The language of philosophy and the philosophy of language: A symbiotic paradigm

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Abstract

This paper was focused on the relationship between the discipline of Philosophy and Language: an interplay that has been found to be a sublime in terms of the conceptual methodological and classificatory values. The logic, objectivity, analytics, symbolism and universalism that have informed the study of language draw on the legacies of philosophy while on the other hand, philosophical studies gain ascendancy in elucidation from the expository, referential and concextual resources of language. It is recommended that experts on the two subjects should carry out more collaborative studies to explore the mutual insights available in the domans.
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1. Introduction

Language constitutes an interplay of levels; syntax, lexis, graphology, phonology and semantics. While the first four levels entail choices, the last level provides an interpretative framework for the meaning outcomes of the choices. Practical criticism and stylistics lend themselves to the analysis of the language used in a particular text, discipline, collection of works, genre, etc with the goal of collating the special features which distinguish one kind of communication from the others.

As it stands, a tripartism may be constructed to indicate language typologies in usage: discursive prose used in expository writings/non-literary forms/scientific prose such as articles and essay on sports, philosophy, science, letters, constitutions, the main purpose of this kind of prose is to inform; literary prose used in creative writings such as novels, short stories and biographies; poetic idiom used in poetry, songs and creeds.

In stylistic or critical terms, investigating the language of a particular text or group of texts means assessing the linguistic features and techniques used in presenting a particular theme, piece(s) of information or objective of knowledge. For example, Millar, R. and Currie J. [1 have described the language of scientific prose as one that: "Tries to confine itself as far as possible to the referential aspect of meaning. It eschews emotion and value judgements it is objective and impersonal."

Within the spectrum of prose language, three variations in usage can be identified based on purpose: informativeness, expressiveness and directiveness. Informative language is used to transmit ideas through descriptions, explanations and analysis. Expressive mode conveys feelings, emotions and attitudes while directive language is used to cause or prevent action.

Language use is further stratified by context (formal/informal usages), subject matter, personality (idiolect), audience-induced (professionals/non-professionals, target/mixed, young/old) tone (attitude induced), level of education (literate/semi-literate/illiterate). Each user of a language selects and arranges the linguistic resources available to him, in diverse proportions, the aggregate of which constitutes the style, studied under stylistics.

Scientific or specialized prose writings are chiefly characterized by lexical and grammatical patterns that stand them out. The preponderance of scientific phraseologies and terminologies, the high percentage of the passive voice of the verb, impersonal objectivity and informativeness in purpose are among the most obvious traits applicable here.

Philosophy is a discipline or a branch of faculty that studies the nature and meaning of the universe and human life. Science almost everything (animate and inanimate) centres around nature, humanity and life in abstract and concrete terms, philosophy as a discipline appears to permeate all aspects of human knowledge resulting in phrases such as philosophy of science, philosophy of history and philosophy of language. Indeed, philosophy is styled "the father of all disciplines".

There are many definitions and view points on philosophy. Ozumba, G [2] sees it as "the new attitude of rationality, criticality, naturalism, systematicity and rigor which characterized or attended old curiosities, inquiries, challenges and explanations". The same source quotes Wittgenstein as stating that "philosophy deals with clarification of language". Also the positivist school of philosophy sees the discipline in terms of clarification, analysis, verification and meaningfulness of language.[11]

Ozumba, G [2] elucidates further on the nature and aim of philosophy by distinguishing it from the non-philosophic. Philosophy, he says, discountenances superstition, unfounded mythology and dogmatism. Philosophical inquiry is said to be open-ended and aimed at directing the course of research in various fields through thinking, rationalizing, evaluating, idea formulation, criticism and theorizing based on empirical methodologies and intellectual engagements. The researcher concludes: "*Philosophy is indispensable in this era of increase in knowledge and the allied challenges that are coming from the social, political, scientific, environmental, economic, legal, psychological, religious and moral dimension of existence.*"

Languages, Linguistics and communications must be added to the list of the allied challenges of humanity where there is a high increase in knowledge upon which philosophical thought is increasingly needed to deal with them. Philosophy and its insights have aided linguists to advance knowledge in the area of classifications of languages, theorizing on the best practices, clarification of concepts and investigating language usages within context and other canons of variations.

Table 1: Language of Philosophy: Table of Data

s/n	Title/Author	First sentence	Last sentence
1	"Introduction" by Innocent I. Asouzu [3]	One of the reasons people get entangled in a web of confusion is their in-ability to distinguish between concepts and the framework of their application.	Each contributor takes responsibility for the material content and form of his or her contribution.
2	"What is philosophy" by G. Ozumba [2]	To discuss the above question is the place to start writing a text of this foundational nature and rudimentary scope	The events of the millennium and the accompanying challenges call for wider and deeper interest in philosophic concerns and in the proper study of philosophy
3	"Traditional and Latest Branches of Philosophy" by Alabi S. Yekini	Philosophy originated in human history, in questions about the nature of existence, knowledge, values and society	Although Marx erected the theoretical framework for communism, he was involved insignificantly in its practical execution.
4	"Philosophy and the Good Life" by Innocent I. Asouzu [3]	One of the most important and indeed most fundamental by a clearly set aim or a clearly defined objective.	One can say that as an attempt at realizing the missing link of reality, philosophy is about learning from mistakes when they do occur and not in complete avoidance of mistakes.
5	"The Rise and Development of Medieval Philosophy" by Tom E. Ogar	In the 4th century, the Great Roman Empire was under threat from two fronts-the internal wrangling and the Barbarism incursion from the North.	Their contribution was essentially in making the works of these great philosophers available to the Islamic world.
6	"Rationalism/Empiricism" by J. O. Inyang	The modern period in philosophy is rather indispensable when the historical development of philosophy is examined especially considering the significance of this period (17th and 18th century)	The collection of all these precepts makes up the self and nothing else beyond sense experience.
7	"Kant" by Osam Osam Edim	The History Of Modern Philosophy Remains Incomplete Without The Name Immanuel Kant	But does this fact reduce the greatness of the Professor from Konigsberg? Certainly not.
8	"Introduction To Contemporary Philosophy" By Chris Ijimoah	Everything new or contemporary is new or contemporary because it is connected to something old.	This contemporary philosophy emphasizes objective, individualistic and contextual knowledge and any method that could lead to it.

9	"Post Modernism" By Inyang Ededem Iwatt	It is argued in some quarters that the culture of modernism came under the sledge hammer of criticism at some point after the second world war-the 50's and 60s to be precise (Bernstein, 1991).	Conclusively, it is important for us to understand that this era is tagged post-modernism not because the identifying features exhibited by it never existed before, but rather, these particular characteristics have become dominant now.
10	"What is African Philosophy" by Asira E. Asira	A painful history surrounds the existence of African philosophy	Since African philosophy has something to do with African worldview, for it to have its relevance, it must have an attitude which is more productive, creative, positive and active.
11	"African Metaphysic'S" by Alabi S. Yekini	This chapter would more or less describe the world outlook of an African people as expressed in their myths of creation, tradition of origin and religious beliefs.	Death here is regarded as the departure of the soul, itself a kind of body, from the physical plane to another plane of existence, namely the astral.
12	"Violence" by Emmanuel B. Eyo	In recent years, most world large cities with their sub-urban towns have experienced violence and violent confrontations among those who live in them.	We have no choice, we should embrace peace (Dariye 2005:5).
13	What is Logic? By K. A. Ojong	Logic, generally speaking is a science that deals with precision rules that guide human reasoning in the quest for knowledge	So the element of creativity in human reasoning is rather ratified by the principle of logic instead of being predetermined by it.
14	"The History and Development of Logic" by Dorothy Ucheaga	The history of logic is said to have begun with Aristotle 354 – 344 B.C)	While it is not out of place to trace the history of logic in an introductory book of this sort, it remains to be said that the beginner will appreciate and learn more than the history of logic as he progresses in the study of the subject.
15	"Inference" by A. F. Uduigwomen	Inference is rightly synonymous with reason and reflecting thinking	Other kinds of immediate inference are conversion, conversion and contraposition.

Source: Asouzu, I. [3] Philosophy and Logic today. Calabar: University of Calabar Press.

2. Description of Data

The data collated for this work were academic essays or learned articles within by researchers in the field of philosophy. The authors, though Nigerians have travelled extensively and interacted with their peers from other places in the world. As University Lecturers, they are professionally and functionality literate and therefore do possess an awareness of the dynamics in the field or philosophy. Their language therefore would reflect the quintessence of the expression mode in the field.

A total of fifteen authors/articles have been selected for this study. From each contribution, the first and the final sentences have been collated in the Table above. Names of the authors and titles of their entries have been reflected. The context of these data is formal, educated, written, researched, intellectual, factual and largely objective. The essays are expository and encompassing in terms of the rudimentary, classical and futuristic use of language, in this case English. The book was edited in line with acceptable standard of formal English usages.

3. Linguistic analysis of the data

Graphology: The entries are consistently written in the 12 point font of the computer word processor with single line spacing, indented paragraphs and upper case titles followed by names of the authors. There are mathematical symbolisms and diagrams to support the discussions in some of the entries. There are italicized words and phrases for highlighting and emphasis. Brackets are used to enclose documented citations of materials.

Syntactic analysis: The data comprises sentences which in English Grammar occur in four elements of subject (nominals), Predicator (verbals), Complement (nominals and adjectival) and Adjunct (prepositional and adverbials) among these four elements, the S and P are obligatory and most functional as meaning careers and style determinants.

Table 2: The subject elements in the sentences

Item	Comment/analysis
Once of the reasons People get entangled In a web of confusion	M (one of the) H (reasons) O (people…confusion)
Each contributor	M (each) H (contributor)
To discuss the above question	Infinitive element realizing the nominal. Key nominal lexeme here is "question"
This chapter	H (chapter)
Death	H (abstract noun)

Most world large cities	M – most world large H – cities
We	H (pronominal)
Logic	H (abstract noun)
The element of creativity In human reasoning	M – the element of H – creativity (Abstract) Q – in human reasoning
The history of logic	M – the H – history Q – of logic
It	H – pronominal
It	H – pronominal
Inference	H – abstract noun
Other kinds of immediate inference	M – other H – kinds Q – of immediate inference
The events of the millennium and the accompanying challenges	Compound subject=nominal group ^{1}+ and + nominal group^2 H^1=events H^2=challenges
Philosophy	Abstract noun (head word)
He	Pronominal (head word)
One	Pronominal (head word)
One	Pronominal (head word)
The Great Roman Empire	M – the modern H – period Q – in philosophy
This fact	H – fact
Everything new	H – everything
Contemporary philosophy	H – philosophy
It	H – pronominal
It	H – Pronominal
A painful history	M = a painful H = history
It	H = pronominal

The subject element in the sentences above are realized by the nominal groups which are simple (containing one item) or complex (containing more than one) M – modifier element that precedes the H (Headword) and the Q Qualifier element after the H. The H-element is a noun or a pronoun and the nouns come in the form of abstract/concrete, common/proper, singular/plural, etc. The pronouns come in as personal/impersonal, first person/second person/third person.

The fact that 60 percent of the subjects are expressed in complex nominals indicates the complex nature of the discipline of philosophy under explication here, hence the modifiers and qualifiers are necessarily employed to provide clarity and context to them. True to stand, the pronominal 'headwords' do not carry any modifiers/qualifiers.

Lexical analysis:

Nominals are the carriers of meaning in terms of the theme, actor, doer, referent in the sentences. They align with the verbs to provide complete meaning in sentential expression. The lexical choices of the nominals can therefore provide insight about the subject pre-occupation of the writer.

In the nominal group configuration, the headword is obligatory and carrier of the stylistic value. The headwords in the groups isolated above are as follows:

Reasons	-	plural common noun
Contributor	-	singular common noun
Chapter	-	singular register
Death	-	common noun, abstract
Cities	-	plural common noun
We	-	plural pronoun
Logic	-	abstract register
Creativity	-	abstract register
History	-	abstract noun
It	-	Pronominal
It	-	Pronominal
Inference	-	abstract register
Kinds	-	common noun (plural)
Events	-	common noun (plural)
Philosophy	-	abstract register
He	-	Pronominal
One	-	Pronominal
Empire	-	Register
Period	-	Register
Fact	-	common noun
Everything	-	pronominal

The lexical items isolated above indicate a preponderance of abstract nouns, most of which constitute register-lexemes used in the discipline of philosophy. There are also many pronouns used in place of nouns. This choice relates to the need for objectivity as against the subjectivity of mentioning specific names, some of which could be personal. The use of common nouns also portrays the writers' desire to make their discourses accessible because the book was written for University freshmen and general audience interested in acquiring basic knowledge of the subject.

4. Philosophy of language: how philosophical methodology applies to language

As earlier stated in the introduction, the nature and goal of philosophy are to stimulate critical and logical thoughts on issues based on objectivity and clarity. The following are some of the areas philosophy has influenced the study of languages, including English.

Empiricism and descriptivism are twin concepts that have overthrown mere historicism and prescriptivism that characterized the early approaches to language study. Modern grammars are scientific, descriptive, methodological and analytical.
According to Wallwork, J. (1978: 142): "*A scientific grammar will attempt to provide a logical and self-consistent account of how language works: it attempts for instance, to answer the problem… to explain how constructions are related.*"

Right from the Traditional Grammar through the structural and functional grammars, explications on the workings of language have been carried out on a solid theoretical basis which deploys logical rules of syntax and usages derived from consistent rules. In following the scientific approach, grammars have been analysed through abstractions, classificatory groupings and componential functions based on the criteria of consistency, exhaustiveness and satisfactory economy. All the emergent grammars have adopted the sentence is a basic unit and attempts have been made to examine their components and sub-component both in the paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels.

For example, the sentence *"Okon kicked the ball"* has been analysed under systemic grammar with the structure SPC.

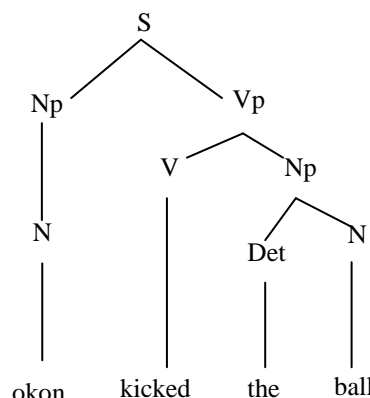| S	P	C
Okon	kicked	the ball

P is the predicate realized by a lexical verb while
C is the complement realized by a nominal group which itself has the structure MH- Modifier, Head where 'the' is 'M' and ball is 'H'.

S is the subject realized by a nominal lexeme

In the rewrite rule of transformational grammar, the sentence can be represented as

S	NP	VP	(Okon kicked the ball)
NP	N		(Okon)
VP	V	NP^2	(kicked the ball)
NP^2	Det	N	(the ball)

The generative transformational grammar would also represent the sentence in a tree diagram as follows:

The symbolism, inferencing and graphic representation utilized above are drawn from the philosophical component of science which strikes at logic, clarity and objectivity.

Semantics or the science of meaning has also preoccupied the spectrum of language study. Undoubtedly, a very abstract and difficult aspect of language to deal with, insights from philosophy have also aided progress in this field. According to Fromkin V and Rodman R. [4]: "*For thousands of years philosophers have been pondering the meaning of "meaning". Yet everyone who knows a language can understand what is said to him or her and can produce strings of words that convey meaning.*"

It follows from the above quotation that the legacy of investigating meaning in language was handed down by the philosophers. Today, based on that foundation, dictionaries have been compiled to provide meaning of words, semantic properties have been outlined and deployed in componential analysis of words, ways of disambiguating sentences have been found, the 'truth' of sentences have been investigated, names are studied based sense and reference. Speech Acts, Pragmatics, Semiotics and Discourse Analysis have all come on board to help linguists explore meaning of words and utterances. Though the question "what is the meaning of "meaning" is yet to be effectively answered, there is no doubt that with the philosophical analysis deployed in the matter of componential analysis, for instance, much sense is now available concerning this paradox. For example verbs such as *kick swim, walk, build, hear; feel* can be analysed as;

+ motion   [kick]
+ contact   [kiss]
+ creation   [think]
+sense   [feel]

The lexemes "man" and "woman" can be analysed as follows:

MAN   WOMAN
+ human   +human
+male   +adult
+adult   +female

Context of situation is a key concept in modern linguistic analysis which was propounded by sociolinguists such as J. R. Firth. This scientific paradigm has illuminated the est-while unknown relationship between language and context (an extra-linguistic feature). Context of situation which encompasses fields of discourse, tenor of discourse and mode of discourse has scientifically extrapolated the variables that attend to different usages of language.

Finally, with the influence of the forensic analytical pursuit of truth, certainty and logic within universal context, as drawn from philosophy, linguists have agreed today on the existence of what is called Universal Grammar (the parts of grammar which pertain to all languages) and from where languages derive their particular grammars by enacting the parts which belong to them. An in exhaustive catalogue of language universals is as follows:

i. Language is a human attribute
ii. All languages are originally equal in status
iii. All languages change through time
iv. All grammars contain word/sentence formation rules
v. Every language exists primarily in the spoken form
vi. Semantic universals of male, female, past time, future time, present time, exist in every language.
vii. Every child can learn any language he is exposed to
viii. Every language has phonetic segments
ix. The relationship between language signs and their meaning is arbitrary
x. All language have grammatical categories of nouns, verbs, etc.

5. Summary and conclusion

The hypothesis that philosophy and language are symbiotically related has been proven in this work. First, using a linguistic analysis approach, it was confirmed that the philosopher uses complex nominals with a preponderance of modifier/qualifier elements situated on abstract common nouns to objectify his discourse. Secondly, modern grammars used in language analysis were confirmed to be rooted in the philosophical methodologies that seek to achieve logic, clarity and objectivity in elucidation.

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