DISTRUST IN DISCOURSE? A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF COMMENTARY PRAGMATIC MARKERS IN PARALLEL ENGLISH CORPORA OF SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

Trust and distrust are common-place socio-moral issues expressed, largely, through language practices. In this study, we examined the issue of distrust in discourse using the parallel English language corpora of the 5 African countries in the Corpus of Global Web-based English (GloWbE). The focus of analyses was on the "manner of speaking" type of commentary pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1996, 1999, 2006). Studies in pragmatics have identified both propositional and non-propositional parts of sentence meaning. While the propositional part conveys direct or content meanings and messages, the non-propositional part includes wide-ranging language features that have implication for the propositional content of utterances. Pragmatic markers are part of the resources in the non-propositional block (Fraser, 1999; Gartner & Gyuris 2012). They are described as "linguistically encoded clues which signal the speaker's potential communicative intentions" (Fraser, 1999, p. 168). One type of pragmatic markers is commentary pragmatic markers, and a sub-type of commentary pragmatic markers is the "manner of speaking" commentary pragmatic marker. These serve as comment on the manner in which the basic message is being conveyed (e.g. *honestly*, *sincerely*, *frankly*, *to be honest*, *believe me*, *in all honesty*, etc.). Fifteen of such markers were selected and a comparative concordance analysis of each was run across selected corpora. The concordance lines were manually sorted to extract instances of the pragmatic uses of each from their instances of syntactic uses. For example, while "honestly" serves a syntactic (pre-modifying) function in *an honestly presented case* (as part of a nominal group)*, "Honestly"* serves the function of "manner of speaking" commentary pragmatic marker in *Honestly, I will give you tomorrow*.

The results of analyses showed that the use of commentary pragmatic markers and the "manner of speaking" sub-type permeated the corpora, an indication a general use. While the application of the Gricean theory of meaning and conversational maxims to the contextual use of each "manner of speaking" commentary pragmatic marker showed speakers' violation of the quantity maxim with the subordinated pragmatic commentary, that of pragmatic presupposition suggested that the use of "manner of speaking" pragmatic markers presupposed some level of distrust between the speaker and the listener, hence the need for the speaker to provide a "truth" assuring commentary that s/he would be truthful or sincere at the given communicative instance. It also presupposes that the hearer might not believe or take the information in the propositional block seriously. It is thus argued that the use of "manner of speaking" commentary pragmatic markers is an indication of distrust in discourse, and the more the instances of the use of such markers, the higher the degree of distrust implicated in discourse. In each case of the search word, the highest instances of the selected commentary pragmatic markers were determined by normalized frequency percentages across corpora, and such instances were found to be the highest in all cases in the Nigerian component of GloWbE, followed by South Africa, Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania. The emanating findings suggested varying levels of distrust pragmatically marked in discourse across the countries, with the highest level found in the Nigerian component.

Key phrases: Corpus pragmatics, pragmatic markers, commentary pragmatic markers, parallel corpora, conversational maxims, pragmatic presupposition.

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