

A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF SELECTED INSCRIPTIONS ON “BRING BACK OUR GIRLS” (BBOG) CAMPAIGN PLACARDS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation was titled “A Pragmatic Study of Selected Inscriptions on Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) Campaign Placards.” It investigated the selected inscriptions and how they were used on placards to fulfil various roles of language. The study analysed the inscriptions with special focus on the illocutionary force behind the inscriptions and demonstrated how power was linked to language from a pragmatic purview. The theoretical framework for this study was J. L. Austin’s (1962) Speech Acts Theory, which sees language use as discourse and an interactive event as expounded by Searle (1969). The data for this research were primarily derived from a corpus of 90 samples of the “Bring Back Our Girls” (BBOG) campaign inscriptions on placards. The inscriptions were downloaded from the internet. The method employed in gathering the data included documentation, and Searle’s taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Grice’s cooperative principles were applied as analytical procedure for analysis. The study found that the BBOG group used language to perform acts rather than simply making assertions. In addition, having conceptualised power and influence within the theory of speech act-illocutionary effect, the study revealed that some of the selected inscriptions produced consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, actions and reactions of the interlocutors. The inscriptions bore different messages that explicated on the issues concerning the abducted Chibok girls. The dissertation concluded that the BBOG group used the inscriptions on placards to persuade the government to ensure the safe return of the girls and intervention.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Speech Acts, Illocutionary Force, Placard Inscriptions, Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG), Discourse Analysis

Introduction

Linguistics has widespread acceptance within and beyond the human sciences for the centrality of language among human phenomena. Over time, man has developed very creative ways of expressing himself and passing messages across. These messages are sometimes mundane downright and massive. They focus on sensitive societal issues as in the case of inscriptions on placards, most of which are by-products of different kinds of socio-political upheavals in the world and Nigeria in particular. These include: insecurity, corruption and mismanagement of resources, human rights abuses, ethno-religious violence, flawed electoral processes, banditry and Boko Haram insurgency. These issues have been the thematic concerns of individuals, groups, and local and international civil societies to highlight the inefficiency of the government in power in this regard. One of the civil organisations is the #BringBackOurGirls campaign group in Nigeria.

At its very essence, language is seen as a tool used for the communication of meaning. However, there is so much more than simple lexical or grammatical meaning encoded in a text. Conventionally, as Yule (1985) says we have concentrated on meaning in language as a product of the meaning of words. Whereas there are other aspects of meaning of the words used in phrases and sentences. When we read or hear pieces of language, we usually try to understand not only what the words mean but also what the writer or speaker of those words intends to convey. The study of ‘intended speaker’s meaning’ is called Pragmatics. Through language, the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) group has established and maintained social identity and relationships. Its members have been talking about their experiences of the world, including the world in the mind. They usually describe events as well as the individual actors involved. Essentially, language is used to interact with people, establish and maintain relationships with them, to influence their behaviour, to express personal viewpoints on things in the world, and to elicit or change the views of others. Meanings are implied and the rules followed are usually unspoken and unwritten. Pragmatics as a field in linguistics is pivotal to interpreting and deciphering ‘the said from the unsaid’; ‘the unsaid from the said’, speaker’s intention etc. As Yule (1985) aptly notes that Pragmatic is a way of investigating how sense can be made of certain text even when from a semantic point of view, the text seems to be either incomplete or to have different meaning to what is intended.

The advent of placarding has served as a springboard to pressure groups, business companies, non-governmental organizations as well as civil societies who seek to express their opinions, feelings ideas and experiences. As opposed to the exercise of power through coercive means, Fairclough (1989), points to the role of language in the exercise, maintenance and change of power. Taking a cue from the theory of ideology, he points to the increasing relative importance of ideology as a mechanism of power in modern society. He also sees language as the locus of ideology, and of major significance with respect to power. Furthermore, Fairclough (1989:12-13) notes the central role of discourse specifically in the development of modern forms of power, as well as “the theory of communicative action” which are all by-products of language and Pragmatics. This civil display of a constitutional right shapes a fairer world. It sheds light on corruption, exposes injustice and incompetence, and boldly tells the stories of people and power the world needs to hear.

Two hundred and seventy six (276) female students were kidnapped on April 14th, 2014 from their hostels at a Government Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State. Boko Haram, an

insurgent group, claimed responsibility for the abduction. According to Litoff (2014), 276 school girls were kidnapped, 57 escaped, while 218 were missing as at 2016. The “Bring Back Our Girls” campaign has undoubtedly generated a lot of sympathy and support from the international community calling for more efforts to rescue the abducted girls. The group announced to the world that the girls had been psychologically abused. This led to the need for every potent means of communication by members of the group to appeal to the sensibilities of parents, government and the general populace to increase efforts towards saving the school girls from their abductors.

A clear case of people exercising their language power using placards is the Bring Back Our Girls’ campaigners. With examples drawn from the experiences of Joseph Estrada of Philippines, Ben Ali of Tunisia, Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya and, Yahaya Jammeh of Gambia among host of others, the influence of placarding cannot be overemphasised. Therefore, it is obvious that choice is a factor in Pragmatics, and Language is predicated upon choice and when the choice is made it has an intention for a specific result. Thus, the research examined how and to what extent inscriptions on placards are used to achieve various roles of language.

Hence, the researcher views the inscriptions on placards of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign group with accompanying photographs of protesters bearing inscriptions and graphic images of children and school girls as a linguistic intervention in the Nigerian society as the research is driven by the social relevance of Language.

Statement of Research Problem

The campaign to secure the abducted Chibok schoolgirls by Boko Haram has been taken to the street with the slogan “Bring Back Our Girls” with very many different inscriptions on placards. The researcher observed that while it is clear that the struggles are geared towards the safe return of the innocent victims of terror, what is not clear are the textual meanings of the various messages visibly displayed as inscriptions on placards relating to the subject matter. This could be through: presentation of incomplete information or biased selection of information visibly displayed on placards.

Sometimes it is difficult to arrive at a particular interpretation of the inscriptions and when they are interpreted wrongly, it could affect a reader’s thought, view, belief or behaviour especially when it seems inciting. Thus, the use of inscriptions on placards may have some pragmatic undertone. However, language in itself is insufficient to always result in to influencing government policies and arouse mass solidarity and sympathy. What ‘placarders’ represent in terms of their linguistic/political background determines the success of their act(s). while protesters use language in their various inscriptions on their placards to achieve many communicative purposes, they might be unaware of the link between context, and the acts performed by the different inscriptions. Scholars like Brown et’al (2016), Maxfield (2015) and Chiluya & Ifukor (2015) have written on Bring Back Our Girls campaigns.

Brown et’al investigates cartoon application in communication and social mobilisation in the Nigeria’s #BBOG campaigns, Maxfield, Chiluya and Ifukor investigates the stance on the BBOG campaigns on ‘Twitter’ (X) and ‘Facebook’, using Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar as theoretical framework. Abaya (2001) and Andokari (2016) have both written on inscriptions but while Abaya focuses on vehicles, Andokari narrowed his work to buses in Kaduna metropolis, using speech acts as theoretical framework. However, to the best of the researcher’s

knowledge, no work addresses inscriptions on the #BBOG campaign placards from a pragmatic perspective. Placarding was and has always been a peaceful, reliable and successful process used to checkmate and influence government policies and programmes. It is a tool for measuring popular opinions. Hence, the researcher views the #BringBackOurGirls campaigns with accompanying photographs of protesters bearing inscriptions and graphic images of children and school girls as a linguistic intervention in the Nigerian society.

Research Questions

This research is geared towards eliciting answers to the following questions:

1. What are the locutionary acts in the inscriptions of BBOG placards?
2. What are the illocutionary forces enshrined in the selected inscriptions?
3. How is power linked to language in the inscriptions on #BBOG placards?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to carry out a pragmatic study of selected inscriptions on “BringBackOurGirls” campaign placards, in order to establish how inscriptions on #BBOG placards are used to achieve various roles of language. The specific objectives of the research are to:

1. classify the locutionary acts in the inscriptions
2. identify the illocutionary force behind the various inscriptions, and
3. demonstrate how power is linked to language in the inscriptions of #BBOG placards.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of speech acts which sees language as discourse and an interactive event occurring between participants, a form of doing rather than simply ‘speaking’ propounded by JL Austin (1962), and as expounded by Searle (1969) namely; locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary is applied to help the researcher to analyse the data collected for this study. The theory of illocutionary act by Searle along with Grice (1975) co-operational principles are used to support this analysis by highlighting the communicative force of an utterance as well as the speaker’s intention as it relates to various kinds of psychological modes that make the basis of communication as its teleological base and the application of ‘logic and conversation’ to keep the conversations on track and help prevent random conversations that lack continuity. The choice of speech acts theory as the linguistic framework for the analysis of #BBOG campaign inscription is premised on the fact that this model accounts for all sentence types in all-natural languages. It posits that interlocutors do not talk unless there is an intention for carrying out the act and this intention can be accounted for through the speech acts model.

Methodology

This research is basically a study of inscriptions on Bring Back Our Girls campaign placards. The data were primarily derived from a corpus of 90 samples of inscriptions both online and offline visibly displayed in Nigeria and the participating states campaigning for the release of the abducted Chibok school girls. The secondary source aimed at complementing the primary source comprised the internet and a participant observation of protester(s) who were directly involved in the Bring Back Our Girls campaigns in the FCT, Abuja. The sampling technique used in this research is non-probability sampling technique. The researcher resorted to this technique because it is almost impossible to ascertain for instance the number of inscriptions used the #BBOG placards in Nigeria or globally. The non-probability sampling technique adopted for this

study is purposive; the inscriptions are selected to meet the aim and objectives of this study as specified in Chapter One. In carrying out this study, several methods were employed for the collection of data for the purpose of this research. These included the internet and participant/non-participant observation. The channel of communication of the BBOG campaigners is placards. The placards have different inscriptions that mirror the peculiar communicative functions that the linguistic messages in them set to achieve. Thus, the inscriptions are analysed, using the Speech Act theory as found in the work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary act and Grice's Co-operation Principle are applied to support the analysis. The Qualitative method of research has been put to use in analysing the collected data with a bias for content analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

As noted in our analytical procedure, this research is a pragmatic study of inscriptions on Bring Back Our Girls placards. In this regard, the channel of communication is the use of placards with different inscriptions that reflect the peculiar mindsets of the members of the Bring Back Our Girls group and the linguistic messages they set to achieve. Generally, we have categorized a sample of 90 inscriptions on placards of the #BBOG into 2 different thematic units reflecting the objectives of the study: the illocutionary force, and inscriptions demonstrating how power is linked to language in the #BBOG placards for easy reference and comprehension of the analysis and general discussion.

A. Inscriptions demonstrating illocutionary force

1. Go to Sambisa
2. Mr. President do something NOW!
3. #Bring Back Our Girls Now and Alive
4. Just #BRING BACK OUR GIRLS alive
5. Rescue our Chibok girls
6. Please find our daughters
7. Please protect us
8. Please do something
9. Destroy the beast of Boko Haram NOW!
10. SHEKAU: find goods to sell not our girls. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH
11. Protect the future of Nigeria
12. End Terrorism Now!
13. We task Mr. President Bring Back Our Girls
14. Bring Our Sisters Home! Show leadership
15. Bring Back Our Girls Now and Alive
17. Protect our borders if not seal them
18. Nigerian government bring back our Chibok girls home immediately
19. Secure the roads to school
20. We've lost 11MORE federal government do something
21. #Justice for our Girls
22. Save our sisters
23. Bring back our girls SHARPLY!!!
24. The primary responsibility of government is the protection of lives and properties.
25. Nigerian government bring back our Chibok girls home immediately

26. We the women in Northern Uganda demand Boko Haram to Bring Back Our Girls
27. #Hadiza Yakubu 155 #Never to be forgotten
28. #Aisha Lawan 111 #Never to be forgotten
29. #Ruth Kolo 69 #Never to be forgotten
30. #Hauwa Nkeki 45 #Never to be forgotten
31. #Yana Yidau 33 #Never to be forgotten
32. #Maryam Abba 81 #Never to be forgotten
33. #Deborah Nuhu 122 #Never to be forgotten
34. #Bilkisu Abdullahi 98 #Never to be forgotten
35. Can you believe this?
#we are here!
#months gone
#219 Chibok girls still missing
36. Bring back our daughters
37. #BBOG together we stand
38. Save! Educate! Empower! #BBOG
39. Stop him (SHEKAU) from depriving little girls of education
40. Je suis Charlie
N'oublions pas les victims de Boko Haram

Gloss- *My name is Charlie remember the victims of Boko Haram*

C. Inscriptions Demonstrating how Power is Linked to Language in the #BBOG Campaign

1. This is terrorism not Islam.
2. Our prayers are with you Chibok girls
3. Muslim + Christians= we want our girls back
4. Hope! Prayers! Waiting for our Girls
5. No to Islamaphobia. No to war
6. Girls are not brides.
7. She is someone's daughter.
8. 2years + 69days of abduction #Chibok Girls #Hope Endures #BBOG
9. 38 million girls out of school: they have dreams too #BBOG #still missing
10. We want our girls back alive
11. We say no to our daughters' abduction!!!
12. #BBOG together we stand
13. Stop him (SHEKAU) from depriving little girls of education
14. Enough is enough! The abduction must stop!
15. We want action now
16. Chibok girls our hearts are with you on May Day!
17. Ruth Lawan 157 #Never to be forgotten
18. Our girls must go to school
19. War against insurgency
20. Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters #BBOG

Data Analysis

This study set out to examine how the protesters maximised the utilitarian communicative value of placards to address issues that are of grave implications for humanity, education and Nigeria as a nation. A tabular procedural format of data analysis is adopted to simply highlight the inscriptions.

The 100 sample inscriptions collected are categorized into 3 thematic unities in conformity with the objectives of the studies for the discussion and analyses while photographs of actual sampled placards bearing the inscriptions will be attached in the appendix.

B. Inscriptions demonstrating illocutionary force

S/No	Inscriptions	Illocutionary Act
1	Go to Sambisa	Directive
2	Mr. President do something NOW!	Directive
3	#BBOG Now and Alive	Directive
4	Just #BRING BACK OUR GIRLS	Assertive
5	Rescue our Chibok girls	Assertive
6	Please find our daughters	Assertive
7	Please protect us	Assertive
8	Please do something	Directive
9	Destroy the beast of Boko Haram NOW!	Directive
10	Empower all women	Directive
11	SHEKAU: find goods to sell, not our girls. ENOUGH is ENOUGH	Assertive
12	Protect the future of Nigeria	Assertive
13	End Terrorism Now!	Assertive
14	We task Mr. President Bring Back Our Girls	Directive
15	Bring Back Our Sisters home! Show leadership	Directive
16	Bring Back Our Girls Now and Alive	Directive
17	Protect our borders if not seal them	Assertive
18	Nigerian Government Bring Back Our Girls home immediately	Directive
19	Protect the future of Nigeria	Directive
20	Secure the roads to school	Directive
21	We've lost 11MORE federal government do something	Expressive
22	#Justice for our Girls	Expressive
23	Save our sisters	Directive
24	Bring Back Our Girls SHARPLY	Directive
25	The primary responsibility of government is the protection of lives and properties. #BBOG	Expressive
26	Nigerian Government bring back our Chibok girls home immediately.	Directive
27	#Aisha Lawan 111 #Never to be forgotten	Commissives
28	#Ruth Kolo 69 #Never to be forgotten	Commissives
29	#Hauwa Nkeki 45 #Never to be forgotten	Commissives
30	#Yana Yidau 33 #Never to be forgotten	Commissives
31	#Maryam Abba 81 #Never to be forgotten	Commissives
32	#Deborah Nuhu 122 #Never to be forgotten	Commissives
33	#Bilkisu Abdullahi 98 #Never to be forgotten	Commissives

34	Can you believe this? #we are here! #months gone #219 Chibok schoolgirls still missing	Representatives
35	Bring back our daughters	Directives
36	#BBOG Together we stand	Commissives
37	Save! Educate! Empower! #BBOG	Directives
38	Stop him (Shekau) from depriving little girls of education	Assertive
39	je suis Charlie. N'oublions Pas les victimes de boko haram Gloss: My name is Charlie remember the victims of Boko Haram	Directives request
40	Free our sisters!	Directives

First, the data show that the campaign is discursively structured as a pragmatic call for social action, which is expressed in what Austin (1962) refers to as 'performative sentences' and Searle (1969) refers to as 'directive acts', that is, acts that are framed as commands, requests to for instance in this case Boko Haram, the Nigerian government; and perhaps the UN and the western world to do something about the abduction.

INSCRIPTION 1: Go to Sambisa

The situational context of the inscription above framed as a directive act is typical of an angry protester to the military and government to go to the Boko haram base called Sambisa Forest to rescue the girls. The directive act is used that have the illocutionary force of ordering the government and military to rescue the girls and indirectly reminding them of their primary responsibility as custodians of lives and properties.

INSCRIPTION 2: Mr. President do something NOW!

The protester uses the directive speech act to call 'Mr President' who is the chief security officer of the country, the only bearer of the title 'GCFR' to exercise his constitutional powers to rescue the abducted girls.

From a contextual viewpoint, citizens have an unwritten social contract with government, which gives the protester the categorical power relationship to have used a directive act by commanding the number 1 citizen of the country by holding him accountable and calling him for prompt action. The use of capitalization for 'NOW' and an exclamatory mark '!' further adds to the illocutionary force of directives.

INSCRIPTION 3: #BBOG Now and Alive

The extract above is a direct act. The protester uses the illocutionary act of directives to demand the safe release of the abducted Chibok School girls. The gaffe has created and provoked different actions among which is the exercise of powers, rights or influence in the inscriptions. Though the personality of the bearer is not known, the conditions attached of 'Now' and 'Alive' makes it an illocutionary force of directives that is threatening or warning.

INSCRIPTION 4: Just #BRING BACK OUR GIRLS

The inscription above falls under what Searle refer to as representative or assertive. The protester uses the illocutionary force by stating a fact. It is framed as a response to the many excuses by the government on their failed efforts, thereby fitting into the assertive.

INSCRIPTION 5: Rescue our Chibok Girls

The bearer of the inscription simply states the obvious need; 'rescue the girls'. The assertive illocutionary acts have been put to use with the believe all that matters is for the girls to be rescued

whether through payment of ransom, diplomatic means or combatant entry into their hideout leaving nothing to implicate.

INSCRIPTION 6: Please find our daughters

The inscription above is an explicit illocutionary act of directives. Pragmatically it is impossible to say they protesters are all biological mothers of the girls, should they not be, it is a way of simply saying we might not have carried them in our wombs but we carry them in our hearts.

INSCRIPTION 7: Please protect us

INSCRIPTION 8: Please do something

Both inscriptions above use the directives acts of request to appeal to the government and security to protect them giving how helpless the common man is.

INSCRIPTION 9: Destroy the beast of Boko Haram NOW!

The inscription above falls under the category referred to as the directives. It is typical of an angry expression with the performative verb 'Destroy' and a graphical representation of 'NOW!' Thus the inscription is an illocutionary force of directives ordering the government to destroy and now the monstrous sect group boko haram.

INSCRIPTION 10: SHEKAU: find goods to sell, not our girls. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

The inscription above conveys the writer's psychological condition of sorrow and anger. Shekau who has been identified as the leader of the group for sure is not a trader. The protester simply used the expressive illocutionary act by expressing how he feels.

INSCRIPTION 11: Protect the future of Nigeria

The inscription above is framed as a directive act requesting that the government should protect the schoolgirls and school children often referred literary as 'tomorrows leaders' metaphorically used as 'the future'.

INSCRIPTION 12: End Terrorism Now

Although the protester does not meet the felicity condition to order, the inscription is framed as a directive act indirectly advising the government to 'end terrorism now' perhaps before it gets out of control.

INSCRIPTION 13: We task Mr President Bring Back Our Girls

The inscription above requests the President (Grand Commander of the Federal Republic) GCFR, to perform an action. Therefore, the inscription is framed as an illocutionary force of directives.

INSCRIPTION 14: Bring Back Our Sisters home! Show leadership

INSCRIPTION 15: Bring Back Our Girls Now and Alive

The illocutionary act of directives has been put to use as both inscriptions try to make the addressee perform an action. While the former is framed like an advice, the latter is threatening.

INSCRIPTION 16: Protect our borders if not seal them

INSCRIPTION 17: Nigerian Government Bring Back Our Girls home immediately

The directive act has been put to use calling the same addressee to perform certain actions 'protect' 'seal' and 'bring'. While the former is framed like an advice, the latter is a command.

INSCRIPTION 18: Secure the roads to school

The writer of the inscription has performed an act. This act is illocutionary specifically, the expressive under J Searle's classification of illocutionary.

This express how the writer feels about the schoolgirls abduction as the inscription is able to create a concrete mental imagery painting precisely a major security flaw leading to the successful abduction of those schoolgirls.

INSCRIPTION 19: We've lost 11 MORE federal government do something

The inscription above is assertive. Illocutionary force asserting a fact as daily updates on the girls through the media added to the number of fatalities among the girls by 11. By stating the obvious the inscription psychologically put the government to a mandatory rapid response.

INSCRIPTION 20: #Justice for our Girls

The protester uses the illocutionary act of expressive. This is because the inscription above is an expression of a heartfelt value judgement as it implicates the accused boko haram guilty, thus calling for justice for the innocent victims of terror.

INSCRIPTION 21: Save our Sisters

INSCRIPTION 22: Bring Back Our Girls SHARPLY

The illocutionary act has been put to use in both inscriptions. This is because both inscriptions is framed to get someone, in context the Nigerian government to perform an act. However, while the former is framed as a request the latter is a command.

Needless to mention, pragmatically both assert salient issues as typified in the use of 'our' as in how similar or related we are than how different we are.

INSCRIPTION 23: The primary responsibility of government is the protection of lives and properties #BBOG

A representative also known as the assertive speech act is used which carry the illocutionary force of stating factual information that is constitutional in the inscription above.

The inscription commits the writer to the truth of the expressed proposition and it is produced based on the writer's observation of deteriorating security architecture, thereby, deliberately reminding the government of their number 1 constitutional role.

INSCRIPTION 24: Nigerian Government Bring Back Our Chibok Girls home immediately

INSCRIPTION 25: We the women in Northern Uganda demand boko haram to bring back our girls

A directive speech act is used which carries the illocutionary force of asking and demanding for the return of the abducted Chibok Schoolgirls, is used in the following inscriptions.

INSCRIPTION 26: #Hadiza Yakubu 155 #Never to be forgotten

INSCRIPTION 27: #Aisha Lawan 111 #Never to be forgotten

INSCRIPTION 28: #Ruth Kolo 69 #Never to be forgotten

INSCRIPTION 29: #Hauwa Nkeki 45 #Never to be forgotten

INSCRIPTION 30: #Yana Yidau 33 #Never to be forgotten

INSCRIPTION 31: #Maryam Abba 81 #Never to be forgotten

INSCRIPTION 32: #Deborah Nuhu 122 #Never to be forgotten

INSCRIPTION 33: #Bilkisu Abdullahi 98 #Never to be forgotten

The above inscriptions commit the writer to some future course of action in the form of promise, self-offering, or pledge. Here, we find the commissive speech act used to assure the abducted school girls whose identity carried on the inscriptions, their families, etc, that they will be always remembered and will never be forgotten until they are found.

INSCRIPTION 34: Can you believe this? #we are here! #months gone #219 Chibok schoolgirls still missing

The inscription above commits the writer to the truth of the expressed proposition. It is a fact that 'we are here', it is true that 'months have gone', and it is reality that '219 Chibok schoolgirls are missing' therefore, the protester uses the representative speech act to tell, assert, state and insist based on the fact.

INSCRIPTION 35: Bring back our daughters

The directives act has been put to use in the inscription above with the illocutionary force requesting for the release of the abducted girls.

INSCRIPTION 36: #BBOG Together we stand

The inscription above is a commissive act. Here the campaign group's refusal to be dismembered and refuting government's order banning their activism in the FCT in 2018 is the adequate pointer to a commissive illocutionary act.

INSCRIPTION 37: Save! Educate! Empower! #BBOG

The inscription above is a directive act. The 3 catchy performative verbs which formed the inscription calls out the addressee to the task of 'saving', 'educating', and 'empowering'. Arguably to save the girls, educate terrorist and empower the security agencies.

INSCRIPTION 38: Stop him (Shekau) from depriving little girls of education

The protester (a schoolgirl on uniform) opt to represent her heart cry from a girl- child education angle. In connection, the sect's name is boko haram meaning western education forbidden, with now 276 girls out of school, from a region often grabbing with challenges of resentment for school among girls is worrisome.

This inscription although framed like a command, is assertive. Thus, the representative act has been put to use with the illocutionary force of stating a fact.

INSCRIPTION 39: je suis Charlie. N'oublions Pas les victimes de boko haram

The inscription above in French with the gloss; my name is Charlie, remember the victims of Boko haram, is framed as a request. Therefore, the directive act has been put to use.

INSCRIPTION 40: Free our sisters!

This is a solidarity call which is semantically framed as a request. Thus, the directive act with the illocutionary force of requesting for the freedom of their sisters has been put to use in the inscription.

Our 40 sampled inscriptions under this purview give an insight to what the protest placards are meant to achieve.

The data embody several illocutionary acts that appear 'direct' or 'indirect' as the inscriptions dictates. The illocutionary acts of directives are mostly used by the protesters. Precisely 22 framed as commands, requests, threats and less of the commissives and expressives with 3 each promising for the former and latter advising, judging and condemning, respectively.

The assertives illocutionary forces in inscriptions 4,5,19,24,25,30 & 33 states, informs, and attracts the populace to empathically give value judgement.

C. Inscriptions Demonstrating how Power is Linked to Language in Inscriptions of #BBOG Placards

Influence is a process where an individual change his or her intentions and actions on the basis of the likely actions and reactions of others. Power is understood as the capacity to effect

action. The researcher conceptualized power and influence within the theory of speech act effect in order to demonstrate how power is linked to language, establish the illocutionary acts effects on the interlocutors as a demonstration to how power is linked to language in the selected inscriptions.

1. This is terrorism not Islam

The inscription is a directive illocutionary. The power accompanying is the force of challenging the abduction, the identity of the abductors, and the abductees which have insinuated ethno-religious act to disabuse the minds of the readers and rebuke the insurgents.

2. Our prayers are with you Chibok girls

The statement revolves round the pitiable situation. The statement depicts the stance of the bearer concerning the fate of the schoolgirls and his or her faith for 'Deus ex machina' a term used in literature for God's intervention. Illocutionary power in deploying prayers has been put to use through the expressive.

3. Muslim +Christians =we want our girls back

4. Hope! Prayers! Waiting for our Girls

With prayers as a cardinal factor for all faiths, an authoritative position has been put to use through the illocutionary act with the declaratory force of bidding. The situation may be helpless but not hopeless for the girls and protesters.

5. #BBBOG No to Islamophobia, No to war

The activities seems to create resentment for Islam in connection with the sects proclamations but the inscription illocutionary with the force of expressive is a deliberate attempt by the bearer to wave- off fear and indifference in the heart for Islam following the insurgence mode of operation.

6. Girls are not brides

The bearer has put to use his or her only weapon (language) to dare and challenge Boko Haram insurgents. The illocutionary directive used has perlocutionary tendency of diverting the attention of the insurgents to the bearer.

7. She is someone's daughter

The inscription is designed to get the addressee do something as it is challenging and thought provoking. It is an indirect address to the abductors, government in a way to say to the mind; yes, the girl(s) may not be your daughter, but she is someone's daughter and the pertinent question is, 'what if she was your daughter? Would you want her in that situation?'

8. 2years +69+69 days of abduction #Chibok Girls #Hope endures

2years + 69days are enough to humanly preset hearts into giving up on the girls. Here we have a strong expression assurance and conviction of what is hoped for and things not seen expressed with the commissive illocutionary in form of vow or promise.

9. I am a father bring back our girls

The inscription is pragmatically an emotional appeal in a way to say children belong to everybody and as a parent, I understand the plight and the perils of losing one. Therefore the inscription uses an illocutionary act of directives to demand the release of the girls

10. 38million girls out of school: they have dreams too #BBBOG #stillmissing

The 276girls abduction aggravated the lingering Girl- child nightmare in the country prevalent in the North and in the mind of the bearer to win more like minds in seeking redress for the challenge. He or she uses the expressive act to gain support, attention to the course.

11. We want our daughters back alive

The bearer stresses the imperative to rescue the abducted girls and bring them back alive. The undertone suggests no alternative would suffice as the illocutionary act of directives has been to use.

12. We say no to our daughters' abduction

In this context, the inscription uses the pronouns 'we' and 'our' to show togetherness and creates and impression of a social bond or kinship affinity only language can make possible thereby challenging the abduction/abductors.

13. #BBOG together we stand

The careful choice of the inclusive 'together' and 'we' is to create a demarcation between the oppressor and the oppressed and show that they belong to the class of the oppressed and choose to stand with the current victims. The illocutionary acts comforts and strengthens the team on their effort to secure the release of the girls.

14. Stop him SHEKAU from depriving little girls from school

The inscription is framed as a directive. The power that comes with it is an order. The 276 Chibok girls were once Shekau's survivors, Dapchi girls were once Boko haram survivors, today's surviving little girls may be tomorrow's victims if he is not stopped. Thus it is a signal that must be jettisoned

15. Enough is enough! The abduction must stop

16. We want action now

This is a directive demanding for an immediate action otherwise as yesterday's victims were once survivors, today's victims were yesterday's survivors; today's survivors are tomorrow's potential victims.

17. Chibok girls our hearts are with you

The greatest of human need they say is to be loved; the potency of the inscription goes beyond gift to a sane reader in face the incident. The commissive act vowing to stand with the victims of terror demonstrate the power of language in love.

18. Ruth Lawan 157 #never to be forgotten

The inscription creates a mental imagery of the situation, and paints a vivid picture of the real abducted girl. An ideology to persuade and get the audience to be receptive to their ultimate cry as the inscription employs the assertive or representative by describing.

19. Our girls must go to school

The right to go to school is a very powerful weapon for development but the right to express it distinguished the primacy of the latter over the former. Many would have been weakened to go to school with this incident, but this inscription framed in the directive s with the illocutionary force, refuting, challenging, and defying strengthens and encourages.

20. War against insurgency

Conflict, denouement and resolution do not start, end or require physical action in much sense than utterance as action. This shows the demonstration of the power of language. The inscription is framed as a declaratives with the illocutionary force of sentencing, excommunicating.

21. Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters. #BBOG

The inscription stresses the importance of people's voice to issues of public concern and has effect upon the feelings of both pro and anti insurgency.

The protest inscriptions in this category are propositional. They affirm and state a belief. They are simply assertive, expressive and directives. All these without doubt are what the writer belief to be the case. The common effect is; the increasing number of the protesters, from the first day the campaign was initiated, several broadcast by the government in response to the BBOG demands etc. this effect is technically called perlocutionary in discourse.

These are basically directives because they all seek the interlocutors to do something. The inscriptions, challenge, command, insist, order or request the interlocutors to perform one action or the other.

Findings of the Study

Locutions: In terms of its intrinsic meaning or reference, as distinct from its function or purpose in context, the inscriptions pass different messages. The data are part and parcel of the people embellished with array of meanings which can be best understood devoid of ambiguity through the application of the theories of speech act.

Illocutionary Forces Enshrined in the Inscriptions: the analysis reveals that the Bring Back Our Girls group use language to perform acts rather than to make assertions. Thus, the BBOG group uses directives more often than expressives and assertives. In the forty-sampled locutions, the study recorded three expressives, eight assertives, and fifteen directives. This indicates that in socio-political campaign or protest inscriptions, language is used a lot to perform actions, give commands, make requests, give directives, more than other functions as in the case of; ‘Go to Sambisa’, ‘Mr. President do something NOW!’ ‘End Terrorism Now’.

How power is linked: Lastly, from the inscriptions studied, it is found that influence is a process where an individual changes his or her intentions and actions on the basis of the likely reactions of others. Power is understood as the capacity to effect action. Having conceptualised power and influence within the theory of speech act-illocutionary effect, the study finds that several inscriptions produced consequential effects upon the feelings, thought, actions and reactions of the interlocutors. Therefore, Power is also exercised exemplified in; ‘Destroy the beast of Boko Haram NOW’, ‘War against insurgency’.

Outside of the objectives, the study found out that the campaign is politicized and speaks volume to the kind of politics and governance at play in Nigeria. The data also shows deliberate irrational attempt by the insurgents and their accomplices to add to the bedeviling girl-child education issues in the north with glimpse of chauvinism and religious sentiment.

Conclusion

It is important to re-emphasise the primacy of language as the exclusively and uniquely human means of communication. It is all about investing the homo loqueans with the faculty of speech to express and describe not only the expressible and describable but also the inexpressibility and indescribability of the indescribable. Nigerians latched onto this uniquely human predisposition to voice out their sincere disposition to the abduction of 276 female students from their hostels at Government Secondary School Chibok, Borno State by Boko Haram on April 14th, 2014. This peculiar linguistic behaviour was examined from the theory of language, which emphasizes the centrality of language functions i.e. to tell people about something, to tell people to do something, and ask people about something. To this effect, the whole gamut of choices, which language makes available to its users is examined. These choices relate ‘speakers’ and writers’ intentions to the concrete forms of a language. Analysing the functions of language as the basis of

human communication act or process, we explicated pragmatics, speech acts, and the conversational maxims and cooperative principles.

The art and craft of inscribing on placards as a social medium of campaigns has attracted, and continues to fascinate people from a wide variety of backgrounds. It has built a tripartite relationship with language and culture, and thus became a corner-stone for study in linguistics. The process has recorded impressive successes with the Arab Spring, Asian, European and Africa specifically Nigeria, where placards were used to mobilize and cause socio-political change by protesters who remain committed to physical offline campaigns often as in the case of the Bring Back Our Girls campaigns.

This study has argued that language is integral to human existence and sociopolitical change and without which many of man's activities will be inconceivable. We also posit that unless placards medium campaigns like #BringBackOurGirls are followed up with strategic action plans, and linguistic expertise akin to English for specific purposes the whole process will simply turn out to be mere slacktivism or clicktivism in the case of online campaigns. With the involvements of Western powers in the rescue efforts and safe return of 112 girls, the campaign may not be futile after all. This research shows that language use in the #Bring Back Our Girls campaign is mostly that of tragedy and exhibits affect, judgment, reflecting moods, feelings and emotional language in the representation of individuals, groups and government.

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