CONTEXT, DISCOURSE ISSUES AND COMMON GROUND STRATEGIES IN SELECTED DIALOGIC INTERNET MEMES

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CERTIFICATION

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to *Jehovah El-Ease*, my ever-present help in times of need.

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ABSTRACT

Dialogic Internet Memes (DIMs), which aid communication of social interests and opinions on Social Networking Sites (SNSs), are used to share previous experiences and negotiate common ground through various contexts. Extant studies on social media interactions among Nigerians have been on text and image memes, humour and multimodality, with little attention paid to the mutual knowledge that foregrounds humour or multimodal effects. This study was, therefore, designed to examine DIMs among Nigerians, with a view to determining their pragmatic appropriateness.

Istvan Kecskes' Socio-cognitive Approach to Common Ground, complemented by Anita Fetzer's Context Types, served as the framework, while the descriptive design was adopted. Instagram was purposively selected owing to its richness in DIMs. Fifty text-only dialogic Internet memes were purposively selected from four Instagram handles: @SavageReplies (19), @unilaghappens (9), @funnynaijapics (17) and @chiefZaddy (5). These handles were selected because of their relevance and robustness in DIMs. Data were subjected to pragmatic analysis.

All the Instagram handles manifested essentially similar pragmatic features. Four context types were identified: socio-economic, religious, academic and medical contexts. These contexts were determinants of the common ground that existed in the sharedness of the DIMs. The second participants retrieved prior knowledge through indexical expressions. Current participant selected next participant based on the amount of information in the interlocutors' linguistic repository of the selected discourse. The adjacency pairs in the dialogues were mostly question/question (indirect answer), question/answer (direct answer), statement/question and challenge/reaction. Six discourse issues were identified: poor economic environment, (un)employment, religious (non)commitment, character referencing, (in)effective communication and intentional ambiguity. These discourse issues showed the subtle debates that pervade the Internet because Instagram permits participation and interactions on online contents. Three common ground-sensitive strategies characterised the selected DIMs: evocation of common sense, exploration of culture sense and reliance on formal sense. Evocation of common sense was projected through the awareness of the general usage and the attendant pre-existing or mutual knowledge of lexical items that are usable and valid in the world. These lexical items are denotative in the context of use. Exploration of culture sense was deployed through the display of knowledge of normative behaviour, beliefs and values of a particular social and geographical setting. Through exploration of culture sense, the linguistic environment of interactants was identified to be within the three major languages (Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo) spoken in Nigeria. Reliance on formal sense probed the general knowledge of the system of language and the mutual knowledge in Instagram through passing of information, performing an action and expressing emotions.

Dialogic Internet memes, as used by Nigerians, are largely dependent on the negotiation of common ground and the understanding of context. They are deployed to activate and enhance pre-existing knowledge without which interpretation will be difficult.

Keywords: Core common ground-sensitive strategies, Dialogic Internet memes, Social networking sites

Word count: 449

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter overview

This chapter gives the background to the study on communication, social media and common ground, statement of the problem, aim and objectives, significance of the study and the scope of the study.

1.1 Background to the study

Communication depends largely on sharedness of common ground among interlocutors. This communicative function finds expression in social media discourse where interactants rely on common knowledge about issues to achieve effective communication. Various methods are however employed to get through to, most times, a heterogeneous audience.

Creatures make sounds because sound is an innate activity that distinguishes living and non-living things. While it is evident that humans, animals and inanimate objects make sound, a recognisable difference is the meaningful communicative process possessed by humans. Language is the articulation of recognisable sounds: first, through the mouth and then through writing. Oral communication was the first ever form. What is said was later transformed to writing. That is probably why semiotics scholars will argue somewhat that there is no connection of spoken words to the written equivalent. For example, what signifies a pen is not equivalent to the way it is spelt. Silverman (1983:3) opines that "semiotics involves the study of signification, but signification cannot be isolated from the human subject who uses it and is defined by means of it, or from the cultural system which generates it." Therefore, the meaning of an object is closely attached to and dependent on the cultural perspective available to the human subject, especially in discourse.

However, in order for communication to be meaningful and effective, language of communication must perform two functions: transactional and interactional functions (Brown and Yule, 1983). Transactional function of language ensures that information goes through a medium to enlighten or educate others about a concept, while interactional function caters for fellowship among language users. These functions have led to the development of media because language is communicated conveyed through media. Media, generally, describe the basic idea of means of communication (i.e. spreading information).

In the past, prior to the advent of technology, information was transmitted through human means. In Nigeria for example, "family heads and traditional chiefs carry out administrative instructions emanating from the palaces and traditional shrines, transmitting such instructions or directives to the inhabitants of the local communities" (Duyile, 2019:4). In other parts of the world, news is circulated through words of mouth by merchants who move from one place to another. These mediums encode given information and appropriately disseminate such which reveal that there are operational language systems.

To cover a wider audience, new methods were introduced. Tracts, news-scrolls, news-tablets and booklets came into existence. Following this, other broadcast system emerged: newspaper, radio and television. This period as described by Manning (2014:1158) refers to the broadcast age. This age is "characterised by inadequate feedback and, sometimes, news is no longer new, because the time frame to deliver information has made it stale". Manning also describes the new age as "the interactive age", featuring new technologies that enhanced immediate feedback and interactions among users of language.

With the dawn of new technologies, the vehicle through which human society thrives, communication as a social behaviour is advanced, influencing the decision of individuals. The society, for some decades now, has admittance to people's opinion on different issues and dialogue has become flexible and engaging. More relationships have been established in the 21st century. People from different parts of the world have been linked and identified as global villagers due to the advent of social media. Manning (2014) defines social media as "the term used to refer to new forms of media that involves interactive participation". Social media, more than the connection it allows,

give room for more control over the quality and degree of connection that we maintain with others (Siapera, 2012).

Social media are grouped into social networking sites, social review sites, media sharing sites, blogging and publishing, sharing economy networks, discussion sites, among others. The most common of these is the Social Networking Sites (SNSs) e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Telegram and so on. Social networking sites allow users to build a public or semi-public profile, create a network of connections with other people and view other people's profiles and networks of connections (Boyd and Ellison, 2008), thereby enhancing effective communication of ideas or events. With increasing development of networking sites, individuals find it convenient to exchange information, views and what they think others should know on particular happenings and events through mediated platforms, with the expectation that others share similar perspectives or become familiar with certain facts. This is what Denisova 2016 (in Denisova 2019:15) refers to as digital platforms.

> …digital platforms do provide opportunities for empowerment for those who seek to find unbiased information, share diverse and unorthodox opinions, express their nonconventional views, connect with the like-minded politicised individuals and mobilise for action.

By this definition, Denisova makes the following assertions:
- There is opportunity to share unorthodox opinions and views.
- There is connectivity in interactions.

Social media, especially social networking sites (SNSs), have made active participation and interaction in any society possible. Meetings, conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures, and interviews can be done through social networking sites where proper coding and decoding of words and careful selection of words exist, and also present functional communicative system. Internet, a global networking system with varied communication and information facilities, has greatly contributed to the functions language performs. The immediate feedback that it affords has given rise to different researches on mediated communication.

A way of sharing or communicating ideas/opinions in our present society, especially among users of different social media platforms is the use of *Internet memes*, featuring

almost every day. Chedid (2016) notes that initially 'memes' were defined as any behaviour or idea that is successful. Catchphrases were the most common type of Internet memes. They come as texts explaining a particular image, while some others are text-based only. *Internet meme*s express a representation or view towards a phenomenon that is familiar and shared among a community of linguistic related individuals. They are capable of revealing ideas, intentions, attitudes, situations or minds of users on topical issues such as health, marriage, education, sport, career, religion and different cultures.

Internet memes have been prevalent in the media since the early 2000s (Sanchez, 2020): text and picture illustrations being the main device employed to convey particular (in)direct message(s) to a general public. The issues raised vary widely. The (in)directness of the message gives each meme its unique identity, evaluating the level of intelligence of the general populace on a particular way of speaking or suggesting an action which may not be said in plain language. Memes are shared through Internet sources, hence the term Internet memes. Unique features of Internet memes, whether textual or a combination of text and image, are: their popularity among users of SNSs (Ying and Liu 2010; Bauckhage, 2014; Kulkarni, 2017); and the transactional and interactional functions they perform. Dialogic Internet memes convey sharedness (by the meme generator and the viewers).

On first sight, Internet memes generate humour and at a closer look, they project ideas and phenomena that are widely shared among hosts or users. Being humorous notwithstanding, memes communicate opinions shared in textual, graphic or motion picture formats thereby generating a pictorial experience a user or viewer can relate with. The foregrounded or climax meaning, which is usually not a particular word, is widely accepted as being humorous at the same time reflecting a norm or a divergence from the same. It should be noted that what is instantiated can be ascribed to the influence of "common ground" as described by scholars like Clark (1996), Stalnaker (2002), and Kesckes (2014). According to Stalnaker (2002:701), Common Ground "is the presumed background information shared by participants in a conversation". He further avers that there is

> a kind of openness or transparency … when speakers mean
> things, they act with the expectation that their intentions to

communicate are mutually recognised. This idea leads naturally to a notion of common ground – the mutually recognised shared information in a situation in which an act of trying to communicate takes place. (p. 704)

The assumption of a mutual knowledge comes to play when generating or creating memes (on the part of the meme generator) for a vast audience who share choices of lexical items that are in their sense common, cultural and linguistic. In view of this, this study focuses on explicating the inherent common ground in social media interactions with special attention on dialogic Internet memes.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Internet memes have proved to be very important means of online communication on various social media platforms. More importantly, dialogic Internet memes are ways of expressing communication patterns laced with social realities, humour and identity issues. The shareability of these memes is premised on the shared knowledge that exists between the meme generators and viewers.

Shared knowledge is a prerequisite to understanding mediated discourse. Studies have drawn their data from various Internet sources and social media platforms like chatroom, Instant Messaging, Facebook, Twitter and with approaches from socio-linguistics, multimodal discourse, pragmatic acts, semiotics, (im-)politeness, stance and engagement, to mention but a few (Chiluwa and Ifukor, 2015; Adeoti and Filani, 2016; Opeibi, Ademola-Adeoye and Adedeji, 2017; Lutfi Gumilang and Juanda, 2018; Ajayi, 2018, 2019, 2020; Fakunle, 2019). This study however draws data from Instagram as a social networking site with a theoretical approach of socio-cognitive approach to common ground.

Studies that have specifically examined *Internet memes* as mediated discourse have focused on politics (Huntington, 2017; Kulkarni, 2017), identity negotiation and identity-related issues (Ding, 2015; Yus, 2018), relationship between social media and film and the spread of memes (Lombard (2014), semiotics (Sari, 2018). Adegoju and Oyebode (2015), Diedrichsen (2018), Tella (2018), focusing on Internet memes, have considered different aspects and discursive practices in online campaign discourse, cognitive mechanisms and emergent grammatical features in memes, humour generation, and multimodal framing in election campaign memes, respectively. So far,

analyses of Internet memes have been on text and images. The data for this study differ from what constitutes those of previous studies; memes that are text-based only and dialogic in nature are considered a significant deficit in the study of Internet memes. Dialogic text only memes give a real or close to real events in social media interactions.

Also, 'Common Ground' (CG) as an approach in socio-cognitive theory has been given insufficient attention in the course of different analyses of Internet memes. Common ground is the basis for the understanding in any form of text production. Dialogic Internet memes are not left out. The memes produced are mostly relatable because they thrive on CG. Not considering CG will make the interpretation difficult because whoever interprets Internet memes has brought in prior knowledge into the interpretation. Hence, this study examines sharedness in selected dialogic Internet memes as a tool in mediated discourse through the use of Kecskes' (2014) socio-cognitive approach to common ground.

1.3   Aim and objectives

This study focuses on CG strategies in Internet memes to describe and explicate the intentions and inferences made in the selected dialogic Internet memes. The objectives will be to:

i.   identify the contexts in the selected memes;
ii.   examine the discourse issues in the selected memes; and
iii. analyse and discuss the core common ground-sensitive strategies in the selected memes.

1.4   Research questions

i.   What are the context types manifested in the selected memes?
ii.   What are the discourse issues in the selected memes?
iii. What are the core common ground-sensitive strategies in the selected memes?

1.5   Significance of the study

This study contributes to research on computer-mediated discourse, Common Ground framework and expands literature on Internet memes as data. The study will be useful

to scholars in media studies on the pragmatic investigations of common ground, as well as to sociolinguistics, anthropology and national language processing.

The study will aid the understanding of Internet memes and other social media interactions, and how intentions are realised through various contexts and discourse issues. Specifically, the conceptualisation and interpretation of social media interactions are useful for the identification of their social relevance. It will also assist in the pedagogy of common ground studies.

1.6   Scope of the study

The study applies Kecskes' (2014) Socio-cognitive approach to Common Ground to dialogic Internet memes with a view to gaining insights into how sharedness that exists between meme generators and viewers create synergised assumption to achieve intended representation of meaning. The selected Internet memes are dialogic, so other types of Internet memes are left out in the analysis. Rather than engage the two sides of common ground (core and emergent), this study is restricted to the core common ground strategies employed. The selection of data is based on relevance to the thematic focus. Therefore, not all dialogic Internet memes are considered for analysis. Also, the data were gathered at different times and they were not selected based on a particular timeframe.

1.7   Definition of terms

The participants in Internet memes as well as the meme generator are described in this section.

1.7.1   Meme generator

A meme generator is the designer or author of memes, who puts together a thought or different thought patterns into visual format. The creation of a meme is closely associated with the assumption that an idea, a concept, a thought pattern, an opinion is shared by a heterogeneous online audience or with the expectation that others become familiar with such facts. Meme generators also carefully select words and images that perfectly describe a phenomenon where no other explanation of the concept is necessary.

1.7.2   Participants in Internet memes

There are two levels of participants observed in dialogic memes. They are 'in-meme' participants and 'out-meme' participants.

i.   In-meme participants: These are participants within a meme.

ii.   Out-memes participants: These participants are the meme generators and the viewers who share and spread concepts.

1.8   Chapter summary

This chapter has elucidated the background to the study on social interactions, particularly Internet memes and their shareability. The statement of problem, aim and objectives, research questions, significance of the study and the scope of the study were also included in this chapter. The next chapter reviews conceptual and empirical studies and the theoretical framework employed in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Chapter overview

This chapter reviews relevant literatures on the concept of Pragmatics and the Internet, Context, Computer Mediated Communication, Common Ground, Internet Memes and Nigerianism. In addition, previous scholarships that have focused on Internet memes and Common Ground are discussed in the chapter. Kecskes' Socio-cognitive approach to Common Ground (CG) complemented by Fetzer's context types are theoretical approaches for analysis. These topics are relevant in that the analysis of the selected data takes insight from the review. They will be discussed in turns.

2.1 Conceptual issues

The concept of pragmatics and the Internet, context in pragmatics, social networking, computer-mediated discourse, memes, common ground, Internet memes and Nigerianisms are discussed in this section.

2.1.1 Pragmatics and the Internet

The fact that humans are interactive beings cannot be overemphasised. Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics are ever prevalent in various studies of the English language. Whether or not it is conceived to be true, all fields in English language – phonology, syntax, prose, creative writing, drama, and sociolinguistics – have discourse analysis features and context of use. van Dijk (1983:24) corroborates this when he said:

> The various schools of discourse analysis… can be distinguished, in part, on the basis of their specific interest in some textual or contextual property. Thus, some people will exclusively study discourse style, or intonation in spoken discourse, or overall meaning, or specific social constraints on the context. Similarly, there can also be specialization in certain discourse types or genres, such as everyday

> conversation, stories, classroom discourse, textbooks, proverbs, or news. Each discourse type, then, could—or rather, should—be characterized in terms of a specific combination of various textual and contextual properties.

The use of any language itself radiates discourse analysis and pragmatics. This is true especially with regards these definitions.

Pragmatics studies meaning in interaction in the sense that it involves a speaker communicating meaning and listeners interpreting it, given the context of their interaction. Since the advent technology, more interactions are seen on the social media. Pragmatics is mainly concerned with intended and invisible meaning of the speaker and how to recognise what is not said (Yule, 1996:12). Much interactions are now closely associated with the Internet. Hence, the "intended and invisible meaning" of utterances abound with the use of the Internet.

Pragmatics cannot be reduced to "purely linguistic matters" (Mey 2004:7). Therefore, the aim of pragmatics is to establish mutual interpretation in a speaker's utterance and the attention paid by the hearer in a communicative event. Pragmatics is the study of the environment of use of a language and how it affects humans and the society. It expresses the relationship that exist among interactants.

Cutting (2002) suggests that pragmatics and discourse analysis should not be defined independently when she refers to them as "approaches to studying language's relation to the contextual background features" (p. 1). She reinforces her claim further by saying, "Both… study the meaning of words in context, analysing the parts of meaning that can be explained by knowledge of the physical and the socio-psychological factors" (p. 2). Both approaches focus on the meaning of words in interaction and how interactors communicate more information than the words they use. In other words, meaning derived from what interactors say is more important than understanding words in isolation. Analysis of discourse ranges from literature texts to day-to-day interactions most of which are found on the Internet.

2.1.2 Context in pragmatics

Context is a form of concept for pragmatics and discourse analysis because there are contextual elements that regulate pragmatic interpretation (Kopytko, 2002). It is what is available to understand an utterance. It is almost impossible to possess a complete

understanding of linguistic encounters without context. This corroborates Odebunmi's (2006:25) definition of context as "the spine of meaning". Contextual meaning is the surrounding, circumstance or background that determines the meaning of an utterance. Context involves topic, participants, setting, and channel of discourse (spoken or written). Context is beyond reference. It is about possessing the knowledge of what things are for thereby giving what is said the adequate pragmatic meaning and counting an utterance as a true pragmatic acts (Mey, 2004).

Different aspects of language use are seen to be connected to the concept of discourse analysis and pragmatics–morphology develops into syntax where words are strung together to achieve meaningful discourse–and the resulting meaningful sentences can be explained further in context larger than the words. Context is centrally connected to pragmatics; there is no pragmatics without context.

A feature of context is the setting of an utterance, i.e. where the communication takes place. Most times, what is said is as a result of the setting we find ourselves. It is possible to encounter restrictions at a setting because of the condition. The condition of a place also determines what is said and how it is said. In all, words used will lead to the context, often times. Another feature of context is the presupposition or assumption of participants in an interaction about previously shared events or circumstances or knowledge.

There are two levels of context generation: macro and micro. Macro is the larger unit that micro context thrives on. Halliday (1985) explains the concept of context through field, mode and tenor; Verschueren (1999) through mental, social and physical world. Odebunmi's (2006) model of contextual belief states two levels of belief system that interactants bring into conversations. They are language level beliefs and situation level beliefs. Language level beliefs refers to the understanding of the verbal and non-verbal language code available in communication. On the other hand, situation level beliefs are "shared knowledge of subject/topic; shared knowledge of word choices, referents and references; and shared knowledge of socio-cultural experiences, previous and immediate".

2.1.3 Social networking

Before the Internet, social networking existed. There were meetings, knowing and linking, which are primary to human existence and social reach. Social Network Sites (Liu and Ying, 2010) are forms of enhancement for social networking. Generally, social networking does not require a platform other than people meeting people, most time face-to-face, through building and sustaining active relationship with different people across different platforms in different places for different reasons and so on.

Social networking sites are virtual communities where people from different sources (different orientation, training or understanding of life) come together. It is plugging into existing network. Communication on social networking sites is done through social media. Social media is the language of social networking; a pattern of e-communication. It is an extension of social behaviour; the traits or character befitting a community.

In summary, social media, as a form of social networking system, has created an avenue to share thoughts, orientation and understanding of life with people who are already members of an offline conversation. It then becomes impossible to view random people's posts except you have a connection with them offline. This sought of increases the sharing of general/common/shared knowledge, using images or words. It also encourages preciseness; shelving unnecessary details because of assumed knowledge by participants.

It is possible to form a general notion about general knowledge, common knowledge and shared knowledge based on the level of interaction that exists between interlocutors.

2.1.4 Computer-mediated discourse

Computer-mediated Discourse (CMD)/Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is a form of discourse or communication where human behaviour on the Internet is considered because of meaningful participation, and where social activities take place. CMD involves communicative events in the Internet. This form of interpersonal communication engages the language use including context, intention of interlocutors, extra-linguistic features (for easy comprehension), and multimodality which are made available through different channels. CMD also encompasses verbal (spoken/written) and non-verbal (body languages) communications, depending on the intention of the message and the channel such goes through.

CMD/CMC has been described as an online behaviour (Herring, 2004). For some decades now, Internet has served as a connector of people and nations. It has provided a means to be familiar with other peoples' culture and ways of seeing things. Socially meaningful activities have been enhanced and interactional function of language has been promoted. (Research on CMD needs to be more reinforced so that a meaningful participation will not be eroded.) He notes that "an important challenge facing Internet researchers is thus how to identify and describe online phenomena in culturally meaningful terms, while at the same time ground their distinctions in empirically observable behaviour" (p. 1). Most times because there are new advances in how things are perceived and as new ideas flood the net, it may become difficult to give terms to new behaviour as they erupt. Communication will continue to be a vital outline of activity. Nevertheless, he adds that "any analysis of online behaviour that is grounded in empirical, textual observation is computer mediated discourse analysis" (p. 2).

Fitzpatrick and Donnelly (2010) consider, from a sociolinguistic approach, CMC by exploring how higher education teachers use the media for interactions online and the maintenance of relationship with their students; meaning-making, shared belief systems, intercultural differences, turn-taking and the likes. They conclude that there is a significant challenge to construct knowledge through a new medium of communication because higher education is yet to acclimatise with communication on learning management system.

2.1.5 Memes
The term 'meme' was the idea of Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* in 1976 to describe how culture is spread from one person to another like in the case of a gene. In other words, memes are small units of culture that spread via person-to-person (Zhao Ding, 2015). Dawkins' idea of this concept is that man serves as transfer agent for behavioural patterns.

> Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping
> from body to body…, so memes propagate themselves in the
> meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which,
> in broad sense, can be called imitation (Dawkins 2006:192).

In Kulkarni's (2017) perspective, 'meme' has been said to come from the Greek word 'mimeme' which means 'to imitate'. This form of imitation could be different forms; shared cultural experience, shared situational experience, or just general knowledge of a phenomenon. Shifman (2013) posits that cultural information, imitation and

competition, and selection are attributes of memes. Dawkins gave examples of memes as "tunes, ideas, catchphrases, clothes fashions…." Recently, researches have been conducted, showing that memes are "one form of user-generated digital media content that may have real-world effects on those who view them" (Huntington, 2017:1) or a way to share thoughts, feelings, humour and ideas (Chedid, 2016), encouraging participation and 'shareability' (Stephenson, 2015) to a wide audience almost at the same time.

2.1.5.1 Memes and their usage

Memes are used to communicate ideas or share experiences that are perceived to be common to a group of people or to a particular culture or tradition. Even though some very old people who know about real culture are not familiar with this new way of sharing ideas or experiences, they have, in one way or another, told stories to the younger generation who in turn look for ways of sharing such. Another way memes are used is to propagate a new way of 'doing'. It could be through a newly released song, a movie, a random personality whose influence attracts others. Whether written or spoken, such can be relayed on the Internet and others who share the idea will also continue to make it popular until another concept erupts. Sometimes, a particular idea can survive for some months while others may not survive more than a week. This does not mean one is more important than the other, but the more people can relate with an idea or experience, the more they share.

2.1.5.2 Memes and their peculiarities

Memes were presumably infused into the culture of the Internet unconsciously, though through deliberate medium. Jokes were performed most times among peer groups who are aware of the idea the 'comedian' seeks to portray. When social networking sites came into existence, allowing people to share contents, those who could not enjoy the privilege of gathering people together for live comedy shows were able to communicate jokes and to a larger audience.

Memes are peculiar to different races due to their educational background or level, age range, class, religion, or political inclination. Some memes are scientific because they imitate the use of certain symbols, equations, diagrams, bar chart and so on. Similarly, other fields of study like law, geography, architecture, library information studies,

language studies, literary studies, psychology, make use of memes to douse tension. The significant difference of this type of memes is the situation surrounding its generation. The words in memes reflect the field of study such memes are associated with.

The age of meme generators also has a lot to do with the type of meme generated. Some memes, as mentioned earlier, are products of coinages invented in the songs of young musicians. Unless when special attention is paid to the wide use of such words or phrases, it will be difficult for an adult to comprehend memes generated from such songs.

Religion also plays a very significant role in the creation if memes. Some memes have connection with words used in the Bible or Quran as well as references from religious stories. Making reference to a pattern of preaching, a song typical of a religion, a way of dressing, manner of worship or even act of giving are pointers to memes generated in line with a particular religion.

Political memes are very common where a politician is represented through his way of speaking, dressing, action or his position on the situation of governance and symbols that represent the political party. Apart from this, politically inclined memes can be generated to criticise a political party through ridiculous imitations.

2.1.5.3 Memes and gestures

Gestures and memes possess some form of connection. This is seen when an image is used to describe a written text or through video memes. More often, gestures are not static, especially rolling of the eyes, nodding, shrugging, dancing, waving, and jumping in excitement. However, they can be described in ways that correspond to the action. The inclusion of video memes makes gestures to enjoy adequate description by meme generators.

2.1.5.4 Meme and culture

The culture of a people is closely attached to meme generation. Culture is generally referred to as the way of life of a particular people. This definition suggests that culture is not universal. Culture is people-bound and varies widely. A lot of things can be seen as what unites a group of people, especially in the same speech community. Once there is mutual intelligibility, an environment can enjoy culture-bound. A group of people

who speak the same language can, however, be separated by the clothes they wear (when a mode of dressing is ascribed to adult and another to the younger ones), doctrinal beliefs and level of education. In all, culture plays a very significant role in the generation of memes so that the intention and quest for retention is achieved.

2.1.5.5 Meme transmission and retention

Ideas that can be imitated and transmitted from person to person (be it writing, speech, gestures, or any other phenomenon) has been made flexible with the advent of social media. And this has given it the name *Internet memes*. As a cultural unit, it is very possible that a meme is transferred and retained because usually a culture is transmitted from one generation to another even though it can be modified. Whatever the situation, memes survive even when the content changes. A meme enjoys replicability if it is accepted by the "host".

2.1.5.6 Memes, emoticons, emoji, GIFs and stickers

Emotion icons, otherwise known as emoticons, may be the first type of memes. Emoticons are used to portray facial expressions of feeling or mood such as smiles, frowns, crying and some other gestures through the use of punctuation marks, letters or numbers. Unlike emoticons, which are limited to facial expressions, emojis include objects we can see around, places, animals, flags, and of course facial expressions. Stickers on the Internet, especially on social networking sites, are smaller memes replicating actions, attitudes and feelings in general. GIFs, on the other hand, are very short motion pictures describing a way of feeling. All these are closely related to memes because they are shared through online platforms.

2.1.5.7 Types of Memes

Memes are imitations of culture captured and shared to reveal realities or experiences. There are three types of memes: text only memes, text and image memes and video memes. They are discussed in turns.

1. **Texts only memes** – these types are written descriptively and to imitate a particular experience or popular notion. There are dialogic and non-dialogic text only meme.

i.   **Non-dialogic text only memes**

If u are my friend, be my
friend. If u r my enemy,
be my enemy. Stay one
place n stop confusing
d thunder😒

www.shiftarena.com
fb.com/shiftlemmefaint1

Do you know that from now
till like mid July is about
90days and if you save 50
naira daily, you would have
saved up about 4,500 naira.
I took my time to do this
calculation for you because
corn will soon come out. I
don't want to hear cut for
me, cut for me.

@correctbae

ii. **Dialogic text only memes** – these types can be likened to drama texts where characters engage in conversations. Some dialogic memes have pictures to illustrate the intended gesture of the meme generator.

2. **Text and image memes** – these types engage the use of picture to illustrate the kind of gesture associated with what is written. Here also, there could be non-dialogic and dialogic text and image memes.

   i.   Non-dialogic text and image memes

Dialogic text and image memes

3. **Video memes** – these types include motion pictures and a text in order to sufficiently explain the intention of the meme generator.

The present study focuses on the dialogic text-based only Internet memes. These types are not more engaging than others, but they reflect some possible differences that exist among social networking site users. Ultimately, the work of pragmatics as defined by Mey (2001) is to place side by side what is said and what is actually being said to arrive at an intention. So, whether a message has been communicated through the conventional stringing of words in any particular language or not, there is an actual meaning in the mind of the coder and possibly another in the mind of the decoder.

2.1.6 Common Ground

The idea of Common Ground (CG) within the ambiance of *communality* has been recognised through other different perspectives. "Shared Cultural Knowledge" (SCK) (Odebuumi, 2006), "Shared Situation Knowledge" (SSK) (Mey, 2001), "Shared Experiential Knowledge" (SEK) (Odebuumi, 2006), "Mutual Knowledge" (MK) (Stalnaker, 1978), "Economy of Expression" (EE) among others, show that human beings are social beings, and the ability to communicate is a common factor. Communality is expressed in the different terms.

Common Ground is the activation of previous knowledge of events/actions between interlocutors or participants (Adeoti and Babatunde, 2018). According to Enfield

(2008:225), CG is "a resource that speakers exploit in inviting and deriving pragmatic inference, as a way to cut costs of speech production by leaving much to be inferred by the listener". This is based on the assumption that the speaker knows what appropriate expression to use so that what is cut off in the process of speech production is not really out of the discussion but left for the "intellectual mind of the participant". An intellectual participant has a highly developed reasoning faculty of the subject matter and not necessarily on general issues.

As defined by different scholars, it has a huge relationship with Mutual Contextual Beliefs (Odebunmi, 2006) which is primarily based on a system of sharing common information or experiences such that gives room for economy of words or put differently, reduced choice of words whereby communicative participants mutually possess the ability to understand and interpret 'ambiguous' expressions, though sometimes unintentionally.

The different approaches to CG will be discussed below and a definition of Common Ground based on inferences drawn from each proponent's perspective will be given.

2.1.6.1 Stalnaker's (1978) Common Ground

The term "Common Ground" can be attributed to the work of Stalnaker. Common Ground is the presumed background information shared by participants in a conversation (Stalnaker 2002:701). The majority of its usage is when a speaker/writer addresses utterance to audience for an unbounded number of perlocutionary and illocutionary purposes such as to establish or maintain a social relation to inform, question, demand, warn, apologise and so on, sometimes creating humour. His idea of CG is much on the presupposition. Presupposition according to him is that if someone presupposes, then someone else also presupposes what was presupposed and so on.

2.1.6.2 Clark's (1996) Common Ground Contributory Theory

This form is based on information gathered, 'created', 'represented', 'maintained', and 'incremented'. He refers to Lewis' (1969) common knowledge, Schiffer's (1972) mutual knowledge or belief and McCarthy's (1990) joint knowledge as the basis for the introduction of the notion of common ground by Stalnaker (1978). His idea on CG is associated with the notion that "two people's common ground is, in effect, the sum of their mutual, common or joint knowledge, beliefs and suppositions" (1996:93).

He sees CG as "a form of self-awareness – self-knowledge, self-belief, self-assumption – in which there is at least one other person with the analogous self-awareness. He gave subtypes of CG as mutual belief, mutual knowledge, mutual assumption, and mutual awareness. A paradigmatic relation exists among these subtypes such that give credence to the subject. He pushes this idea forward by stating that "CG is not information that I have by myself". In other words, the notion of CG will not stand if a single person possesses the 'ground'. It is impossible for communication to be effective without at least another participant to decode what has been encoded by the speaker.

He gives two broad types of CG: Communal CG (cultural communities that people belong to) and Personal CG (people's direct personal experience with each other) (1996:100). Cultural communities define the systems or cultural group an individual belongs to. This will further give the basis for assumption of the individual. "The information people have about a community depends on whether they are insiders or outsider" (1996:101). These classification projects what is expected among 'interactants' in the same cultural community. An *insider* has mutual assumption of what any member of a community is expected to possess while an *outsider* assumes what is expected to be possessed mutually by members of the same community.

Most times, relationships are established and built on the foundation that parties involved share a belief system and such relationships build more environment where parties (participants) base conversations on what is assumed to be in existence in their group. Except for reasons where doubt creeps in because a participant expected to have physical features of the cultural community and does not possess such due to some occasions, there will be no need to probe to ensure that such participant(s) belong to a cultural community or a "nesting" (1996:104). For instance, a Yoruba man who ties wrapper (which is native to the Igbos) but speaks Yoruba fluently will probably be probed because the physical features have in a certain way betrayed his claim. But beyond dressing and appearance, use of language is a basic determinant of CG. What determines use of language could be nationality, educational background, religion, gender or interest. Likewise, a book written by a Briton will be different from the one written by an American. Contents of communal CG includes: Human nature, communal lexicon and Cultural facts, norms and procedures**.**

2.1.6.3 Allan's (2012) Common Ground

Common ground in the opinion of Allan is tied to the fact that certain assumptions are made for proper understanding of choice of topic, language and language variety, style of presentation and level of presentation. There are academic CG, social CG, religious CG and what I will refer to as shared cultural orientation.

In spoken or written discourse, a prevalent idea is that interlocutors who speak the same language either share same background, religion, political view, socio-economic knowledge, lifestyle or educational background. The ground on which these different cultural perspectives exist is peculiar to those *standing* on such *ground*. Allan (2012:2) argues that certain assumptions can be made for proper understanding of "choice of topic, language, and language variety, style of presentation and level of presentation." This is so because common ground varies largely. It could be academic, social, religious, all of which could be based on shared orientation of viewers. All of this is premised on assumption because creating memes is not for a particular sect; many will see it and only those that constitute the group or who have the same orientation with the creator/designer of such memes will understand.

Orientation in a general term means a belief system or disposition or feelings about a particular subject. It is a training or information that you are given before starting a new job, course, etc. (OALD, 8th Ed), or the training you receive at each level or stage of life. At each level or stage where something new is introduced, there are co-participants who are assumedly intelligent being (Allan 2012). Co-participants do not need any extra lecture to comprehend what has been communicated (communicative competence). For instance, in South-western Nigeria, expressions and coinages like *gbe body e* (lift your body)*, gbe'se* (lift your leg), *turninoninown*, *japa*, *o shaprapra*, have become prevalent among youth, especially due to the influence of music. When such expressions are used for older adults, they become insulting because interlocutors do not *stand* on the same *ground*.

Allan (2012:7) concludes that:

> the terms common knowledge, mutual knowledge*, shared knowledge, assumed familiarity, presumed background information and common ground are describing essentially the same thing, and it is what defines the pragmatic constituent of communicative competence: the knowledge and application of

how and when to use utterances appropriately that combines with grammatical knowledge (of semantics, syntax, morphology, phonology) in the production of utterances to generate a coherent text comprehensible to its intended audience.

2.1.6.4 Kecskes' (2014) Common Ground

CG has been referred to as "common knowledge" (Lewis 1969:56ff), "mutual knowledge" (Schiffer, 1972), "assumed familiarity" (Prince 1981:23). Kecskes (2014) gives two main approaches to Common Ground (CG): the pragmatic view and the cognitive view. In the former, CG is categorised as "specialised mental representation that exist in the mind a priori to the actual communication process" while the later "emerged as a result of research in cognitive psychology, linguistic pragmatics and intercultural communication".

Intention and attention are two very important components of CG and these can be achieved through socio-cognitive approaches as proposed by Kecskes. In most interactions, participants seek that attention be drawn to a particular way of reasoning or a group of words or expressions that are not related, but the intention is sustained because of a shared belief between the interactants. Sharedness constitutes the core and emergent CG of the participants. Three ways intention and attention contribute to CG, according to Kesckes' (2014) are:

1. Interlocutors activate mental representation
2. Interlocutors seek information
3. When the speaker brings in private knowledge

Kecskes' socio-cognitive approach (SCA) to common ground creates a nexus in pragmatic and cognitive approach in intercultural communication.

> SCA emphasises that speakers do not always seek common ground and they are both egocentric and cooperative in the communicative process in varying degree. This requires that we integrate the pragmatic and cognitive approaches to communication and, as a consequence distinguish two sides of common ground: *core common ground* and *emergent common ground* (2014:160).

Core common ground (CCG)

This represents the general knowledge or beliefs that are associated with a speech community. Subcategories of CCG include common sense, culture sense and formal sense.

Emergent common ground (ECG)

This refers to the knowledge created in the course of communication, facilitated by the context of situation. Subcategories of ECG are shared sense and current sense.

This study therefore defines CG as the shared common, cultural and linguistic knowledge available to participants prior to a communicative process that enhances mutual intelligibility, with or without emergent presupposition.

2.1.7 Internet memes

Over time, there has been prevalent use of funny graphics in the Internet especially on social media platforms. These graphics create pleasurable memories in the audience, accounting for their use. Many emerging designers have described their experiences or the ones they are familiar with or stories from goings on in the news. What is designed has created so much interest such that the peculiar experiences shared amongst "mediated participants" (Milner 2012:10) are brought to bear. Also, the use of language that conveys the message appropriately in line with the experiences of viewers, no matter their level of literacy, is what makes *lingua* (contemporary usage of words) popular.

The term 'meme' was introduced by Dawkins (1976) to refer to cultural units which are spread from person to person. **Memes are imitations and that is why they are different from random texts and graphics. What is imitated may be experiences from the past or imagined experiences that is most times common to the intended audience.** The target audience is usually not selected by the creator of such memes. Memes self-select its users. Unlike regular conversations where turn taking is done, mimicking is straight to the point; no long expression to communicate an idea or proposition.

So much has been done on memes and a common definition has described it as "internet culture" "participatory culture". The different approaches to the study of memes notes that it is a culture of the Internet (Shifman 2013, Yus 2018). Therefore, it is not limited

in any aspect of culture – social, religious, political, economics and by extension, technology. The customs and belief system of a particular group may vary. One thing that will ever make culture to continue to be relevant is the use of technology; different culture has to make use of technological advancement to get to other parts of the world. I have included technology as an aspect of culture because it now carries or transmits cultural perspective and attitude of different groups or country thereby making it possible to access varying culture.

As a technology culture, memes serve to achieve different purpose. Memes help in the transfer of cultural norms of a group to another. Shifman (2013) sees memes "as cultural units that spread from person to person". As a unit of culture, it has gained much use because of its unique way of passing information. Memes are not spoken but they are written in a way that gives the content a spoken channel, covering many issues which include politics, social life, business, economics, religion and all other cultural views. What makes them different from other images is what Yus (2018) refers to as "replicability and spread of discourse through the net within today's participatory culture". With this, it has been established that Internet meme is a technology culture that allows participation of individuals in the society.

A significant feature of memes is the humourous discourse generated by its users. The view of Internet memes from the discourse level has however shifted the focus away from the humour generated from them. Yus (2018) identifies and addresses 5 stages of meme communication and the ways the different stages influence user's identity: decoding, inferring, sharing, strengthening and spreading. Meme is not communicating if there are no users. It remains the creator's imagination and can only be assumed to be that individual's opinion or ideology about life.

Imitation of cultural perspectives, previous experiences, current trend/societal issues that is channelled through the Internet for the purpose of assessing the level of sharedness of a particular phenomenon or orientation is what is advanced through Internet memes. As a culture of the Internet (Huntington, 2017; Diedrichsen, 2019), Internet memes are "groups of digital items sharing common characteristics of form, content, and/or stance, which are created with an awareness of other similar items" (Katz and Shifman 2017: 828, Shifman 2014). Internet memes in the context of this study is the culture of capturing and sharing the reality/experience of our world.

2.1.8 Nigerianism

It has been observed that when a language is native to a particular set of people, no matter how much you learn, it cannot be without distinct irregularities either in pronunciation or syntax or semantics. The advent of the English language in Nigeria gave rise to the nativised way of using the language. English is only native to the inner circle described by Kachru (1985). As a global language (Crystal 2003), English has been adopted by many countries. The English language moved but not completely because the places where it came in contact with were not without their own culture. The influence from the different contacts mixed with the language not just in phonology and syntax but in semantics too. The recognition of this gave birth to the type of English spoken or used by Nigerians called Nigerian English.

In Nigeria for instance, there are words whose meanings have been transferred from the Nigerian sociocultural environment to suit meanings attributed to them. The reasons can be linked with how such words are produced, making them sound like indigenous languages. Some meanings were borne out of assumptions which in turn render such logic unacceptable. For example, it was convenient for any Nigerian to say "scale through". Drawing from the cultural inclination, it is believed that you should climb over a situation or circumstances which can be viewed as a hurdle, though not literally. Conscious effort is required, however, to give the exact description of an experience without transferring meanings and imposing such on another word.

Beyond transfers, there are other features that mark the English spoken by Nigerians, no matter their level of education or enlightenment. This is not to say that expressions by Nigerians are wrong, but they have been adapted to suit the context of use especially by those who may not be familiar with such lexicon(s). These features have been categorised to be Nigerian English. Nigerianism is a concept developed due to the adoption of English as an official language and a lingua franca. This helps in meeting needs of the immediate environment, considering incompetency among second language users of the English language.

Nigerian English is one of the "New Englishes" which has become 'nativised' (Udofot 2002). The nativisation features expressions that can be linked to the cultural perspective of Nigerians. Emphasis on the ability to read and write in the English language which is seen as literacy has been promoted, neglecting the fact that culture and language cannot

be separated. Learning a language is not complete and would not be absolute if the culture that (sometimes) give birth to how language is used is assigned a lower position. This type of English must therefore be accommodated to promote the culture that has given it more unique features other than how it is used and to also reveal how English is used in other parts apart from its original habitat. The present study includes evidences of the nativisation of the English language. There is a culture and language interplay that helps with the understanding of the selected memes.

2.2 Empirical studies

This section discusses existing studies on Internet communication, social media platforms, Internet memes and common ground.

2.2.1 Studies in Internet communication

Internet communication involves all forms of communication that are channelled through the Internet, whether adverts, chats, news, interviews, media chats, campaigns, emails, learning management systems, and so on. The Internet affords individuals and corporate organisations several opportunities in different ways as it has contributed to the growth of many. It offers easy communication, quick information dissemination and feedback, teaching and learning and connection with the world beyond an individual's demography.

Filani (2016) examines the responses of readers to Akpos jokes, an online comedy corner considered to be humourous. Jokes selected for analysis were randomly collected from a Facebook page where Akpos jokes are published in which there is no prior or ongoing relationship between the producer and the readers. The jokes and reactions reveal the online and Nigerian ESL context where computers paralanguage and language mixing are expressed in writing the jokes. Readers were able to associate or dissociate with jokes or introduce a different context that may be unrelated to either support or refute the humour in the jokes. Osisanwo and Ilesanmi (2022) made recourse to Filani's study, but their data were more precisely jokes from selected Nigerian stand-up comedians, analysed to examine humour strategies. These two studies agree that the audience of comedies or jokes become aware of social issues and these jokes are deployed through different humour strategies. The jokes, like memes, can be identified as forms of internet culture that is transferred among online or offline audience through social media. Rather

than emphasise on the humourous content of this type of internet culture, the present study focuses on Internet memes and the common ground that accounts for their understanding, where such may evoke humour.

Relying on the use of Internet-based computer application, Opeibi, Ademola-Adeoye and Adedeji (2017) present an analysis of digital political text as a new research orientation in digital humanities that can improve scholarship and research breakthroughs. They conclude that digital media technologies can help citizens acquire new skills, foster creativity among users, help the country solve problems, accelerate progress towards a sustainable and strong democracy, improve national development index among others. Specifically, they considered Facebook and Twitter as oppose to the present study's use of Instagram.

Osisanwo (2017), on war against Boko Haram terrorism, examines the discourse strategies deployed by readers who take stance on former President Goodluck Jonathan administration's war against the attack. Data were sourced from the website of e-punch newspaper, an internet version of the newspaper. The outcome of the study indicates that readers' comments condemned the administration of the former president, while some suggested solutions. The study concludes and recommends that the electronic newspaper be monitored to avoid crisis. A point of departure for the present study is that common ground

On presidential media chats in Nigeria, Adepoju (2018) investigates discursive dimensions to politeness in downloaded 2015 Presidential Media Chats. The analysis reveals how "the President make use of politic, polite and impolite verbal acts to get the appropriate message across to those listening or watching". Internet communication invariably takes into consideration appropriateness of receivers. Ajayi (2018) also explores impoliteness strategies in Facebook posts on 2019 presidential election in Nigeria. Drawing from Culpeper's impoliteness theory and Mey's pragmatic acts, twelve selected posts that reveal different Nigerian electorate's use of impoliteness strategies. Ridicule, taboo words, associating the other with negative aspects were seen to be used to threaten their faces to discredit their candidates in the 2019 presidential election.

2.2.2 Studies on social media platforms

Social media communication has been of interest in linguistic research. It is a part of Internet communication with more focus on the exchange of information that ensues on social media platforms. Social media platforms as stated earlier include WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and so on. These platforms allow connections from offline participant to continue interactions online.

With more focus on the activities of companies, organisations and groups, Aicher and Jacob (2015) examine the extent to which social media use in the corporate world are exploited to analyse and compare brands of different companies/competitors. They defined social media as "web-based applications and interactive platforms that facilitate the creation, discussion, modification and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 258). In corporate social media use, there are behavioural differences in the choice of which to employ for the dissemination of information or brand awareness. Depending on the number of followers, sharing of posts increase effectiveness as individuals are able to reach other connections and facilitate the success of a brand on social networks.

Chiluwa & Ifukor (2015) examines the discursive features of the #BringBackOurGirls social media campaign on Twitter and Facebook. Their findings show that the campaign exhibits affect at the vocabulary level showing feeling, emotional language and mood in the representations of persons, groups and government. The study argues that activisms on social media platforms can only yield positive outcome if backed up by offline actions. This study could be correct as the recent #endsars activisms started online and was backed up by offline participation, although not completely abandoning the online activism to allow diasporic participation. Unlike their work, the present study examines Instagram as a social media platform for data collection.

Adeoti & Filani's (2016) study benefited from Odebunmi's (2006) contextual belief theory. They opine that social media in Nigeria make available an avenue for cultural practises to be produced and consumed. Their findings reveal that writers of the selected jokes (Akpos jokes) manipulate shared knowledge of language and situations to generate humour. The choice of social media platform employed (blogs and Facebook) are different from the present study's.

Data were retrieved from Facebook and Twitter as social media platforms were selected to examine the discourse construction deployed by participants in representing the 2017 winner of #bbnaija in Osisanwo (2017). The study concludes that the construction of identity on the reality show brings consciousness to the readers.

The use of social media platforms (among adults in the United States), why it is used and the aspects that influence the frequency of activities on the platforms were examined by Hruska and Maresova (2020). Other questions answered by this study are the gender, educational level, age, income or social status of users. Their analysis is based on telephone interviews of 2002 adults who were 18 years and above and are resident in one of the 50 states of the United States or the District of Columbia. The findings of the study show that households with higher incomes and higher education use social media the most, and as the age of users of Internet memes increases, participation on social media platforms decreases. Older individuals participate less or they choose to focus on a favourite social media platform. Also, those who studied a four-year college/university degree had higher participation because as observed, more educated people desire more information. The married participated more and on gender, males have a higher participation rate than the female gender. It was concluded that Facebook and Instagram were in 2018 and 2019 and companies can focus on them. The scope of this study could justify the findings. In Nigeria, for instance, the frequency in the use of social media platforms is not limited to those with college or university degrees, neither does it feature more married participation. The desire for more information cuts across the board.

Hallikainen (2015) analyses the motivation and consequences of social media platform usage while also developing a research model for exploring the same. Motivations highlighted are functional/utility gained, social value, emotional value, epistemic value (curiosity, novelty or desire for knowledge) and conditional value (that is, values as the situation arises). The model's assumption is that a person's values or needs drive the use of social media platforms. It was also assumed that users derive social capital to achieve their goals and "the perceived social rewards gained from the social interaction through the social media network were assumed to be affected by the ability to draw social capital from one's social network" (p. 15).

Okereke and Oghenetega (2015) interrogate the impact of social media on the academic performance of university students of four tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Through a

purposive sampling technique, 25 students in each school were selected, making a total of 100. Questionnaires were administered as the instruments for data collection. Their findings reveal that most use of social media is not for academic purpose, rather social media is used to reach out to friends (close/distant), to get general information about life and sometimes for academic assignment purposes. Another outcome of the study is that social media is one of the fastest/quickest ways to send and receive information but it has a negative effect on those addicted to it.

An effective tool for social mobilisation and transformation drive and development in Nigeria is the social media. Dunu and Uzochukwu (2015) examine how social media technologies can be deployed for mobilisation and development. They observe that access and use of social media is limited to urban areas and the elites (p. 20). They also conclude that to achieve government goals and targets in development agenda and for effective realisation of these goals, social media is an effective tool, especially in Nigeria.

The use of social media for mobilisation of political supports by campaign planners is south-eastern part of Nigeria is examined in Chinedu-Okeke and Obi's (2016) study. Anchored on technological determinism and social judgement theories, they observed that campaigns on social media platforms has great significance in the decision-making of electorates and the general participation in elections in Nigeria. Technological determinism deals with the setting employed and was propounded by Marshall McLuhan (1964), while social judgement theory deals with the exposure, attitude and feelings about target attitudes. The study's conclusion is that there is a relationship of the Internet with participatory democracy.

Social media communication and the effect on consumer's perception of manufactured products is investigated by Schnivinsk and Dabrowski (2016). They analysed 60 brands in non-alcoholic beverages, mobile network operates and clothing through an online survey in Poland. Social media communication generated by users has positive influence on the equity and attitude of brands, while those generated by firms/industries of brands affect brand attitude only. The equity and attitude of brands have great effect on why it is purchased or the buying behaviour of consumers. Their findings show that contents created by industries online after the attitude of consumers, although the content created does not appear to directly influence the perception of consumers of brand equity.

On stance and engagement in selected posts and comments on Facebook page, Ajayi (2019) concludes that Facebook as a social media platform has proved to be an appropriate platform for Nigerian electorates to air their views on the Nigerian political space.

2.2.3 Studies in pragmatics

The studies reviewed in this section are pragmatics tools which explain context and common ground features suitable for this study. They include identification of linguistic elements that help to realise discourse devices in interactions, language forms and functions on website-based communication, contexts and strategies.

Odeneye (2014) examines the locutions and illocutionary acts performed in the journal discourses in the site with a view to establishing the link between the linguistic forms and pragmatic functions in the discourse and their implications for linguists' publication prospects. Studies on Linguist List Site and other academic fora have covered site descriptions and scope of operation, but not the pragmatics of publishers' intentions on the journal publication calls. The research used 115 Linguist List Journal Publication Call Posts. They were analysed using Searle's 1969 Speech Acts theory to examine the language forms and language functions and the indirect communication use of Linguist List Journal Publication Calls.

Two levels of locutions were found: lexico-semantics and syntactic levels. Lexico-semantic level covered vocabulary which pointed to the journals, academic practice, publication process, editorial composition and peer-review. Paradigmatic features show synonyms related to publication process, scopes of journals and subscriber's status while antonyms revealing research methodology, scopes of journals, publication process and subscriber's status were observed. Syntagmatic elements included collocations found in scopes of journals, research methodology, publication process, soliciting papers, journal utility and journals' assess types. At the syntactic level, sentence types revealed simple, compound, complex and anomalous sentences. Seven illocutionary acts manifested in the journal posts: explaining, preferring, describing, mentioning, proposing, restricting and claiming. The study of the language use in journal publication calls as the focus of the study is expected to advance more on the mode of presentations of journal publishers' intentions thereby enhancing the rate at which scholars decode the intentions of the publishers and to improve their write up which will in turn enhance their academic

prospect. It is expected to assist subscribers to identify the journals that will meet their academic publication prospects through the understanding of the language used by the journals' publishers. It also contributes to research on website based communication.

A lot of research in pragmatics has been carried out on medical verbal interaction. The focus of Ayeloja (2016) is on the discourse devices deployed by doctors and patients during clinical interviews with a view to knowing their communicative functions. The work investigates discourse devices during consultations and the communicative functions using discourse techniques. Linguistic elements used helped to realize the discourse devices to explain politeness maxims in the interactions, the differences and similarities between the actual discourse devices employed in the two locations. The study adopted Brown and Levinson's politeness and M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics as frameworks. One hundred tape recording of doctor-out-patient interactions were made at University College Hospital, Ibadan and University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital, Ilorin and fifty were purposively sampled based on their strategic content.

Twelve discourse devices were dominant in the data. It was observed that doctors employed phatic communion (for opening consultations), direct and indirect questions (for diagnosis), face-threatening acts (for presenting diagnosis politely), language switch (for explicitness, informativity and mutuality), rapport expressions (for cordiality, solidarity and open communication), religious belief (for encouragement and solidarity), counselling (to guide the patients on how best to handle their health), answering questions by patients (for response to queries), closing of conversations (for terminating consultations), repetition (for emphasis), circumlocution (for communicating medical information), declaratives (for providing information), and imperatives (for giving directives). Discourse devices were deployed for addressing specific communication and health problems during diagnosis at the selected hospitals. Awareness of these is important for a better understanding of diagnostic discourse in doctor-patient verbal interactions in the Nigerian context.

The concept of *Omoluabi* and the Yoruba cultural ideology evoked in Lagbaja's music is the focus in Makinde's (2017) study. *Omoluabi* as defined by the work means "good personhood and socially appropriate manner". The study examines the contexts, speech acts and pragmatic strategies adopted in the Lagbaja's music as well as ideology and

stylo-linguistic orientations in order to situate Lagbaja's ideology within the Yoruba culture. Aspects of speech act theory, Fairclough's and Leeuwen's theories of critical multimodal discourse analysis and Odebunmi's pragmatic *Omoluabi* construct were adopted. The study shows three *Omoluabi* features: integrity, considerateness and deference. Integrity occurs in the context of domestic affairs, culture, urbanisation, socio-politics, governance, morality, tradition and socio-economy. Considerateness appears in the socio-political context and deference in the traditional context. Representative and expressive speech acts expounded both integrity and considerateness while commissive and directive acts were found in integrity. Pragmatic strategies of patronisation, dysphemisation, demystication and satirasation established cultural ideology, neutralisation characterises fraternalist ideology and the evocation of phatic communion marked off respecter ideology. This study is an aspect of the cultural sense explored in the understanding of common knowledge in pragmatics.

Through the lens of pragmatics, Folorunso's (2017) study stems from the fact that language serves as a means of socialisation. Since humour is an aspect of social behaviour, it suffices to say that it can only be successfully conveyed through the use of language (2017:1). The study adopted aspects of discursive pragmatics, together with humour theories of incongruity, relief and superiority to account for conversation-based pragmatic acts and humour types. In a logical order (sequential perspective, as used in the study), the study considers the environment of the discussants (context), actions in the context and meaning from the pragmatic perspective. This was used to establish the fact that conversations in the selected movies determined the humorous resources that were discovered. Participants of the humour transactions in the selected movies unveiled "economic sense" as meaning was accounted for through the seven discursive actions identified: mocking and teasing of common knowledge, traditional and family institutions and rites of passage, deception, self-overrating, playing of pranks, trivialisation of church process and parodying the scripture. The meanings associated with the actions are post-proverbial orientation, egocentric orientation, posturing adaptation and post-scriptural orientation. In other words, previous knowledge of proverbs (in the cultural sense), the scripture and also individual self-centred orientations were responsible for the humorous transactions in the selected movies. Rather than focusing on the culture sense alone, present study explores the common sense and formal sense as responsible for comprehension.

The study further shows three types of context found in the selected movies: conflict, coercion and mediation. These contexts reflect the intention of the humour users and the common knowledge shared with the recipients of the humours. She explains four types of humour – comic wit, flattery, satire and jokes. The use of incongruity and superiority theories has brought out features that are peculiar in the context of conflict which linguistic analysis has not been able to account for. The two theories and aspect of discursive pragmatics which are context-situated sensitive theories are able to account for the circumstances under which utterances are produced as indicated by the interactants. With this, scholars can establish connections between conversation and the sequential perspectives that condition humour enactment in Nollywood movies.

Olajimbiti (2017) contributes to the search for discourse representation of children's roles as connected to isolation, dependent, sexist and innocence identities marked by transitivity process and characterised by seven pragmatic strategies in the selected movie genres. Children were depicted as largely victims of adult irresponsibility, discriminators and naïve individuals. He maintains that "it is not an overstatement to say that nothing is 100 per cent context-dependent… a pragmatic analysis is almost impracticable without context (p. 31).

Purposive selection of children between the age brackets of 6 – 12 years and specific interactions of children in the movies, whether with children or adults were carefully transcribed. The Children-Adults interactions included Children-Parents interactions, Children-Teacher interactions, Children-Caregivers interactions, Children-Parent's friend's interactions, Children-Grandparents interactions, Children-Adult family relation interaction, while Children-Peer interactions included Children-Sibling interactions, Children-Schoolmates interactions and Children-Neighbour interactions. The study used strictly information and interactions got from the selected Nollywood movies only and as advocated the use of qualitative and quantitative methods as a method to be employed in analysing children roles and identities.

2.2.4 Existing studies on Internet memes

Different definitions have viewed Internet memes as "participatory culture" (Huntington, 2017), "digital culture" (Börzsei, 2013). Its evolution can be traced to social and technological perspectives. Börzsei (2013) defines Internet memes as "a piece of content spreading online from user to user and changing along the way". Other

characteristics of the definition of Internet memes by different scholars include: online content, user to user usage, spread, decoding (Huntington, 2017), and a way of communication. It can be still images or videos.

Since Internet memes involve culture, it will be generated by users of such and for such cultural environment and not for the entire world. The fact that it is a culture shows that the content is sensitive and can only be understood by those associated with a particular place or orientation. It can be argued that man progresses through childhood to adulthood but different culture shape each person. Imitation in a particular culture might be strange in another culture. To this end common ground of users will determine the decoding, spreading, inferring, strengthening of Internet memes. Internet meme is a form of visual entertainment, which can manifest in many different formats, such as a still image, an animated GIF or even a video. It has also been seen to be multimodal.

Lombard (2014) examines the spread of memes and social media, how identities are formed and offline implications in selected examples of films and television. His study is based on the assumption that social media sites have changed the way in which memes (culturally transmitted ideas, as defined by him) are transferred or spread. His purposeful sampling of selected films to answer what the relationship between social media sites and the spread of memes are shows the way social media aids the spread of memes and how social media are presented in films. One of his findings is that social media provides the most fertile environment for the replication of memes. One can construct an entirely new persona or experiment with different aspects of an individual or social media sites. Online persona can be influenced by memes one chooses to spread online. All memes carry connotations, values and judgments. Assumptions can be made about the identity of an individual based on what is shared. The present study does not focus on the identity, rather more concern is on the common ground in memes as social media interactions.

Adegoju and Oyebode (2015) also through van Dijk's socio-cognitive model and theoretical perspectives on humour examine the patterns of humour evidenced in the deployment of Internet memes (both verbal and visual) in online campaign discourse. They observe that memes serve subversive purpose to detract greatly from the electoral value of the targets. They also explain that "one of the new genres in political humour is memetic communication… the creative use of digital content to spread ideas, establish

community and participate in culture". Socio-cognitive approach to common ground is employed in the present study to rather examine pre-existing knowledge for interpretation.

Mazambani, et al. (2015) examine the impact of status and meme content on the spread of memes in virtual communities, focusing on meme consistency/inconsistency. The status (high, moderate, low) can determine the spread of memes. The study is based on research that information consistent with the theme of a group is remembered better and that ideas that threaten a group identity are rejected. Also, his account from previous studies show that low status group members mimic high-status members and communicate with them to seek information and approval. The study analysed social interactions among four online forums. Findings show that memes from low-status members spread faster than memes started by high or moderate status members. The outcome shows that political memes are more likely not going to gain *spreadability* owing to the form of sophistication attached to the use of words and arguments or "critical thinking" and careful responses that are attached to such. If the initial meaning of meme is to imitate, criticism should probably not be the focus of memes but a side effect it can produce.

Onanuga and Ajao's (2017) work deviates from the cultural perspective of other authors to describe Internet memes as "multimodal artifacts". Their work centres around political online memetics of Goodluck Jonathan with more focus on power and personality on the internet. Negative memes were identified to be prevalent which in turn has implications for the impression presented on Jonathan. This is in line with Lombard's (2014) identity findings on how assumptions can be made about the identity of an individual based on what is shared.

Assessing the effect and affect of Internet memes, Huntington (2017) explains perception and influence of online user-generated political discourse as media. (Media is a channel through which ideas, opinions are passed from one person to another.) He sees meme as "participatory media culture". With much attention to political discourse, the work looks for reasons surrounding the use of political memes. He used ANOVA to determine effectiveness, argument, scrutiny, message discounting and persuasiveness. His findings reveal that political memes produces different effects on viewers than non-political memes. He also submits that political memes are subject to motivated reasoning

in viewers' perception of memes' persuasiveness, adding that more arguments ensue among viewers of political memes, non-political memes were discounted as jokes, and that political memes convey arguments beyond jokes. Whether or not other memes are seen as jokes, there are emotions attached to every meme because, that people do not participate in discussion does not make other memes less perceived. He further notes that there are motivated selective judgement and selective perception in political memes. His idea is formed based on media and politics.

Also on political discourse, Tella (2018) investigates language and the use of images for humour generation and the creation of definite frames during 2015 Nigerian presidential election campaigns. The study was carried using 46 memes from soft news sites and forums. He concludes that supporters of election candidates use humourous Internet memes to portray opponents negatively while positively representing favoured candidates. This is largely due to the participatory culture on the Internet as it promotes the preferred candidate(s).

There are several ways of communicating opinions about politics, and Internet meme is one of them. Yus (2018) defines Internet memes as light-hearted reference pop culture, anonymous and articulated online. The considerations projected in the study is premised on citizen's discourse and participation through the use of memes, the link between information and entertainment and the influence upon people, how consumers of Internet memes decode the argument, "motivated reasoning" and the effect of what is perceived by viewers. Yus's focus was on the identity of the user, that is, what makes the user identify with the usage of memes is the "related feelings and emotions beyond the initial purpose of replicated humour" (Yus 2018:113). The present study agrees with the fact that Internet memes communicate opinions, however, it concentrates more on the prior knowledge that helps users identify with Internet memes. Yus's classification of memes includes digital items such as pictures and videos. Including videos will be appropriate because motion pictures can adequately imitate.

Examining the pragmatic-semiotic analysis of lifestyle memes, Sari (2018) explains that memes pass information and ideas on daily basis beyond entertainment. So, she decides to find out the relationship among the text, the image and the interpretation in the memes and the meaning lifestyle memes express, using pragmatics because it defines the meaning of the text. She also applied Pierce's theory of semiotics, speech act,

implicature and verbal humour in her analysis. Images and the captions they bear play a significant role in the interpretation, completing and supporting each other. Assertiveness is the most common type of speech act found in the creation of memes. She also observes that most memes use popular actor/actress or popular character in cartoon movies. Following the outcome of her work, memes don't just entertain; they also criticise phenomenon in the society. This shows that Huntington's (2018) conclusion about other memes as not motivating criticism is faulty. While criticizing/critiquing, you can also entertain which will be based on common ground.

Yus (2019) observes some feature research issues for Internet pragmatics. He notes that Internet development enables predictions as regard certain challenges pragmatics of Internet communication will most likely face. He states that most online discourses nowadays have to be analysed in the combination of visual and verbal inputs in mainly multimodal instances of communication. Analysis of interactions will have to go beyond CA to "polylogue" containing traditional elements in communication such as author, discourse and audience.

Close to the present study is Diedrichsen's (2019) interaction of core and emergent common ground in Internet memes. The concern of her work is how memes can vary with respect to the degree to which they require core common ground or the generation of emergent CG for their proper usage. In other words, it is what is required when a meme is viewed by "mediated participants", whether core or emergent CG. She posits that memes as a concept "is useful for the description of signs in human communication…" it makes it possible to include intonation, gestures, sign language with all its dimensions. Focus also is on shareability as well as the knowledge and intention of the user. This she did using Kecskes and Zhang's (2009) core and emergent CG, explaining why communication with Internet memes work the way they do. However, not all Internet memes feature emergent common ground as seen in this present study. A feature prevalent to these studies is the sharedness that is enhanced. Most works on Internet memes are on politics with no special focus on dialogic Internet memes.

Ajayi (2020) also shares some similarity with the present study. He investigates a pragmatic (de)construction of "Nigerian realities" in selected humourous Facebook memes. Fifteen memes were purposively sampled that reflect jokes on social issues in

Nigeria on Facebook. They were analysed with Common Ground theory and Odebunmi's (2006) mutual contextual beliefs theory. The outcome of the study shows clear demonstration of materialism and elevated status, gender and stereotyping, marital infidelity, electricity and (un)employment problems, religiousity and spiritualisation of issues, and exorbitant spending on festivities/ceremonies are some of the social realities found within the Nigerian space as evident in the memes. The study's argument is that humourous memes do more than evoking jokes in the Nigerian context; they help communicate subtle debates on social networking sites.

In a recent study on Internet memes, Anton-Sancho, et al (2022) examine the use of humour and memes in virtual learning environment, especially in higher education learning environment. 401 university professors from different disciplines who attended a lecture on the use of humour strategies in higher education classes were sent a survey in order to analyse the effectiveness and employability of the use of humour in higher education for virtual classes. They conclude that "the fact that the usability of memes is less valued, in general, than their didactic effectiveness suggests the need for specific training actions on the use of humourous resources, especially memes, for university professors" (p. 12).

2.2.5 Existing studies on common ground

Common Ground (CG) in communicative process, its role in inferring meaning, the choice of words and expressions to reflect socio-cultural and political realities, implication for societal limitations and affordances imposed on language use of cartoonists and how linguistic and pictorial strategies demonstrates certain ideologies in editorial cartoons is the thrust of Adeoti's (2015) study on Common Ground. She observes that "the use of language is basically relevant in CG which has its place in shared linguistic codes, shared knowledge and diverse shared experiences at the personal or communal levels, employing politeness strategies in an attempt to be communicative yet circumspect". She further avers that CG determines the communicative intention of the cartoonists and that ideology is disseminated through CG. Although the present study also agrees that common ground determines the communicative intention, it differs in choice of data.

Highlighting the pragmatic markers of CG in tertiary institutions on students' sexual discourse in Lagos State, Nigeria, Oni-Buraimoh (2013) observes that "participants in

any conversation encounter operate on the assumption that there are certain aspects in their encyclopedic knowledge that should be a common denominator in assessing understanding and interpreting any ongoing subject" (p. 1). Forty purposive tape recording of students' conversations were made in two universities to examine the linguistic and pragmatic resources inherent in the students' interaction. Findings reveal the CG present in the conversations to be shared cultural knowledge, shared situational knowledge and shared experiential knowledge. Knowledge of indigenous language expressions, blending of foreign and indigenous language words, knowledge of indexicals were products of shared cultural knowledge. Slang words, indexicals and ellipsis were indicators of shared situation knowledge, while shared experiential knowledge featured shared personal co-experiential knowledge and shared extrapersonal co-experiential knowledge. This work has examined CG through Mey's (2001) pragmeme, Odebunmi's (2006) contextual belief model and conceptual metaphor theory using tertiary institution students. The present study differs in theoretical framework (Socio-cognitive approach to common ground) and data (Internet memes).

On a further look into the CG, Adeoti and Babatunde (2016) examine the role of common ground in referential interpretation in editorial cartoons, using Enfield's (2008) and Clark's (1996) perspectives of common ground. Reference and ambiguity in editorial cartoons prompted the search for what makes the readers of editorial cartoons understand the concepts developed by the cartoonists. The type of reference employed by the cartoonists and the expressions that are associated with the cartoons were based on the assumption of the cartoonist that readers have the ability to correctly identify the referent which is, essentially, a function of the common ground. Reference tells the relationship between words and what they represent. The relationship will then account for what meaning is to be ascribed to such words. What CG underscores is the idea that there is reference from the speaker/writer and inference on the part of the listener/reader on whatever is presented. Yule (1996) advances that reference is what a speaker makes, while reference interpretation is the listener's task to identify the relationship between what is expressed with words. The work of CG is presented here as reference and inference by meme generators and viewers, respectively. Common Ground is therefore the activation in the joint effort to interpret a referent.

The literatures reviewed were important to situate the choice of data into pragmatics, context, Internet communication, computer-mediated discourse and common ground.

They are however not sufficient in isolation to address the concept of the present study. Hence, this study brought in relevant aspect to describe the intentions and inferences in dialogic Internet memes.

2.3 Theoretical framework

This study employs Kecskes' (2014) socio-cognitive approach to common ground complemented with Fetzer's (2004) context types. They are discussed in turns.

2.3.1 Kecskes' (2014) Socio-cognitive Approach to Common Ground

A sociolinguistic perspective to how sharedness can be seen among users of Internet memes is *mutual intelligibility* where the language used has motivation for understanding a concept. The language used here will refer to the Internet cultural language or register of the Internet (or in this case, social media). Internet culture requires Internet language. Internet language encompasses code mixing, code switching, slangs, coinages, neologisms, and so on. The language of the Internet is universal. No matter what concrete language is used, the language of interaction or transaction is not as important as what makes for mutual understanding.

Mutual intelligibility is a situation where two or more speakers of mostly unrelated languages find affordances that can enhance comprehension. It emphasises language differences and how users accommodate each other for the purpose of communication. Mutual understanding of a concept promotes common ground. In this study, Kecskes' (2014) Socio-cognitive Approach (SCA) to Common Ground (CG) in the language use of Internet memes is to: situate the study of Internet memes into pragmatics; determine how users of Internet memes understand the concept of the 'meme generator'; explore the dominant type of CG for the purpose of representing different issues; put forward how the mental debate of Internet memes adequately represent the memes and what aids its shareability. Kecskes further distinguishes three components of CG: information that the participants share, understanding of the situational context, and the relationship between the participants. All these come together to account for the common ground that exists in the production and interpretation of utterances, with more focus on interactions on the Internet.

Kecskes' (2010) presents a socio-cognitive approach to pragmatics where what contributes to interaction is the bringing to the fore the relationship between the society

and the individual; not disregarding salience and egocentrism which are essential in communication as well as cooperation, rapport and context. Previous experience of individuals in a communicative encounter plays a vital role in the construction and understanding of meaning in an utterance. He notes further that a speaker's utterance may not be interpreted or understood by the hearer because of the different inclination to actions, previous experiences or orientation of the production and understanding of a speech event. This is the concern of SCA.

Kecskes' SCA to Common Ground gives distinction between core and emergent areas of shareability of a communicative process. What determines the two will be based on context and situation of occurrence. The approach developed by Kecskes (2014) for analysing socio-cognitive to Common Ground (CG) is adopted in this work.

Kecskes' (2014) Common Ground approach to discourse is used to:

1. Situate the study of Internet memes into pragmatics.
2. Determine how users of Internet memes understand the concept of the 'memer'.
3. Explore the dominant type of CG for the purpose of representing different issues.
4. Put forward how the mental debate of IMs adequately represent the memes and what aids its shareability.

The choice of Kecskes' (2014) CG perspective is premised on the fact that there is an interplay of prior experience and actual situation experience that allow a dynamic meaning construction. Also "the more CG we share with another person, the less effort and time we need to convey and interpret information". Kecskes further distinguishes three components of CG:

a. Information that the participants share
b. Understanding of the situational context
c. The relationship between the participants

These three components corroborate Halliday's metafunction of language where understanding of the situational context can be sufficiently addressed through field, mode and tenor of a text. They in turn give information that participants share and the relationship between participants. Kecskes' CG approach also provides insights to the core CG which is the bases for sharing a concept and the need for an emergent CG for adequate comprehension.

Kecskes also made available subcategories of the two sides of CG which are pointers to understanding background knowledge on different discourse issues. The core common ground subcategories were used as strategies to examine the prior and mutual knowledge that is present in the understanding of the intention of meme generators, the attention and how inferences are drawn from the memes. The three subcategories are common sense, culture sense, and formal sense. Common sense is used to identify the knowledge about the world that has been used through the choice of lexical items that is considered to have the same meaning anywhere in the world. Also, culture sense is used to identify underlying norms, beliefs, customs that aids the understanding of the culture(s) expressed in Internet memes, while formal sense reveals the linguistic features used to achieve CG. Communication is dynamic and should not be restricted to the conditions made available by the society alone; but they can also be formed by it.

2.3.2 Fetzer's (2004) Context

Context of situation and culture determine common ground. Context, according to Olajimbiti (2017:33) is, therefore, the missing link between discourse, communicative situation and society which are parts of the foundation of pragmatics. Fetzer (2004) identifies three types of context namely: cognitive, linguistic and social contexts. This is close to Verschueren's context types. Cognitive context, according to Fetzer, is the mental host of inference, i.e. the way of processing what is said. The elements that constitute cognitive context are mental representation, proposition, contextual assumption and factual assumption. It is also the way things are placed in the brain. He further argues that for an effective cognitive context, mutual context features participant common background knowledge. Defining social context, she notes that it "is the deduction of linguistic context and cognitive context…as comprising all of the constituent parts of a speech event" (2004:7). Social context on the other hand refers to the constraints imposed on meaning and understanding of events by interactants. In other words, it is when a communicative process influences the way meaning or events are interpreted. The social context will include the setting without which felicity conditions are not met. It tells us who can say what and where it is said.

Linguistic context according to Fetzer is the linguistic meaning of a text which is constrained by the structural and lexical environment (co-text). Linguistic context considers the collocations available in a text; natural, literary or technical.

Fetzer's contexts are considered for analysis as they subsume micro contexts observed in this study. Fetzer considers context at the macro level which complements Kecskes' position on context. Kecskes' CG is a socio-cognitive approach, hence the need for a broader context type.

Different contexts were identified in the selected memes: religious, academic, economic and political contexts. Under these micro contexts are discourse issues. Contexts and discourse issues serve as bedrock for understanding the environment of use and aids sharedness in the selected Internet memes.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has been committed to reviews of relevant literatures on the concept of Pragmatics and the Internet, Context, Common Ground, Social Networks, Computer Mediated Discourse/Communication, Internet Memes, and Nigerianism. This review also considers empirical studies on Internet memes and Common Ground. Kecskes' (2014) Common Ground (CG) and insights from Fetzer's context types are theoretical framework for analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the research design, method of data collection, the population of the study, and the analytical procedure applied in carrying out this study.

3.1 Research design

This study employed the descriptive research design. It examined the three (3) subcategories of core common ground–common sense, culture sense and formal sense– to present the common ground that exists in the production of Internet memes, especially text-based dialogic Internet memes. The study equally highlighted the varying context types in the selected data and the discourse issues associated with them.

3.2 Data collection

Through a purposive random sampling, fifty (50) texts-only dialogic Internet memes (DIMs) (that is, dialogic memes without images) were selected from different meme generators on Instagram, owing to its richness in DIMs. @SavageReplies (19), @unilaghappens (9), @funnynaijapics (17), and @chiefZaddy (5) were selected handles from Instagram because of their relevance and robustness in DIMs. The selected DIMs reflect online interactions that reveal social interests and public opinion negotiation, existing in SNSs because of the dynamics of no face-to-face contact. The selected data were also to provide multiple mixes on different discourse issues. The data were gathered at different times and they were not selected based on a particular timeframe.

3.3 Sampling procedure

The data for the present study were sourced from Instagram. They were screenshot from the selected handles. Analysis was done by examining the data reveal the core common ground sensitive strategies, context types and discourse issues, embedded in the intentions projected through the selected memes. A top-down approach was employed;

contexts were identified, discourse issues were examined and the core-common ground sensitive strategies were analysed and discussed.

3.4 Analytical framework

The study draws upon aspects of Kecskes' (2014) Socio-cognitive approach to Common Ground (core). Each of these contributes significantly to the analysis of the study. Common Ground (CG) approach is employed to account for the core common ground features present in the selected memes. Through CG, the study accounts for how intention is achieved through common, culture and formal senses. Words and expressions that depict core common ground-sensitive strategies were explored, bringing out the common, culture and formal sense present in the selected memes. Figure 3.1 points out the representation of the frameworks, objectives and findings of the study.
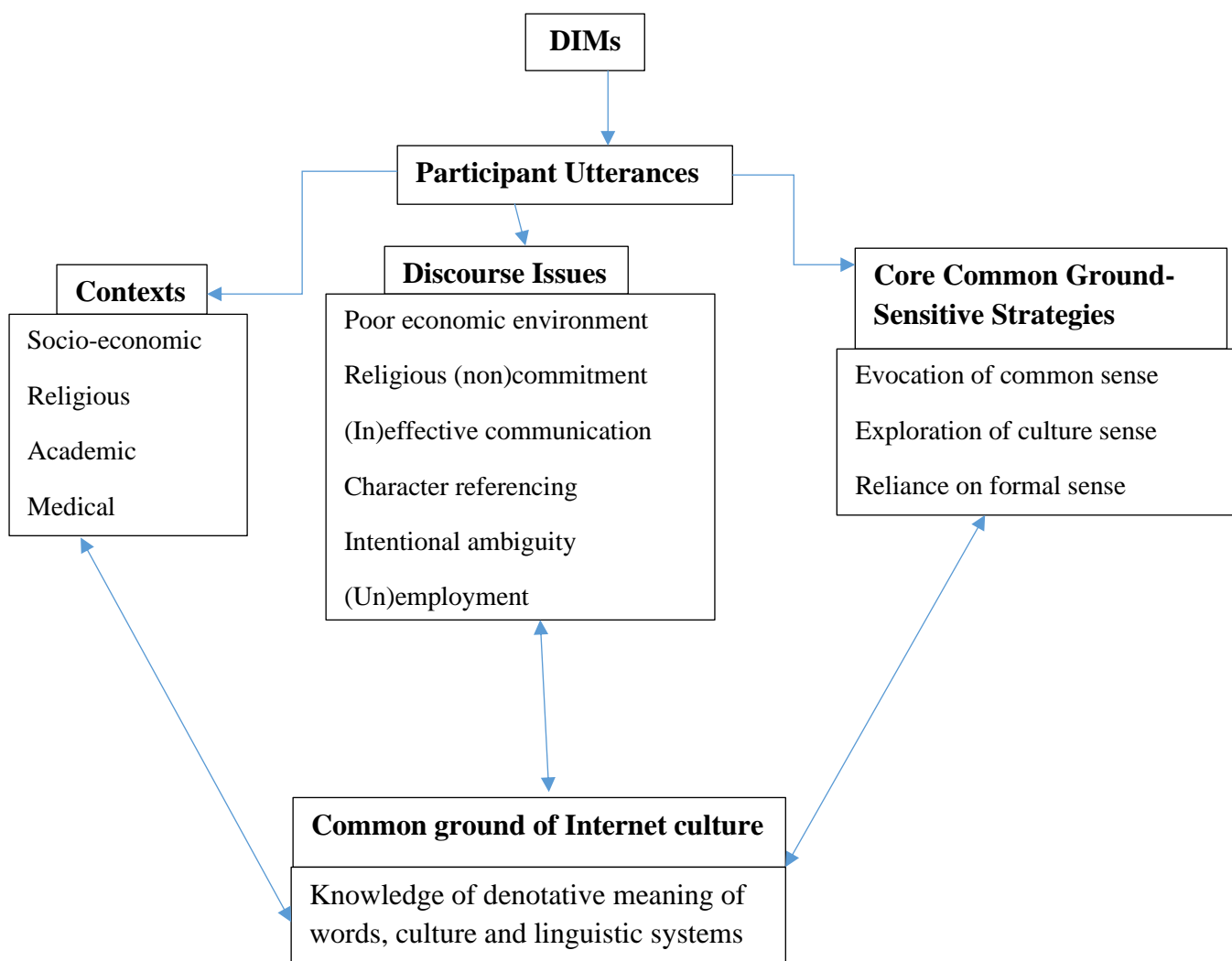
Figure 3.1: Common ground strategies in dialogic Internet memes (Source: Researcher)

Figure 3.1 shows the reflection of participant utterances in dialogic internet memes. From the utterances of the participants, contexts, discourse issues and core common ground sensitive strategies can be unpacked. The unpacked features show an interrelationship that exists, revealing the knowledge of lexical items, culture and linguistic systems of language use in the common ground of Internet culture.

3.5 Chapter summary

The chapter has discussed the methods deployed by the researcher in the analysis of common grounds in dialogic Internet memes. The sharedness in Internet memes is aided by the understanding of the intention and inferences made in the mediated discourse.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the analysis for this research. The analysis is divided into three segments. The first segment identified the prevailing contexts in the selected dialogic Internet memes, the second examined the discourse issues in the selected dialogic Internet memes, while the third segment investigated the core common ground-sensitive strategies in the selected data.

4.1 Contexts in the selected dialogic Internet memes

Context determines the understanding of an utterance. The selected data features the social, socio-cultural and linguistic contexts, but more importantly they shape other forms of context. Fetzer (2004:3) notes that "depending on the frame of investigation, context is delimited to the global surroundings of the phenomenon to be investigated…." She is equally of the opinion that "an utterance relies upon the existing context for its production and interpretation, and it is, in its own right, an event that shapes a new context for the action that will follow" (p. 6). In this study, context is conceived as the surrounding, circumstance or background that determines an utterance based on the mutual knowledge on lexical items where unnecessary details are shelved because of the assumed knowledge possessed by participants. This study, however, identified four context types prevalent in the data. They are socio-economic, religious, academic and medical contexts.

4.1.1 Socio-economic context

Socio-economic context is the surrounding that bears representation on the knowledge of various economic situations, the knowledge of available resources presumably available and the use of these resources. Socio-economic context is used to portray the state of the economy, interest rate, business cycle, business decisions and stakeholders

of a particular geographical location, and how the society responds. This is represented in dialogic Internet memes to show the state of the economy and what is shared by participants. Plates 4.1 and 4.2 exemplify socio-economic context.

Baller G 💦 🦉 👑
@spunky_niga

Who started #Yahoo yahoo?

@Funnynaijapics

iZIK🇳🇬
@Onile_unusual

Our teachers.
Write a letter to your friend in
America telling him you will be
visiting for the next holiday. Do you
have a friend in America?

Plate 4.1: **Representation of economic situation from @funnynaijapics**

Some expressions Plate 4.1 tilt towards an understanding that both share the knowledge of "#Yahoo yahoo" which is associated with a decision made or business cycle as a result of an economic situation. There is a level of shared linguistic, social, socio-cultural contexts embedded in this dialogue. The DIM's turn-taking is current speaker selecting the next speaker based on the amount of information. The meme evoked shared knowledge of a classroom setting where a teacher gives a class test or an assignment. The response points to a socio-economic context. The inclusion of "#yahoo yahoo" shows the social state of the economy and the various ways some individuals go about ensuring a "better economy" for themselves". The desire to visit does not come free of charge, although the letter writing exercise is supposed to train rather than engage in dubious activities.

In Plate 4.1, *iZIK*'s answer is clear enough to be understood by *Baller G* and out meme participants. The level of appropriateness is the representation of the socio-economic context.

Nkanyezi ✔
@NkanyeziKubheka

As you get older what irritates you more than anything?

@unilaghappen

love yo self. ✔
@MichellCClark

not being born into generational wealth

Plate 4.2: **Representation of economic resources from @unilaghappen**

Plate 4.2 is another instance of socio-economic context present in Internet memes. The second participant in the dialogue expresses irritation as 'not being born into generational wealth'. Generational wealth is the resources available from one generation to another which gives whoever is born into that generation the privilege of not struggling for needed resources. Socio-economic context is retrieved through the second participant's mention of generational wealth and the social status that accompanies such. There is the understanding of the frustration that accompanies not having access to wealth.

4.1.2 Religious context

Dialogic Internet memes project discourse issues through allusions to religious characters and events, socio-religious gatherings, symbolic representations of religious events and festivals. Plates 4.3 - 4.5 exemplify religious context.

Charles Dimoke
@Charlie_Gunman

My mom don't wanna talk to me because i used her anointing oil to fry eggs 😢

@SavageReplies

TheDejiBalogun
@TDBofLagos

Quick question chief, Did the anointing break the yolk?

Plate 4.3: **Representation of Christian religious setting from @SavageReplies**

Plate 4.3 is an example of the context of religion. This is seen through reference to anointing oil by the first participant. In the dialogue, the co-participants like in most DIMs don't know each other. The first participant projects the knowledge of a religious substance. "Anointing oil" and the "did the anointing break the yolk?" project a religious statement that "anointing breaks the yoke". The meme draws attention to what is considered to be sacred in the Christian religious setting. The qualifier "anointing" is the indexical that differentiates the oil referred to here as compared to others. The knowledge of this is what the second participant dwells on to ask the question. Internet culture permits connection or independent responses based on the mutual knowledge on the indexical "anointing oil". Through the expressions– "anointing oil" and "did the anointing break the *yolk*"–there is the inclination and reference to a religious context, where these words are used.

Omoniyi Israel
@omoissyy

How will you name your twins "Trust and Obey". 😭 😭

@Funnynaijapics

Makida Moka Onyekweli
@TheMakidaMoka

Because there's no other way.

Plate 4.4: **Representation of culture and religion from @funnynaijapics**

In Plate 4.4, "Trust and Obey" is foregrounded in the question asked by the first participant. The attention drawn to this is based on the understanding that twins are given similar names. Naming is a sociocultural event. Different societies engage in naming which is considered to be important, especially for identification purpose. Names are given to show affiliation with a particular culture or religion to construct identity.

The first participant did not express concern about naming but more about the reason for the choice of the names. He is also aware of the fact that twins are given similar names. Based on his knowledge of the lexical items, he asked the question. He is also aware that the names given to the twins show a religious affiliation. "Trust and Obey" is the beginning of the refrain of a Christian hymn. The response/answer by the second participant attests to this by stating further the refrain of the hymn. The contextual meaning projected is understood because of the shared religious orientation.

Nappy Blaze ⚡
@Nappyblaze

As a christian, would you shoot an armed robber if you accidentally got his gun?

@Funnynaijapics

The Gentleman
@Mature_Gambino

Five bullets. J.E.S.U.S

Plate 4.5: **Representation of Christian religion from @funnynaijapics**

The identity of the co-participants in Plate 4.5 is revealed to be those familiar or having an understanding of the Christian religion. The dialogue is between two persons on what a Christian's response should be if s/he "accidentally has the gun of an armed robber". The second participant's response suggests the knowledge about Christianity with the choice of word 'JESUS' and equating it to five bullets. The first participant however does not display an inclination to be a Christian or not. There is also a shared knowledge of the lifestyle of a Christian. For instance, in the Bible, there is a command that says, "if you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the left".

4.1.3 Academic context

Academic context is the environment of use of words that are associated with learning or the lack of same. This is equally one of the subtle debates that pervade the Internet. Academic context is suggested by our data with words and expressions like 'English teacher', 'uni', 'studying Physics' and so on as exemplified in Plates 4.6 - 4.12.

Plate 4.6: Representation of academic appropriateness from @SavageReplies

Co-participants in Plate 4.6 pick indices from academic influence because of the reference to "English sentences" and "English teacher". It can also be inferred that an "English teacher" is expected to be learned in that field and not make mistakes, especially in a public space and more importantly in an attempt to correct bad expressions. There is also the knowledge on what is to be corrected but which has been defeated because of the mistake. From the challenge and reaction by the participants, the field of the conversation is 'autocorrect'. This is a device that helps to correct assumed wrongly spelt words. This has been the excuse referred to in the first participant's challenge. It is equally associated with the voice of learning appropriate ways of expressing a new or given information.

barda
@CasaDupre

I can't believe girls were cooking for dudes
at uni
@SavageReplies

UG
@UgwunnaEjikem

I can't believe boys were using pocket
money that was barely enough for them to
take girls out in uni.

Plate 4.7: Representation of (non-) academic behaviour from @SavageReplies

The dialogue in Plate 4.7 is about a university environment. This is seen in the clipping of the word university to 'uni' by both participants. They expressed the way of living of students in an academic environment. The interaction suggests other non-academic behaviours that are prevalent among university students such as cooking for *dudes* (an informal way of referring to a man).

AbUduLLAH 👀
@bolajitheboy

After studying physics, what next?

@Funnynaijapics

KING KRIS ⑦🌍
@krisayyor

Keep the certificate at Ohm and sell bags on the TL.

Plate 4.8: **Representation of academic field of study from @funnynaijapics**

Different fields of study exist in an academic environment. It is expected that students should be able to work after graduating in organisations that are related to their fields of study. Plate 4.8 employs question and answer to investigate what happens to students who do not know what to do after graduating. The understanding derived from this meme is based on the inference from the context of academics.

BK.
@_bukunmmi

They should start releasing our results. I'm bored.

@Funnynaijapics

Emi Super Mario
@man_like_demi

Abeg o, if you're bored go to sport center and run.

Plate 4.9: Representation of academic space from @funnynaijapics

Plate 4.9 reveals participants as students who have written examinations in an academic environment. *BK* makes a statement, requesting for the release of results while the respondent reacts to the request. From the dialogue, it could be inferred that the first participant is psychologically ready to see results unlike the second participant. Releasing results is, although, not limited to an academic environment (medical tests results can also be released at hospitals and laboratories), but from the respondent, going to a "sport centre" instead of anticipating "results" is a pointer to an academic environment. Rather than having a sport centre in a hospital, most hospitals have physiotherapy units or gym centres.

What's your Favourite position?

@Funnynaijapics

Behind a brilliant person with a clear handwriting in the exam hall.

Plate 4.10: **Representation of examination condition from @funnynaijapics**

Plate 4.10 reflects the understanding of an examination condition and the psychological disposition of a student in an academic environment. The first participant did not explicitly state what position is being referred to but the respondent points us to the environment of academics. The second participant disambiguates the meaning of "position" and expresses an examination sitting position. Other indices of an academic context are 'brilliant person', 'clear handwriting', and 'exam hall'.

***Plate 4.11*: Representation of academic admission from @unilaghappen**

JAMB is a body that regulates admission in a university. This is the first indexical to the context of academics in Plate 4.11. The first participant's academic status is represented through the claim about his/her JAMB score, the stating of the score and the question trying to find what others scored. The second participant, however, shares the knowledge of JAMB, the score and the implication of 293 as a JAMB score by stating that the end result of that process is to gain admission into a higher institution of learning. Another inference that can be drawn is the fact that 'gaining admission' is a collocation in an academic environment as opposed to an admission in a hospital because a patient will not *claim* to have 'gained admission'.

Nnedi 🌹
@Nnedimma24

Apart from IPhone users, which other people think they've made it in life? 😂🙄

@unilaghappen

Islamiyat 🌹
@Ameeyah6

Masters student invigilating undergraduates during exam.

Plate 4.12: **Representation of examination condition from @unilaghappen**

The second participant in Plate 4.12 has shifted focus from 'iPhone users' to 'masters (sic) student'. The shift is understood in the context of an academic environment due to the mention of "Masters (sic) student", "undergraduates" and "exam". Masters students are postgraduate students in a higher institution of learning who can 'invigilate' exams. The reference to them as people who think "they have" made it in life is comprehended when related to an academic environment.

4.1.4 Medical context

Medical context is concerned with the environment that relates to patient(s) and physician(s)' wellbeing. There are various ways by which a medical environment is conveyed: dress code, medical jargons, personnel (Doctor, Nurse, Pharmacist, Lab scientists, and so on), places or names of different sections in the hospital or clinic, names of diseases, symbols and so on. More than all these, what is said and how it is said goes a long way in assigning the context of medicine in a particular discourse. The familiarity of the selection of codes gives a subtle background to what obtains in the medical world, whether or not one is a patient or a patient's relative. This is exemplified in Plates 4.13 - 4.15

Talk Bleu
@I_DIFFER_B

Has anyone tried using tea for flat tummy? Does it work?

@SavageReplies

Nimueh Anacksunamun 😊 😊
@wickedstepmami

My cousin used it and after two months,she lost 13 thousand naira

Plate 4.13: **Representation of alternative medical therapy from @SavageReplies**

The dialogue created in Plate 4.13 defines the state of wellness craved by individuals. This is sought for through different means. Part of the ways to seek for wellness without visiting a physician in a hospital is shared by the participants which is an alternative medical therapy packed as 'tea'. The first participant in the dialogue seeks to know how well the option works. With the understanding of the respondent on the use of "tea for flat tummy", s/he answers the question by making reference to a previous experience of his/her cousin who "lost 13 thousand naira" in the process. Inference can be drawn from the knowledge of medicine on what using tea for flat tummy is, which is associated with wellbeing and the desire to carry out a therapy without consulting a doctor.

mogwai.
@TheVunderkind

The doctor who saved my life is leaving the country permanently to practise in another country.

I can't even laugh.

@Funnynaijapics

Taruu
@Fabyjnr

He saved yours, now he's saving his.

Plate 4.14: Representation of physicians from @funnynaijapics

Plate 4.14 deploys a meme which projects understanding of medical environment as well as the knowledge of physician and wellbeing of both physicians and patients. The dialogue is premised on the meme generator's knowledge of the situation in the medical field. Dwelling on this knowledge, the respondent constructs 'saving' as what is needed by both the patient and the doctor. The co-textual indices of the medical context are "doctor", "practise in another country", "saving his (life)".

Naija ✓
@Naija_PR

Defeating malaria 'll cost Nigeria
N1.89 trillion -- FG

@Funnynaijapics

ÀKÀNKÉ 🤸
@Titilope__xo

Female anopheles submitted their
budget?

Plate 4.15: **Representation of wellness from @funnynaijapics**

In Plate 4.15, the meme generator projects the goal of defeating malaria with adequate provision made available. Malaria is a disease caused and spread by mosquito. This Plate, like in Plate 4.13 defines wellness and measures put in place to defeat occurrences of disease and anything that can impede human wellbeing.

4.2 Discourse issues in the selected dialogic Internet memes

The discourse issues in the selected memes include poor economic environment, (un)employment, religious (non)commitment, character referencing, (in)effective communication and intentional ambiguity. These discourse issues show subtle debates on social networking sites. They also indicate the level of explicitness, solidarity with propositions and ways of engaging assertions.

4.2.1 Poor economic environment

Poor economic environment is a situation that handcuffs progressive thinking. This is associated with what is available and present for the smooth running of life. It is not without attendant irregularities. This is exemplified in Plates 4.16 - 4.18.

Chris Ani
@iamchrisani

Generational Wealth starts with one risk taker.

@SavageReplies

Mist' Uch£ נִפְלָא 🇳🇬
@ManLikeMarv_

Or one thief.

Plate 4.16: **Representation on online economic debate from @SavageReplies**

84

The occupation of participants in Plate 4.16 is unknown but they may be in the same age bracket, having likely the same social class because the first participant shows a level of academic attainment and the second participant displays a full comprehension of the poor economic situation that he is familiar with. The first participant gives information on how to live in "Generational Wealth". Due to the fact that it's assumed to be an online interaction, the mode of communication is written. In Internet memes, there is an opening which is neither summoning nor greeting. The Internet permits no proper opening or closing as opposed to Osisanwo's (2008) claim on discourse opening and closing which can be to inform, summon or greet.

With the exchange structure of "challenge and reaction" (Osisanwo, 2008), turn taking is regimented; current speaker selects next speaker based on the amount of information available in the next speaker's language repertoire or the choice of lexical items or collocation.

Dr. Dípò Awójídé, FHEA
@OgbeniDipo

What is your elevator pitch?

If you were stuck on a lift with Dangote, Tony Elumelu or Otedola for just 3 minutes, what will you say to them?

@Funnynaijapics

Chidi Okereke
@Chydee

There's nothing they've not heard, and there's no skill set they don't have access to. Everybody is trying to curry favors, and there's really nothing you can offer them that they can't live without. So no need to beat around the bush. Just rob them.

Plate 4.17: Representation of economic opportunities from @funnynaijapics

The situation presented in Plate 4.17 is a question and answers about being stuck on a lift with either Dangote, Tony Elumelu or Otedola who are Nigerian business magnates and how to impress them to get a business opportunity or employment in their respective firms/industries. The names show that they have a leverage on the economy of the nation. The respondent's claim that there is nothing they have not heard before and instead of trying to impress them, robbing them, which is considered a better option, is an indicator of a poor economic state in a nation. If at all there is a need to impress, there will be no need to "rob them". An awareness of a poor economy is presented in this plate.

the kelechi †
@_igwilo

Nobody loves you until you have money.

@unilaghappen

Fuego
@just_deeyah

Even me i don't like myself when i don't have money

Plate 4.18: **Representation of money from @unilaghappen**

Poor economic situation is associated with insufficient funds. The participants in Plate 4.18 are aware of a resultant effect of a poor economic situation, hence the reference to money which is a first indication of a poor economy. Religion, occupation, age, social class of the participants in Plate 4.18 are not known and may not be necessary because whatever religion, occupation, age or social class a person is, money is required for transaction of goods and services.

4.2.2 (Un-)employment

Employment is an essential part of any society the lack of which breeds lots of comments that are made known in the public. (Un-)employment involve everything associated with sending and receiving of CVs, application letters, work environment, employer/employee relationship, and so on. This is exemplified in Plates 4.19 and 4.20.

Plate 4.19: Representation of employment from **@SavageReplies**

The discourse issue projected in Plate 4.19 is employment. The participants are obviously employed. Without employment, there will be no need for the question on the part of the first participant and the respondent will probably have changed the topic of the discourse.

Wale is a Vibe ✨
@TweetByWale

227 days into 2021, how much have you saved so far? 😹 😊

@unilaghappen

ussy
@ardojoy

My life because Nigeria is after it

Plate 4.20: **Representation of employment and savings from @unilaghappen**

Sending CV is a pointer to the issue of unemployment which is the main topic in Plate 4.20, although surrounded by lies and family ties. The meme generator projects unemployment through this meme, making reference to the frustration associated with unemployment. It is obvious here that participants share the interpretation of sending CVs.

4.2.3 Religious (non-)commitment

Religious commitment hinges on the zeal exerted by individuals on issues that pertain to spiritual affairs. It cuts across, in the Nigerian context, faithful of all the dominant religions. This is exemplified in Plate 4.21.

khadeejah
@thorpland

Cement is 3700 naira!

@Funnynaijapics

mazi Ibe
@maziibe_

What we should be building now is our relationship with God because there are many mansions waiting for us in Heaven.

Plate 4.21: **Representation of religious psychological disposition from @funnynaijapics**

Plate 4.21 presupposes religious commitment in the face of hike in price. The first indicator to the hike is the use of exclamation mark. This hike in price of cement is the concern of the first participant. Occupation, age, social class or religion have no role in hike in prices of goods. The response, however, deviates from the issue of hike in price to a religious psychological disposition. The religion referred to is Christianity. The respondent made reference to one of Jesus' statements in the Bible.

4.2.4 Character referencing

The qualities of an individual can be made reference to without mentioning a name. This can be as a result the distinct nature, popularity among different sects, level of influence of such person(s), and so on. This can be identified based on the lexical choices. This is exemplified in Plate 4.22.

Zaynab B. Galadima
@Zayxay

Don't be a boring wife, sometimes take his phone wipe away all the female contacts, sit down and wait for war. 🙄

Adérìnsólá Abíólá
@RinsolaAbiola

@chiefZaddy

Meanwhile, the actual problem is saved as "Muniru carpenter". 😀

Plate 4.22: **Representation of identity masking from**
@chiefzaddy

Plate 4.22 projects the thinking pattern of some women as regards infidelity in marriage. By the names of the participants in this meme, it is possible to identify them as women. While the first participant did not state explicitly whose phone's female contacts should be wiped, the first 'instruction' (Don't be a boring wife) indicates who "his" is – which is the husband of any woman who cares to act on the instruction. The respondent's referent of "the actual problem", based on the existing context, is a supposed mistress.

In an attempt to conceal the identity of the husband and the mistress, they both used neutral expressions; 'his' and 'the actual problem'. Interpretation is aided by prior knowledge through making recourse to movies, especially on cases related to the husband saving a mistress's contact with a man's name or an artisan's just to avoid ease of identification of "the actual trouble".

4.2.5 (In-)effective communication

Effective communication involves the exchange of communication without interruptions, distractions or assumption and where participants assign the same meaning in a speech event. Ineffective communication, on the other hand, involves the disruption or vagueness in a communicative act. DIMs feature ineffective communication where what is meant is not explicitly stated or when stated properly, there is an attempt to reshape the meaning. At some other times, a speech event is ineffectively communicated to lampoon a particular action or event. What out-meme participants view is not ineffective, but a discourse effect in communication process. This is exemplified in Plates 4.23 - 4.27

Onye Nkuzi
@cchukudebelu

The easiest way to waste money, is by
@SavageReplies
eating outside.

Joey Akan
@JoeyAkan

I was eating on my balcony when I saw
this tweet. I quickly moved my food
into the house. Make money no waste.

Plate 4.23: Representation of ineffective communication from @SavageReplies

"Eating outside" can be considered to be ambiguous in Plate 4.23. First, it may mean literally eating outside of a house where flies can perch on the food or on the plate and cause food poisoning. On the other hand, it could mean buying food instead of cooking. Either opinion may be borne out of previous experience. The effective part of the meme communicates humour.

UZOAMAKA
@jennygodswill

I mistakenly cheated on my boyfriend, but I have been on my niece begging him since morning

Uncle don't even want to look at me, guys please what else should I do 😭 😭 😭

@SavageReplies

K10
@officiallyk10

Cheating is relative. That said, you need to find out what's cousin this behavior.

Plate 4.24: Representation of (in-)effective communication from **@SavageReplies**

The information being passed in Plate 4.24 is ineffective owing to the choice of words that do not adequately describe what is intended. To out-meme participants, the message of ineffective communication is effectively communicated. The essence is to lampoon wrong spelling as this contributes greatly to effective communication.

Mrs Girlfriend ✨
@oddeomontle

I'm actually curious.. what do you guys do for a living?

@Funnynaijapics

Kush
@KuhleBesman

our best. we do our best.

Plate 4.25: **Representation of effective communication from @funnynaijapics**

The question asked is communicated effectively in the Plate 4.25, but the respondent's answer can communicate ineffectiveness. The intention behind asking the question is perhaps out of sincere curiosity about either what makes people spend so much or out of curiosity on what makes people have time to engage in some things. The respondent, however, responds in a way that shows that the initiator of the discourse has not communicated his intention effectively. With the use of dots or what is supposed to be ellipsis, there is ineffective communication that the respondent tries to remedy instead of asking for further clarification on the subject matter.

Anda Damisa
@lazywritaNG

DIRECTION is better than SPEED

@Funnynaijapics

Olayinka ✓
@YinkaPost

Dog never pursue you before?

Plate 4.26: **Representation of explicit discourse from @funnynaijapics**

Plate 4.26 shows a communication that has been disrupted by the response in the meme. In an attempt to put forward the distinction between "direction" and "speed", he mentions that one is better than the other, although the reason for the statement is not known. If the initiator of the discourse was explicit about the context where direction and speed is situated, the respondent would not have made reference to when a dog chases a person.

I dislike people that see something wrong with everything

@Funnynaijapics

You did not put full stop.

Plate 4.27: **Representation of sentence construction from @funnynaijapics**

Information passed in Plate 4.27 is properly understood by the respondent and that is the reason he intentionally points out an error in the first participant's incomplete sentence. The respondent has the knowledge of sentence construction: a full stop, an exclamation mark or a question mark appear at the end of every sentence, depending on what is presented (statement, surprise/excitement/anger/command or question).

4.2.6 Intentional ambiguity

Intentional ambiguity is one common to DIMs. Ambiguity refers to the use of words or expressions that can be interpreted based on the context of use, and on the fact that it can accommodate more than one meaning. Intentional ambiguity is used in dialogic Internet memes to express the knowledge of an ambiguous word or to confuse the interpretation that should be assigned to an expression. Intentional ambiguity can also be used to save the face of a person from being threatened. It can also be to conceal the meaning of a word or expression. This is exemplified in Plates 4.28 – 4.33.

Fact
@Fact

A "kakistocracy" is a system where the government is run by the worst, least qualified, or most unscrupulous citizens.

@SavageReplies

valking♔
@_valkiing

Say Nigeria, nobody will beat you

Plate 4.28: Representation of intentional ambiguity from @SavageReplies

The first participant attempts to avoid directly attacking a particular government. In Plate 4.28, the first participant tries to save the face of the government that is "run by the worst, least qualified or most unscrupulous citizens". On the other hand, the respondent expresses disapproval for the face-saving act employed by *Fact,* the first participant, by adding that "nobody will beat you". The intention to conceal the identity of the government and the eventual revelation is not invisible to the out-meme participants. In a way, a definition has been given to "Nigeria". The comprehension of this concept is based on the common knowledge that exists between participants.

Onye Nkuzi
@cchukudebelu

I've been shocked twice at the same UBA ATM.

@SavageReplies

bigBaDwolF
@theofficialFEMI

It must be a current account.

Plate 4.29: Representation of banking and electricity from @SavageReplies

Plate 4.29 expresses the ambiguious nature of the word "current". The out-meme participants shared what it means to be shocked at an ATM. This shock is an electric shock that can be caused by the flow of electricity from an electrically wired substance or object through to the body. The "current" related to this shock is the flow of electric charge to the body. Current account is, however, a type of account at a financial institution which is used by businesses or salary earners. It can also be used to secure loans from banks. There is no link between the current from an electric shock and a current account but because of the use of ATM, the intentional ambiguity is made obvious for out-meme participants to understand.

Unkonfined ✓
@unkonfined

Silence is full of answers.

CHIEFZADDY
i'm baby.
@mummy_mistura

Until you dey exam hall.

Plate 4.30: **Representation of meaning transfer from @chiefzaddy**

In an attempt to give a reason why silence may not be always full of answers, the respondent made it more ambiguous. In Plate 4.30, the first participant explains that even in silence, a lot of things are expressed. This is true as in non-verbal communication. The respondent, however, diverts the meaning of the expression to an academic environment where silence is expected during the conduct of an examination. The respondent tries to repair the meaning of "silence is full of answers" and in the process, diverts a supposed intended meaning.

Crochet Creator 🧶
@Ore_akiinde

Price of yarn has gone up by 40% now. Sigh.

@Funnynaijapics

Ors 💉
@deoors

Yet they keep saying talk is cheap

Plate 4.31: **Representation of intentional ambiguity from @funnynaijapics**

In Plate 4.31, "yarn" is used by the initiator of the discourse to mean a type of wool used for knitting or embroidery. The first participant's expression is clear enough and should be understood by those who know what a yarn is used for because of the mention of "price… gone up by 40%...". The second participant in the meme however introduced a different meaning to what a yarn is. "Yarn" is also the pidgin way of referring to "talk". That the price of "yarn has gone up" is not equivalent to saying the price of talk has increased as the respondent inferred (they say talk is cheap). The intentional ambiguity is employed to express this meme as a Nigerian meme that may not be understood by Standard English speakers.

Jaiye
@D7Hulk

Btw, when Nigeria start to they celebrate Halloween??

Oppai connoisseur 🕵️
@Chuka_emordi

You buy bread N500 on Monday, on Tuesday same bread come be N850, no be scary something be that?

Plate 4.32: Representation of transfer of meaning from @chiefzaddy

In Plate 4.32, "Halloween" is a tradition among the English people where they wear masks and other scary costumes. The first participant's question is expected because the tradition is not celebrated in Nigeria. The respondent's understanding of Halloween has been transferred to mean "anything scary". This the respondent explains by stating that there is a huge change in the price of bread just in the interval of two days and he considers it scary. The intentional ambiguity like in Plate 4.31 stems from the understanding of the Nigerian environment.

A Banter
@kingtobbie

Who speaks French and is willing to travel?

@Funnynaijapics

Ope Baby
@SwitOpe

Common j'apa?

Plate 4.33: **Representation of ambiguous expression from @funnynaijapics**

French is a language that can create job or travelling opportunity either as an interpreter for a business trip or to a group of tourists to a French-speaking country. This is what is expressed by the first participant in Plate 4.33. The response of the second participant is ambiguous to a non-speaker of French because he/she tries to ask a question, writing in a way that shows what is close to French writing system. "Common j'apa?" is the combination of an English word and a slang which can only be understood in the Nigerian context. The meme projects intentional ambiguity through a familiar writing system.

4.3 Core common ground-sensitive strategies in the selected dialogic Internet memes

Three core common ground-sensitive strategies characterised the selected dialogic Internet memes: evocation of common sense, exploration of culture sense and reliance on formal sense. These strategies help to identify the general usage of lexical items, the cultural beliefs and values of a geographical setting and peculiarity of the system of language, which are deployed to activate pre-existing knowledge, without which interpretation will be difficult.

4.3.1 Evocation of common sense

Evocation of common sense refers to the manifestation of mutual general knowledge of lexical items in the selected Internet memes. Dialogic Internet memes contain instances of this strategy with respect to common sense of lexical items addressing various topics: academic, foods and hygiene, banking and finance, aviation issues, job application, medical issues, people and attitudes, governance religious issues, which are predominant debates in Internet memes. This is exemplified in Plates 4.34 - 4.38.

SWEET SEXY SAVAGE
@iam_besha

University is just a scam😩

@unilaghappen

Toby
@tobyy____

This one has seen result 😂

Plate 4.34: **Representation of academic process from @unilaghappen**

Plate 4.34 is a dialogue that presupposes three things: university is a citadel of learning; universities write examination; results come after examinations. 'University', 'result' are words associated with the context of a citadel of learning. A university is a higher-level educational institution in which students study for degrees and where academic research is done. Common sense of the word 'university' is closely associated with going through academic rigor of attending classes and being tested through the writing of examination. It is therefore easy to infer by the second in-meme participant that the metaphor university as a scam was probably because the first participant had gone through the academic process and has not done well. Another side to the dialogue –why the second respondent would assume wrongly– might be due to how life has been after his university education; perhaps he could not get a job or has seen some of his colleagues whom he did better than getting good jobs and living well. But the assumption of the respondent and the presupposition are the focus. It is obvious that they both share the common knowledge of a citadel of learning.

Sage (Oluwaseun Ayansola)
@OJayansola

Looking for a travel buddy. Flights and accommodation will be covered. You just need to be available for 6 business days.

@Funnynaijapics

Jowie 🥀
@prettyyassmf

will my loved ones see me again after this?

Plate 4.35: **Common sense of indexicality from @funnynaijapics**

In Plate 4.35, the information shared by participants are tourism and aviation-related. These are seen in the words *travel buddy*, *flights and accommodation*, *6 business days*. The participants in are assumed middle-aged who still desire travelling. Participants are able to co-construct common sense of the indexical and the intention of the meme generator is achieved through the utterance. Although the response does not seem to activate the knowledge of travelling by air, having one's accommodation taken care of and being away for six days, it still reflects the fact that the respondent is fully aware of the first participant's proposition by the indexical item "this".

Oris
@_Ortodox

This is the time for microbiologists to step up in this country 🤕

@unilaghappen

Petty-grew
@TheVumVum

People that are selling wig

Plate 4.36: Representation of common sense of expertise from @unilaghappen

In Plate 4.36, *microbiologists* are denotatively someone who has studied or is studying microbiology; the study of microscopic organisms. In-meme participants share the information that there is a situation in the "country" that requires the expertise of microbiologist even when the response does not reflect this explicitly. The fact that they "are selling wigs" shows (i) they both have the mutual knowledge of microbiologists as human beings and not inanimate objects, (ii) there is a situation that they all need to come together to address since they are expected to be knowledgeable in that field.

Plate 4.37: Representation of shared knowledge on arithmetic from @SavageReplies

In the Plate 4.37, *MATH* is a short form for mathematics which is concerned with counting, measuring, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and other calculation related. The in-meme participants mutually understand the concept of mathematics, hence the response by the second participant. Common sense of this also translates to mean math is considered to be a difficult subject to learn and this is reveal in the lexical items 'cry' and 'crying' when *math is done* and the questions that relate to math: *WHAT IS 3 TIMES 7?*

Onye Nkuzi
@cchukudebelu

I've been shocked twice at the same UBA ATM.

@SavageReplies

bigBaDwolF
@theofficialFEMI

It must be a current account.

Plate 4.38: Representation of common sense of banking from @SavageReplies

The meme in Plate 4.38 shows the presence of general knowledge of expressions that are associated with banking and finance. They are 'ATM' and 'current account'. ATM means automated teller machine. This machine does the work of dispensing funds with the use of a card and it is widely understood by all banking institutions and customers. The knowledge of ATM was what links the dialogue together. Lexicons associated with banking and finance includes current account and ATM in this dialogue. The relevance of this dialogue to the banking and finance sector has however been transferred to electricity with the use of "current account". The word 'current' is a typical way of representing light, especially among users of English.

4.3.2 Exploration of culture sense

Exploration of culture sense refers to what is engulfed in the general and mutual knowledge of customs, norms, beliefs and values of a society. This culturally shared sense by participants in the dialogues has a way of travelling through the mind of the meme generator and what informs the choice of words, especially in dialogic Internet memes. In the selected dialogic Internet memes, culture sense of lexical items discussing knowledge about norms, beliefs, values, customs and ethics, social science, daily life experiences are explored to account for intention and attention drawn to the utterances.

In the selected data, second participants display a mutual knowledge with the initiator of the discourse and this is indexed appropriately as the thought patterns peculiar to a community where prior experience exist is found in the current conversation. The exploration of culture sense is exemplified in Plates 4.39 - 4.43.

S.B.
@SephoraCB_x

Why do men hate celebrating their
birthdays so much lol   @SavageReplies

Soldier ⟳
@PatohShanqueels

We tired of receiving socks from
people who expect Boat cruises from
us

Plate 4.39: **Representation of knowledge of celebration from @SavageReplies**

Plate 4.39 explores the knowledge of the culture of celebrating birthdays, the associated gift items for different genders which is based on the peculiarity of genders. *S.B.* is pseudo-surprised at why men choose not to celebrate their birthdays because she has observed the norm over time. The predominant norm implies that most men do not want to celebrate their birthdays. The respondent, *Soldier*, gives a reason to why it is so; they are *tired of receiving socks from people who expect boat cruises from them.* In order words, the gifts they receive on their birthdays are not commensurate with what they give. The reason may not be so, but there is a shared sense of gift giving as it concerns each gender. The meme generator explored this knowledge in the creation with the hope that it is shared amongst viewers. Also, the choice of words progresses in a way that allows viewers to understand the concept; celebrate, birthday, receiving socks, expect boat cruise.

Lanrewaju.
@lanruzze

I started teaching my sisters how to drive today. And i have decided that tomorrow, I will introduce cane.

Meliodas 🌿 **@SavageReplies**
@100thONE

You think teaching your sisters how to drive is frustrating until you teach your babe. That one, you can't even vex for her because she will change it for you. All you can do is internalize your anger and continue the next day. 😂

Plate 4.40: **Representation of teaching from @SavageReplies**

Plate 4.40 expresses the belief that a *babe* is treated with much more respect and care than an immediate family member because it might be considered a form of relationship abuse which is frown at in most societies. A *babe* is implicitly a lady with which a man is in a relationship with. Teaching her how to drive will be a demanding task that requires patience, while still focusing on doing the right thing. The first participant did not explicitly state how *frustrating* it is to teach a female gender how to drive. The first participant *Lanrewaju* is by name a Yoruba person. His quip shows that he is older and he thinks he could discipline his sisters when they misbehave. This is not unacceptable in a traditional Yoruba setting, especially where he is seen as the "arole". The respondent however makes known the challenges associated with the teaching: frustration, internalised anger and the need to continue the next day because it is not a-day event. The respondent also highlights that fact that no matter how junior a lady is to you, if she is your girlfriend, you will have to internalise your anger and move on.

The strategy employed here is the culture sense of teaching an adult, a woman/lady with caution and patience so as to avoid hegemonic patriarchy. The meme generator observes the culture sense ignited here because culturally, domestic violence is frowned at (woman should not be beaten or molested in any form). Meme viewers also share the idea presented here because of the choice of words that indicate family (sister) and a relationship (babe).

Beck
@baddiebeck

Your moms side of the family is always
the better side tbh   @SavageReplies

$Olóyè.
@oloye__

Your mum's side of the family is
another person's dad side of the
family.

Plate 4.41: **Representation of indigenous culture from @SavageReplies**

In a family, there are two sides; the father's and the mother's. An important aspect of Plate 4.41 is the reference to the mother's side and how the second participant rescues the situation, making recourse to the fact that a "mum's side of a particular family is the dad's side of another". With this, stating that a particular side of the family is better is relative. Culture of marriage proves that in any society where a child is born, the child has both a mum's side and a dad's side. @oloye quite understands this as a Yoruba man. Oloye is a chieftancy title in Yoruba culture. A previous culture sense activated by the first participant may be because of how she has been treated by both sides. On the part of the out-meme participant, culture sense of indigenous cultures as seen in movies is activated. It is often believed that what is re-enacted in movies are real life experiences that individuals can relate to.

Rotimi ✓
@Rotimi

Don't call it a dream, call it a plan.

baron
@afadjato

@SavageReplies

so I had a plan that my auntie was
chasing me with cutlass.

Plate 4.42: **Representation of shared knowledge of motivations and culture from**
@SavageReplies

Plate 4.42 depicts the culture sense of the expression made by the second participant. The advice given by the first participant is an example of a motivational speech. The response dwells in the shared knowledge of a culture where it is possible that a close family member can engage in a diabolical act. This is mostly seen in Nigerian movies (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba) and it makes it easy to identify with because storylines may be relatable. Dream as used by the first participant is different from the respondent's use of it. While the first participant referred to 'dream' as someone's aspiration/hope/ambition, the second participant has interpreted it through the understanding of what happens during a person's sleep. The identity of the respondent is not explicit enough to know the geographical region he belongs to, but the response to *Rotimi*, who is Yoruba, can help in identifying the respondent as either Yoruba, Igbo or Hausa. He understands the use of the word 'dream' by the first participant but chooses to deviate.

Toochukwu
@seed_michael

Dear African parents, stop forcing us
to come out from our bedrooms to
greet your friends 🙇
They're not our friends!

Cinderella Man ✓   *@unilaghappen*
@Osi_Suave

Alot of our parents friends are the ones
they go to when they are looking for
Jobs for you

Loans for you
Places for you to stay when you travel
abroad.

The simple courtesy of good morning
even if you aren't aware of what is
done behind you.

Won't kill anyone.

Plate 4.43: **Representation of custom and value from @unilaghappen**

In Plate 4.43, the indicators of culture sense explored are "African parents", "greet your friends", "our parent's friends", and "simple courtesy". In typical Nigerian homes, parents want their children to greet visitors/friends as this shows that a child is properly brought up. This the second participant in the meme elaborates by stating more reasons why 'African parents' make their children "come out to greet their friends": parents' friends are the connections when a child is looking for a job; they are connections for loans; their homes are ready-accommodations for children who want to travel abroad (until a child can find his way around). The respondent emphasises that greeting is a simple courtesy in an African home. The culture sense is the activation of the normative behaviour, beliefs and values shared in a cultural Nigerian setting, be it Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba cultures.

4.3.3 Reliance on formal sense

Formal sense is "the generalised knowledge about language system used in our social interaction" (Keckes, 2014:161). In CG, there is so much reliance on the formal sense, that is, the linguistic resources shared by participants in a dialogue to achieve intention.

In a bilingual or multilingual environment, we rely on shared language system where levels of education, age differentia, and religious peculiarity do not matter. All that matters will be the language of communication that is mutually intelligible so that the goal of the communicative event is actualised. Kecskes (2014:161) states that "we rely on a shared language system…to put through our meaning to each other and achieve certain desired effects such as informing others, performing an action, or expressing our emotions."

Reliance on formal sense helps to understand the common ground that exists in Internet memes. Most memes share information on popular notions or new ideas. The focus is the language system used in sharing information on popular notions or new ideas. This strategy is exemplified in Plates 4.44 – 4.50.

Adeola
@Sheeeedarh_

I can't even count the number of people that told me "send me your CV let me see what I can do about it"

Nobody has done anything 😭

Bobby
@theactorbobby @chiefZaddy

Lmao.. My uncle once told me to send my CV to his mail. I forgot to send it. I saw the man two weeks later and he said he had forwarded it to some of his big friends 😂😂

Fraud!

Plate 4.44: Shared concept of emotions from @chiefzaddy

In Plate 4.44, sending CVs is popular and especially among fresh graduates or youths who are 'qualified' for job positions. A man-know-man approach is common in the Nigerian setting. The sentence has a popular quotation which is not new to most youths; "send me your CV let me see what I can do about it". 'Adeola' has shared information by expressing displeasure over failed promises. This information and expression of emotion is equally shared with the respondent 'Bobby' who also gives a written experience with 'Adeola'. Formally, a statement was made which does not necessarily require a response but the experience has been seen to be a shared concept among youths who may or may not know each other but who are connected via social media and real life experience. The meme generator failed promises by relying on the mutual formal sense projected through the choice of the lexical items.

JUDAH
@Mister_Judah

Where can somebody find plot of land for 12k?

It's Urgent

Pastor Ola
@Biisi96

Buy King James Bible, open to the last page, there's a map there. Choose any plot of Land on the map. Ole

Plate 4.45: **Shared knowledge of performing an action from @chiefzaddy**

Plate 4.45 represents the question/answer format common in conversations which is not limited to face. It is also expressing emotions about a university experience. The response gives a clue to the relevance of the information shared. The first participant made an urgent request for a land of 12k (12,000 naira). The response is a performance of an action in response to the first participant's request and also the expression of emotions. The general knowledge of the linguistic system in the response is used by the meme generator to confirm mutual knowledge.

Plate 4.46: Shared knowledge of answering questions from **@SavageReplies**

Plate 4.46 paints the picture of the reliance on the understanding that participants share the knowledge of answering a question with another question. The first in-meme participant was inquiring from a heterogeneous audience because being mad is sign that is assumed to be recurrent if the prescribed medication is not used appropriately. Also the giving of information through a question is a common and mutually understood way of answering a question.

PROF LATTE ™
@honilatte_

You guys should keep watching big brother while Nigeria turns to Afghanistan.

@SavageReplies

DaBushBaby
@ElJefe_

Leave them joo. Jobless youths. You, come lets go and deal with this Taliban nonsense once and for all. DM location make we pick you.

Plate 4.47: **Shared knowledge of expected action from @SavageReplies**

Plate 4.47 expresses the generalised knowledge of requesting for information and expression of emotion that exist in a language system. The first participant challenges "guys" which is used to refer to both male and female, expressing emotions about the situation of the country and the attitude of youths to the situation. The second participant expresses emotions that involves the expected performance of an action – "lets (sic) go and deal with this Taliban nonsense once and for all", while also making a request – "DM location make we pick you" so that an action is carried out.

Mohammed Jammal ✓
@whitenigerian

I just drove from Lagos Airport to VI, no single pothole. I'm impressed 🙌🏼

@Funnynaijapics

Erica Nlewedim ⭐ ✓
@EricaNlewedim

Where did you pass?

Plate 4.48: **Shared knowledge of sharing information from @funnynaijapics**

The dialogue in Plate 4.48 is about moving from one location to another without hitch. The first participant's desire who to inform his online connection about the situation of the road. This may be in an attempt to praise the government of the day or to debunk the rumour about that particular are a being filled with potholes. His information was however watered with the second participant's inquiry about the route the first participant took from "Lagos Airport to VI". His question also debunks his claim about good road network without explicitly stating it.

Plate 4.49: Shared knowledge of answering questions from @unilaghappen

In Plate 4.49, the formal sense is relied on for the understanding of this meme is the expected performance of an action. The first participant is of the opinion that anyone who responds shares the knowledge of doing something for a living. This is a mutual knowledge that wh-questions require answers.

Mr Aziz
@_AzizAdams

@SavageReplies

I hate to admit this, but our kids will miss prayerful mothers!

O.A
@SeniormanOA

Women don't have Gods special number.

Open your mouth and be a prayerful father MR Aziz Adams.

Plate 4.50: Representation of expressing emotions from **@SavageReplies**

The first participant in Plate 4.50 expresses emotion/concern about not having mothers who will keep up with praying for their children probably because they are not so religious anymore based on observation. The respondent also expresses emotions about women not having any special contact line with God and advances the performance of an action – "open your mouth and be a prayerful father".

4.4 Discussion of findings

This study shows that dialogic Internet memes are dependent on the previous/common grounds, which are deployed to activate pre-existing knowledge for adequate interpretation. The study answered the questions about the context types manifested, discourse issues and the core-common ground sensitive strategies in the selected data.

Sharedness or previous knowledge comes in the comprehension of discourse issues and context in dialogic Internet memes. The selected dialogic Internet memes from Instagram handles manifested similar pragmatic features. Socio-economic, religious, academic and medical contexts were identified in the data. These contexts were determinants of the common ground that existed in the sharedness of the DIMs. Second participants retrieved prior knowledge through indexical expressions. The discourse issues identified – poor economic environment, (un)employment, religious (non)commitment, character referencing, (in)effective communication and intentional ambiguity – showed the subtle debates that pervade the Internet because Instagram permits participation and interactions on online contents. Current participant selected next participant based on the amount of information in the interlocutors' linguistic repository of the selected discourse. The adjacency pairs in the dialogues were mostly question/question (indirect answer), question/answer (direct answer), statement/question and challenge/reaction.

Findings of the study are consistent with previous studies on Internet memes as a culture of the internet (Huntington, 2015; Börzsei, 2013; Yus, 2018) and its *spreadability* (Mazambani et al, 2015) that activates humour (Adegoju and Oyebode, 2015; Tella, 2018). Also on Common Ground, there are similarities in the findings of Adeoti (2015) and Adeoti and Babatunde (2016) with the present study where there is shared knowledge of linguistic items and references to linguistic items on the assumption of viewers to correctly identify the reference through linguistic indices.

Three common ground-sensitive strategies characterised the selected DIMs: evocation of common sense, exploration of culture sense and reliance on formal sense. Evocation of common sense was observed through the awareness of the general usage and the attendant pre-existing or mutual knowledge of lexical items that are usable and valid in the world. These lexical items are denotative in the context of use. Exploration of culture sense was deployed through the display of knowledge of normative behaviour, beliefs and values of a particular social and geographical setting. Through exploration of culture sense, the linguistic environment of interactants was identified to be within the three major languages (Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo) spoken in Nigeria. Reliance on formal sense probed the general knowledge of the system of language and the mutual knowledge in Instagram through passing of information, performing an action and expressing emotions.

Social media platforms sometimes share and can accommodate similar contents to show continuous online participation that are associated with the culture of a particular space (Chiluwa and Ifukor, 2015; Adeoti and Filani, 2016; Osisanwo, 2017). They are also appropriate platforms for social interactions and debates (Chinedu-Okeke and Obi, 2015; Dunu and Uzochukwu, 2015; Ajayi, 2019).

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented and analysed the selected data by examining the contexts, discourse issues and the core common ground strategies in the selected dialogic Internet memes. The types of context include socio-economic, religious, academic and medical. The discourse issues exemplified were poor economic environment, (un-)employment, religious (non-)commitment, character referencing, (in-)effective communication and intentional ambiguity. Evocation of common sense, exploration of culture sense and reliance on formal sense were the core common ground strategies in the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the concluding remarks of the study. It presents the summary, findings, contribution to knowledge and suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Summary

Context, discourse issues and the common ground strategies that aid the sharing of the dialogic Internet memes have been examined in this study. Chapter one gave the general introduction and background to the study, aim and objectives, statement of the problem, significance of the study, scope, alongside the two levels of participation in the selected Internet memes. The second chapter presented reviews of conceptual and empirical literatures that are related and relevant to the study in order to place this study within existing research on the focus of the current study. It reviewed the concept of pragmatics and the Internet, common ground, social networks, computer mediated discourse/communication, memes and Nigerianism. This chapter also presented the theoretical framework for the analysis of the selected data. Chapter three gave the method adopted for data collection and analysis.

Chapter four presents a socio-cognitive approach of Common Ground analysis of the selected dialogic Internet memes. This is with the intention of exploring and examining core common ground-sensitive strategies, context and discourse issues in the selected Internet memes.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has shown that meme generators make use of lexical words to express their intentions through varying discourse issues in a particular context. Contexts generate discourse issues which point to the CG shared by out-meme participants. Core common

ground is more prevalent in the selected memes and the selected dialogue does not accommodate emergent CG. Common, culture and formal senses (Kecskes, 2014) are direct pointers to the common ground that exist in the selected dialogic Internet memes. Irrespective of the observed contexts or discourse issues, they all project the presence of mutual knowledge that helps in the interpretation of Internet memes.

Except when there are recontextualizations, emergent CG, where probably a prior interpretation is not in accordance with the intention, does not ensue. Out-meme participants engage common sense, culture sense and formal sense, which are based on mutual knowledge guided by the context of use in such memes. Certainly, there are different contexts in the production of Internet memes with varying discourse issues, but the primary intention of meme generators remains capturing the reality/experience of our world in varying dialogues. Social networking sites continue to promote common ground among users.

Unlike other types of Internet memes (text and image memes, non-dialogic texts only memes, and dialogic text and image memes) dialogic text-only memes require previous knowledge of the representations presented in the memes. Most times, the meaning generated by viewers are alike due to the indexical employed in the creation of the memes. In other types of Internet memes enumerated in this study, there is a glimpse into what is about to be discussed, although it might employ intentional ambiguity in the process. It is, however, apt to mention that in whatever type used to portray a particular phenomenon, previous knowledge always comes to play.

It is also easy to identify the geographical area of generation and use of Internet memes. Some meme generators make it explicit (for example, funny**naija**pics, **unilag**happens) to access the setting, while some others choose an identity that does not give out the setting but the context (physical, psychological, educational, social and so on) states the exact area where such expressions can be made.

5.3 Recommendations

This research only analysed dialogic internet memes, with particular focus on the core common ground-sensitive strategies in the selected memes. The other side to common ground which is the emergent common ground can be explored using dialogic Internet memes where knowledge created in the cause of communication or interaction can be

looked into to examine the actual situational context, looking at the shared and current sense.

The patterns of the experiential function of grammar in the selected Internet memes can be used to examine the experiences shared by participants in a conversation, the verbs they use and the circumstances surrounding the events which are essential to bringing out the common ground. The interpersonal and textual functions of grammar in Dialogic Internet memes can also be considered for analysis.

5.4 Contributions to knowledge

This study contributes to research on computer mediated discourse and expands literature on Internet memes as a source of data and common ground as a theoretical framework for pragmatic analysis. As observed earlier, studies on Internet memes have focused on politics - using different approaches – and how intentions are conveyed from the use of the social media platforms. The understanding of Internet memes is based on the fact that meme generators believe that there are experiences that are peculiar to either a stage of life, religion or cultural practices. Those who share this orientation with the meme generator will understand without further explanation.

While some are of the opinion that images strengthen remembrance (Gardy et al, 1998), which is based on observation, others do not require any image to relate to a situation. Whether written or illustrated, interactive Internet communication cannot be limited. This study encourages and enhances creative thinking and writing. Also, the research advocates the use of right words in mediated conversations for proper decoding.

Specifically, this study has contributed to knowledge in the following ways:

1. It gives the common ground strategies employed in the understanding of visual communication on the Internet.
2. It identifies contexts manifested in dialogic Internet memes.
3. It adds to the study on Internet memes, especially text-only dialogic Internet memes.

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