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AN APPRAISAL OF THE LINGUISTICS OF ADORING RELATIONSHIPS

ABSTRACT

This paper is a linguistic survey of certain dating moves and marriage relationships. The purpose of the paper is to establish a medium to mediate breakups in the modern society through adequate use of communication. Hence, 21 dating terms and slang terms were purposively accessed from the net while 2 excerpts of conversations were also selected from different partners in relationships. It employs Politeness Principle theory to analyse real life situation to show how the use of language can make or mar relationships. It peeps into the concept of 'love language' which everyone possesses and how this can make all the difference in saving a relationship. It is discovered that most dating terms actually connote different things from their original meanings. It is also established that people respond emotionally to expressions whether negative or positive and this goes on to determine how successful a relationship is. The paper then concludes that relationships do not become burdensome unless communication in relationships becomes impaired. It is therefore suggested that couples pay closer attention to their love languages if they hope to fix their love life.

Keywords: Dating, Politeness, Relationship, Partners, Conflict.

Introduction

Communication is key in healthy relationships. Healthy couples make time to check in with one another on a regular basis. Researchers have found that communication style is more important than commitment levels, personality traits or stressful life events in predicting whether happily married couples will go on to divorce or people dating will go on to get married. In particular, negative communication patterns such as anger and contempt are linked to an increase likelihood of splitting up (Kreider R.M 2005). However, disagreements are part of any partnership, but some fighting styles are particularly damaging. Couples that use destructive behaviour during

arguments such as yelling, resorting to personal criticisms or withdrawing from the discussion are more likely to break up than couples, dating mates that fight constructively. (Lavner, J.A & Bradbury, TN, 2012).

According to Wikipedia, dating is a stage of romantic relationship in humans whereby two people meet socially with the aim of each other assessing the other's suitability as a prospective partner in an intimate relationship or marriage. Dating may also two or more people who have already decided that they share romantic or sexual feelings towards each other. These people will have dates on a regular basis, and they may or may not be having sexual relations. It is a form of courtship, consisting of social activities done by the people, either alone or with others. While the term has several meanings, the most frequent usage refers to "two people exploring whether they are romantically or sexually compatible by participating in dates with each other". However, with the use of modern technology, people can date via telephone or computer, social media platforms and also meet in person.

HISTORY OF DATING

Dating as an institution is a relatively recent phenomenon which has mainly emerged in the last few centuries. From the stand point of anthropology and sociology, "dating is linked with other institutions such as marriage and family which have also been changing rapidly and which have been subject to many forces, including advance in technology and medicine". As human society has evolved from hunter gatherers into civilized societies, there have been substantial changes in relations between people, that perhaps one of a few remaining biological constant being that both adult woman and men must have sexual intercourse for human procreation to happen. (Wikipedia)

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

PRAGMATICS AND POLITENESS

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistic which includes various concepts such as, speech act

theory, talk in interaction, and conversational implicature and studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning. Pragmatic language skills are important for developing relationships with others, and for communicating with a range of interlocutors in a variety of contexts. Pragmatic studies how the transmission of meaning depends not only on the linguistic knowledge (e.g. grammar, lexicon etc.) of the speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance, knowledge about the status of those involved, the inferred intention of the speaker, and so on. In this respect, pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity, since meaning relies on the manner, place, time etc. of an utterance (Wikipedia). Sadeghghli and Niroomand (2016), quoting Yule (1996) describes pragmatics as "the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms". While syntax is the study of how linguistic forms are arranged in sequence, and semantics examines the relationship between linguistic forms and entities of the world, pragmatics is concerned with the notion of implicature, i.e. implied meaning as opposed to the mere lexical meaning expressed (Grice, 1967, cited in Schmit, 2002). There are times when we say (or write) exactly what we mean, but much more frequently we are not totally explicit.

Pragmatic Proficiency

Bardovi-Harlig (1991) asserts that language learners interacting with speakers of a target language must be exposed to language samples which are pragmatically appropriate- follow social, cultural, and discourse conventions. According to Bardovi-Harlig, this is particularly true of advanced learners whose high linguistic proficiency leads other speakers to expect high pragmatic competence. This does not mean, however, that classroom activities designed to increase pragmatic awareness are appropriate only for advanced learners. Pragmatic competence is indispensable in face-to-face interactions in a foreign language. The ability to

understand another speaker's intended meaning is called pragmatic competence that is a part of communicative competence which involves being able to use language in interpersonal relationships, taking into account such complexities as social distance and indirectness (Wikipedia). Pragmatic awareness is regarded as one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, and comes only through experience. Children acquire pragmatic competence in their native language through interaction with their caretakers or older children. They receive continuous feedback from parents and peers who model appropriate routines and this feedback contributes to the acquisition of the pragmatic skills required to function in their community (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999). In contrast, most adult foreign language learners lack that type of input. Consequently, the classroom becomes the most important, and perhaps the only, source of relevant input for the development of their pragmatic competence. (Sadeghghli & Niroomand , 2016. p 1-2).

Thus, Pragmatic competence has repeatedly proven that even proficient speakers of English often lack necessary pragmatic competence; that is, they are not aware of the social, cultural, and discourse conventions that have to be followed in various situations (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999). As well as knowing the structure of a language, we have to know how to use it. According to Al-Tayib Umar (2006), acquisition of socio-cultural rules, which is widely known as pragmatic competence, is crucial to second language learners. Tanck (2002) claims that speakers who due to their linguistic competence seem fluent in a foreign language may still lack pragmatic competence, and as a result they may not be able to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate. Scollon and Scollon (1995) also assure that violation of pragmatic rules is bound to lead to communication breakdowns. Kasper (1999) states that, competences, whether linguistic or pragmatic, should be developed and learned systematically. (Sadeghghli & Niroomand , 2016

The notion of Politeness

Language use often demands some form of politeness in order not to sound “too pointed”, “uncultured” or “rude” (Innocent .C. & Christine .O. 2014: 169). According to them, politeness is not just about showing some compliments, it is rather the exercise of language choice to create a context intended to match addressee’s notion of how he or she should be addressed”. Language as a form of cultural expression consists of etiquette and rules of behaviour that interactants must imbibe and practise. Politeness is therefore one type of the manifestation of etiquette or proper behaviour in communication. However, in dating and marriage relationship, the principle of politeness cannot be neglected if partners will thrive and if their relationship will last. However, Politeness has become one of the most active areas of research in language use by increasing interest in Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principles (Chen, 2007,). Acquisition and learning of politeness strategies is a part of learning L2 pragmatics, which has attracted a lot of attention in second and foreign language acquisition. Studies from Brown and Levinson (1987) and Scollon and Scollon (1995) have aroused increased attention in the study of politeness. A working definition of politeness in language study could be “(a) how languages express the social distance between speakers and their different role relationships; (b) how face-work, that is, the attempt to establish, maintain and save face during conversation is carried out in a speech community” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 405). Politeness in English is personified by “someone who is polite, has good manners and behaves in a way that is socially correct and not rude to other people” (COBUILD English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2001).

Thus, politeness is also a kind of disposition we have towards other people that makes us not to want to hurt their feelings or do things that we know will make them feel unwanted. When we speak to others, we try to be polite in the kinds of things we say to them by carefully choosing our words. We are tactful and nice in what we say, even when we do not sometimes mean it. We choose our words to fit the different occasions we experience every day. Even when we say things that are not too polite, especially when they are not said deliberately, we try to apologize. We are quick to recognize it when people are not polite in their speech because we have a sense of what it means to be polite when we address other people. For instance, respect is a form of politeness. In the Yoruba culture, greeting is considered as part of politeness, especially when we are meeting people for the first time in a day or after a very long time, or even people we have never met before. We are more polite with people

we are meeting people for the first time than we are with people we are familiar with. We are also more polite in formal situations than in informal ones. We are more polite when we speak with people older than us than we are with people who are our contemporaries or people who are junior to us. It is important to note that what constitutes politeness differs from one culture to another. For instance, it is impolite for a child to speak where adults are speaking in the Yoruba culture unless such a child was permitted to do so. However, in the English culture it may not be necessarily seen as an impolite act

Face and Politeness. The most relevant concept in politeness is face. Face refers to the respect an individual has for himself or herself. According to Brown and Levinson (1986), speakers develop politeness strategies to maintain their self-esteem. One's face is one's public self-image. Every person has an emotional sense of self that they want every other person to recognize. So when we are polite, we have shown awareness of another person's face. Everybody has what Brown and Levinson call a negative face and a positive face. A negative face is the tendency in a person to be independent and have freedom from imposition. When a speaker says I am sorry to bother you for instance to someone he is trying to make an enquiry from, then he/she has used a face-saving act that emphasizes the addressee's negative face. A face-saving act that emphasizes the addressee's positive face draws attention to a common goal, e.g., such a person is likely going to make a statement such as: You and I have a common problem or We can do it together.

DATING SLANGS AND TERMS

According to Sophie (2017), whether you one is still single in a relationship or not, keeping with date slangs can be hard. Viral words change constantly and expressing oneself and one desire in relationship can be difficult enough as it is. Here is a list of latest viral dating slangs to help one avoid miscommunication.

MONKEYING

The term 'monkeying' is meant to invoke an image of a monkey in the jungle, swinging from tree to tree without pause in between branches. In dating, 'monkeying' means bouncing from relationship to relationship, without giving yourself proper "you" time in between. Example in sentence

- a) I spent my early 20's monkeying from boyfriend to boyfriend.
- b) I am saying this out of love, but I feel like you are monkeying from girl to girl to avoid the fact that you are still not over Lisa.

BENCHING

Benching is the latest evolution of ghosting. When someone is not into you enough to commit, but he also don't want to totally give up potential opportunities for future sex or dates, he will bench you.

Example in statement:

Tope didn't respond to me for two weeks, and then, out of nowhere, he likes five of my Instagram photos and asks if am "around" this weekend. He is totally benching me.

SUS

This is a short-hand for "suspect". It is used in situation where daters suspect each other of cheating.

Example: Anytime I come home late, my boyfriend is always 'sus' of me cheating on him.

TALKING

A state where two people are dating, hanging out, sleeping together but none of them has made the move to actually define relationship. For example:

- a) Bimpe: Tola, you and that guy spend every weekend together but you won't call him your boyfriend.
- b) Tola: No, he is not my boyfriend we are talking for now.

DRT

'DRT' means "define the relationship". After you have been talking with some for months, and it's obvious that you are both feeling it, it's probably time to cut the crap and DRT. For example:

I've met James parents, and he won't still DRT. This is getting ridiculous.

CAT FISHING

This is used to describe when someone lures one into a relationship via fake online profile. It could be a guy posing as a girl, a girl posing as a girl or your friends playing a cruel trick on one. This term portrays the nature of a 'catfish' that swims in the water moving from one location to other and when caught could sleep from one hand because of its sleepy body. For example:

Ope: Tolu, I have a new date on the net, she sent me her picture last week but when I later checked her profile I got to know she is a man.
Tolu: You mean she is a catfish.
Ope: Exactly.
Tolu: So women still catfish?
Ope: That's exactly what's happening to me.

NEXFLIS AND CHILL

It was coined in the era of streaming movies at home at face value, it is an invitation to have a quiet night in while watching a movie. Really, it's another way to ask:

Do you want to come and have sex?
Jack: Hi
Jane: Hello
Jack: It been a long time, what's going on there?
Jane: Am cool, you left me for your new girl.

Jack: Not as you thought. Anyway it cool right here.
Jane: Use your blanket.
Jack: Could you come over so we could 'Nexflis and Chill'?
Jane: Am I your girl, you can place a call to her to come Nexflis and Chill.

GHOSTING

Ghosting occurs when you have gone on a couple of dates with someone and he suddenly goes silent without explanation.

Example:

Richard: I met a girl last month; we have been going along well but anytime I call her she will not answer my call.

Raphael: You mean she is ghosting?

Richard: exactly.

ZOMBIE

Zombies are lifeless people that wonder back into your life via a random text or message to hook up. When someone ghosts you and he/she decides to come back, he/she is a zombie.

Example:

Nike, that your guy comes one month and the next we will not see him, his behaviour is that of a zombie.

BACKSLIDE

This is used when one gets back with his/her ex; it is a negative term for a bad move since the relationship ended on a bad breakup.

Example:

Raymond: Guy, I saw you with Rose last night at the club, I just decided not to disturb.

Victor: That's true. She is backsliding.

Raymond: You mean you took her back after all she did to you?

Victor: Yes, I still love her.

BAE

It means 'Before All Else'. It is a fun way to say "my insignificant other". Example: Jide, let's define this relationship BAE.

TEXTUAL RELATIONSHIP

When one starts messaging someone and gets attached to him/her via texting or sending messages to each other and both never met, one is in a textual relationship and not real one. It is also called text relationship.

IN THE HOOK

Keeping someone in the hook is dropping enough hints to keep someone interested in one even though you are not interested in him.

Example:

Omolola: Moni, that you boy keeps sending gifts, love messages and cards. Tell me what are you using?

Moni: Nothing! He is just 'in the Hook'

THIRSTY

If someone is thirsty in dating world, he is parched for a relationship or sex. As in he is thirsty for women or she is thirsty for men.

Example:

Omolola: Moni, that your boy keeps sending gifts, love messages and cards. Tell me what are you using?

Moni: Nothing! He is just 'in the Hook'

Omolola: And you said he has not touched you?

Moni: Never! He is a cool guy. Although he's 'thirsty' of me.

Omolola: Why you no com de give am na.

Moni: No bi now. Let me still enjoy his love before he dumps me for another girl.

Omolola: Oto lo so (you are right).

CUFFISING SEASON

This is a period where some people that are single seek out a relationship due to the colder weather and the lack of sunshine forcing them indoors.

CATCH AND RELEASE

This is a term for someone who dates for the thrill of the chase rather than seeking a relationship. This is someone who stops showing interest after almost reach relationship status.

Example: Williams, it been long I saw you with that girl. Hope she is not one of your 'Cash and Release?'

SLAY

The dictionary meaning of 'slay' is to kill something in a violent manner but in dating, 'slay' is the act of getting a lot of dates and a lot of actions. As in, 'she slays a lot of guys or he slays all day'.

NSA

It means 'No Sting Attached'. It is a relationship between two people that is strictly about the physical. Sometimes, people who are afraid of commitment or don't want to be in a relationship go the NSA route.

FWB

This means 'Friends with Benefits'. It is same as NSA relationship except you know each other, hang out and could occasionally go out to brunch.

LDR

It means 'Long Distance Relationship'.

Example:

James: Mary, I have never seen with a guy or are you a Rev. Mother?

Mary: Brother! I have someone but don't live in town.

James: Are you both doing LDR thing?

Mary: For now, yes.

OPEN RELATIONSHIP

It is a situation where a couple or people in a relationship agree that both can sleep with other people.

Example:

Wale: Guy I saw your girl with a gay at the club I went last night. This morning I also saw a new girl coming out of your bunk. Are you practising 'open relationship'?

Ope: No, but sometime when I need a girl and she is afar off I quickly one pick around.

Wale: That is not a good way of living. I'm your friend and need to tell you the truth.

Ope: I will change. Just keep praying for me.

However, while these terms about dating world and relationships are new, they no doubt fade with time and generation as others emerge.

WORDS TO SAY TO KEEP DATE OR MAKE LOVER HAPPY

(Ladies Especially)

Rafaclina .S. (2015) says that "telling your girl what she wants and needs to hear should be at the top of a man's priority list, especially when it comes to making her feel worth it". This is a feeling of pleasure that innately comes from wanting to shower her with love without her having to ask. Women can use same expression or word to keep their husbands or love happy too. Every one of us wants to be told how beautiful and amazing we are from the people we love. However, there is an array of words that women want to hear at all hours and times of the day and because these words are free; this should not be too much to ask for. They are:

"I love you": In this generation, hearing these words is everything.

"You are the one"

"Just kiss me": Women love it when a man takes the initiative and they also love to be manhandled.

"I miss you": Nothing says I miss you like cuddling in bed together, naked, just breathing each other's energies and enjoying each other's company to true love.

"Good morning beautiful".

"Wanna go shopping?"

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean it"

"Fine, you win"

"I am cooking": Ladies love it when their guys cook for them.

"Buy the shoes": Women love shoes.

"You look gorgeous."

The words are free; therefore, lovers should use them at all times to spice up their relationships.

However, for marriage and relationship to be cordial, love giving and love expressive, one has to learn his partner's love language and let his partner know about his. Thus, find your partner's love language and communicate to him/her using his/her love language.

Politeness Strategies and Relationships

Brown and Levinson (1987) identified four major types of politeness strategies, namely, bald on record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-the-record or indirect strategy.

Bald on record strategies are strategies that do not attempt to minimize the threat to the hearer's face. It is commonly used by speakers who know their addressees very closely. With the bald on record strategies there is a direct possibility that the audience will be shocked or embarrassed by the strategy. For instance, a bald on record strategy might be to tell your brother to wash the car, by saying "it's your turn today."

Positive politeness will attempt to minimize the threat to the hearers face. This strategy is most commonly used in situations where the interlocutors know each other fairly well. In many instances attempts are made to avoid conflicts. For example, a positive politeness strategy might be the request such as, "I know you are very busy now, but could you please spare me five minutes."

Negative politeness presumes that the speaker will be imposing on the listener. It is the desire to remain autonomous. For Instance, a speaker may request this way "I know you just paid your children's school fees, but please can you lend me N1,000 till the weekend?" The addressee is likely to accede to the request if he/she has the means because the request shows a respect for their ability to maintain autonomy.

The final politeness strategy outlined by Brown and Levinson is the indirect strategy. Here the language is indirect, but the intention is usually clear from the context. For instance, a request can be made this way "Is there any eatery und the corner?" by someone who is hungry and wants to eat. This question insinuates that the speaker is hungry and would want to go and eat, but it is not put so directly.

Excerpt 1

Below is a conversation between a couple.

Wife: Honey your food is set on the table.

Husband: Thanks honey.

As husband starts to eat the food, he noticed that the food was very salty. His response:

Husband: Honey! I learnt Dangote has reduced the price of salt in the market.

Wife: Really! What is your source?

Husband: The food is my source

Both of them laughed over the matter.

Thus, the man just used the principle of indirect *politeness* to tell the wife that the food is salty instead of saying it directly which could lead to argument and quarrel.

According to Grundy (2001) “politeness is simply way a speaker implicates a context that matches the one assumed by the hearers”. Polite utterances often encode the relationship between the speaker and the hearer.

Excerpt 2

A case study of a couple whereby the wife is not a good cook but the husband manages her meal. On a certain day, the man’s colleague needed to visit him at his house. This man called his wife, Honey! Please prepare food my colleagues are visiting today. The wife did but the food was tasteless. When the husband’s colleagues tasted the food, they couldn’t eat it. The man quickly came in “sorry friends I don’t eat salt so when my wife cooks she does not put salt. Unfortunate, she forgot that I am not the only person to eats this food, please bear with us.

In the above, the man employs Goffman’s (1955) concept of face to save the face of his wife in the public even though he knows the wife can’t really cook good meals. This Goffman defined as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.” (p. 213). He uses the term, face-work to describe the actions people take to save their own face (defensive orientation) and that of others (protective orientation. Thus, marriage and relationship will thrive if partners save each other’s

Conclusion

Expressions create impressions and this in turn gives rise to reactions that, in the case of broken relationships, lead to breakups.

The contention of this paper is that terms and expressions employed by partners in dating and marriage relationships should be geared towards building it. Romantic relationships are important for our happiness and well-being and this helps create a healthy society. Yet with more than 40 percent of new marriages ending in divorce, it is clear that relationships are not always easy.

Hence, we have highlighted that not only must interlocutors in relationship have the pragmatic competence required in engaging meaningful conversations, but they must also be vast in the application of the principles of politeness in other to manage the complex situations daily presented in relationships. This will help save relationships, marriages and the society at large.

This research contributes to the field of language studies by expanding the scope of discourse in dating and marriage relationships. However, it is recommended that, for future re-research, attentions be given to areas like sociolinguistics and discourse analysis of broken relationships, this will help build a stronger case for communication as a potent tool in sustaining relationships.

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