

Pragmatic Failure in Intra-Cultural Communication: A Case of the Igbo Language

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Abstract

This paper examined pragmatic failure in intra-cultural communication in the Igbo language. The research identified and analysed certain pragmatic failures that occur in Igbo language, the reasons they occur and possible solutions to them. The study was done using qualitative approach; a semi-structured interview was used to collect primary data from 14 native speakers in Anambra State. The research used descriptive survey method and respondents were chosen using purposive sampling. The study finds out that pragmatic failure in Igbo language occur in colloquial terms, phonologically ambiguous words, salutation and greeting, proverbs and idioms, misinterpretation and misplacement of names. The findings of this work show that these pragmatic failures are caused by lack of contextual knowledge, lack of pragmatic competence, ambiguity, negative pragmatic transfer, age factor. This research work also established that pragmatic failures can be solved through the inculcation of language rudiments from parents to their children and the encouragement of intergenerational language transfer. Igbo natives should endeavour to always use tone-marking in writing the language. Finally, we recommend that during the language teaching procedures, pragmatic knowledge should be involved.

Keywords: Pragmatic failure Intra-cultural Communication, Igbo Language, Ambiguity, Culture Context

1: Introduction

Inter-personal use of language in everyday context involves the exchange of information which has been acquired through sensory experience. It usually takes place with certain contexts, it could be in the classroom, hostel, family, church, town meetings, board

meetings traditional events, cooperate events. It could be among friends, villagers, scholars, business colleagues, strangers, among others. So in which ever context, language should be used appropriately to convey meaning and achieve certain goals and purpose. However, when we fail to achieve the intended goal as a result of inappropriate use, we can misfire. In other words, one can imply something else rather than what he/she actually intended to say. This brings about pragmatic failure which tells us that pragmatics stresses on the relationships among the utterances, the context and the speaker's intention. When the pragmatics force of a language is misunderstood, for example, if an apology is interpreted as an excuse, the communication fails, which is called pragmatic failure. Pragmatic failure can be divided into two types; pragmatic linguistic failures and socio linguistic failure. By pragmatic linguistic failure, we mean that the failures result from the fact that what the speaker says does not agree with the habit of the native speaker, by socio pragmatic failure, we mean the utterances do not

When an interlocutor produces a wrong communicative effect as a result of inappropriate use of speech acts or violation of rules of speaking. This could be referred to as social miscommunication arising mostly from inadequate knowledge of cultural nuances that guides the use of a particular language. Hence cultural competence should be the focus of any person that is being trained to acquire L1 proficiency. This means that culture could and should be thought alongside any language. One of the major aims of language teaching should be for L1 learners to achieve efficient communication that conforms to native standards. However one factor that can impede such communication is pragmatic failure.

This pragmatic failure can result in rather funny and anecdotal misunderstanding. in other cases it has more dramatic repercussions by causing misunderstanding that may result in puzzlement, surprise, astonishment, frustration, embarrassment or anger. In extreme cases, it may even produce interactive conflict, cultural friction, communication breakdown, unfair and unjustified attribution of personality traits with subsequent negative labelling and stereotypes, or contribute to the perpetuation of discrimination as a consequence of very different interactive norms across speech communities.

The term (intra-cultural) pragmatic failure is defined and illustrated along with commonly accepted and interrelated notions of pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic failure. A potential cause of pragmatic failure is negative pragmatic transfer In studying pragmatics failure the researchers tend to create a relationship between what is said or meant versus what is understood. This paper looks at communication and intra-cultural pragmatic failure in Igbo Language, its causes and the possible solution.

Geographically, the [Igbo homeland](#) is divided into two unequal sections by the [Niger River](#) – an Eastern (which is the larger of the two) and a Western section. The Igbo people are one of the largest [ethnic groups in Africa](#).

The [Igbo language](#) is a part of the [Niger-Congo language family](#). It is divided into numerous regional dialects and somewhat mutually intelligible with the larger "[Igboid](#)" cluster. The Igbo homeland straddles the lower Niger River, East and South of the [Edoid](#) and [Idomoid](#) groups, and West of the [Ibiboid](#) (Cross River) cluster.

This paper is organized as follows: section 1 is the introduction while section 2 highlights the aim and objectives. Section 3 provides the paper's significance, while section 4 provides the theoretical assumptions. Section 5 discusses the paper's methodology. In section 6, we discussed data presentation and analysis. While Section 7 is the summary and conclusion..

2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed at examining pragmatic failures that occur in Intra-cultural communication of Igbo language with the following objectives.

To identify and analyse certain pragmatic failures that occur in Igbo language.

To examine why certain pragmatic failures occur in Igbo language

To attempt to proffer solutions to certain causative factors of pragmatic failure in intra-cultural communication.

3 Significance of Study

Several works have been done in inter-cultural communication but little or no work has been done in the area of intra-cultural pragmatics, therefore, we hope that this research work will provide more insight into pragmatics especially at area of linguistic intra-cultural pragmatic failures. The study will equally be useful to language scholars and researchers particularly those with interest in pragmatic investigation of interaction in varied contexts.

4 Adaptation Theory

Verschuren (1999), first propounded the Adaptation theory. He argues that the process of using language is also a process of choosing language with feasible principles and strategies. He explains that the reason why language users can make linguistic choice is that language has the nature of variability, negotiability and adaptability. According to him, variability makes it possible for language users to choose language. Negotiability endows language with variety and feasibility, while adaptability leads to the aim of communication after making negotiations and choice. Verschueren (1999) further explains

that adaptation is the root of pragmatic failure in cultural communication. Put differently, pragmatic failure in verbal process occurs due to the fact that language users fail to make communicative language dynamically adapt to various factors of the communication context.

Thomas (1983), also noted that pragmatic failure is the inability to understand what is meant by what is said.

Verschueren (1999) states that adaptation of language includes the following:

- a. adaptation to pragmatic context: Varieties and factors considered in the process of making linguistic choice.
- b. adaptation to language structures: Adapting in different levels of language and language structures.
- c. dynamics of Adaptation: The process of making linguistics choice and negotiation is also a process of dynamic adaptation.
- d. salience of Adaptation: The degree of awareness of the communicators when making linguistic choice (Variability).

According to him, the process of making linguistics choice is also a dynamic process that language structures adapt to their context. Context is composed of language context and communicative context. Language context refers to the language meaning that language users choose to achieve the aim of communication. Communicative context is non-language context, which includes language users, the physical world, social and mental world of language users. Language users are the focus of communication. The contextual factors in the physical world, mental and social world need to be motivated by the cognitive activities of the language users. In other words, the strategy of the language users has to adapt to the physical, social and mental world of both parties of communication. Therefore, linguistics context and communicative context should be adapted dynamically.

Verschueren (1999) further outlines various forms in which failures could occur. They are:

- a. failure to adopt to the social world
- b. failure to adapt to the mental world
- c. failure to adapt to the physical world
- d. failure to adapt to the language users across culture.

5 Methodology

The researchers used descriptive survey method. The population of the study comprises of native speakers of the Igbo language resident in Anambara. Following Bunce & Johnson,

(2006), Clarke & Braun (2013), and Fugard & Potts (2014), who recommend that a qualitative study requires a minimum sample size of at least 12 to reach data saturation, we used a sample size of 14 respondents (7 female and male youths and 7 female and male adults). The study gathered data using the interview schedule and purposive sampling technique. Respondents were purposively selected and interviewed. The interview was conducted face-to-face and the interview were audio recorded and all the observation made during the interview sessions were analyzed.

6 Result and Discussion of Finding

6.1 Pragmatic Failures in Igbo

From the data gotten from respondents, pragmatic failure in Igbo language are those error that occur in understanding what a person has said. Pragmatic failure in Igbo occurs when wrong meaning is inferred from what a person has said other than what is actually intended. From the data obtained for the this study, the areas in which pragmatic failure can occur in Igbo are:

- Colloquial terms.
- Phonologically ambiguous words.
- Salutation and greeting.
- Proverbs and idioms.
- Misplacement and misinterpretation of names.

Colloquial Terms

Colloquial terms are words that have informal interpretations. They are used among peers or when one wants to exclude other from a conversation. Examples of such words

Table 1

Igbo words/expressions	First meaning	Second meaning(colloquial)
Nwaoma osiso	Fast Good child	Prostitute
Gbawa	Break	Leave
Nyem Isi zik	Give me Head of Zik	Give me 500 hundred naira
Akwukwo	Paper	Money
Igba ncha	Pour soap	Masturbation

i. The phrase *nwaoma osisi* literally means ‘fast good child’ and colloquially used as ‘prostitute’. Pragmatic failure occurs when one is called *nwaoma osiso*(prostitute) and it is understood as ‘good’. This is done probably to exclude someone near from understanding and is common among youth. This leads to pragmatic failure as listeners would most likely infer another meaning different from what was meant.

Below, we present conversation between speaker A and B using the colloquial term that could lead to pragmatic failure in Igbo

1. Speaker A: *Omalicha nwaoma osiso* 'prostitute'
B: *Daalu* (Thank you)

This means that the speaker A called speaker B *Omalicha nwaoma osiso* 'a prostitute' but speaker B did not understand it the way the Speaker A meant it and feels it was a compliment. Hence, the reply from Speaker B is *daalu* 'thank you'.

- ii. Same goes for *gbawa* which colloquially means 'to leave' being mistaken for 'break'. This can be demonstrated in the conversation between Speaker A and B

2. Speaker A: *M ga gbawa* 'I will leave'
B: *Biko a gbawa na* 'Please do not break'

- iii. In Igbo, some people refer to five hundred naira note as *isi zik* 'Zik's head' This can also lead to pragmatic failure. This can also be demonstrated in the following conversation between Speaker A, B and C

3. Speaker A: *Nyem isi zik* (give me five hundred naira)
C: (amazed and wonders how he/she can possible bring the head of Zik
B: *Emefubeghi ya. Lee ya* 'I have not spent it. Take it.'
C: *O o! I mefula m obi.* 'Oh! You scared me initially'.

- iv. You also find Igbo people refer money as '*akwukwo*', opposed to its conventional name '*ego*' it is called. The following conversation illustrates this colloquial expression.

4. A: *Nne biko choro m obere akwukwo* 'Mummy, please, help me with small money'
B: *O bu English ka o bu maths?*
A: *Nne, o bu ego.* 'Mummy, it is money'

From the data, we have observed that colloquial expressions can cause communication failure due to some hearers not being able to understand the context in which the words are used, simply because, the speakers do not share the same background. This is in congruence with the adaptation theory which expects speakers to adapt to contextual factors during conversation. Thus, one should also be acquitted with the colloquial implications of some words to avoid pragmatic failure.

Phonological Ambiguous Words

This type of ambiguity has to do with pronounced words. In the Igbo language, when the expressions that have similar phonological realizations are not written down properly, they are disambiguated because Igbo has principles of writing. But in speech, these expressions could be misunderstood if the speaker and the hearer do not have the same contextual understanding of such expressions. Some examples of phonological ambiguous words are shown in table 2.

Table 2

Igbo words/expressions	First meaning	Second meaning
Onye M' ma/ónyé òmà	Person I know	Knife seller
Ará pu g̃/ a rapu g̃	If you are left	If you run mad
Ìhu mmà/ihe m' ma	Matchet face	Familiar face
Ámù /a' mu	Learn	Penis
Úzò	Door	Way
Ọkú	Fire, hot	Pressure/touch
Álà	Floor	Land
Íkwá Íkò	Woo	Sex
Isi	Head	Beginning
Ánaghì ànú ìhé	Deafness	Stubborn
Nà-èdinèkò	Sleep together	Having sex
Hùrù ná ányá	To love	To see
Iḳogwù	Mix medicine	Charm
Ó bitùrù égò áká	Touched money	Wealthy/rich
Ó bù úzó biá	Came first	Came carrying door
Ó cháká	Fair	Smart
Ádágó	Fall down	Bankrupt
Ókwà	Position	Mortar

The expression *Onye mma* has two meanings. The first meaning is 'someone I know' and the second meaning is 'knife seller'. Phonological pragmatic failure can occur when a speaker in a conversation is unable to distinguish and decode meaning of spoken words due to pronunciation similarity. This is illustrated in the conversation between speaker A and B.

5. Speaker A: Ahuru m onye mma n' ahia ta
 B: Oburu na m soro gi ga, agara m ma zuta mma
 A: Obu enyi mmatara n'uloakwukwo

In the conversation above, speaker A told speaker B that he saw *someone he knows* in the market but speaker B misinterpreted what speaker A said by thinking it was a *knife seller* Speaker A saw in the market. Consequentially, Speaker A had to tell Speaker B the *mma* he referred to. This indicated that there was a pragmatic failure in their conversation resulting from an unequally contextual knowledge of what was said.

Another phonological ambiguous expression is Uzo. It means 'to leave' and 'door'. Pragmatic failure in this expression is expressed in the conversation below.

6. Speaker A: Ozo buru uzo puo n'ulo ta
 B: echem na ogwara papa tupu y'eburu ya
 A: Ihe m n'ekwu buna oburu Emeka uzo gawa oru ta

In this exchange, Speaker B misinterpreted Speaker A's use of Uzo. Speaker B thought that the subject of the conversation had carried the door in the home away. Speaker A corrected saying that the subject left the house first that day. A breach in communication took place simply because the speakers did not share a common contextual background of what was spoken.

Again, *Oku* is a phonological ambiguous word meaning 'touch' or 'pressure'. Pragmatic failure in the use of this word is expressed in the conversation that follows.

7. Speaker A: Ha chara m oku n'ahu m n'oru ta
 B: Unu na-eji oku aga oru?

In this instance, communication flow was affected when speaker B misinterpreted what Speaker A said. Speaker A said that pressure was put on her in her working place, however, speaker B thought Speaker A meant that a torching light was what was referred to. This was because they didn't work in the same organisation. If they did, Speaker B would have gotten the message Speaker A tried to pass across.

Furthermore, *Isi* could mean 'head' or 'beginning', but it can be misinterpreted due to the same sound pattern that results to a pragmatic failure. This is illustrated in the conversation below.

8. Speaker A: Onyenkuzi bidoro n'isi
 B: Mana Chima kwuru na ometuru ya aka n'isi

Another is the expression *Adighi anu ihe* which could mean ‘deafness’ or ‘stubborn’. The conversation below illustrates how pragmatic failure occur.

9. Speaker A: Ichoputa kwala na Emeka anaghi anu ihe
 B: Ole mbe oria nke a bidoro?

In the conversation above, Speaker B misinterpreted what Speaker A said by thinking Speaker A meant that the subject of their discussion has gone deaf, whereas what Speaker A meant was that the subject was being stubborn. This reveals that there was a communication breakdown owing from the ambiguous expression *adighi anu ihe*. The pragmatic failures witnessed in the foregoing conversations indicates that the speakers shared unequal contextual leanings ana this is in congruence with the theory of Adaptation which states that maximum understanding of shared contextual background must be available for an unhindered effective communication.

Salutations and Greetings

Salutation and greeting is an integral part of Nigerian cultures and values. Sometimes, some Igbo speakers or L2s experience difficulty in the use of these greetings. Examples of greeting which can lead to communication failure.

For instance:-

Table 3

Igbo words/expressions	First meaning	Second meaning
Unu aputa kwo?	Good morning	Did you people come out/wake up
O nna/nnu o	Welcome	Hey Son (hailing)
Daalu kwo	Thank you	well-done

This can be demonstrated in the following conversation between speaker A, B and C.

10. Speaker A: Nne, nno! ‘mother good morning’
 B: Unu aputa kwo! ‘good morning’
 C: Otela mgbe anyi tetara. ‘It has been a long time we woke up.’
 B: O wu ekele ka mu mere. ‘I was only greeting you people’

From the conversation, we observe that there is a pragmatic failure between Speaker B and C. This is because speaker C understood the literally meaning of *Unu aputa kwo* as ‘did you people come out/wake up’ instead good morning’ that is the greeting. This is often

misinterpreted by younger persons who are not aware of this cultural norm or the context of the conversation.

Another instance where greeting causes pragmatic failure is in the case of *Daalu* 'well-done/ thank you' We have stated that *Daalu kwo* could mean thank you in one context and well-done in another, but sometimes misconstrued. This is also demonstrated in the conversation below.

11. Speaker A: *Daalu kwo nu!* 'Well-done!'

B: *mmela gi gini nne mu oo?* 'Mummy, what did I do for you?'

It is interesting to note that Speaker A and B do not have the same contextual leaning that was why speaker C could not adapt. This led to the communication failure noticed in their conversation. Speaker B understood *Daalu kwo* as 'thank you' which was not what speaker A meant.

Misplacement and Misinterpretation of Names

People misplace and misinterpret names because they are not aware of the origin or the cultural implications of such names. This is always observed from L2 learners.

For instance:-

Table 4

Igbo words/expressions	First meaning	Second meaning
Agu	Leopard	Lion
<i>Èdí ábàlì</i>	Night worker	Wild dog which roams only at night
<i>Azúbúiké</i>	Back is power	Strength in cordial relationship
<i>Dínwēnūm</i>	Husband who own me	My lord
<i>Đikē</i>	Powerful husband	Strong/courageous

Agu na-eche mba (Leopards which guides village). *Agu* has been misinterpreted as lion for years by non-speakers of Igbo language. Names such as *Oguagu*, *Ebubeagu* are associated with lion killing rather than the leopard which roamed the Igbo lands years ago. Majority of speakers are oblivious of these difference. Hence, statements such as *Odum na Egbu Agu* becoming difficult to understand. Vast majority found it difficult to comprehend this saying since *Agu* has been associated with lion already, and *Odum* Tiger.

Similarly, calling a night worker an *Edi Abali* throws confusion to an L2 speaker. This is because *Edi Abali* literally means hyena or jackals which roam only at night.

Azu bu ike (literally glossed as back is power) signifies the importance of relationships. Pragmatically, the name means that there is strength in cordial relationships. This name is synonymous with Igwebu ike, Ibebu ike, U, mu, nnabu ike, etc. This would cause pragmatic failure for those without this background knowledge.

Again, Dinwenum ('di' husband+ 'nwe' possess+ nu 'enclitics' + 'm' me), (husband who own me) in Igbo means 'my Lord' which implies that di can also be glossed as 'lord'. The husband is in other words the Lord of his wife. It may be necessary to remark here that whatever 'di' is affixed to, insinuates authority, power, force and strength in Igbo.

'Dike' structurally glossed as di 'husband'+ ike 'power' literally means (powerful husband). Semantically, it stands for powerful and courageous person. From the above examples, we would see that different interpretations would definitely result in intra-cultural pragmatic failure for persons who are not of equal contextual backing, thus, adaptation becomes difficult to achieve.

Proverbs and Idioms

These constitute a great source of pragmatic failure because the meanings of the expressions cannot be gotten from the literal point of view. They contain deep meaning of which most times are not know, therefore, people go for the literal meaning and it ends up in pragmatic failure.

For instance:-

Table 5

Igbo words/expressions	First meaning	Second meaning
Ma onye elu ma onye ala	Both people up and those down	all and sundry
Ihe ikwuru ejulam afo	what you have spoken has filled my stomach	The words you have spoken are satisfactory to me.
Uka Mu Na Gi Bu Otu	the word you and I have spoken are one	Our word are in unison or we are in agreement.
Okro Anaghi Eto Kari Onye Kuru Ya	The okra cannot grow taller than the planter	No matter how elevated you get in life, you cannot surpass the hand that groomed you.

Chọọ ewu ojii ka chi di	Chase black goats during the day	Work hard early enough .
Ọ na- ̣bụ asi nwata wuba ̣hụ, ọ saba afọ ya	Tell a child to wash his body, he washes his stomach,	Sign of immaturity
Ugo chara acha adighi echu echu	A mature eagle feather will forever remain pure.	One well trained will stand the test of time.
Nri bu ndu	Food is life	An empty stomach can lead to early grave
Aka aja aja n'ebute onu mmanụ mm̄nụ	A sandy hand brings oily mouth	Hard work pays off
Ha na-asi na ọkụ gbara father,i na-ajụ ma o gbakwara ma afụonụ ya	It's being said that a reverend father go burnt and you are asking if his beards also go burnt	Talking about the important and you are talking something less important
Ọna eme aka n'abọ	He uses two hands	He steals
Ọ nwere nti ike	He is stubborn	He is hard of hearing/deaf

Proverbs are the use of physical elements and natural phenomenon to convey other meanings during discussions. Most L2 speakers of Igbo had a hard time understanding the proverbs spoken to them, as these proverbs are enshrined in Igbo culture.

Ma onye elu, ma onye ala was easily translated to mean the people up and those on the floor, majority seems to assume that the speaker must be speaking from the context of being in a position where there were people above ground (upstairs) and on ground level. Hence the reference to both set of people. However, the speaker was referring to all and sundry, where *elu* (up) and *ala* (floor) refers to social status rather than height difference.

Ihe ikwuru ejulam afo, using knowledge construction, L2 Igbo speakers are able to translate this to mean "what you have spoken has filled my stomach" which in itself makes little grammatical sense. Since words are not food which would fill a human stomach. However, satisfaction which is what food brings is to humans is likened to what words can do to the listener. Hence the word actually means the words you have spoken are satisfactory to me. Another example is the proverb *uka mu na gi bu otu*). Interpreted by the interviewers to be 'the word you and I have spoken are one'. Though spoken words cannot be counted together to be one as they are countable nouns. Rather the saying means our word are in unison or we are in agreement.

Okra anaghi eto kari onye kuru ya. When translated by most of the listeners, it means that Okra plant cannot grow beyond the planter. This is contrary to the truth; Okra actually grows beyond humans. But literarily, the statement means that those who help others grow are never outgrown. Relating this to the father and children, teachers and students, masters and apprentices, one can see that those who sacrifice for the growth of others are never really outgrown when their prodigies are grown. These communication failures strongly indicate that adaptation can be affected because of the absence of contextual background between the speakers

6.2 Some Causes of Pragmatic Failures in Igbo

From our data, we observe that pragmatic failures in Igbo can be caused by the following

Lack of pragmatic background knowledge

According to our respondents, most if not all pragmatic failures occur because of lack of pragmatic knowledge, people do not know the different ways in which Igbo language is used in different settings and different purposes. Language is a moving train and due to this some words gain wider usage as compared to others.

Lack of pragmatic competence

Another reason is lack of pragmatic competence. Some Igbo speakers do not have the ability to use the language appropriately in social context, they lack the ability to understand the speakers real intentions especially people that grew up where Igbo is not used often in their homes.

Ambiguity

Ambiguity is one of the major causes of pragmatic failures in Igbo. This is a situation, where one expression is given more than one interpretation. From the data, we observe that most of the expressions have more one interpretations.

Age factor

Certain words used by adults are not same with the ones used by the younger people, Sometimes, younger people use certain colloquial terms which may be understood as something else by adults.

6.3 Possible Solutions to Pragmatic Failure in Intra-Cultural Communication in Igbo

From the data, we observe that pragmatic failures in Igbo can be reduced by the following

Tone-marking

Igbo writers should endeavour to always tone-mark. Igbo writers should endeavour to always tone-mark especially those words that are identical and are prone to different interpretations, bearing in mind that the Igbo language is a tonal language. For example, in Igbo language, tone is used to distinguish between a declarative sentence and interrogative sentence, lexical items etc.

Intergenerational Language Transmission

Intergenerational language transmission should be encouraged.

In addition to inculcating the rudiments of language, there should be parental guidance to children (intergenerational language transmission). There is no language usage, when there is no language knowledge.

Provision of textbooks

Provision of textbooks with enough Igbo pragmatic knowledge and cultural information can improve the pragmatic knowledge of school children.

Textbooks used in schools do not contain enough focus on Igbo pragmatic knowledge and cultural information. Though a large amount of linguistic knowledge is covered, there is not enough of the pragmatic knowledge that is needed in cultural communication.

Cultivation of cultural awareness

Cultivation of cultural awareness is another solution. The diversity and distinction of the Igbo culture demand that communicators should be sensitive to cultural awareness. Nowadays people have understood and recognized the importance of influence of culture on people's thinking pattern and behaviours. It is essentially necessary to cultivate and improve people's cultural awareness.

Improvement of Communication competence

Improvement of pragmatic competence goes a long way to reduce pragmatic failure in Igbo language. Communication competence is the ability to understand respect, and integrate cultural contexts. In other words, people with cultural competence know how to elicit a desired response in interactions and to fulfil their own communication goals by respecting and affirming the worldview and cultural identities of the interactions.

7 Summary and Conclusion

We have been able to examine pragmatic failure in intra-cultural communication in Igbo. The result of this research work indicates that a number of pragmatic failures indeed

occurs in Igbo language. The study showed that pragmatic failure in Igbo occurs when wrong meaning is inferred from what a person has said over what is actually intended. In other words, it is the inadequate contextual meaning of an expression.

We observed in this work that colloquial terms, placement of tone, phonologically ambiguous words, salutation and greeting, proverbs and idioms, and misplacement and misinterpretation of names can cause pragmatic failure in communication in Igbo.

We also noted in this paper that the reasons pragmatic failure occur in Igbo language are lack of pragmatic knowledge, lack of pragmatic competence, ambiguity, age factor etc.

We further established in this work that pragmatic failure in Igbo can be reduced by ensuring that appropriate tones or tone-marking is used in communication. The speakers should also ensure that intergenerational language transmission, provision of textbooks, and improvement of communication competence are encouraged.

Finally, this study validates the adaptation theory by Verschueren (1999) which explains the root of pragmatic failure in cultural communication. Using this theory, we have shown that that pragmatic failure in verbal process occurs in Igbo due to the fact that Igbo speakers fail to make communicative language dynamically adapt to various factors of the communication context.

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