



PRAGMATIC ACTS IN THE LANGUAGE OF ALMS BEGGING IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The meaning of language is tied to the context where it is used. This study examines the different pragmatic acts performed by beggars across Southwest Nigeria while soliciting alms. The aim is to establish the role of language as a tool in perpetuating this age-long profession of soliciting alms from members of society. The study employs Jacob Mey's Pragmatic Act theory as its theoretical springboard while data for the study was obtained by closely observing the activities of the subjects across selected locations within the study area. This is done with the consent of the subjects. The study discovered beggars often employ nine pragmatic goals in achieving their objective, that is, soliciting, hailing, praying, directing, informing, assuring, requesting, pleading and inquiring, with the pragmatic goal of pleading to account for the highest percentage of the occurrence. The study also identified a linguistic adaptation where the research subjects conform to the situational context in their linguistic choices, including a manifestation of shared situational knowledge between the research subjects and their addressees.*

KEYWORDS: Pragmatic Act, Context, Pragmatics, Begging, Pragmatic Goals



INTRODUCTION

Language is a unique human attribute which empowers the human race with expressivity and gives the ability to share information and exchange views, ideas and opinions. Odeunmi (2016:2) submits that language as a means of social interaction enables humans to give life to their thoughts. He is of the view that language provides a fundamental foundation for the existence and preservation of the entire human race. It is the core of human existence. In other words, language ensures the sustenance of cross-cultural and intra-social ties in society. Richardson (2007) claims that language, at different operational levels, is deployed to achieve specific objectives. Alms begging is an ancient and age-long social activity whose origin cannot be particularly associated with a specific date in human history. In Nigeria, for example, there is no exact date or place regarding the origin of begging. However, scholarly evidence points to the idea that art originated around religious activities as well as certain traditional practices. This is evident in studies like Ikotun et al. (2017), Adedibu & Jelili (2011), and Ogunkan & Fawole (2009), who all link begging among the Yorubas to some of the African traditional religions associated with the ethnic group. It can also be deduced from biblical records that begging as a profession dates back into the history of Christianity as recorded in the book of Acts (chapter 3, verses 1 to 6). This record of alms soliciting at the biblical beautiful gate brings us to the conclusion that soliciting alms is indeed an ancient profession. A beggar can be described as any individual who goes about or stays in a certain location soliciting mostly financial aid from members of society. Whatever form it takes, either itinerant or stationary, alms begging is a social phenomenon prevalent in most developing countries. Jelili (2013) described begging as a profession embraced by the most economically vulnerable in society. A reasonable number of countries in this category are found on the African and Asian continents. It can be rightly argued that the phenomenon of alms begging in a way contributes to the classification of most African and Asian countries as ‘under-developed’ and, more recently, as ‘developing’ countries. Various scholars have examined the menace of begging across numerous geographical spreads. Namwata et al. (2011) explore the implications of demography on the incidence of street begging in urban areas of central Tanzania. The study concluded that begging is more pronounced among natives or indigenous, physically disabled, male, single, widowed, and illiterate Tanzanians. Among other things, the study recommended that deliberate efforts should be made to improve the socio-economic security of the families of street beggars through empowerment programmes. It also suggested massive public enlightenment on the negative consequences of begging on various dimensions of development in Tanzania. Wendosen (2017) examine the push factors, challenges and coping strategies of elderly beggars in Addis-Ababa. Employing the direct contact and observation method, the study discovered that elderly beggars in Addis-Ababa engage in the art of begging due to the death of support providers, sudden disengagement from work, economic and family challenges, and physical and health deformities. The study concluded that elderly beggars adapt to their situations by making their abode in the open, buying the cheapest meals, sharing their feelings with fellow beggars and living a generally un-hygienic lifestyle. For Ikotun et al. (2017), begging is described as being influenced by religion, culture, laziness, disability and illiteracy. He situated begging in the beggars’ religious beliefs, cultural beliefs, laziness on the part of the beggars, physical disabilities or inability to have access to formal education.

Beggars are usually found in public places such as motor parks, urban relaxation parks, busy markets and religious centres. Alms begging can be described as a social act where a supposedly helpless person seeks assistance, asks for money or expresses need through a



linguistic code of communication, a sign, a donation cup, or an outstretched hand. Demewozu (2003) is of the opinion that begging is generally viewed as an activity emanating from poverty, disability and destitution, as mostly seen in the tattered and haggard-looking appearance of most beggars. However, it can be argued that beggars may not be completely categorised based on dress and physical appearance alone. This is most relevant when we consider an emerging nomenclature for a category of beggars: 'cooperate beggars'. Corporate beggars are often neatly dressed and are found in the corporate environment. Begging is practised to obtain cash and other material things from others. Jelili (2013) is of the opinion that begging is fast becoming a means of livelihood for most beggars. He argued that beggars in most African urban centres had earned their living from the income obtained from the profession using their age, health and economic conditions to gain sympathy from society members. For Namwata et al. (2012), alms begging is an activity where the less privileged employs different strategies to solicit cash, clothing, food or any form of assistance from people. It is often assumed that the solicited alms if given, will help them live a more meaningful life. Going further, Namwata et al. identify the various methods involved in alms begging as: sitting, crawling, body exposure and written language. Namwata et al. claim that beggars sit in certain strategic locations, expose certain areas of the body to reveal their state of health, and crawl on the floor, especially for beggars who have mobility challenges or go about with documents which they present to prospective alms givers. It becomes important to say at this point that one of the strategies identified above has to do with language. It is claimed that some beggars present written documents, mostly medical reports as a way of supporting their reason(s) for soliciting alms. The current study, however, seeks to explore the use of the verbal or spoken form of language as a tool in alms begging. Begging is an emotive and emotional issue where strong concern and sympathy are expressed for beggars who tend to express a sense of frustration and helplessness. This frustration and helplessness are mostly expressed in the language deployed by beggars with the aim of attracting the sympathy of the members of the public. It, therefore, becomes expedient to examine the things that the beggars do with language in the southwestern part of Nigeria.

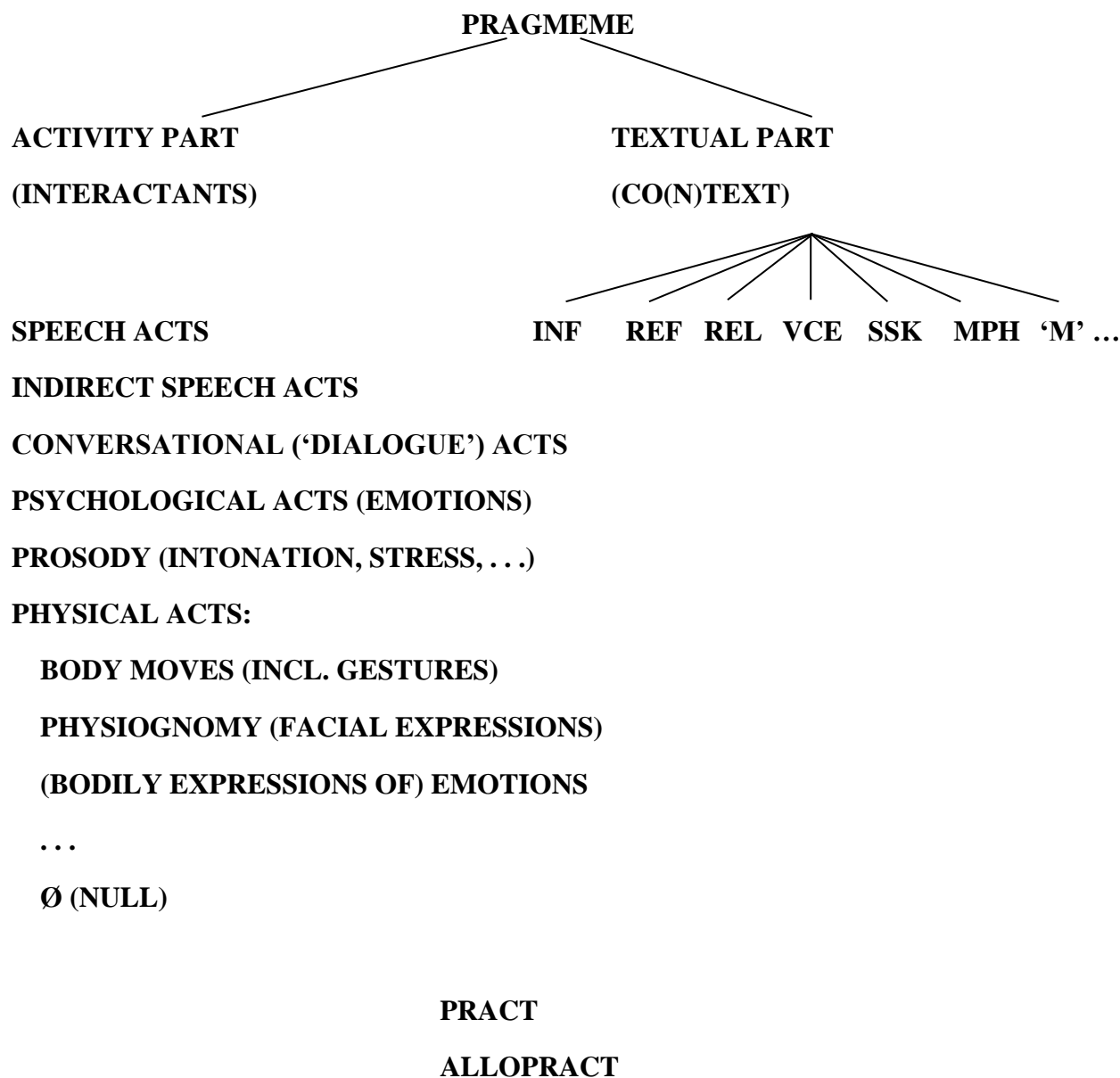
From the foregoing, it becomes evident that academic efforts on begging have focused mainly on the social aspect of begging viz a viz its implication for the co-existence of human beings in society. The current study, therefore, identifies a dearth in the academic effort on the use of language as an important tool or instrument in begging as a vocation and seeks to fill this vacuum.

The subject of alms begging as a social phenomenon has continued to attract current academic attention from language scholars. This may partly be attributable to the fact that art is one that employs language with spontaneity. While one can argue that begging is not a professional occupation, evidence abounds as to the central role of language in the art of begging. Even beggars who are deaf and dumb still employ the written language to advance the course of their trade. It can be argued that While some view alms begging as an activity that is anti-social, others see it as another profession or a form of trade, while another group attempts to create a link between alms begging and religion (Islam, Christianity and Traditional), yet for another group it is a means of survival for a certain category of people who chose it as a last resort.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical model employed for this study is the pragmatic act theory proposed by Jacob Mey. This theory is a reactionary model to John Austin's speech act theory. In the opinion of Mey (2001), Austin's viewpoint in *How to Do Things with Words* focuses only on reference. The speech act theory is founded on the belief that we can explain our use of 'words in action' by referring to individual speech acts with well-defined physical properties assigned in accordance with certain philosophical and linguistic criteria. Mey (2001) contends that context, both situational and textual, which is the centre point of any pragmatic model, is more than making reference to physical situations. Mey explains that in order for speech acts to be effective, they have to be situated. He argued that context is 'action' it centres around what things are for. Context is the main feature of communication that gives human communication its true meaning. Mey further claims that it is what counts as true pragmatic acts (Mey 2001:41). The theory of pragmatic acts does not explain human language use by starting from the words uttered by a single, idealised speaker. Instead, it focuses on the interactional situation in which both speakers and hearers realise their aims. In essence, the context determines what one can say and what one cannot say". Consequent upon the limitation of SAT, Mey proposes the pragmatic act theory as not just a theory of reference but a model of action which situates speech acts in the appropriate sociocultural contexts. With regard to pragmatic acts, one is not primarily concerned with matters of grammatical correctness or strict observance of contextual rules. What counts as a pragmatic act depends on the language users' understanding of the situation and on the outcome of the act in a given context. Osisanwo (2017:301) opines that the emphasis in pragmatic act theory is not based on the conditions and rules for an individual speech act but on characterising a general situational prototype (pragmeme) that can be executed in the situation. Thus, a particular pragmeme can be substantiated and realized through individual pragmatic acts. In other words, a pragmatic act is an instance of adapting oneself to a context and the context to oneself. The model is schematically presented hereunder.



PRAGMEME, PRACT, ALLOPRACT

Figure 1: A model of Pragmatic Acts Theory (PAT) (culled from Mey 2001:752)

The figure above shows that the pragmatic act theory is divided into two parts: the activity and the textual parts. Mey (2001) describes the activity part as encompassing the acts that can be performed by the participants in a communicative event. The activity part is made up of list of optional components with the possibility of having not more than one out of the listed items. The second part comprises other components that constitute the context or co-text. While the activity part focuses on speech acts, indirect speech acts, conversational ("dialogue") acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts and physical acts, the textual part involves pragmatic



elements that are intricately linked to the contextual situation of the communicative event. They include; inference, reference, relevance, voice, shared situation knowledge, metaphor and meta-pragmatic joker. For the purpose of this study, from the textual angle, the analysis of the selected data samples will be driven by components such as speech acts and psychological acts. At the same time, inference relevance and shared situational knowledge will guide the analysis from the contextual perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tinuoye (2003:10) explains that meaning and communication are important components of language. He described language as a tool that strengthens the bond of cooperation among the members of society. It is a unique human attribute which enables members of the human race to express their thoughts and engage in productive interactions designed to advance the cause of human society in one way or the other. Odebunmi (2016:3) posits that the fundamental orientation for the sustenance of human society is deeply rooted in language. Smith (1969:10) explained that “language is a shared and arbitrary system of vocal symbols by means of which human beings in a speech community interact and exchange their common cultural experiences and expectations. Summarily, Odebunmi (2016) further explains that this view of language points to the important things;

- i. the existence of language is built on the existence of a group of users who have mutual access to the codes in order to facilitate both inter and intra-group communication;
- ii. language is spoken in a society where its resources are activated to express shared cultural experiences and expectations of language users.

Pragmatics is one of the five levels of language use where meaning is not completely tied to the lexical choices used in conveying the particular expression. Pragmatics, as a branch of sociolinguistics, is premised on the belief that human languages usually contain less and mean more. The study of modern pragmatics has its origin in the treatise presented by John Austin (1962). The view was contained in a lecture note titled *How to Do Things with Words*. The crux of the argument is that language transcends merely the uttering of audible sounds. Austin explained that language use constitutes action. In other words, uttering a performative translates into the actual performance of the action. Pragmatics is the study of language according to use and user. Pragmatics would be an approach to language that is oriented to people doing things with words (it is the people that matter, the people and what they do, how they interact, and eventually create linguistic meaning).

Most researchers who have worked on the art of begging have not given a specific categorization of the concept. Studies on begging include Boriwaye (2016), Ikotun et al. (2016), Adebayo (1995), Quadri (2006), Fawole 2011 and Ogunkan & Jelili (2010). With the exception of Boriwaye (2016), others perceive begging as a social malady that should be eradicated from society. Boriwaye (2016) conducts a generic structural analysis of the discourse of beggars in Ibadan, Nigeria. He focuses on explaining the role of human cognition in beggary discourse through the use of phatic communion, accentuation and familiarisation strategies. For the purpose of this study, however, begging will be categorised into four different groups: these are panhandling, itinerant begging, cooperate begging and violent begging. Since all categories of discourse take place in real-life situations, it becomes pertinent



for language users to arm themselves with reliable knowledge of the context of use. Halliday (1970:141) argues that the particular form and grammatical system are determined by the function for which the language is intended. Halliday identified three main functions for which language is used; these are interpersonal, ideational and textual. Language, when used for interpersonal purposes, has the objective of maintaining existing relationships between two or more people. It may also refer to a category of language used in closely knit groups. Language performs ideational functions when it is used to express and present personal ideas, to represent the physical, economic and social world in the view of the speaker or writer. The textual function of language is achieved when meaning is a function of the structure and interconnectedness of language.

METHODOLOGY

The southwestern part of Nigeria is one of the six geo-political zones that make up the country. The region is made up of Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Ogun, and Lagos states. The six (6) autonomous states have their different political, economic, religious and administrative structures. In all of these diversities, however, it is important to state that they are all united by language and that all of these states share the same language, which is the Yoruba language, though with some dialectal variations. As a result of this, intra-state communication and mutual intelligibility are easily achieved. The choice of this section of the country for the present study is premised on the general, though unsubstantiated, assumption that the southwestern part of Nigeria is the most developed part of Nigeria, especially in terms of educational advancement. It is much more instructive that the first institution of Higher Learning in Nigeria is located in southwest Nigeria. This is just as the region is associated with many other firsts that may not be directly of interest to this study. This notwithstanding begging, which is strongly perceived as an anti-social activity prevalent in most of the states in southwest Nigeria. This explains why states like Lagos, Ogun and Oyo have all, at different times, initiated legislation against the menace. It is, however, worthy of mention that in spite of all of these legislations, the 'menace' has refused to go away. It is, therefore, in light of this that this study seeks to examine what beggars actually do with language in order to achieve the desired objectives focusing on the performative aspect of the language of beggars. Data for this study were obtained through direct and indirect interaction with beggars across selected markets in southwest Nigeria. The states include Ekiti, Osun, Oyo, Ondo, Ogun and Lagos. A total of samples were selected through personal observation of selected beggars across the southwest. Being a study that employs situated and practical language, the samples for this study were obtained by observing and recording the discourse of the selected population. It is instructive to state that most of the data samples were recorded using the indigenous language of the southwestern part of Nigeria and translated into the English language. A total of thirty-four (34) samples were selected for the study.



DATA PRESENTATION

1. **E saanu mi ntori olorun o** – *have pity on me for the sake of God*
2. **Brother, sister, mo fi oruko olorun be yin, e saanu fun mi** – *brother, sister, I plead with you in the name of God, have mercy on me*
3. **Gbogbo ero inu oko yi e joo, e saanu mi ntori olorun** – *all the passengers in this vehicle, please have mercy on me.*
4. **Ayunlo, ayunbo l’owo nyun enu** – *you will not fall into calamities in your journeys*
5. **E ma a lo’re; e e ma bo’re** – *you will go in peace and return in peace*
6. **E saanu mi aunty, ebi ale o ni pa yin** – *have mercy on me aunty, you will not be hungry in your old age.*
7. **Iya mi, e ke meji o** – *my mother, give something to the twins*
8. **Omo meji nki yin o** - *the twins greet you*
9. **E ta beji lore o** – *give gifts to the twins*
10. **Okan nba bi, eji lo wole to mi wa** – *I would have given birth to one, I had two instead*
11. **Daddy wa e jowo e ke meji o** – *our daddy please, give something to the twins*
12. **Baba o, eeyan iyi, ori e wa nbe** – *the honourable father, your head is there*
13. **Ki lo wa fun awon boys?** – *what is available for the boys?*
14. **At all at all na im bad** – *nothing is too small*
15. **E je ka je nnu ola yin** – *let us enjoy part of your wealth*
16. **Alaye mi, je ka be happy-** *my buddy, make us happy*
17. **Alaye mi ki lo nsele?** – *my buddy, what is happening?*
18. **Odomode olowo, e saye f’awon boys** – *young millionaire, celebrate for the boys*
19. **Enu gbe l’ori tarmac** – *there is no money in the street*
20. **Epo wa l’owo yin, e je k a ba yin la** – **(Your hand is oily, let's lick it for you. \)** *You are very wealthy; let us benefit from your wealth*
21. **E saanu mi ntori olorun** – *have mercy on me for God's sake*
22. **Eni olorun bun ko saanu mi** – *extend your God-given blessings to me*
23. **E saanu mi ebi ale o ni payin** – *have mercy on me. You will not suffer in your old age*
24. **E saanu mi omo o toju eyin naa** – *have mercy on me, may your children care for you too*



25. **Baba agbalagba, mo juba o,te mi mole ko koja** –*the godfather, walk me over*
26. **Alaye mi to sure, jaye ori e** – *my sure confidant, enjoy your life*
27. **Eeyan iyi, se bo se wu e** – *the honourable one, behave the way you like*
28. **Alaye mi, mi o gapa, owo meji f'eeyan kan** – *my buddy, I am not arrogant, I respect you*
29. **E kira fun baba o, je ka je ninu ola e** - *respect for our father, let us benefit from your wealth*
30. **E e ni sori buruku, e saanu mi nitori olorun** – *you will not be unfortunate, have mercy on me for God sake*
31. **Iya aburo /uncle / aunty, e saanu mi e e ni foju sunkun omo** – *have mercy on me, you will not weep over your children*
32. **Layo lee so o, aye o ni pejo daro yin o** – *you will reach your destination in peace, people will not gather to mourn you*
33. **Ina o ni tan owo yin o** – *you will never lack money*
34. **Owo yin o ni kan isale apo** –*your hand will never get to the base of your pocket*

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

After a close study of the data collected for this study, thirty-four pragmemes or practs were identified. These samples were designed to achieve nine goals with varying degrees of occurrence. The goals are: Pleading (seven), hailing (8), soliciting (2), praying (3), directing (3), informing (4), requesting (3), assuring (2) and inquiring (2). The pragmemes can be appropriately interpreted due to shared contextual, situational and linguistic knowledge between the interlocutors. A summary of the identified pragmemes is presented in Table 1 below.



S/N	PRAGMEME	GOAL	FREQ	%
1	take pity on me for the sake of God, I need something to eat	Pleading	7	20.5%
2	brother, sister, I plead with you in the name of God, have mercy on me	Pleading		
3	all the passengers in this vehicle, please have mercy on me. you will not be hungry in your old age.	Pleading		
4	have mercy on me for God's sake	Pleading		
5	have mercy on me. You will not suffer in your old age	Pleading		
6	have mercy on me, may your children care for you too	Pleading		
7	have mercy on me, you will not weep over your children	Pleading		
8	you will not fall into calamities in your journeys	Assuring	2	5.9%
9	you will go in peace and return in peace	Assuring		
10	have mercy on me, aunty, you will not be hungry in your old age.	Soliciting	2	5.9%
11	my buddy, make us happy	Soliciting		
12	my mother, give something to the twins	Requesting	3	8.9%
13	our daddy please, give something to the twins	Requesting		
14	let us enjoy part of your wealth, my guy	Requesting		
15	the twins greet you	Informing	4	11.6%
16	there is no money in the street	Informing		
17	nothing is too small	Informing		
18	I would have given birth to one, I had two instead	Informing		
19	give gifts to the twins	Directing	3	8.9%
20	extend your God given blessings to me	Directing		
21	young millionaire, celebrate for the boys	Directing		
22	the godfather, your head is there	Hailing	8	23.5%
23	you are very wealthy, let us benefit from your wealth	Hailing		
24	you will not be unfortunate, have mercy on me for God sake	Hailing		
25	The godfather I show deference, walk me over	Hailing		
26	my buddy, enjoy your life	Hailing		
27	the honourable one, behave the way you like	Hailing		
28	my buddy, I am not arrogant, I respect you	Hailing		
29	respect for the godfather, let us benefit from your wealth	Hailing		
30	what is available for the boys?	Inquiring	2	5.9%
31	my buddy, what is happening?	Inquiring		
32	you will reach your destination in peace, people will not gather to mourn you	Praying	3	8.9%
33	you will never lack money	Praying		
34	your hand will never get to the base of your pocket	Praying		
	TOTAL		34	100



Table 2 shows a graphical representation of the communicative goals identified in the language of beggars in southwest Nigeria. Nine major pragmatic goals were identified after a close interaction with and observation of a selected group of beggars across southwest Nigeria. Each of the identified pragmatic goals is explained hereunder.

Hailing: The pragmatic goal of hailing has the highest frequency of occurrence, that is, 23.5% among the data selected for this study. This goal was observed to be common among a category of beggars known in southwest Nigeria as street urchins or motor park touts. Though not completely restricted to street touts as other categories also make use of this pragmatic goal but in a different pattern. The pragmatic goal of hailing is a form of greeting. This goal draws its contextual relevance from the socio-cultural environment of the southwestern part of Nigeria, where greeting, either formal or informal, is a way of initiating and sustaining a conversation, especially with strangers. It is worth noting that for the street urchins, the form of greetings or salutations is often violent in tone as a result of the individual characteristic or features of the beggar. For this group, the intention is always to create an ambience of familiarity and camaraderie with the addressee. This is done by showering encomiums on and calling the addressee endearing names so as to make them part with money. This accounted for words like *my friend, honourable, the godfather etc.*

Pleading: This pragmatic goal accounts for the second-highest pragmatic goal representing a total of 20.5% of the data selected for this study. This goal was observed to be common among all categories of beggars selected for this study. The goal draws relevance from the mutually shared knowledge of the nature of the language of begging among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria. This is often deployed to appeal to the sensibilities of the addressees and make them part with their hard-earned money. It becomes important to say that the goal of pleading shows the speakers as indirectly identifying their specific needs and calling the attention of the addressees to the urgency of their situation. For example, words like *I need something to eat, you will not suffer un your old age*, are meant to trigger the human nature in the addressees who share the understanding that the experience of hunger is not a palatable one. The statement, *May your children take care of you*, is also an indirect admission that the speaker had not been receiving adequate care from his or her children.

Informing: Conveying meaningful information from one person to another is an important feature of human communication, and the linguistic exchange between beggars and their addressee is not an exception. The pragmatic goal of informing is one of the goals identified in the language of beggars across southwest Nigeria. The goal accounts for 11.6% of the data sample selected for this study. This pragmatic goal is primarily employed by beggars in southwest Nigeria to convey information. In this regard, speakers are of the opinion that certain information is necessary for the addressee to understand the beggarly condition of the speaker. The study equally observed that motor park beggars and street urchins mostly employ the act of informing. The aim of this communicative intention is to provide the addressee with additional information regarding the beggar's pitiable condition, this explains statements like "enu gbe e ba wa wa nkan" (our mouth is dry, give us something), which literally translates to the expression of hunger and the speaker's way of informing the addressee that he has not had anything to eat for a long time.

Directing: This pragmatic goal is intended to compel the addressee to act in a particular pre-determined way. The act is often conveyed from speaker to hearer through the issuance of orders or by means of an imperative statement. In the data selected for this study, this pragmatic



goal, along with two others, accounted for 8.9% each. A close perusal of the study data revealed that beggars in southwest Nigeria employ subtle statements in achieving this pragmatic goal. Because giving orders is a direct affront on the face of the addressee, this goal is actually conveyed through indirect speech acts with statements like *e ta ibeji lore* (*give alms to the twins*). In deploying this act, the speaker is of the opinion that the addressee shares the same situational context with him, and as such, meaning is not hampered.

Praying: Another pragmatic goal identified in the language of beggars selected for this study is the one that focuses on praying. Africans, especially the Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria, are very religious people and this is manifested in their use of language. This goal confirms the opinion expressed in Ikotun et al (2018) that there is a link between begging and religion in ancient African societies because most begging activities are connected to African traditional religion. This claim was premised on the study's observation of the use of music by beggars in most African societies, including southwest Nigeria. The current study established the fact that another element showing the relationship between begging and religion is the deployment of the pragmatic goal of praying. This goal is achieved by making reference to God as a way of appealing to the religious sensibilities of the addressees. It can equally be inferred that in employing this act, the speaker and the addressee are conscious of the religious tendencies of one another, which is what the addressee seeks to explore.

Requesting: The pragmatic goal of requesting is one of the goals identified in the language of beggars in southwest Nigeria. The goal accounted for 8.9% of the sample selected for this study. This goal serves the objective of driving home the main objective of the begging. In deploying this pragmatic goal, the beggars employ subtle or indirect orders to solicit alms from the people. The beggars, in deploying this communicative goal employs kinship terms to show a kind of bonding or connection with the addressees. They are also deployed to soften the communicative force of a direct request, taking into consideration the fact that the situational context and the objective of this communicative act is inappropriate for a direct request. The words used here are *my mother, our daddy, my guy, my brother, aunty, uncle* etc.

Assuring: The pragmatic goal of assuring is one of the communicative goals identified in the language of beggars across Southwest Nigeria. The study also observes that this communicative goal which accounts for a total of 5.9% of the sample selected for this study, also employs the indirect speech approach. This is seen in the beggars indirectly admitting certain things regarding their individual condition and giving the addressees the assurance that such unpalatable condition will never be their lot. Statements like "*you will not fall into calamities in your journeys*" and "*you will go in peace and return in peace*" are indirect ways of the beggars assuring the addressees, especially in motor parks, that disasters associated with commuting from one point to another, will not be their portion. The study observes a similarity between this pragmatic goal and praying because most words of prayer deployed by beggars in southwest Nigeria are actually used to give one assurance or another. For example, statements like "*you will never lack money*" and "*your hand will never get to the base of your pocket*" are meant to indirectly admit the beggars' reason for engaging in the trade and to assure the addressees that they will not be visited with the same fate with which the beggars were visited.

Inquiring: Another pragmatic goal identified in the language of beggars across southwest Nigeria is the goal of making enquiries. The goal also represents a total of 5.9% of the data selected for this study. This goal focuses on asking questions from the addressees. The study



also observes that this goal is deployed only by a category of beggars known as street urchins often found in the street. This goal is also notably associated with violent begging in southwest Nigeria. It can be stated that regular beggars do not employ this pragmatic goal as it is perceived as breaking the rule of the face as one of the contextual considerations which interlocutors are expected to understand before deploying any specific pragmatic goal.

Soliciting: the last pragmatic goal, which also accounts for 5.9% of the data employed for this study is the goal of soliciting. This goal, though is the main objective of begging, soliciting alms or financial aid, is not directly employed in the language of beggars in southwest Nigeria as it ranked among the least employed pragmatic goals among beggars in southwest Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

This study acknowledges the importance and the centrality of language in every human endeavour including begging, which is a profession associated with the very low members of the African society. It was established that beggars across southwest Nigeria are conscious of the contextually sensitive nature of their profession and, as such, explore the provision of the pragmatic act model in achieving their communicative objectives. A careful analysis of the data samples showed that begging is an age-long profession that leverages the creative qualities of human language. This explains why various governments across southwest Nigeria have not recorded any significant success in their effort to eradicate begging. The beggars sampled for the purpose of the research actually displayed a huge understanding of the situational context of both the addressees and the environment and used it to appeal to the sensibilities of the people. It can be said that the beggars in southwest Nigeria equally explore the provision of the pragmatic act model of language use. An important feature of the pragmatic act model observed in the study is the mutual understanding exhibited by both speaker and addressees. Communicative goals like greetings, hailing etc., were effectively explored. For example, all the goals identified in the language of beggars in southwest Nigeria were meant to achieve the single purpose of making the addressee(s) offer money to the speaker. It is instructive to state that certain aspects of the communication of beggars that could not be captured in this study, that is, facial expressions, also contribute in no small measure to successfully conveying the speakers' intention.

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