

IGBO ABUSIVE EXPRESSIONS AND THEIR MEANING: INSIGHT FROM NIMO SPEECH COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine Igbo abusive words and their meaning: Insight from Nimo speech community. The researchers motivation is born out of the indiscriminate use of abusive expressions in recent times, their volume of difference in meaning which leads to the displeasure of people towards it. The objectives of this study were to explore the existence and meaning of abusive expressions in Nimo speech community, describe their reasons for using them. The study also texts their attitudes towards abusive expressions especially in mixed groups context. The research design for this study was descriptive design approach. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 80 respondents for this investigation. The researcher used focus group, questionnaires and interviews as instruments for data collection. The data collected were analysed using qualitative and quantitative analysis method. The Firth's 1967 contextual theory of meaning formed the theoretical foundation for this research. The findings of this study indicate that abusive expressions exist is in Nimo speech community with relative contextual and associative features. The study also revealed that abusive expressions emanates from unpleasant attitude attributes of individuals and animals and well as ailments. People's reaction to abusive expression depends on mostly their psychology and context. The researcher recommends that people should be conscious of the psychological disposition of others while meting out abusive expression. Again, individuals should learn not to take some meaningless abusive expressions seriously. Above all, the less abusive expressions individuals use the safer and more relaxed people will feel around each other thereby reducing behavioural psychology insinuations on the wider perspective.

Introduction

Language is an essential means of communication through which people can express their views, emotions and attitudes. Language can be seen as an integral part of human social interaction since it strengthens their relationships. However, language is not the only tool which can transmit people's ideas since it is also accompanied by gestures. The context in which language is used, has a great importance. Thus, language and the context in which interaction takes place are inseparable. This means that there are social factors which play crucial roles in directing language use between speakers. In other words, the use of language depends largely on the social context where interaction occurs. Consequently, there are some aspects that affect language. They include social structure, social environment and values of the society.

Language is deeply rooted in the culture of its people since it reflects their norms and taboos. Hence, Gaius (2016) alleged that ignoring these beliefs during interaction may lead to severe assault between speakers since every individual has to behave appropriately in his/her society depending in its norms. It is therefore worthy to note that all languages have certain words, expressions, sentences and topics which are not uttered at will, across age groups or in public. One of these expressions of language is abusive expressions.

A major function of language is that of expression. People express their change of state, fear delight, pain, displeasure or confusion spontaneously without sometimes knowing the full implications depending on the community and context. The use of abusive expression from one person to another depends on certain social factors as anger, frustration annoyance and so on. Also, gender, age and the educational background of the interlocutors play an essential part as social variables in analyzing the language of a given community because, males and females use it differently depending on their ages.

According to Romaine (1994), a speech community is a group of people who do not necessarily have the same language, but share a set of norms and rules for the use of language.

The Igbos' are culturally homogenous. They form a group which interact in paternal ways and share beliefs, values, goals and norms and have a feeling of membership. Their rich cultural heritage is embedded in their proverbs, songs, music, dances, drama, paintings, drawings, marriage ceremonies, festivals, chieftaincy installations etc. all these aspects of culture which bind the people are made meaningful, expressed and operational through the use of language. The Igbo language is thus, a unifying factor of the Igbo culture and has proved an efficient and useful tool for the dissemination of the Igbo culture over generations.

This study focuses on Igbo abusive expressions and their meaning in Nimo speech community. Igbo language is used today creatively to accommodate figurative speeches, idioms, proverbs and other syntactic and semantic coinages, one of such is the abusive expression and their meaning or semantic entailment. The branch of linguistics which has to do with meanings in a language is referred to as semantics. Nwala (2015) defines semantics as the study of meaning and interpretation which enhance communication. Semantics do not only refer to the meaning but also the interpretation of meaning in order to promote communication. The focus here is on the meaning of every aspect of the language: morphemes, word phrases, sentences and longer discourse in language as it concerns abusive words. Meaning is not fixed but changes to suit the context of usage and meaning intended by the user. There are many types of meaning ranging from sentence meaning, figurative meaning, lexical meaning, implied meaning etc. giving language a semantic approach is appreciating it through understanding the tense, value or meaning intended by the expression or piece of language. This research can be said to be a semantic approach to abusive expressions in Igbo, with insights in Nimo speech community.

Area of Study

Nimo is located in the Western part of Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra state, sharing common boundaries with Enugwu-Ukwu in the North, Abagana, Abba and Abatete on the South. It shares boundaries with Neni, and Agu Ukwu Nri on the Eastern side and it is bordered on the Western side by Eziowelle and Abacha. Nimo has four villages namely: Etit Nimo, Ifite Ani, Ifite Enu, and Egbengwu. The people of Nimo mostly make their living through farming and rearing of live stocks, trading and driving of 911 vehicle.

Statement of Problem

Abusive expressions is not solely the lack of courteous words, but communicates a great deal of different things depending on when and where it is expressed as well as with from whom and to whom. Individuals express displeasure towards abusive expressions in Nimo speech community. Abusive expressions naturally imply different things in different contexts to different people and are a statement in itself that conveys meanings in communication. The meaning of abusive expressions in conversation poses a challenge in Nimo speech community, this is simply because of the fact that the interpretation depends on several factors inclusive of, culture, relationship and understanding between interlocutors, the occasion, and the verbal and non verbal contexts surrounding the expression as well as the psychological temperament of individuals. While some members of Nimo speech community find some abusive expressions offensive at all times and place during conversation, some others do not or depend on context for their reactions. The researcher is inspired to perform an analysis of the meaning and entailment of abusive words using different contexts during communication in Nimo speech community in order to find out the interpretation of abusive expression by the people of Nimo speech community as well as, explore the psychological implications of such expressions, the norms, traditions and functions attached to it if any in the Igbo people especially Nimo speech community. In tackling this problem the following questions were raised.

Research Questions

1. How is Firths 1957 contextual theory applied by language users in Nimo speech community?
2. What are the reasons behind the use of abusive expressions?

3. What are the implications of the use of abusive expressions in Nimo speech community?

Objectives of the Study

This paper aims primarily at exploring the existence and meaning of abusive expressions in Nimo speech community through investigating the attitudes of Nimo speakers towards the use of abusive words and expressions. Secondly, it describes the main reasons for the use of abusive expressions and words. It also aims to test their attitudes towards the use of abusive expressions in mixed groups.

Significance of the Study

This study being in line with the efforts of other linguistic researches in the area of social variables that affect speech, It is hoped and expected to be used to account adequately for linguistic creativity or develop a fully universal theory of language. Additionally, this study will bring to knowledge the attitude of Nimo speech community towards abusive expressions, their understanding of it and its functions to them during communication.

Above all, this study will be beneficial to indigenes, strangers to Nimo speech community, student and teachers as they may draw an overall general view and implications of abusive expressions in the community for effective communication.

Scope of the Study

This study covers only the meaning and entailment of abusive expressions, the way people view them as well as explain the reasons why abusive expressions are made during conversations in Nimo speech community in some contexts. These contexts are numerous but for the purpose of this paper contexts known to be pertinent to the normal lives of the people of Nimos' will be discussed. These contexts include;

- Greeting: this is of particular interest to the Nimo people because it occurs in every interaction.
- Family: just like every other group of people, the communities live in family groups nuclear and extended inclusive. The uniqueness of every family in nature and organization determines what is abusive in expressions during conversations
- Traditional ceremonies: there are inherent ceremonies from generations that may have lost some of their original meaning.

Literature Review

In this section, the conceptual review, theoretical review, empirical studies and theoretical frame work related to the study will be summarized.

Conceptual Review

a. Expressions

Expression is the act of making our thoughts and feelings known by speech, writing or some other way we are comfortable with. This can be done with a word, phrase or sentence and can be fixed, idiomatic, metaphorical or sign.

b. Entailment

Entailment is the relationship between two sentences where the truth of one (A) requires the truth of the other (B). Entailment is a concept that refers to a specific kind of relationship between two sentences. More specifically, entailment means that if one sentence is true, then another would also have to be true: the second sentence would be entailed by the first sentence. Furthermore, another way to prove entailments between two sentences is to demonstrate that if the one sentence is false then the other sentence must be false. Entailment is closely related to the concept of logical consequence. In all, entailment cannot be separated from the concepts of presuppositions (refers to a basic premise that is assumed to be true) as against implicature (that the truth of A suggests, and does not require, the truth of B).

C. Abusive Expressions

Abusive language which can also be referred to as offensive language in its simplest definition is hurtful, derogatory, abusive expressions or remark made by one individual to another. They are a set of negative conflicting expression. Abusive words are harsh, insulting language, it condemns or vilifies usually unjustly, intemperately and angrily, Merriam Webster dictionary. What this means is that the use of remarks intended to demean, humiliate, mock, insult, or belittle can be seen as abusive. These may or may not be based on the actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity of an individual. They are rather characterized by wrong or improper use of words –harsh, violent, or profane. Abusive expressions are used to mistreat people physically and emotionally and are injurious, extremely rude and insulting. They are usually used when one is offended and it can be in form of cheap stare, singing a song idly, throwing cheap hints, invading another person's personal space, passing hurtful comments or mimicking usually to the hearing of the abused.

There are a lot of words which are sometimes taken to be abusive even though no abuse is actually intended. For instance, some Scots and Welsh take offence at being called 'English'. Some Igbo's are offended when called *nyamiri* which means *nyem miri* (give me water) by Hausas'. The hausas' feel offended when an Igbos' call them *onye awusa* which means (Hausa man) he feels offended. The Akwa-Ibom man will hate an Igbo man for calling him *onye mmanwu* in response to awu-unege he is being called by the Akwa-Ibom man. This is because the tone may suggest an abuse but ordinarily it is not an abuse and may not even have meaning. Where one does not intentionally mean to be abusive, all that needs to be done when people pick offences at such expression is to back them up rapidly with apologies or face saving act.

Abusive expressions can be seen from a positive point of view. Occasionally, age mates or peers make jest and crack jokes, with abusive expressions. They find it funny and entertaining. At yet another time, abuses can help control behavior especially the type used by parents on their children, the fear of which keeps the young people out of bad behavior or bad company. Igbo language use abusive expressions to achieve different results especially for insulting and inflicting emotional pain. In recent times, there is an indiscriminate use of abusive expressions. This can be observed from the social media in the way people met out abusive words on each other without even knowing themselves or paying attention to the point the person has to make. These abusive expressions become hate speech which politicians and citizens turn to their advantage to bring disunity among ethnic groups. This has led to attempts by the government to legislate laws to help reduce the use of hate expressions usually born out of abusive words.

Categories of Abusive Expressions

Many writers have recognized many types of abusive expression. We will outline and discuss some below.

- i. Defamation
- ii. Direct and indirect abuse
- iii. Explicit and implicit abuse
- iv. Name-calling
- v. Hate speech
- vi. HD and CV abuse

Defamation:

Defamation is an oral or written communication of a false statement about an individual or group that brings about harms to their reputation. It is a type of abusive expression that can also be referred to as slander or libel. In some countries, defamation is regarded as a serious crime. Spoken defamation is known as slander while those of the media as printed words or images are called libel.

Direct and Indirect Abuse:

This category of abusive expression according to Waseem et al (2016) can be synthesized in two-folds. While the first fold considers if the abuse is directed at a specific target, the second fold considers if it could also be directed to a group of individuals. They authors opined that abusive language can either be directed at an individual as well as can be used towards a generalized order for instance, a group of people with a certain ethnicity, educational orientation or sexual orientation.

Explicit and Implicit Abuse:

This is another category of abusive language articulated by Barthes (1957) who affirms that abusive expressions can be implicit or explicit. While explicit abusive expressions are unambiguous in their potentials to be abusive like languages that contain racial or homophobic slurs, implicit abusive language is connotative in nature. Explicit abusive expressions are denotative featured and implicit abusive expressions do not suggest abuse immediately, it hides under ambiguity to manifest as sarcasm.

Name Calling:

This is the use of offensive name mostly to win an argument. It is bringing about rejection or condemnation of an individual or project without objectively considering the facts at hand. Name calling is often a verbal abuse and usually involves mentioning physical attributes. Crystal (1987) affirms that the concern of name-calling ranges from ingenious form to intellectual ridicule and humour to the crudest possible attacks on an individual's courage, sexual prowess or relatives. Furthermore, name-calling provides information on how the speaker views oneself in relation to others says Jay (2000). According to him, it can get to an extreme where participants engage in acts of verbal duel or ritualistic insult which produces both psychological and cultural effects.

Hate Speech:

Hate speech can be said to be any communication, in speech, writing or behavior that uses derogatory expressions or language to refer to an individual or group on the basis of religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, sexual orientation, colour, decency, educational background, political inclination or other identification element.

HD and CV abuse:

Two types of abusive language are identified by Kenndy, et.al. (2017), firstly is according to the extent to which it dehumanizes, and attacks human dignity hence (HD) and secondly, the rate at which they call for violence (CV). Gagliardone, et al. (2015) opines that such expressions are regarded as illegal not only because of their likelihood to lead to harm but also for their intrinsic content.

Relationship between Abusive Expressions and other Linguistic Terms

Abusive language is related to other linguistic terms as, taboo words, vulgarism, swear words and the likes. Abusive expressions like taboo have negative implication and are usually emotional. According to Culpeper (2019:2), "people have negative attitudes towards the use of taboo underpinned by societal thinking"... "the language is taboo when it conflicts with what people expect in a particular context, or what they desire or think should be the case" he concludes. An expression is taboo because a given community sees it as impolite.

The use of taboo language as an abuse illustrates the weight impolite words may have on an individual's emotions, they are offensive. It is necessary to point out that all taboos are not abusive and it is not all abusive expressions that are taboos. The relationship between them is their consequent effect on the individual which is the ability to hurt. Akmajian et al (2007:119) defined taboo as words or phrases that are to be avoided completely or at least avoided in mixed or polite company.

Vulgarism can be related to abuses in our distinct communities, some things are held in high regard. For instance, body parts like breast, penis, vagina, buttocks etc. are not mentioned freely in some communities. When they are used publicly in some expression, they are termed vulgar words. According to Trudgill (1990) four types of vulgarism usage includes: Abusive (intended to harm the hearer), expletive (used to express the emotions but not directed towards others), humorous (looks like wearing but has the opposite function) and the Auxiliary (swearing as a way of speaking, often or always non-emphatic). Abusive expressions are rooted in culture and exist everywhere. According to Berry (1969) abusive language is a cross-cultural and universal phenomenon, the difference that exists is usually culture based. For instance, the antecedents used for abusive expressions in different cultures are of various kinds such as diseases, private body parts, immoral behavior, religion, low level of education, feces, (shit), animals, devil, male sexual inadequacies, dirtiness, genitals and relationship. The words used to express abuse differ from culture to culture. Abusive language can be both 'etic' (cross cultural) and 'emic' (a culture specific element). Male Habit, and Hofstede (1980) added that it depends on the masculinity or femininity of a certain culture. The more masculine a society, the more abusive language is expected to be a male habit vise versa.

Different Reactions to Abusive Expressions

Abusive expressions can sometimes turn into bullying which not an experience whort having for any individual of any age and class. People respond in different ways when abused, while some become aggressive, others laugh it off. There are still people who coil in and become emotional especially when their ego is hurt. Van Oudenhoven et al (2008) believe that women usually receive fewer insults than men expect in Germany and Croatia where women receive more insults than men. In Nigeria, women receive more abusive expressions because it is believed that the society is 'a man's world'.

Empirical Review

Many people have surveyed abusive language from different perspectives. Iroka (2013) in her research on "sociolinguistic profiling of the use of abusive language in Nigeria: a print media perspective" looked into the way abusive language is used by media practitioners. She found out that different issues like government's nonchalant attitude towards the safety of lives and properties of citizens attract abusive comments. According to her, the offensive language used was intended to cause harm to the feelings and reputation of government officials as a way of showing the citizens' grievances.

Yalwa (1991:69) in his paper socio-cultural and linguistic implication of abusive expression in Hausa" also noted that abusive expressions are intended to hurt or injure the feelings of someone and are therefore prohibited both by social etiquette and religion. He listed categories of people who get involved in the abusive act- Husbands and wives – they sometimes abuse each other when there is a misunderstanding between them; parents and children – parents sometimes use abusive language on their children when they do something bad. According to Yalwa, the abuse is meant to correct the child's behavior and make him/her conform to the norms accepted by the society. He also identified other individuals who use abusive expressions to include co-wives, children, peers and teacher students. He noted that casual/ non-serious abuse is also used among the Hausas as compliments given to those who perform an amazing or incredible act. Finn (2013) agrees that some offensive words are compliments under certain circumstances for example fucking awesome.

Olumuyiwa (2015:297) in her research noted that insult words, statements or actions are used with the intention to be rude or scornful to express one's emotion or hatred, aggression and anger to people. Her research shows that foul language has different linguistic forms like simple and complex noun phrases and sentences which may be declarative, interrogative, negative, conditional or affirmative: her findings are in agreement with Jackson (1958) in jay

(2000) that abusive expressions, foul language or swear words, apart from causing harm emotionally have some positive values. In her research, she posited that beyond offending, hurting and arousing the anger of the addressees. There are other intentions of using insulting words and they include:

- To prove a superior skill in a verbal duel
- To correct misdeeds in the addressee especially subordinates.
- To flatter and show admiration towards the addressees e.g. a housewife calling her sister – in –law a miserly sister in –law”
- To describe the interlocutors (in the negative) e.g “ someone with curved legs” and “stupid person with bad mouth”

Theoretical Frame Work

The contextual theory of meaning popularized by Firth in 1957 forms the theoretical framework and analytical procedure of the data. Firth's contextual theory is an integrationist idea, which mixes language with the objects physically present during a conversation to ascertain the meaning involved. Firth established the fact that, whatever anyone said must be understood in the context of the situation. Thus, beside linguistic factors, factors like the status and personal history of the speaker as well as the social character of the situation must also be taken into account

Methodology

Research Design

The research design chosen for this study is the descriptive survey method. According to Nworgu (2006:34) “a descriptive survey design is a type of research design in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of entire group”. The sample for this study was 80 speakers of Nimo dialect (40 males and 40 females to ensure gender balance), drawn from the four quarters using convenience sampling after obtaining permission from the participants. The participants filled in informed consent and bio-data forms before the commencement of the discussion and interview.

Method of Data Collection

The method used to collect data for this study was focus group discussion and interview. Structured and unstructured questions were written in Igbo language in order to harvest the required data for the study. The focus group method was selected because it creates a conducive environment for participants to discuss perceptions, ideas, opinions and thoughts’ (Krueger & Casey, 2000, as cited in Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009: 2). Using focus group discussion, therefore, is thought to provide data that are “often deeper and richer than those obtained from one-to-one interview” Rabiee (2004:656).

The questionnaire captured some personal data of the respondents such as age, sex, and educational background. Prior to the construction of the questionnaire, the researcher, as native speaker of Nimo dialect, wrote down a list of abusive expressions used amongst Nimo indigenes in different social contexts and for different reasons. The researcher's personal observations and the responses of the interviewees served as the basis of constructing the questionnaire. Structured and unstructured interviews served as the primary source. The secondary data used in this research work were the information obtained from secondary sources such as library materials, textbooks, journal articles, internet and other documented sources from the print media. Abusive expressions come spontaneously in speech. One does not plan to use them but they come up as people interact with each other. The data collected in this study were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative analysis methods.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

This paper centers on meaning of abusive expressions. In this section the meaning of abusive expressions used in this work will be analyzed and discussed as it agrees and relates to the

theory in application. Respondents gave overall general abusive expressions with contexts and expressions in Igbo land and how specific it is to Nimo speech community. According to them, abusive expressions include vulgar words such as words dealing with the private body parts as can be observed in the table below.

Table 1: Abusive Expressions Associated to Body Parts

S/N	Nimo/Igbo Expressions	English Meaning
I	Ikpu nne ghụ	Your mothers vagina
Ii	utu nna ghụ	Your father's penis
Iii	Ike ghụ	Your ass
Iv	Ara darada,	Flat Brest
V	Ike slippers	Flat bottom
Vi	Igba ntị	Hard to hearing
vii	Isi okpo	Empty head

Respondents outlined contexts where the abusive expressions mentioned above are used to include peers friendly conversations and in the family among siblings. Outside these contexts, abusive expressions as *ikpu nne ghụ*, *amụ nna ghụ*, *ara dara ada* will be taken seriously and has serious implications. This is in line with Firths idea of the fact that whatever anyone says must be understood in the context of the situation. *Igba nti* is used to draw one's attention or imply that the person actually has hearing problems. Observe below expressions.

Expression Gloss

Chika : kee ihe ị na- achọ?	What are you looking for?
Nwuka: ikpu nne ghụ/ amụ nna ghụ	your mother's vagina/your fathers penis
Chika : igba nti nee anya ebe a	look here you deaf
Nwuka : Ọ mụ ka ị na agwa	are you talking to me?

The private parts are used with a tone of vulgarity to entail disgust. The sacredness of private parts in Igbo land especially Nimo speech community reveals the vulgarity rate when they are used in a crude manner as in the examples above. Their real names are avoided and more pleasant or mild words are used in referring to them. '*ihe ghụ*' (your thing) or *di ono ghụ*, *dike ghụ* (your strength) are used to refer to the penis to avoid direct mention of those body parts.

Table 2: Abusive Expression Associated to Animals

S/N	Nimo speech community abusive expression	English meaning	Entailment
I	Nkakwụ	Smelly rat	Entailing someone with bad body odor
ii	Mpama	Idiot	Entailing a meaningless person
iii	Ewu	Goat	Entailing the person is stupid
iv	Uchicha	cockroach	Entails a slow but destructive person
v	Oke	Rat	Entails a thief, or small but problematic
vi	Nkita	Dog	Entailing a promiscuous person
vii	Agwo	Snake	Entails a deceptive person
	Ezi	Pig	Entails a dirty person
	Aturū	Sheep	Entails a senseless person

In table 2 above, we have some Igbo abusive expressions related to animal and their entailment. Animal traits are used in Nimo speech community to abuse people, for instance, dog (*Nkita*) is known for its promiscuity and barking as such an individual who is promiscuous or shouts a lot in and out of conversations is being referred to and called *nkita* (dog) abusively. One has to understand the details of the expression to know that he or she has been insulted because of its implicit meaning. This is applied to the other animals mentioned in the table, their traits are used to abuse people in the speech community. However their context of employment determines how deep the abusive sits with the abused. Consider below examples

Expressions Gloss

Nne : kee onye mee ihe e who did this?

Adanna: O kosi it is kosi

Nne: kpọrọ m uchicha ahụ mere ihe e boro oke call that small but might for me

From the above example extracted from a family context, the abusive expression is from mother to child. The child may laugh at the expression and also learn from it. Firth cannot be more correct to say that the status of interlocutors must be considered to determine meaning and perception. Nimo Igbo speakers use any of the animals mentioned in the table above to abuse themselves entailing the characteristic of such animal. This however depends solely on from who it whom. According to some respondents, abusive expression as “*i bu nnọ mpama*” (you are really an idiot) is used amongst peers and is laughed off, but when used for an elder by a younger person, it is taken as an abuse and a very serious one at that. However some adults or elders may behave in a manner that earns them such an abuse, when that is done they owe no apologies, said some respondents.

Table 3: Abusive Expressions Associated to Diseases

S/N	Nimo speech community abusive expression	English meaning	Entailment
i	Kitika gbagbuo ghụ	Chicken pox	May you suffers to death from chicken pox
ii	Afo tookwaa ghụ ebe	Stomach tumor	Entails may one suffer from tumor
iii	anwa	Leper	A person who cannot associate with others
iv	Onye Ekpenta	A mad person	Entails someone who is out of his senses
v	Onye Ara	A person suffering from diarrhea	When a person maltreats another and he wishes him dead, he says let him purge or stool to death
	Otolo gbagbuo gu		

The above disease associated abusive expressions in Nimo speech community are usually directed at an offender. The stigma and the deadliness associated with these diseases make them frightening. This is why they are employed to abuse people. Leprosy, chicken pox with the incurable rashes associated to it and swollen stomach where dreaded in the past because of lack of cure. These diseases were abomination and taboo in Igbo communities that when contracted, the victims were quarantined or ostracized from the communities to live in the evil forest till they die.

Table 4: Abusive Expressions associated to Family Members

S/N	Nimo/Igbo Expressions	English Meaning
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I	Nne ghụ	Your mother
Ii	Nna ghụ	Your father
Iii	Nnenne ghụ	Your mother's mother
Iv	Nnenna ghụ	Your father's father
Vi	Isi nne ghụ	Your mother's head
vii	Isi nna ghụ	Your father's head

In Nimo speech community the sacredness of one's parents especially mother's makes it a serious abuse when they are included in name calling. Children in Nimo speech community will react angrily at the mere reference to their parent without even calling their name. It is a serious abuse to tell a child in the community *nne ghụ*. Adults and youths in the speech community may joke over it in the context of age mate conversation or lighter mood.

Expressions Gloss

Mma: I na-eme ka nne ghụ you behave like your mother

Amaka: kee otuọọh like how?

In the above expression however, some respondents affirmed that where parents are known with bad character, their children may not want to be referred to be like them. Ordinarily, such expression should be complementary but in this case it is perceived as an abuse. It is usually an unrestrained expression of emotion used to retaliate when one has been offended and he or she does not know how else to react.

Table 4: Abusive Expressions Associated With Character

S/N	Nimo speech community abusive expression	English meaning	Entailment
I	Onye aghughọ	A liar	A deceptive person
Ii	Ọfeke	A good for nothing	A useless person (Direct abuse)
Iii	Onye isi ike	A stubborn person	direct abuse
Iv	Onye ohi / aka ntutu	A thief	Direct abuse/indirect (euphemism)
v	Ọgbanje	A child who dies and reincarnates/an unpredictable child usually female	An unpredictable child (Direct/indirect abuse)
Vi	Onye nzuzu	Stupid person	Entailing a senseless/stupid person (direct abuse)
vii	Onye alulu ana	A wicked person	Direct abuse
viii	Onye asị	A liar	Direct abuse

Character traits can be positive or negative. It is the negative character traits that an individual exhibits that are used to abuse them in Nimo speech community. They do this to remind the person the kind of persons they are, warn others and correct them. If a thief is abused thus: *I bu onye ohi* in private conversations by a family member in a family context, it is to make him aware that they know and for him to redress. If the same abuse is done in the public space in mixed group, it is for people to be aware who they are dealing with. However in the context of peers it can be considered a joke especially when the person is not a thief, there are exceptions where some individuals do not want to be associated with any form of negativity

especially character traits due to their orientation. These kinds of people will always frown at such expressions no matter who it comes from and where.

Table 5: Non-Verbal Abusive Expressions

S/N	Nimo speech community non-verbal expression	Entailment
i	Igba nkīti/ūchū (intentionally keeping quiet)	Entailing that the person should meet ill luck.
ii		disdain
iii	Ịrọ anya (eyeing someone)	It serves one right.
iv	Ntọọọ (opening the mouth and extending the tongue sometimes adding the touching of the fore-fang on the cheeks)	Entailing may same evil follow the person that planned
v	Nya sokwa ghū (opening the palm towards a person and spreading out the fingers)	Meaning be careful/mind yourself/one is out of his mind. The persons actions are out of the ordinary (usually negative)
vi	Ị rụ mmadụ aka n'isi (point someone on his or her head)/I rūrū mmadụ aka n'isi (using the fore-finger to point at the head)	Sign of ridicule. Entails that one's plan has failed
vi	Ịja eze (flashing one's dentition at someone)	Entails "who cares"
	Ị kpọ kim (a sound made with or without closed mouth)	

In the above table are non-verbal abusive expressions identified in Nimo speech community. Respondents responded that individuals can abuse each other without using words and still achieve the intended meaning. Follow with the following examples.

Ịkpọ kim: (a sound made with or without closed mouth))

In Nimo speech community, this expression entails who cares/I do not care or it does not concern me attitude at its peak. A respondent explained that this expression is used to scorn an individual's action or utterance. It can be complete or partial disrespect. This can occur during greeting in Nimo speech community when a child greets the parents and gets the *Kīm* response. It means that the child must have disobeyed or gone out of line. Because greeting is an all important part of the Igbo man, parents choose that to convey their feelings so that their message will be understood. A child will feel uncomfortable on getting the *kīm* response to his or her greeting to the parents.

Igba ūchū (intentionally keeping quiet). This is another non-verbal abusive expression identified in the speech community of study to entail who cares but here the individual may not intentionally use it but the victim reads the meaning to be that he or she is not wished well. For instance in every family of Nimo speech community the first thing family members do is to greet each other. Not responding is feared to bring bad luck for the rest of the day. This is because it is a wrong way to start the day. The family member depending on his or her temperament may respond with *ūchū nwa gbakwa ghū* or *nya sokwa ghū*

Ị Rụ Mmadụ Aka N'isi (point someone on his or her head)/I Rūrū Mmadụ Aka N'isi (using the fore-finger to point at the head). In Nimo speech community, during traditional ceremonies like marriage, title installations, sharing gifted cows, masquerade e.t.c the tendency of misunderstanding between indigenes usually arise. Abusive expressions of ị rụ mmadụ aka n'isi and ị rūrū mmadụ aka n'isi arises when there is misunderstanding of certain cultural rites that are not performed in the right way. They are question markers used in finding out if one realizes that he/she has gone out of track by his/her reaction and utterances

(usually negative). This expression being a gentle abuse that aids one to get back on track can be used as a joke, in conversations, and in public. This expression has no consideration for the abused.

Other non-verbal expressions as *ntọọ* which means ‘good for you’ to who it is directed is used for a person who had been fore-warned, but did not give heed and things ended up badly. The failure of the addressee to take advice at the right time gives the user of this non-verbal expression the audacity to rub in the disappointment being felt by the addressee. *Ichị waka* which means the opening of raised hand/hands at someone and spreading the fingers alongside. Respondents said it means ‘back to sender’. It entails rejecting evil wish abuse that is intended and sending same intention back to the originator.

Table 6: Spirit Associated Abusive Expressions

S/N	Nimo/Igbo Expressions	English Meaning
I	Amusu	Witch
Ii	Ajọ mụọ/ekwensu	Evil spirit/satan
Iii	Mụọ mmiri /maamịwọta	Mermaid spirit/ water goddess
Iii	Ndụ mụọ	Spirit

Expression Gloss

mụọ mmiri dị ka ghụ ? water goddess like you ?

ajọ mụọ/ekwensu jì ghụ aka you are possessed by the evil spirit.

By Using above abusive expression *Ajọ/ekwensu* and *mụọ mmiri* the addressee wants to associate the abused to evil and wickedness due to his or her evil behaviour. Satan being evil personified, is believed to be the initiator of all bad and evil deeds. One can be directly abused as *ekwensu* when know for evil acts. Also consider below example

Expression Gloss

Obi bụ ajọ mụọ, ekwekwana ka o dufuo gu Ọdịnaka is an evil, spirit don’t let him mislead you.

Above expression has a negative entailment which includes deceit, wickedness and other forms of evil. Mamịwọta refers to the marine spirit or mermaid spirit which is depicted as having the physical or bodily forms of a beautiful woman with a fish like tail.

Expression Gloss

Chidimma bụ mụọ mmiri/mamịwọta. Chidimma is a mermaid.

This is a direct abuse used metaphorically and it entails deception and seduction. This means that the beauty that mermaid is associated with is deceptive and seductive that is having the charm to lure a man to love a mere shadow because he cannot bring her home as a wife. It can also be used to refer to an unpredictable individual usually female.

Result and Discussion

From the fore-going, the responses indicate that abusive expression is undoubtedly employed in Nimo speech community by the speakers and that it has both negative and positive functions during communication. The meaning of abusive expressions is highly ambiguous, and depends on the situations and contexts of its use. There are many reasons behind the use of abusive expressions by Nimo speakers. Nimo speakers do not use abusive expressions indiscriminately in mixed groups and their dialect does not contain much vulgar words.

Findings of the study indicate that the attitude of Nimo speakers differ towards abusive expressions in any given context. Many respondents perceive some of the abusive expressions to be very hurtful and is used to demean them or what they represent thereby causing them emotional pain and sometimes affects their ego. Some respondent on the other hand believe

that it is part of life. They see it as *njakiri*, something of fun and joke used in cooling down and relieving frustration. They are of the opinion that if properly used in the proper contexts, it can be teasing and a relieve to social tension during stressful moments. It can be used to emphasize important points and as a tool to gain grounds amongst youths/peers. They are used as corrective tool for molding behavior, self control and discipline especially for children.

Further findings corroborate that abusive expressions are relative, contextual and associative. Sometimes, they are used figuratively when the user applies metaphors and similes in phrasing the abuse. This is very much in tune with Firth's theory of context that advocates for understanding of expressions to be made based of contexts. It was also discovered that some abusive expressions can be used to express emotions or create humour depending on who or what it is directed at in Nimo speech community which further emphasizes Firths contextual theory of meaning. It is confirmed that abusive expression can be aggressively used in communication depending on the understanding or exposure of the people involved in the speech community of study. Some respondents also agreed that some abusive expressions are used politely.

Finally, abusive expressions have implications on the individuals abused in Nimo speech communication depending on the understanding or exposure of the persons involved. Some people see abuse in expressions that never intended to abuse but generally have negative implications like emotional hurt, arousal of anger, resentment and disgust. The pride, honour or reputation of the abused is usually disparaged or denigrated. Some respondents said that some abused persons can even go as far as hurting the person that abused them or even killing at worst case scenario.

Another implication is that of avoidance. People of the speech community of study will keep off others who are abusive to avoid misunderstanding. It also affects the good flow of conversation in the speech community.

Conclusion

Communities make use of language for numerous speech acts. The meaning depends on the speech act, the people performing it and the level of shared knowledge of the language in use. This study has explored Igbo abusive expressions and their meaning, what they entail, their functions and implications using Nimo speech community as an insight. To effectively do this, data was collected from Nimo community in focused groups, different social settings and dispositions; there were oral interviews for further clarification of observation.

Abusive expressions are confirmed to be annoying, insulting and offensive even when they are not so intended. Individuals with short temperedness tend to blow it out of proportion. Abusive expressions are found in all cultures but differ in application depending on the society. They may be directed at an individual or a group and can also be explicit or implicit. The main aim of abusive expressions is to annoy no matter how they are presented be it as a cheap stare, hurting comments, name calling, defamation, hate speeches, disguised jokes, swearing, vulgar words or ordinarily mimicking someone, it inflicts pain and harms physically or emotionally. However some abusive words also serve positive functions as creating humour, '*njakiri*', correcting an erring subordinate, molding and remolding character. It can be learnt from.

Finally, abusive expressions can be verbal, non-verbal, written, gestures or actions intended to cast aspersion on an individual or group. The meaning is usually relative because what is abusive to one person maybe humorous to another; this by implication means that before one reacts to supposed abuse, he or she should try to understand the meaning of such expression and what it entails and vice versa.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that people should be conscious of the psychological disposition of others while meting out abusive expression. Again, individuals should learn not to take some meaningless abusive expressions seriously. Above all, the less abusive expressions individuals use the safer and more relaxed people will feel around each other thereby reducing behavioural psychology insinuations on the wider perspective.

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