

## **ROLES AND EFFECTS OF VALENTINE CARDS ON COMMUNICATION**

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### **Abstract**

The paper is aimed at studying the roles and effects of some valentine cards in communication. Given that meaning is hidden in most of the valentine cards that may not be open to everybody, this paper therefore seeks to identify some roles as well as their effects in some selected Valentine Cards within the context in which they occur using Systemic Functional Grammar as the theoretical framework. Data were collected by sampling technique. The research found that some cards do not really entail the deeper feelings of the sender. The study recommended that lovers' day should be a day of sincere and genuine interpretation of love. Interlocutors should be on alert to avoid using wrong expressions that might deviate from the true feelings of the day.

**Keywords:** valentine cards, context, communication, love

### **Introduction**

Pragmatics is the study of meaning in relation to speech situation. According to Geoffrey leech, pragmatics is a tragic relation, relative to a speaker or user of the language. Pragmatics also studies factors, which govern the choice of language used in social interaction and the effect of this choice on others. Theoretically, one can say whatever one feels like saying but practically, one must follow the large number of social rules. There are norms of formality that one has intuitively assimilated that one must follow when talking to older people, people with higher authority, and even the opposite sex. Writing behavior is also constrained in similar ways.

Pragmatic factor influences the selection of worlds in communicative grammar and vocabularies form, language differs greatly in those aspects. Greeting expression for example differs from language to language. Pragmatics according to George Yule studies how language is used in communication. It seeks to distinguish the study of the general conditions of the communicative use of language and from the more specific use of the same. This study is mainly on the language used on the valentine cards, which is observed on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of February of every year. It is a day of celebration for lovers, who traditionally exchange affectionate messages and gifts. Pragmatics will therefore play an important role in the conceptualization and contextualization of the language used for this occasion.

Pragmatic shows how social principle of linguistic behavior such as social values, norms, attitudes, real or imagined communion and belief system of the people affects and sharpen the mode and manner of developing and producing meaning in any speech event. However. linguistic variables such as conversational implicature, speech acts, presupposition, cohesion, and participants' inference are some of the basic element in pragmatics, and this element are significant in encoding and decoding the language used in valentine cards.

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Meaning and Scope of Pragmatic and Valentine Cards**

The subject of pragmatics is very familiar in linguistics. Pragmatics deals with how language is used in communication. People like Chomsky regarded meaning too messy for any serious contemplation. But Katz and Fodor began to find out how to incorporate meaning into a formal linguistics theory. It was not long before the California or bust spirit led to a colonization of pragmatics; its colonization was only the last stage of a wave-by-wave expansion of linguistics from a narrow discipline dealing

with the physical data of speech to a broad discipline, taking in form, meaning and context.

The widening scope of linguistics involved a change in the view of what language is and how linguistics should define its subject. The American structuralists were happiest with the idea that linguistics was a physical science and therefore did their best to rid the subject of appeals to meaning, but by accepting ambiguity and synonymy as among the basic data of linguistics. It is notoriously difficult to exclude the way meaning varies from context to context, and so semantics spills over into pragmatics. Pragmatics can be usefully defined as the study of how utterances have meaning in situations. To do this one must develop theories and methods of description which are peculiar to pragmatics, the strongest influences on those developing pragmatic paradigm have been the formulation of a view of meaning in terms, illocutionary force by Austin and Searle and of a view of meaning in terms of conversational implicature by Grice.

### **Brief Historical Development of Valentine Day Celebrations in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the celebration of valentine day is just assuming national prominence for this reason, it has little or no past attached to it. Valentine day does not have much significance in Nigeria it is mostly observed among the elites. The day is now heralded with romantic songs on airwaves, to induce and bring love to memory. Most young lovers send anonymous cards or gifts to someone they have long admired for fear of being turned down. In Nigeria, Valentine Day is mostly observed among lovers or intimate friends unlike in U.S.A and Great Britain where love messages are exchanged by both children and adults. The idea of children getting candy, chocolates and other gift in Europe is ruled out in Nigeria thus, valentine is strictly meant for lovers and adults.

## **The Roles of Cultures, Religion and Environment on Valentine Cards and Messages**

Benedict Ruth (1930) define culture as a pattern of thinking and of doing that which runs through the activities of a people, distinguishing them from all other peoples. The role of culture on valentine cards dates back to the early 1400s.

Muslims do not believe in valentine because of the many stories attributed to it. They do not know which to believe or hold on to or that the day is not certain Moreover, because of the religious implication, which does not encourage open show of affection, the practice is greatly down played by the Christian catholic, in their own legend has it that valentine was a priest in Rome, who with St. Marius and his family assisted the Martyrs in the persecution under Claudius II. He was apprehended and who on finding all his promises to make him renounce his faith in effectual, commanded that he be beaten and beheaded. He was executed on February 14, about the year 270, Pope Julius I is said to have built a church near Ponte Mole and was then named Porta-Valentine. His name is celebrated as that of an illustrious martyr in the sacrament of St. Gregory church several zealous pastors' substituted the name of saints in billets given on this day.

In England, women eat hand boiled egg with salt and put green leaves under the pillow to dream of their intended husband. In Germany, women plant onions in pot on saint Valentine's day, each onion is given a man's name and put near the fire place. The first onion to sprout will be the future husband. In France, according to the history channel on Microsoft Encarta, the first young man seen by a girl on the morning of valentine day becomes her boyfriend, called cavalier or valentine for the year. At the end of the year, engagement usually followed. In another part of France (Hantes-Vosges) the elders gather the name of eligible people for marriage and matched them, if the pair was satisfied,

the girl would cook a meal and her valentine would bring wine and they would go for a dance, if the man did not like her, he would desert her and she would stay alone for eight days, on Saturday night she would burn an effigy of him in a bonfire with other unhappy women and scream abuses on him this was abolished in (1776) by the French Parliament .

However, because of different socio-cultural background amongst various people in the world, the mode and manner of writing and sending valentine messages has been greatly influenced. Just as Daridson (43) rightly observed., “Religious needs were seen as lying at the heart of social evolution social needs were conceived in religious terms, Christmas and Valentine have their focus on the message of love. However, while Christmas shows God’s undying love for humanity, Valentine Day shows the romantic essence of all humans, and the exchange of cards also features commonly in both celebrations.

### **Verbal and Non-Verbal Aspects of Valentine Messages**

The verbal or linguistic aspect of any valentine card provides a relatively detailed and general information about the type of cards. The verbal aspect consists of item such as the name of the addresser and addressee and the message he or she intends to pass across. Such a message being passed across carefully depicts the mood, tone and emotions of the sender towards the receiver.

The non-verbal aspect of any valentine card is the most conspicuous part. This enhances the verbal aspect. The non-verbal aspect of Valentine card conveys information about the addresser and his or her situation through which the addressee learns about his or her emotions, feeling and attitudes. The non-verbal aspects include the use of pictures, signs, graphic colours, flowers, photographs and other emblems of love. These illustrate the text, that is, they often tell the story better than the verbal aspect and

because of their inherent power, they often trigger deeper and more emotional reactions from readers.

It is believed that rose flowers are sacred to Aphrodite the Greek goddess of love. The earlier valentine recorded in Britain in the verses of Chaucer, in the 1700s, valentines were placed on friend's doorsteps and given to men and women in England, children sang valentine carols, and in America, Valentine accompany gift such as perfumes.

The geographical channel on Valentine legend analysis reads as follows:

- Doves - Love messengers that are magical and can predict the future.
- Violets - From Greece, which turned beautiful women blue hearts - were thought by the Romans to contain the soul, a symbol of love
- Religious - Catholic countries (only) made by runs out of cut lace with a saint and the sacred heart in the Centre.
- Hand - Hand of engagement picture on care (mostly used by men who proposed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February).
- Marriage License -In shape of marriage license signed by Reverend tie and tight (popular in England and Africa)
- Vinegar- Unsigned cards containing insults mostly from heartbroken ladies to their lost and past lovers
- Valentine Gifts - Common gifts from men are jewelleryes, flowers, teddy-bear, perfumes and from the women we have handkerchiefs, stockings, ties, cakes and cards from both sexes.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The importance of theory is to help the researcher base his /her work on a guiding principle or theory of linguistics. This work

will therefore make use of systemic functional grammar as a theory because it provides the basis for analyzing the role of pragmatics in the study of the language use in some selected valentine card. Systemic Functional Grammar was an alternative specifically for the wordings of a language. Systemic Functional Grammar illustrates how language can be used in the study.

Several linguists have observed and analyzed the phenomenon of the object on pragmatics today. Pragmatics deals with how language is used in communication. The widening scope of linguistics involve a change in the view of what language is and how linguistics should define its subject. Chomsky opened a door for semantics and went a step further by admitting meaning to be a central pace in language, semantics spill over into pragmatics. Pragmatics can be expressing something in certain ways and the knowledge beliefs and presupposition about the world upon which speakers and listeners rely when they interact. Speech act will be used to carry out the analytical study hence the sole aim of this research is strictly attached to interlocutors.

### **Method of data collection, instrumentation and analysis**

The research collects data specifically from Valentine messages, the research picks ten out of thirty sample card due to the similarities of the cards. The research instrument to be used in this work is chosen because the research will have to showcase the sampled cards in order to properly analyze the pragmatic features or element encountered in the cards. The research analyses the language used on Valentine cards by pointing out the pragmatics in encoding and decoding the feelings and emotions of the interlocutors.

### **Data Presentation and analysis**

#### **Sample 1**

Speech Acts - in sample I, we have two speech acts and they are

e.g     *Until we met.  
I know a rose was lovely,  
But I didn't know its scent  
Could he so sweet.  
I know that there was sunshine  
But didn't know how warm  
Its glow could be.  
I knew I needed someone.  
But I didn't know how much  
Until I met you.*

Is as well affirmative, pledging that the presence of the addressee is greatly cherished and of great benefits in “I knew a rose was lovely but I didn’t know its scent could be”. The perlocutionary effect of these speech acts is to show the love of addresser to the addressee. The Rose flower is so prominent as it portrays its totality and indicates the continuous growth and development of the relationship.

### **Sample 2 and 3**

The second and third samples come from a hand-made card, of creativity and eternity. In sample 2, the bold name of the front page signifies the style of the addressee, a sign of intimacy the message here is affirmative and informative, typically answer the question “how” (non-question) and making a promise guess who will choose “you of course”

*Affirmative in, because you are everything.*

*If feelings come in colours*

*If feelings come in flavours informative in I will choose blue  
(Blue - a symbol of everlasting love)*

*I will choose Vanilla*

*Cohesion is' achieved by the use of repetition*

*If feelings Collie in*



*If feelings conic in and I will choose  
I will choose and this is achieved for emphasis.*

The word ‘*you of course*’ is punctuated as if the addressee is there saying it in presence, making his presence felt. It is a sign of intimacy and affirming the fact “you” the addresser that is being referred to.

The message is well arranged in the first six lines, each to add beauty to the message.

Rhetoric choices of ‘*you*’ and I show the extent of love, it makes use of elevated poetic language.

Sample 3 is short and precise, it shows the continuation of love with unconditional and the inscription.

*‘Special Valentine’ I love you’ more than  
.....*

*I can ..... ever say helps to strengthen the bond of love  
between the lovers.*

Cohesion is achieved here by the use of ellipses the speech act is informative and metaphorical “*The joy of creation is my unconditional love for you*”.

#### **Sample 4**

The tile of sample 4 establishes the kind of relationship existing between the two people as in “*To my Valentine with all my Love*”. This can well be discovered with message within the expression: “*Now that valentine’s day is here I want to tell you that I’ve never cared about anyone as much as I care about you*”.

The speech acts in the above extract are informative and affirmative. Information in that valentine’s day is here, affirmative in that it affirms and consolidates their love for each other as in ‘I’ll always love you. The addresser affirms and pledges his love in I want to tell you that I’ve never cared about anyone as much as I care about you. Thus, the message declares affectionate feelings and points to the addressee’s state of mind.

### **Sample 5**

The illustration in this card goes a long way towards establishing the fact that words may at time become inadequate to express the degree of the love, hence the pairing, affinity and collocation of words:

*Pen and paper*

*Rhythm and blues*

*Horse and carriage*

*Pcacon and tomatoes*

The words in sample 5 do not carry any affectionate message aside, “*me and you.*” It shows the continuation of the expression on the title page with the evidence of cohesion. The expression is poetic in a metinethymine scheme. The use of “*me and you*” indicate the closeness of the people involved.

### **Sample 6 and 7**

The two sample are both designed for a stylistic and romantic effect and they complement the messages being passed across. The speech act theories of both samples are informative and confirmative. The informative speech act gives adequate information about Valentine’s Day and the purpose of the message which is commisive and it point to the fact that there is a promise being made. Sample 6 indicates the festival or celebration of Valentine’s Day The speech act is both informative and confirmative. The informative speech gives adequate information about valentine’s day and the purpose of the message. In Sample 7, there is the use of ellipsis in the expression: “*To my Valentine...*” The use of ellipsis and the possessive determiner “*my*” strengthens the bond of love between the addresser and the addressee. The lover is seeking the love of the addressee as in: “Please be mine”. There is the use of parody in eyes realized as I’s. The rose of flower tallies with the message The “*special delivery*” wrapped flower symbolizes the addresser’s love in a

confinement and given to the addressee in as in the following: “*all love, for your*”. This signals the totality of the addresser’s love on this day. Addresser invariable is not promising any. love after the lover’s day of valentine.

### **Sample 8**

The title of this data is ‘Happy Valentine Day’

The simplicity of the cards and the message it carries show that the relationship is not that of intimate lovers, compared to Sample 1-7. The speech acts elements in the sample are informative. The informative speech acts declare that Valentine can as well be celebrated among special friends thus disputing the assumption that Valentine’s Day is restricted to lovers.

*You know, valentine ‘s day*

*Isn’t just a day to think of*

*Those special people ...*

The message expresses a controversy in the following expression: “*valentine’s day isn’t just a day for lovers.*” Cohesion is achieved in sample by the use of ellipsis as in: “*...to others all year through.* There is also the repetition of words as in: “*Special kind of person.../Special kind of love....*”. This is achieved for emphasis. Thus, despite the fact that Valentine’s Day centers on love, the kind being espoused here is a casual one.

### **Sample 9**

This card describes the addressee as a precious ornament, hence the expression: “*To my precious jewel*” The title page illustrates this fact because the two hearts are bound together to signify the commitment of love with a flower, which stand as a bound writing the hearts, with the inscription on the heart in “to my precious jewel”. This shows that the heart is embedded and firmly fixed in one. The speech act shown here is informative as in: “*you’re the most cherished a precious jewel.* This shows that the sender counts himself lucky to have had the addressee as a

lover being that she is his “dearest and most valuable person in the world”. Thus, he concludes as follows: “*The most valuable possession one can ever dream to have is you*”. This indicates an intimate relationship which is heightened by the expression: “*You are the apple of my eyes*”. Also, cohesion is evident in the text making the language poetic and beautiful while the repetition of the expressions: “*the most cherished/The most valuable/I will never stop*” is for emphasis. Again, the purpose of the message is commisive and it points to the fact that a promise is being made as in the following: *I will never stop loving/I will always be there for you*”.

### **Sample 10**

The title for this sample is “*A Valentine for the one I love*”. Despite the fact that the title appears similar one, “*I love*” indicates that the relationship is intimate because the “*I love you*” is written in a different form, it is written in two hearts bound together to signify the commitment of love, with copad good of love) arrow piercing through the heart. The speech act is informative as in: “*it is so easy to be your valentine*” and affirming in because I’s so easy to keep loving you” The message carries some affectionate tone as it is evicent in: “*To keep loving you*” while cohesion is achieved by the use of repetition as in the following: *It’s so easy to be/It’s so easy to keep.*” Lastly, the message is arranged in four lines with a rhyming scheme which helps in making the entire text some melodious features.

### **Conclusion**

Base on the analysed samples of the data above, it is obvious that Valentine’s Day is celebrated and observed mostly by lovers in Nigeria where it is tagged “lovers day”. Nevertheless, the entire analysis disclosed and emphasised lovers’ affairs rather than casual friend or friend to friend relationships. The study also discovered that some cards do not really entails the deeper feelings

of the sender. Finally, Valentine Cards are not only given as present to lovers, friends or family relatives rather it implies some hidden interpretations in respect to the original meaning.

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