A Lexico- Semantic Analysis Of Military Language

Takim Ajom Okongor
Federal University Dutse, Nigeria

Abstract

Language is one of the most important possessions at the disposal of man to help him shape and dominate his environment. Man, therefore, uses language in various contexts and situations either to offer information, influence attitudes, or maintain a social relationship. Because of these variegated functions, that language is called upon to perform differences exist in vocabulary and style.

This paper focuses on the Lexico-Semantic Analysis of military language. The aim is to describe the language of the military as a specialized variety with its own distinctive features. Data collection was by oral interview and observation technique. The findings show that the features of military Language are comparatively quite distinct from all other varieties. The author concludes that the language of the military is peculiar as well as relevant to those in the military profession.

Keywords: register, military, profession, lexico- semantic, analysis.

Introduction

This study focuses on the sub-variety of the occupational variety of English language, that which is often used in the military profession. This forms the basis of Moody's (1970:2), opinion that:

> Every language has develop means for the
> differentiation of distinct functions and association.
> And our knowledge of language is incomplete
> until we recognize, interpret and originate all the
> subtle in relation to varying needs of our personal,
> social, political and profession involvements.

This definition states the variation of language as well as its flexibility in order to account for its demands and usage. It is necessary to consider the social and contextual background of the military in order to effectively appreciate how the functionality of language used in the military demands particular linguistic terms. According to Asher and Simpson (1994:2496), the soldierly trade is almost as old as man. Priests and warriors have long established themselves as soldiers within every society. The warrior ethic was known in the distant past with signs, symbols and dresses, badges and ritual ceremonies. All these provide a particular form of communication. As warfare became complicated, military conversation became the language of professionals. The military conversation is also encouraged by the growth of distinct specializations as well as the impact of technology. The skill of war and the recognition of its requirements needed a language of its own that will enhance communication among soldiers.

Modern society is advancing technologically. The world has now moved into the age of "hi-tech warfare". The description of the battlefield and its experience has changed. Verbal communication is now electronically transmitted. The relationship between the harmful weapons and the words used to describe their effect is contradictory. The terms conveying death and destruction have given way to what has been regarded as the domestication of battlefield violence.

Acronyms, euphemisms, abbreviations, and slang are converted into more important use to enrich the military language. The military language must perform its established function such as the investigation of war. With the invention of the computer, military language serves as a medium for information management linking "hi-tech " with human capabilities as a means to facilitate the identification of information and also provide the opportunity to cope with the changing situation.

The military must be regarded as a specialized group, whose language is used in state service or government. The military language is an affirmation of institutional identity that controls deadly, destructive weapons.

The History of the Nigerian Army and its Role

According to Obasanjo (1987:-34-43), Lt. Glover of the Royal Navy in 1863 selected eighteen indigenes from the northern part of the country and organized them into a force called "Glover Hausas". The force used by Lt. Glover, the governor of Hausas" was renamed " Hausas Constabulary" in 1863. It performed civil and military known as "Lagos Constabulary." It was incorporated into the West African frontier force in 1901, and it became "Lagos Battalion". The

West Africa Frontier (WAFF), by the end of 1901, has incorporated all paramilitary units in the other British units in each of the dependencies into a regiment. The merger in Neria produced the Northern Nigerian Regiment and Southern Nigerian Regiment.

When Queen Elizabeth of Britain visited Nigeria between 28th January and 15th February,1956, the Nigerian Regiment became known as the Queen's Own Nigerian Regiment (QONR). The regionalization of the West African Frontier Force (WAFF), came into existence in the same year and each military force became the Nigerian Military force (NMF). By 1st June 1958, the Nigerian Government took over control of the Nigerian Military from the British Army Council in London. When Nigeria became independent in 1960, the Nigerian Military Force became known as Royal Nigerian Army (RNA), and in 1963 the Royal Nigeria Army (RNA), change its name to the Nigerian Army.

The functions of the Nigerian Army are: to protect Nigerian territory; it may be involved in international war if the need arises. This is done to protect the interest of the nation. The Nigeria Army in addition to Safeguarding the interest of Nigeria also gets involved in international peacekeeping in Africa as well as other continents.

Statement of the Research Problem

Misinterpretation, misunderstanding and contradiction are some of the problems that hinder soldiers from carrying out their duties. By studying the language used in the military we hope to draw the attention of all categories of men and women of the Nigerian Army as well as the public to the importance of effective communication. Therefore, the questions this paper attempts to answer include:

• What are the special registers in the language of the military and what are their meanings?
• What are the rules and norms governing military discourse?
• What is the consequence of these on the meaning of the military language?

This research assumes that language used in the military is a distinct and functional variety of the English Language.

Aim and objective of the study

This study aims to describe the language of the military as a specialized variety with its own distinctive features. The specific objectives of the study are to:

• Examine the special registers in the language of the military and their meanings

• Highlight the rules and norms governing military discourse

• Highlight the consequence of these on the meaning of the military language.

Scope of the Study

There are different approaches to the study of the language of the military. However, for the purpose of this study, our attention is limited to certain lexical items, which have specialized functions in the military. The study is limited to some and not all lexical items of the language of the military due to constraints of time and space.

Literature Review

Registers

Malmkjaer (1991:140), defines registers as "what you speak at a particular time and as determined by what you and others are doing". According to Akinpelu (2001:181), cited in Ubahakwe and Sogbesan (2001), registers refer to specific vocabulary and a range of language items, which are frequently used when talking about particular functions or professions. In other words, there are special vocabularies or technical words for special concept in every field of study such as Mechine, Law, and the Military e.t.c Nwofor (1990:41) sees registers as "particular set of lexical items associated with a form of language linked to one's area of human experience and endeavour".

Register, according to Chaulkly, (1982:75), are " the type of linguistic variation most closely related to the basic social function of the language". Different register fulfill this function of initiating, maintaining and controlling social interaction by allowing speakers to convey their social position relative to that of their listeners, while simultaneously communicating a message. Like any other language, English has different register or styles from which its users almost unconsciously choose as they change from one situation to another in everyday life. It should be noted that certain types of sentences, words and collocations differentiate each register. For example, the register used by lawyers in the document they prepare for their clients is marked out by long, clumsy sentences and words and collocations, like "plaintiff", "liable"; "aforesaid", "defendant", ' etc.

The register of sport is marked out by words and collocations like 'referee", 'draw", and "score" "attacker", "commit a foul " away win", " home win" and "rough tackle". Each time we use English, therefore, we have to be able to use the register that is appropriate for which we happen to discussing.

Military Language and Context (Soldier Talk)

Malinowski (1949:-312-315), is of the view that "Language is always used to do something ". Languages function as a mode of action. Malinowski studied the pragmatic function as well as the non-pragmatic function of language. According to him, the pragmatic function is when language is used to achieve concrete goals, recall the past and the non-pragmatic is when language is used to establish social intercourse. He considers the non-pragmatic as functional use of language, labeling it "phatic communion ." He describes such conversational uses of language as "a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words" Malinowski (1949:316).

Anyone who has ever served in either the armed forces or military organization of any country will recognize that "soldier talk" is a language in its own right. Just as the military is a separate world, so does it also have its language.   According to o Asher and Simpson, (1994:2499):

> The familiar is dissolved in a thoroughly unfamiliar environment
> where even elementary domestic routine becomes strange.
> The soldier's language is an attempt to construct a reality
> of his own to give himself a particular identity in the
> face of the system, e.g the U.S.A infantry men in vienam
> were the "grunts," deadly weapons are given amiable and
> innocuous designations. The heavily armed gunship-emerge
> as "puff", the Magic Dragon, the hug life helicopters as
> "Jolly". Green giants, clumsy, chemical warfare clothing as
> "Noddy suit".

The submariners, aircrew, gunners and tank troops each have their own internalized language. Like the rest of the "soldier language" it is designed to set up distinctive and demarcations of skill or achievement. The universal language of the universal soldiers is obscene, crude and raw. The soldiers' talk varies from one country to another.

According to Asher and Simpson (1994:2500), the word "fuck" can turned into adjective, noun, verb, and suffix depending on the situation. The man, the piece of equipment or weapon, an enemy, neighbor, the weather, and food can all be used to express range, frustration, despair and contempt. Much of soldier talk is also self mockery.

The military organization is an establishment with goals. So in order to enable it to perform its objectives, more concern is paid to procedures, laws, and rules, and regulations. That is why the military ends up in hoarding more information than is given out because procedures, laid laws, rules and regulations have to be strictly obeyed.

Because of the rigidity of the military, power is at every stage concentrated in the hands of a person. At every stage of organizational hierarchy, a soldier is answerable to a superior officer under whose control and supervision he is. For an institution as the military to achieve its goals, there must be a collective responsibility, loyalty and effective communication. This brings about situation whereby the superior officer gives order and the juniors obey. This situation calls for organized and situational language use as an effective means of communication.

The Uniqueness of Military Language

 The language of the military desire uniqueness from its inherent linguistic features and characteristics. Language is characterized by the use of signals, which are used as the primary medium for communication. The signal is verbal or written. To achieve effective communication there has to be professional training and expertise.

According to Kyenge (1999:45) a signal must be an action or the product of an action demanding a response or correspondence. The way in which a message flows within the military hierarchy is dictated by the tone of the message, which is formal. It must be clear and brief. It also

depends on who is sending signals and to whom. For example, if it is from a captain to a major, then it must be polite and frank giving the most detailed information and inferring that final decision is with the superior officer.

It should be noted that whatever is the direction of the hierarchy, a signal message is characterized in two ways: (a) it is detailed and often conscious of rank and position. (b) It is brief and precise, often making adequate use of coded expressions, abbreviation and symbols. In communication, adequate attention is given to the fact that such codes carry pragmatic as well as semantic information. This also varies and depends on situation and context.

The military language is precise when used internally. There is high degree of care especially in the use of 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns. This is done in order to avoid personal responsibility for actions taken in the course of performing formal functions.

There are special vocabularies or technical words for special concept in every field of study such as medicine, law, photography, building, engineering, religion, journalism, printing, library, agriculture et central.

Theoretical Framework

The Researcher has decided to adopt Systemic Functional Linguistics Approach. This theory has been found apporpirate for this work. Systemic grammar has the ideals of coherence, consistency and explicitness. Systemic grammar often demonstrates how the forms of a human language or a variety of a language can be related to its social functions. It deals with the description of varieties of language, which depend on social situations, registers and social dialects.

The main emphasis of systemic grammar is sociolinguistics because it has sociolinguistics as its focus; it is so much concerned with the functions of language that are relevant to stylistics and text linguistics. Systemic grammatical studies give a very high priority to the sociological aspect of language.

Language as a social system is subject to variation to use- register variation in meaning. Register variation, therefore reflects the social order in the special sense or social processes. The notion of the register is a notion required to relate the functions of language to those aspects of the situation in which it is being used. These are the relevant aspects for us to include under the nature of speech situation or context. According to Halliday (1985:77), the relevant aspect of speech situation are what he calls field, tenor, and mode respectively. As a concept, they help to explain how language users interpret the social context or textual environment in which meanings are made. As a descriptive term, field refers broadly to the subject matter or topic. That is what is going on – the social action which has meaning in a social system. The field of discourse refers to what is happening in a discourse. What a particular text is about. For example, in weather, football e.t.c the tenor of discourse relates to who is taking part in a social situation. It includes the role structure into which the participants in the discourse fit. For example teacher and student or mother and child. Actual speech roles are included, through exchange itself.

The mode of discourse deals with the role that the text or language itself is playing in the situation at hand.

Methodology

Sources of Data

In carrying out this study, the sources of information include: primary and secondary. The primary source was mainly oral interviews with a selected cadre of military men and officers of different ranks and statuses in the Infantry Division of the Nigeria Army.

The secondary source includes textbooks, published and unpublished works like magazines, journals, newspapers and bulleting e.t.c

Data Collection Techniques

A combination of techniques was employed in the collection of data for the purpose of this research. Oral interviews and observation techniques were used for data elicitation and collection.

Oral interview

An oral interview was used as one of the techniques for eliciting relevant linguistic data from the informants. The oral interview consisted of a set of guided questions, which helped us answer our research questions. Questions were asked or presented to the informants or interviewees in an informal and relaxed atmosphere where most significant or reliable and valid information and facts about the military register were elicited and gathered. This may otherwise be difficult in a formal situation. We used the technique of random sampling and spoke only to the willing soldiers. After all, it was usually encouraged that a limited number of informants be chosen to ease data handling problems or rather for effective data handling.

Analytical procedure

This research work is a lexico-semantic study of the language of the military. The registers and corresponding interpretation of such registers are outlined in a tabular form. That is the data is arranged in a tabular form to aid understanding and to present the work neatly. The data is analyzed further to give a clearer picture how these terms are used within the military profession.

Data presentation

The registers are presented in one column, and their technical meanings in another column. This orderly presentation of the data is made to facilitate our understanding of the meaning of some of the lexical items associated with the military.

Military Terms

Word	Technical Meaning
actual	The (marine) unite commander, used to distinguish the commander from the radioman when the call sign is used
Advance	Move forward
Agency	The central intelligence agency
A-gunner	Assistant gunner

Air bone	Refers to soldiers who are qualified as parachutists
B-40 rocket	A shoulder-held rocket-propelled grenade launcher
Ball game	An operation or a contact
Band-aid	Medic
Bandoliers	Belt of machine gun ammunition
Basic	Basic training
Carpet-bomb	Bomb (an area) intensively
Captor	A person who capture another
Capture	Take or get by force
Cartridge	A casing containing a charge and a bullet or shot for a gun
Casualty	A person killed or injured in a war
Dash down	Take cover
Defence	Military measures for protecting a country
Die with one's boot on	Die fighting
Disarm	Take a weapon or weapons away form
Disarmanment	The reduction or withdrawal of military forces and weapons
Enemy	A hostile nation or its armed forces in time of war
Enlistment	Enroll or be enrolled in the armed service
Fatigue	Clean up
Fireabomb	A bomb intended to cause a fire
Fire power	The destructive capacity of guns missiles, or a military Force
Firing squad	A group of soldiers order to shoot a condemned person
Fratricide	The accidental killing of one's own forces in war
Ground	Area of operation
Guard house	A building used to accommodate a military guard or to detain prisoners
Guardroom	Cell
Gun	A weapon with a metal tube from bullet or shells are propelled by explosive force
Gunboat	A small ship armed with guns
House wife	Needle and thread
Kit	bag
Langalanga	Cutlass
Master parade	Morning inspection of soldiers
Mess	A place members of the armed force may eat and relax
Military honours	Marks of respect paid by troop at the burial of a soldier
Mine	A type of bomb placed on or in the ground or water, which explodes on contact
Minefield	A short large bore cannon for firing bombs at high angles
No 1 dress	Ceremonial dress

No 4 dress	Camouflage
No 5 dress	Tertaron or OG green
Operation	A strategic movement of troops, ship for military action
Order	Trial
Padre	Chaplain in any of the armed forces, for example a priest
Parade hour	Devotion time
Parade	A formal or ceremonial muster of troops for inspection
Parade ground	A place for the muster of troops
Party one order	A paper containing military information
Rank	Position within the armed forces
Recruit	Take on (someone) to serve in armed forces
Regiment	Permanent unit of any Army
Retreat	Withdraw from attacking enemy forces
Rifle	A gun with a long spiral grooved barrel to make a bullet spin and thereby increase accuracy over a long distance
Salute	A raising of a hand to the head, made as a formal military
Sentry	A soldier stationed to keep guard

Data Analysis

From the data presented above, it is evident that there are great differences in meaning between technical terms used in the military and the meanings these words carry outside the military (literal meaning). A discussion talk with some professional soldiers has also revealed the same thing. It has been realized that most of these words are taken from the general English language and used in this specific area to mean more than they ordinarily do.

If we consider the words "ground" for example, the first thing that comes to mind is the solid surface of the earth or land of a specified kind, but in the military language, it is an area of operation. That is, the battlefield. The word "axis" in ordinary usage is an imaginary line through a body about which it rotates or an imaginary line about which a regular figure is symmetrically arranged. In mathematics "axis" is a fixed reference line for the measurement of coordinates, while in the military, "axis" is an estimated area.

It is important to note that the use of context also plays a very important role in this analysis. Since we know that words could lose their meaning if isolated, bearing in mind the importance of meaning that is the aim of communication, the use of context becomes a vital tool in the disambiguation of utterances and words present in the military registers. For example, in this conversation between uniform and Zulu:

- Uniform to Zulu- I repeat –Uniform to Zulu. Can you read me?

- Zulu speaking: I read you loud and clear, over.

A civilian would feel lost. The code Uniform and Zulu do not refer to the distinctive clothing worn by members of the same organization or school and the language of the Zulu people in South Africa. The codes are used to refer to two people in a radio transmission. Words have their meaning from the context in which they are used that is in the military context military. In another context, it means another thing. In the language of transport "boot" means the luggage compartment of a motorcar.

The examples are numerous and they all help to explain the point that military language is a unique form of language most of which is restricted and highly technical. The examples also show that in every register used for communication meaning cannot be ignored because meaning is what is being passed across.

Findings

In the process of analysis, we found out that the features of the language of the military are comparatively, quite distinct from all other varieties found in English Language. This is due to the nature of their terminologies which are shared less by other varieties of English Language. The registers are set out to perform particular functions.

The military language also has a unique style. This includes its use of abbreviations and acronyms, which also have technical meanings. There is also the unique way of combination of words to derive other words, which have new meaning. For example scar face, papa-Alpha-Yankee. This makes it very difficult for a person who is outside the context to understand the meaning of such words.

Conclusion

From our analysis, we can conclude that language of the military is peculiar as well as important to those in the military profession. It is technical in nature because it makes use of abbreviations and numbers that can only serve to confuse the layman.

Recommendations

The need for the military registers to be understood by people other than the professionals themselves has become necessary over recent times. More and more military registers are being linked with general language. This is done to enhance credibility of information amongst other factors. This is not a clamour for the non-professional to attain vocabulary expertise equivalent to the professional. But rather it is the recognition for a diffusion of these register with day-to day language. The end result should therefore be an increasing number of people fairly knowledge about the important lexical items of the military that have a prominent effect on our everyday lives.

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