

SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF SLANG EXPRESSIONS IN NKPOR METROPOLIS ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This paper presents a semantic analysis of slang expressions in Nkpor Metropolis, addressing the gap by identifying various slang expressions used by youths, adolescents, and touts. It also accounts for the semantic processes involved in their formation and explores how the meanings of these slang expressions are employed in communication. The research adopted a descriptive design, and data were collected through participant observation, recordings, and interactions involving ten participants. The data were analyzed descriptively using a socio-semantic analytical procedure. The analysis indicates that the use of slang expressions in Nkpor Metropolis enhances communicative styles and enriches linguistic experiences. This study contributes to the understanding that slang expressions can bring a significant change in the linguistic competence of speakers.

Keywords: Semantic, Slang, Nkpor, Linguistic Competence, Socio-Semantic

Introduction

Language is the special way human beings communicate with one another. Language contains sounds, words, and rules (grammar) that allow us to express ideas, share feelings, ask questions, give commands, and create relationships. Without language, there would be no organized way to pass knowledge, culture, or history from one generation to another. Ofoegbu (2012) defines language as “the human system of communication. It is a means by which humans alone communicate. Nweke (2021) posits that as human beings, we communicate our ideas using language. Life has no meaning without language. Ofoegbu (2012), building on his earlier works, defines language as a system of communication for humans alone.

Ofoegbu (2012) explains that language is man and man is language. This definition centers on the function of language that communication is inseparable with human. Ofoegbu (2022) sees language as the human system of communication which expands continuously as new experiences are recorded by people who speak the language. In a later collaboration, Nweke (2024) says communication involves the practical skills of listening and expressing thoughts. Again, Nweke and Okeke (2023) submit that, in both writing and speech, language is structured to communicate meaning for specific purposes. Ofoegbu and Udoe (2011) posit that humans use language to communicate emotions and feelings which are reflected in their everyday language use. Ofoegbu and Usar (2018) repeat and expand this definition, stressing that language is not only a system of communication but also a fundamental tool for expressing human experiences. The emphasis here remains on the exclusivity of language to humans and its indispensability in social life. The fact here remains that language is a vital part of social life.

Ofoegbu and Okoli (2022) describe “language as a means human beings have devised for communicating ideas, feelings, emotions, desires etc. through complex vocal or written symbols”. This showcases the effective nature of language. It states its function not just for interaction but also for expressions. Ofoegbu (2021) posits that the human language is very unique because it has its own structure and its own system of organizing its component units into meaningful patterns. This simply means that there are rules governing the organization of sentences in a language. Ofoegbu and Okey-Kalu (2021) describe language as “a means which human beings have devised for communicating ideas, feelings, emotions, desires, etc., through complex vocal or written symbols.” This highlights the symbolic nature of language, showing that it functions not just for interaction but also for the expression of inner states, emotions, and symbolic representations. Ofoegbu and Ishima (2024) reaffirm earlier views, calling language “the human system of communication ... man and man is language ... man uses language for his everyday interaction.” However, they extend the definition by situating

Nweke (2024) opines that Language is an important tool in the society and thus, in its multifunctional ways, plays crucial roles in human life. It is fundamentally a communicative tool characterised by taking systematically into account the speaker’s and hearer’s side, and the communicative needs of the speaker and of the given language community. That is, it involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding. Also in Ofoegbu (2024) “language is man and man is language”. Life has no meaning without language. Nweke (2024) emphasizes that there is recognition of a relationship between language and society that has existed from the very beginning.

Again Ofoegbu (2025) posits that Language is a system and this means that it is an organised human behaviour built on inherent structures and that language is purely a human attribute which, serves primarily as a means of communication. Nweke and Okeke (2025) articulate that language, in its multifunctional nature, enables individuals to participate in communicative acts with others; to assume roles and to express or understand feelings, attitudes, and judgments; and to relate what is said or written to the real world as well as to other linguistic events. Ofoegbu and Okoli (2024) emphasize that man uses language to communicate his individual thoughts, inner feelings and personal psychological experiences and this is evident in this study. Hickey (2014) examines the relationship of language with the society that uses it say that it is the mode of communication between different individuals living in a society.

Slang is an aspect of language that is strange kind of vagabond language, always on outskirts of proper speech but always straying or forcing it way into the most respectable company (Partridge, 2015).

Slang expression are used to identify with group behavior informed mood. Slang is often more spoken than written. It is usually regarded as a substandard variety the expressions are made up of words that are either entirely peculiar to some class or group of people. Slang expression have very short life span in the language because users make references to topical issues. Once it is outdated, slang comes up.

According to Coleman (2012) slang can be uttered to reveal their ideas, feelings as well as expression, and it can be understood by certain people in a limited area and may not be known by people outside the group. Although slang shares similarities with other language varieties like creole and pidgin, it has not been given adequate attention as a linguistic phenomenon worthy of intense scholarly research (Adeyini, 2019).

This paper describes levels of communicativeness and language effectiveness of slangs in Nkpor metropolis. It outlines slang expressions use in Nkpor and also other communication purposes of these slangs.

Literature Review

Ofoegbu (2022) defines Semantics as the study and analysis of meaning and the meaning of a word is the idea a word conveys in the heart or mind of the speaker or hearer. Again Ofoegbu and Okoli (2018) assert that semantics deals with how meaning is encoded in language, especially in words and how semantic relations or creativity are realized in communication. Ofoegbu (2011) says that some words have peculiarity of usage and have meaning other than its logical or grammatical one. Ofoegbu and Usar (2017), demonstrate how words derive their meanings and how they are structured around socio-semantic choices that are carefully selected to achieve meaning in language use.

Adeyanju (2007) examines the numerous slangy expression viewing from the people interaction norms, socio-cultural values, world views and personal experiences which characterizes Nigeria English usage. This study based its assessment of the select slangy expression based on the categorization of field which seemingly have direct effect on generality of the populace. He also concludes that asserting that the existence of slang enriched people's linguistic repertoire hence enhancing effective communication especially among members of the same social class.

Ofoegbu (2022) again emphasizes that Semantics is the study of meaning in language, particularly how words, morpheme and expressions convey meaning. In his morpho-semantic analysis, he explains how meaning comes through processes of word- formation, coinage, compounding and borrowing, indicating that Semantics work hand in hand with morphology and context. Similarly, Mena et al. (2022) investigate the impact of slang in the Pakistani context, where students use slang expressions for mutual interactions and English for tertiary education.

Kinds of Slang

A. General Slang:

This is generally used by people in slangy areas.

Examples:

Word	Meaning
Correct -	Exactly
Chill -	Calm or Wait

B. Group Slang:

This is used within a specific group or context.

Examples:

Word	Meaning
Odogwus -	Rich or wealthy men
Babes -	Group of female friends

C. Geographical Slang:

This is slang used in different geographical regions.

Examples:

Word	Meaning	Regions
One Kpa-	₦1,000 -	Onitsha
Raincoat-	Condom -	Warri
Shayo	- A drunk -	Ogbomoso

Method of Data Collection

This study focuses on slang expressions in Nkpor Metropolis. To gain access, these slang expressions were observed in the area and recorded. Information was also collected through one-on-one interactions. The population of this study comprised ten participants, including four youths, two adolescents, and four touts. These participants were selected because they frequently use slang expressions to communicate.

Theoretical Framework

The referential theory of meaning is a linguistic and philosophical framework that suggests words and expressions derive their meaning from objects, concept or events, they refer in the rest word. The theory views language as a connection to reality through reference.

When analyzing slang expressions through the lens of referential theory, the researcher examines how these slang expressions relate to real-world concepts, objects, or events.

Examples:

Slang	Referent	Real-word Context
Kposh -	Smoking weed -	Satisfaction
Sapa	- Lack of money -	Broke
Jack	- Reading -	Studying

Slang expressions in Nkpor metropolis

1. Relaxation

Slang	Meaning	Slang Usages
Crash	- Sleep	- Kam crashia biko
Perch	- To relax	- Chideya na perch
Pia One bo	- Alcoholic drink	- Kam pia one bo.
Butuo	- Calm down	- Nnao butuo
Chill	- Relax	- Kam chillie na ngbo

2. Substances

Slang	Meaning	Slang Usages
10 kpa	- ₦1,000	- Piam 10 kpa
Piante	- Indian Hemp	- Bia ka ipiante
Sky	- ₦50	- Chorom sky way
Mentolinto	- Inferior thing	- Ugboa bu metolinto

3. Fashion

Slang	Meaning	Slang Usages
Nwa na ebebe	- Beautiful lady	- Asa ina ebebe
Sharp	- Cuteness	- Nwa idi sharp
Oke nwa	- Handsome guy	- Oke nwa si na Obosi
Doings	- Rich men	- Ndi doings
Feeling funky	- Feeling good	- Asa ina efeel funky

4. Personality

Slang	Meaning	Slang Usages
Squad	- A group of friends	- Ochigodi squad
Chikala	- A lady	- Chikala na ebebe
Long leg-	Influential	- Kam gbagi long leg na Awka
Mpa	- Respect	- Mpa kai tido
Gba shoe	- Wealthy person	- Odogwu gba shoe

5. Sex / promiscuity

Slang	Meaning	Slang Usages
Okpunabuenyi	- Condom	
Nwa miayanki	- Prostitute	
Igbo ncha	- To have sex	

Maradona	-	A play boy
Bakasi	-	A girl with big buttocks

6. Greetings / Social relation

Slang	Meaning	Slang Usages
Kee ka osi	- How are you	- Kee kaosi nnao
Moi sa	- Good morning sir	- Moi sa kwa
Apatasia-	How was your night	- Apatasia mpa
Koo	- Overlook	- Kam koorigi na
Mgbado -	Chyke a girl	- Kam mgbado asa

Data analysis

The slang expression used in this work are of different categorical context. These slangs were analyzed based on contexts, which comprises of Relaxation, Substances, Fashion, Sex and Greetings. Slangs were stated on each of the following context, following by meaning and illustrated with usages.

Findings

It was noted that slang used in the Nkpor area occurs in different social contexts. This aligns with Eme, C. A. (2016), who states that slang is an informal form of expression used by various social groups, reflecting cultural trends and attitudes. This paper also observes that some slang expressions from Nkpor Metropolis have spread to other popular areas, such as Onitsha Metropolis, where they have undergone linguistic adaptations within the speech community.

Some slang expression like ‘squad’, ‘Bakasi’, and ‘Koo’ are slang borrowed from Warri Delta State with semantic modification in Nkpor metropolis of Anambra State.

In conclusion, interactions, recording, observation and conversation enhanced the authenticity of this work. The slang expressions in this area show that slang as a means of communication has linguistic effect among the users of the language.

Conclusion

This study focuses on a descriptive analysis of slang expressions in Nkpor Metropolis, Anambra State. Brook (2005) observed that the effects of slang on language are generally short-lived because slang expressions, as a rule, express ideas that could be conveyed equally well by ordinary language, leaving little incentive for them to become permanent. The present research emphasizes the semantic analysis of these slang expressions in the Nkpor area by identifying and analyzing them. The study highlights the semantic features of their various usages. The researcher hopes that this study will make a meaningful contribution and serve as a reference for subsequent researchers who wish to investigate slang in other areas from different perspectives.

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