

The Use of Common Ground in Students' Graffiti at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria

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Abstract

Graffiti, over time, have been observed as a means of communication among students which allows them to vent their pent up feelings, thoughts, ideas, displeasure, grievances, religious beliefs, etc. The aim is to investigate what constitutes common ground in students' graffiti at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. The method adopted in this study is descriptive, using qualitative mode of analysis. Twelve samples of purposively selected strands of graffiti on university and staff affairs, morals and religion, general theme constituted the data for the study. The samples were subjected to tools of common grounding like presupposition, implicature and context, among others. The findings present graffiti as effective channels of communicating displeasure, pent up feelings, grievances, religious beliefs, etc. This means that graffiti do not always convey bad intentions as revealed with the aid of the grounding tools. Rather, graffiti sometimes give specific details via appropriate descriptions of referent for better understanding irrespective of the absence of the both the graffitist and the audience. In conclusion, given the nature of graffiti, paying the deserved positive attention to them can result in positive transformation of the society.

1. Introduction

The quest to ease the task of meaning explication in overt and covert expressions and communication has drawn the attention of specialists like anthropologists, philosophers, and linguists over a very long period of time, to pay a closer attention to what constitutes meaning in contexts. The essence of any language in its environment of usage is communication. As this takes place without any form of hindrance, we can say language has fulfilled its obligation. Wheelright (1997, p.44) believes that “all

languages, whatever its communicative nature, has a communicative aspect; a part of its natural purpose as a language is to say something to someone other than the speaker, even if the identity of that someone is not specifically known.” In other words, a language has the natural and inherent nature of being spoken and being understood by other users of the language present, and its essence is communication irrespective of where, when and what is said. In addition, Wheelright (1997) further explains that a language user is more naturally successful while communicating in its entirety to a few language users than to a heterogeneous many (p.44). In other words, one could say a shared knowledge among language users in a communication process has a long way to go and as such it substantiates common ground in communication.

Graffiti, as channels of communication among university students, express certain themes that are considered taboos or aberrations and this is further helped by authorial anonymity of graffiti. It is observed that writers of graffiti often times “share the same social values”, (Fasuyan, 2017). Blume (1985, p.141) is in support of the assertion above, “authors of writings in women's toilets are of the female gender, those writing on the desks are school children and those who write in Turkish on walls in Germany are most probably Turks”. In other words, Graffiti as means of communication have an inherent target encoder and decoder. So, they have ways of sustaining communication despite the absence of both the writers of graffiti and their readers. Furthermore, the fact that the writers of graffiti and their readers belong to the same social group substantiates the essence of common ground in this task. This is premised on the notion that, as a group, they will not only share the same experiences, but their views about ideologies behind certain happenings will also be influenced as a group.

Authors of graffiti have little or no idea of their likely readers. If a graffiti is written on a school desk, it is meant for other students to read. Likewise, if graffiti are meant for university lecturers, they will be written very close to their office walls or doors, notice boards, where nobody will see the writer. The anonymity of the writers and readers of graffiti, according to Blume (1985, p.140), results to “defective communication.” Blume (1985) is of the opinion that because of the absence of the connection between the readers and writers, communication may not take place. She is of the opinion that this goes against the submission of Grice's

conversational maxims of truth, relevance and clarity. Though, graffiti have been noted to be among the same social group, in the same societal frame of happenings, and ideologies but without common ground there might not be an effective communication between the graffitist and the reader.

Decades upon decades, graffiti have been in existence and this has necessitated the need to conduct a study on it because they are channels of communication. The intentions of both the writers of graffiti and their audience have always been treated with a bland approach in the society. This is consequently premised on the fact that due to the absence of writers of graffiti and its unknown audience (readers), their intentions always stand the chance of being misconstrued. Having identified this shortcoming in the process of passing across a message through graffiti, this study is embarked upon to examine how common ground and other pragmatic tools like presupposition, context and implicature which have been seen as meaning contributing tools that can be useful in decoding the intended meaning in graffiti. Common ground and other identified pragmatic tools have been spotted to explicate the intended meaning of graffitists, and this can actually be achieved without having to infer endlessly or in futility.

The aim is to investigate what constitutes common ground in the selected graffiti among University of Ilorin students.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- (i) examine the contextual features, the predominant type of presupposition and the type(s) of grounding tools dominant in the selected graffiti among Unilorin students
- (ii) analyse the types of implicature prevalent in the selected graffiti among Unilorin students.

Communication is the sole aim of language and it is unavoidably an integral part of every human community. It is the only medium through which feelings are communicated, ideas are expressed, ideologies are promoted, cries are heard, all of these are made possible through the use of language in every human community. Merge these two paragraphs. You have a tendency for writing short paragraphs. Graffiti have long been used as a tool for bringing into awareness the ills and atrocities that exist in a

community. Researchers have taken it upon themselves to explore graffiti as a phenomenon, likewise the use of common ground to explicate the intentions of a language user.

Jimoh (1983, p.121.) regards graffiti as a campus behaviour which features the expressions of repressed feelings, and it also serves as a means of relaxation as well. Adeoti (n.d.) also explored the use of common ground and ideology in editorial cartoons in three different Nigerian newspapers. It is worthy of note to bring to notice that no work has been done on common ground in the use of graffiti specifically. This has not only distinguished this dissertation but also made it a worthwhile endeavour.

This study attempts to examine common ground and other identified pragmatic tools in the use of graffiti from selected places in the University of Ilorin. The use of graffiti is peculiar mostly to the adolescents whom are generally perceived to be students of any cadre; the universities, polytechnics, even secondary schools. Graffiti are most of the time observable on the walls of the toilets, on the doors of public places, on the parked and mobile cars. The reason for this selection is to investigate and establish the features of Common Ground observable in the graffiti and how these have enhanced effective communication.

Notably, University of Ilorin has been purposively selected to gather the data. Consequently, whenever the students feel aggrieved about actions and reactions of the school management, they express their feelings, thoughts and grievances on the walls in the public places, doors leading to the toilets, both in the skyway and the walkway, privately owned male hostels and privately owned female hostels, the school male and female hostels.

2. Methodology

This is a study whose goal is to explore the manifestations of common ground in the use of graffiti. So, for the purpose of this research, Common Ground (CG) was applied as the main investigative tool in the study. Bach and Harnish (1979) speech acts classification, Clarks (2009) typology of CG, Vendergrift's (2006) grounding strategies were examined. In other words, the approach was eclectic.

The selected graffiti were collected from the female hostel toilets, male hostel toilets, library toilets and walkway toilets in the University of Ilorin. Twelve graffiti were collected and twelve were analysed, this

number of data is as a result of unclear picture of some of the graffiti and as well as recent renovation of the facilities. The graffiti from the female hostels were got with the help of the porters.

The samples that were used for the analysis were based on the categorisation of Jimoh (1983, p.116), they are:

- (i) graffiti on sex and sexual matters
- (ii) graffiti on the university affairs and staff
- (iii) graffiti on morals and religion, and
- (iv) graffiti on general themes.

For emphasis, simple percentage will be used for the analysis of the data.

3. Literature Review

This section of the paper reviews relevant literature to the study, they include History of Common Ground, Presupposition, Context, Implicature, Inference and Intention Theory of Bach and Harnish. This study also reviews scholarly contributions on graffiti. Graffiti as channels of communication are a common phenomenon in tertiary institutions. Bello (1994, p.3 cited in Fasuyan (2017) says it is common among students, “who scribble weird jokes usually on the toilet walls of Nigerian universities.” Bello describes graffiti as “one crude way students humour themselves, comment on the ills of the society, and make light their suffering.”p.4.

In other words, Bello perceives graffiti as means through which students relieve themselves of tensions by scribbling jokes on the wall and also use graffiti to bring to the awareness of whoever makes them feel uncomfortable. So, Bello (1994) and Blume (1985). have been able to reconcile their submissions on graffiti that in spite of the absence of the writers of graffiti, their target audience are able to identify themselves when they read what strikes their interest i.e. they share the physical context. This is because the audience share and also belong to the same social group. However, in order to communicate effectively and successfully as well, graffitiists need to be properly grounded in the knowledge of their immediate environment which their target readers share with them.

Furthermore, Babatunde (2007, p.182) avers that “... the socio-

cultural awareness, the degree to which he (a writer) is rooted in his environment is largely manifested in the way these relevant linguistic and contextual features flow wittingly into his writing”. The graffitiist's awareness of the socio-cultural terrain is important in the encoding of the message and the exact interpretation by the reader of the graffiti. This is what common ground has been able to make provisions for, to the graffitiist and its readers.

In the foregoing, when people speak or write, certain things tend to be taken for granted. They tend to make assumptions which inform their utterances, how they write and what they write and how it is perceived and interpreted by their hearer or interpreter. These assumptions are said to be drawn from shared prior experiences which could be linguistic or otherwise, a shared immediate context in which scribbling takes place, certain information embellished in the speech event or writing. The whole of these features between a speaker or a writer and hearer or reader is tagged “common ground”.

Common ground is popularised by Stalnaker (1978). And he submits that “the propositions of a speaker are the propositions of whose truth he takes for granted. As part of the background of the conversation ...presuppositions are what is taken by the speaker to be the common ground of the participants in the conversation, what is treated as their common knowledge or mutual knowledge” (1978, p.320). It is observed that when people talk, certain ideas are taken to be common grounds and these are further observable in the development of a speech event as it progresses.

According to Fetzer (2011), common ground is “indispensable for philosophical and cognitive conceptions of knowledge where it serves as background for reasoning and for retrieving speaker-intended meaning and other types of implicit meaning, such as indexical expression or implicature (p.33).” Common ground is observed as the background for reasoning and meaning explication. It is also seen as a signal for contextual background. Fetzer gives a further explanation that context and background are quite different because this is as a result of likely different backgrounds that same utterances might have, consequently, “background contains not only mutual knowledge of facts about the conversational background but also knowledge about the world, such as ethical norms and socio-cultural values, transcending the common sense notion of context”

(p.33). In other words, common ground serves as the basis for felicitous conditions, “conversational record” and it is context dependent.

Grounding in Conversation

In order to have a smooth running conversation, there is a dire need for some level of familiarity, which means that the interlocutors must hold on to some things in common. On many occasions, some interlocutors do not have a prior information or experience yet they communicate, so the establishment of the little information that will allow for the smooth conversation there and then is what is tagged “grounding”. Clark and Brennan (1991) submit that grounding is the process whereby participants in conversation try to establish what has been comprehended: they ground what has been said or discussed and make it part of their common ground. This process also requires the interlocutors to “keep track of their common ground and its moment by moment changes” (p.128).

Grounding has been observed to be dynamic as it changes based on the communicative goals of conversation/ utterance. This communicative goal determines the context of the communicative events which determine the strategies to be employed by the interlocutors. The context types according to Clark and Brennan (1991, pp.222-233) are references and verbatim. Grounding references involve establishing referential identity- the shared belief that the hearers/readers have correctly identified a referent. This is established through the following strategies:

- (i) **Alternative description:** This has to do with using one or more referring expressions, this could be with definite or indefinite pronouns, proper nouns, demonstrative or pronoun. This basically has to do with the way partners can identify the referents to substantiate the object of discussion (p.227).
- (ii) **Installments:** “When speakers present a lot of information to be registered verbatim, they generally cut it up into a bite-sized chunk or installments and receive verbatim displays on each installment (p.228)”

Example: speaker A: where are you now, *what*?

B: I'm at Faculty of Arts, Department of English.

B: I'm running.

- (iii) **Referential installment:** This entails a proper identification of a referent in question before communication can be established. Example: Speaker A: Where exactly are you?

B: There is a giant building behind phonology lab---

A: With a pavilion at the front of it?

B: Yes.

- (iv) **Trial references:** This is a grounding process done in a mid-utterance when speakers find themselves about to present a name or description that they are not sure is entirely correct or comprehensible, they can achieve this by a try marker or slight pause. (Clark & Brennan, 1991, pp.222.233)

Having considered common ground as a very significant chunk of shared ideas, beliefs and assumptions, it is quite explicit enough that its meaning is far beyond the notion of just an abstraction.

Pragmatic theories and features

(a) Context

Saeed (2006) submits knowledge as context and he identifies two types to be linguistic and non-linguistic. Furthermore, he categorised non-linguistic into knowledge as context, discourse as context and background knowledge as context (p. 181). Background knowledge as context has to do with the knowledge made available to the hearer before the main communicative event, it helps in better understanding of the communicative event.

In order to understand and interpret the speaker's intention context is quite expedient, context is of different types. Lawal (1995) gave six categorisations of contexts which are:

- (i) Linguistic context
- (ii) Physical context
- (iii) Psychological context
- (iv) Social context
- (v) Sociological context

(vi) Cosmological context

(b) Implicature

This has been observed as one of the elements in pragmatics which falls within the terrain of implicitness i.e. covert meaning. Its relevance in this study is justified because it allows us to know that which is communicated even when it is not said. This notion of implicature is credited to H.P Grice (Grice, 1989). He is of the opinion that “what is said” and “what is implicated” has speaker's linguistic property. Though “what is said” is the part of meaning that is catered for by the truth conditional semantics when 'what is implicated' is the part of meaning that is not captured by truth condition, therefore, it requires an interpretation and this is pragmatics. Generally, there are two types of implicature; conventional and conversational.

(c) Presupposition

Yule (1996) submits that presupposition is “something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance” (p.19). He is of the opinion that a speaker presupposes and not the sentence, additionally, this falls within two propositions whereby one out of the two propositions presupposes the other i.e. one assumes the other

Having observed that meaning explication in a speech event is more than what is left to the hearer or reader to infer. It is quite paramount to bring to fore what determines the unsaid in a speech event. Among these factors which are imposed on communication by the context are the norms of the society, who the participants are, what should be said and what should not be said, the manner in which an idea should be expressed. All of these limiting factors have moulded a speaker or writer to be dynamic, creative and proactive when it comes to language use. There are different types of presupposition and they are:

1. Existential presupposition: This indicates something exists. It is always present in possessive pronouns and in any definite noun phrase. E.g. my pen, the sister is running, etc.
2. Factive presupposition: This is an assumed piece of information that points to a fact. It follows this simple logic that everybody knows Ejika, Ejika is the presupposed information. Verbs like

know, realise, saw, and phrases involving 'be' with aware, odd, and glad possess factive presuppositions.

3. Non-factive presupposition: These presuppositions are considered not to be true. Verbs like imagine, dream, etc. are good examples of presupposition that are considered not to be true.
4. Lexical presupposition: The use of an expression suggests another unstated intention, which is conventionally known by all. For example, the word 'eventually' presupposes that the reality occurred irrespective of the odds.
5. Structural presupposition: Sentence structures are analysed conventionally and they are assumed always true e.g., Wh-questions in English are always presupposed to be true.
6. Counter-factual presupposition: Aside being true, this category of presupposition is the opposite of what is uttered. The use of conditional structure starting with 'if' indicates counter-factual presupposition.

Bach and Harnish submitted Speech Act Schemata (SAS) and this explains how sense is decoded from a communicative event and also “linguistic communication is an inferential process” (Bach &Harnish, 1979, p.4). In other words, inference is the process of deciphering the intentions of a speaker in a communicative event among the interlocutors. A listener is expected to infer the intention of a speaker in speech events and this is successfully done when there is a ground for mutual sharing of some belief systems, context, shared knowledge, etc. It has been observed that inference is either delayed or absolutely not successful especially when the listener is not attuned to the aforementioned factors are not in place. Babatunde (2007, p.52) opines, Bach and Harnish see linguistic communication as an inferential process and the inference the hearer makes and takes himself to be intended to make depends on what the speaker says on mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs), the important contextual information the participants share together. The hearer relies on MCBs to determine the meaning of what is uttered and also the force and content of the speaker's illocutionary act.

Bach and Harnish (1979) submit two general mutual beliefs that “the hearer relies on to make his inference” (p.7). They call them linguistic presumption (LP) and the communicative presumption (CP). Babatunde

(2007, p.53) briefly explains that Linguistic presumption is the mutual belief in a linguistic speech community which if any element of that language is spoken, sounds intelligible to other speakers of that language, the hearer, who is also a member, decodes the meaning of the element uttered. However, Communicative presumption simply means the mutual beliefs that a speaker who performs a speech act actually possesses, and also the intention the speaker wants the hearer to decode.

Graffiti

Communication does not have a specific means of expression or specific place of expression. It could be verbal or non-verbal i.e. spoken or written. Any medium of expression can be employed in passing across a message. An art work which is just a picture could be passing across more message than words. As such, written words do not communicate better than pictures. According to Longman dictionary (2008), graffiti are a form of writing and pictures that are drawn illegally on the walls of buildings, trains, etc. Recent studies have proved that graffiti is not only a form of illegal writing but also an expression of important message to the readers. One of the places that graffiti have been popularly employed or found is the school. This may be interpreted in line with the high presence of youths in this area since graffiti have been associated to youths because of their content. According to Owojaiye (1995), Graffiti has been noted as a popular means of communication in schools. This is related to the freedom of expression and hidden identity encompassed in it which many describe as a deviant behaviour.

Tiel (1997) cited in Marpaung (2015) says the essence of graffiti is to communicate. They are collective phrases of (partially anonymous) inscriptions (words), tags, personal messages, initials, phrases and all forms of communication, popular, of generally known matters, information and knowledge of 'insiders'. Graffiti could be simple or elaborate wall paintings, and have existed since ancient times, with examples dating back to ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, and the Roman Empire (Wikipedia, 2018). Many a times, they serve as means of conveying political and social messages.

Crystal (1995, p.181) observes that graffiti is typically obscene or political in character, but a great deal of humor and popular wisdom content has formed the basis of several collection by folklorists, artists and

humourists while Coulmas (1996) describes graffiti as writing or drawing scratched on a wall or other surface such as inscriptions that contain quotations from poets, salutations, idle words, obscenities, love addresses and satirical remarks.

Authorial anonymity of the writers of graffiti is a feature that substantiates their inherent freedom of liberty because nobody knows whom the writers are. This is further acknowledged by Owojaiye (1995) who observes that the social relation between the graffitist and his or her audience could be likened to the relation between a broadcaster on the television or radio and his audience; or advertiser and his or her readers. This describes the assumption that the writer is always hidden from the readers and this explains the many available graffiti. Though, most times graffiti writings are always a reflection of the society where it is written as most writers are also members of that society. So, it also reflects the issues that affect members of that society.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

This section of the paper examines the data for this study in question using Clark's and Brennan's submission on common ground as well as other allied components like implicature, context and presupposition. The data are thematically grouped based on the thematic categorisation of Jimoh (1983, p. 116). They are:

- (i) graffiti on sex and sexual matters
- (ii) graffiti on the university affairs and staff
- (iii) graffiti on morals, and
- (iv) graffiti on other themes

The locations where the data were got were codified as female hostel toilet (FLT), male hostel toilet (MLT), female library toilet (FLBT), male library toilet (MLBT) and walkway hostel (WKT).

(a) Sex and sexually related issues

Datum 1 “Lesbia nini ssm destroys, it is bad please, change” (FLBT),

Context: There is an evidence of socio-cultural context in this graffiti. The meaning of this expression is that “lesbianism” is bad and those that are involved should stop and change for the better. The graffiti expresses

caution, warning and frowns at the proliferation of this immoral act among the young ladies in the school hostels. It has been rightly established in the literature review that graffiti among its functions is to righteously satirise bad deeds in the society. In this part of the world “lesbianism” is not meant to be welcomed based on the cultural belief system. How do you know? You can't be too sure..

Conversational Implicature: The graffito implies that lesbianism has been observed among some ladies in the female hostel and the graffitist takes it upon herself to express her disgust about it by admonishing them to stop. In other words, the implicature here is conversational.

Structural Pressupposition: The literal sense derived from the meaning of the data is an indication that “lesbianism” is bad.

CG (Communal): There is an evidence of communal CG in this data and it is observed in the in the reaction of the graffitist by showing her displeasure to the fact that ladies touch themselves nowadays all in the name of civilization and thereby losing their sense of morality and engaging in all sorts of immoral acts that are quite degrading. It is quite easy for the graffitist to decode this because she belongs to the same community where this happens, the female library toilet to be specific. The Unilorin community has been observed for its moral uprightness, so having this shocking experience affects the psyche of the graffitist and thereby writing the graffiti for the sake of corrective measure.

Grounding tool: There is an evidence of trial reference in this data and it is observed in the morphological realisation of the name of this degrading act “lesbian nini sm”. The effect of this is that the graffitist showcases her disgust for this act even in pronouncing the name and also to substantiate the fact that he is far from the in depth knowledge of the amoral act other than the fact that it destroys.

Datum 2. “One love kips us 2geda as Victor hooks Priscilla 2017 Love story.” (FLBT)

Context: There is an evidence of social context in the graffiti which is quite evident in the topic of discussion. The proclamation of the topic suggested social and trivial topic of an affair among the two referents who have been having a love affair till the year 2017 inelegant English.

Implicature: Conversational implicature is evident in the data and its effect is that among the things that graffiti do, they expose hidden plans and intentions of the graffitist. The two names mentioned in the graffiti were having an affair in 2017.

Lexical presupposition: Every lexical item in this graffiti suggests the meaning deduced from this graffito and this is substantiated by the choice of words by the graffitist by including in the graffito “love story”.

CG (Personal): The evidence of CG in the datum is personal experience and this is substantiated by the use of the plural pronoun “us” which also points to Victor and Priscilla. Decoding the meaning of the graffiti is not far-fetched because the graffitist shares the personal experience and expresses some enthusiasm.

Grounding tool: The grounding tool used here is alternative description. The use of “us” which also points to Victor and Priscilla is an indication of alternative description. In other words, the pronoun “us” also refers to the mentioned names.

Datum 3. “I don't know if am v positive cos I was told my bf was hiv positive.” (FLBT)

Context: Psychological context is evident in this datum as it expresses the worrisome state of mind of the graffitist. This is because anyone who is diagnosed of this kind of deadly disease is liable to death. HIV/AIDS is a deadly disease. The graffitist, being a lady, expresses emotional display of fear and worry having considered HIV/AIDS a deadly disease. Please write concise academic English

Implicature: Conversational implicature is observed in this data and this is justified by the fact the graffitist having heard that the boyfriend whom she has constant intercourse with is positive for the diagnosis; it automatically implies that she is positive as well, since HIV/AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease.

Existential presupposition: It is assumed that the reader of this graffito should understand the fact that having tested positive for HIV/AIDS is as good as hearing one's death sentence because it is still an incurable disease, though it can be managed.

CG (Personal): The writer of the graffito assumes that knowledge relating to HIV/AIDS is part of the societal knowledge of the readers and this is

seen in the dilemma expressed in the post. The use of abbreviations ('v', 'v positive') also indicates that the writer has utilised the shared background with the readers in this context. Evidence of common ground observed in this datum is informed by the graffitist's personal experience. This aided the meaning of the graffiti and this is observable in the manner in which HIV/AIDS is written "v positive", it is abbreviated.

Grounding tool: The grounding tool employed by the graffitist here is trial reference and this is observable in the manner in which HIV/AIDS is written "v positive". Trial reference uses a description that the speaker is not sure of.

(b) General theme

Datum 4. "Stop painting rubbish here" (MLT)

Context: There is an evidence of psychological context here. It appeals to the morality of an individual that defaces or disfigures school property in which the lavatories are included. The physical context of this data is the lavatory. The graffitist frowns at the habit of destroying the school property and thereby gives an imperative that whoever is fond of painting rubbish on the wall of the lavatories should stop.

Conventional Implicature: This implies that students are fond of painting on the wall and it is against the rules and regulations of the school to deface physical property like buildings and other things. The graffitist sees no rationale behind scribbling 'rubbish' on the walls of the toilets. He perceives it to be tantamount to property defacement.

Presupposition: There is an evidence of factive presupposition in this data which is property defacement and also disfiguration. The graffitist expresses his personal concern about the paintings done on the wall of the lavatories. Painting and writing on the walls of the toilets are assumed to also pose an irritating sight to the toilet users, these acts as well attract punishment if caught.

CG (Personal): Owing to the nature of graffiti which is written in a place where the readers will easily see it, it subjects the correct interpretation of graffiti to the reader's knowledge of the environment on many occasions. The graffitist expresses his opinion by calling the attention of the fellow members of Unilorin community not to deface the property of the school by painting rubbish.

Grounding tool: There is an evidence of referential installments. This has to do with a proper identification of a referent in question before communication is established. The deitic expressions "here" i.e. the male hostel, is an indication of the proper description of where the graffitist has in mind to express and not somewhere else.

Datum 5. "God is God to all mankind" (WKT)

Context: There is an evidence of cosmological context in this data. It indicates the perception of the Supreme Being in this part of the world and the graffitist acknowledges the fact that God does not change likewise the way He is perceived by the whole world. He is immutable.

Conventional Implicature: This implies that God is not different in Unilorin so also in other schools. So no man should see God as being different based on whatever fact.

Presupposition: The observable presupposition in this graffiti is factive. God remains the same in every part of the world. There is God who is assumed to be bigger than all and He does not change.

CG (Communal): The graffiti reveals that Unilorin community to be godly one with the atmosphere of the consciousness of religious members irrespective the religion each member professes. So, the graffitist emphasises the existence of God and the fact that nothing change about God.

Grounding tool: The grounding tool deduced in this graffiti is installments and the implication of this is that it substantiates and gives a vivid description of the referent, and it God.

Datum 6. A: "Don't talk while in the Toilet; Demons are present" (FLBT)

B: "I am untouchable"

Context: The context observed in this graffiti is physical and social. The physical context makes the two graffitists available in the data. Graffitist A admonishes that the toilet user should not talk while in the toilet because it is naturally unhygienic to talk while in the toilet and even where there is need to do so it is done abruptly because of the fact that it is not healthy to do so. The social context justifies the kind of relationship that exists between the two graffitists. This is made evident from the graffitist B's

response in his reply by saying he is untouchable. It means that graffiti creates a sense of humour even when it they express serious themes. Graffiti B's response as well also justifies how graffiti can be used to express religious beliefs and spirituality, also his response shows that he is not scarred by them.

Conventional Implicature: This implies that graffiti are capable of expressing spirituality among other themes which is evident in graffiti B's response. In the same vein, graffiti as well expresses humour, in other words, it eases tension on the reader.

Presupposition: The presupposition observed in the graffiti is factive. Graffiti (A) responded to this reaction who is presumably to be fond of this habit. In other words it is a stated fact that no one is expected to be talking in the toilet. Aside the fact that it is not healthy and hygienic to talk in the toilet, graffiti B made it evident that based one's belief, there is no big deal to talk in the toilet and that is why he said he is untouchable.

CG (Communal): It is quite unhealthy to talk while in the toilet, this is taken for granted and it is revealed in the graffiti which sounded a note of warning to shun such a habit while in the toilet. Alas! The response that was generated from this graffiti is quite religious and hilarious. In other words, it means people's opinion can be expressed, members of the community can make their religious beliefs known. This is substantiated in the response of the second speaker, "I am untouchable".

Grounding tool: The grounding tool used in this graffiti is referential installments, this substantiates the establishment of the referent (toilet) and the fact that is not hygienic while using it.

(d) Themes on University affairs and staff

Datum 7. "He break the record of becoming SU president being a Christian in Unilorin" (MLT)

Context: The physical context in this graffiti is the school toilet. The psychological context observed is that of shock and surprise. This fact is made evident in the graffiti by making a remark that being a Christian he became the president of the students' union.

Implicature: There is an evidence of conversational implicature in the data and this is made evident in the graffiti, that there has never been a Christian SU president long before now.

Presupposition: There is an evidence of lexical presupposition which is quite observable in the graffiti. The other presupposition observed in the data is factive which is presumably in line with the usual fact that it is only the Muslims that have always been in charge of SU administration to the extent of becoming the president.

CG (Personal): It is assumed in this graffiti that there has never been a Christian SU president before now. The referent is this graffiti has broken the record of being the first Christian SU president and this elated feeling is expressed by the writer for his audience to see. This graffiti informs the readers about the newest event in the Unilorin campus as the time of writing this graffiti. In other words, graffiti gives information to its readers.

Grounding tool: There is an evidence of referential installments in the data and this is made evident in the graffiti by making reference to the SU president

Datum 8. "EMINENT is a dictionary and will be easily manipulated"
(MLT)

Context: Social context is evident in this graffiti because it reveals the relationship that exists among Unilorin students and how they perceive themselves. *EMINENT* as the mouthpiece of all the Unilorin students and it is assumed that he does not have a mind of his rather he is open to manipulations by the school authority.

Conversational Implicature: This implies that *EMINENT* will not represent the interest of the students adequately rather he would do the bid of the school authority irrespective of the effect of their decisions.

Factive Presupposition: It is assumed that the message embedded in the graffiti is a clear observation of the kind of person that *EMINENT* is.

CG (Communal): It is revealed in the graffiti that *EMINENT* shares a kind of temperament that will not encourage rancor in dealing with the students and the school management, consequently he is tagged as a dictionary because he will always be at will of the dictate of the school authority. Graffiti reveals other people's opinions about the office holders especially in their immediate environment and this is observable in the datum above.

Grounding tool: The observable grounding tool in this graffiti is

installments, it gives specific details of the kind of person observed in *EMINENT*.

Datum 9. “It's a matter of time... Patience is the key... 2yrs to go, can't wait ... make it fruitful resolution in me ...success is mine.”
(FLBT)

Context: There is an evidence of psychological context in this graffito. One of the feelings generated in Unilorin community among the students is self-assurance that even when everything is difficult, one must keep going because it will not last forever.

Conversational Implicature: This implies that every student has one or two things going on in their lives but the graffitist has taken it upon herself to advise her readers and also encourage them to exercise patience.

Factive presupposition: It is quite obvious that no conditions is permanent and also life is not a bed of roses. In other words reader of the graffiti in the Unilorin community should endeavour to endure no matter what.

CG (Communal): The graffitist having observed that the only core value that is required so as to be successful in Unilorin community is patience. She encourages herself by professing success to be hers and her readiness for a fruitful resolution so that she can achieve more at the end of the remaining two sessions that she has to stay on campus. This is an indication that graffitists express thoughts inform of writing to ease tension, to relieve themselves of tensions, worries, and to reassure themselves

Grounding tool: The evident grounding tool in this graffito is installments; the details of what is to be done which would aid meaning were clearly spelt out by the graffitist and they include being more patient, her readiness to stay put til the end amongst others.

(e) Themes on morals and religion

Datum 10. “ATTENTN! (WKT)

Jesus xrist is our noble and sent prophet, whose name wasn't supposed 2 be mentioned in the toilet.”

Context: There is an evidence of cosmological context in this data. The

way religious issues are treated in this part of the world is quite different because we believe that what is worth doing is worth doing well so writing the name of prophets of a religion that one professes is quite an unwelcome idea.

There is also an evidence of psychological context in the datum which is displayed by the graffitist by showing his disgust in the fact that “Jesus Xrist” a Holy name was written in the toilet.

Conventional Implicature: It is implied in the graffito that it is quite wrong to be mention a holy name in the toilet also it doesn't denote an iota of seriousness on the part of the writer of such.

Presupposition: The presupposition observed in the data is factive and this shows that among the roles that graffiti stand to play is to ensure that there is an end to a very bad habit like this

CG (Communal): It is assumed that in the Unilorin community, it is not good to write the name of a prophet of God on the wall in the toilet. And this is made evident in the graffito as it sounds a note of warning to strop imbibing such a habit because it is not good enough. In other words, graffiti are didactic in nature and they also teach morals and religious beliefs.

Grounding tool: The alternative description is a grounding tool employed in this data. The name Jesus Christ is to Christianity. So in a discussion where Jesus Christ is mentioned, it automatically signals to Christianity.

Datum 11. “Don't condemn yourself, you can never be bad for God”
(MLT)

Context: The psychological context is observed in the graffito because it preaches a positive message to the readers of this graffiti and whoever might be found in this worrisome category among its readers.

Conversational implicature: This implies that no one should condemn him or herself before God rather everyone is enjoined to come closer to God irrespective of their bad deeds.

Existential Presupposition: There is an assumption that quite a number of people have been condemning themselves and have resorted to the

conclusion that God cannot attend to their issues because they believe they are to wayward for God to be attended to.

CG (Communal): It is assumed that Unilorin community comprises both the religious and those that see themselves as being wayward. The graffitist observes that some members of Unilorin community among the students have condemned themselves due to one reason or the other and deem themselves unfit before God. This graffiti is written to give hope and inform those that have condemned themselves that there is a second chance.

Grounding tool: There is an evidence of installments in this graffiti which gives the details about the fact that no one should condemn him/herself.

Datum 12. “ECKANKAR ... Religion of the light & sound... Church or no church, I love God” (FLT)

Context: There is an evidence of psychological context in the graffiti; this is observable in the graffitist's love for God and not about a denomination, the graffitist seems to be more concerned with her relationship with God rather a particular church in mind.

Conversational Implicature: This implies that the love for God comes first and not the denomination that one belongs to. This is overtly stated in the graffiti and the writer's stance is made known as well.

Existential Presupposition: It is assumed that in every society people get reckoned with their church before any other thing but this graffitist has taken it upon him or herself to stand against division and embrace God's love.

CG (Personal): This meaning of this graffiti was aided by the personal experience of the writer which was shared a member of the Unilorin community member that, the love for God should come first and not a denomination.

Grounding tool: This grounding deducible grounding tool in this graffiti is installments. It gives and substantiates that love for God is what matters and not the denomination, graffiti as a channel of communication can be used to correct wrong impressions and teachings in the society.

(f) The evidence of the quantitative analysis is given below:

TNPE=Total Number of Predominant Elements

PT=Predominant Type

NOC=Number of Occurrence

$$\left(\frac{\text{NOC} \times 100}{\text{TNPE} \times 1} \right)$$

1

$$\text{Context} = \frac{6 \times 100}{34 \times 1} = 17.6\%$$

$$\text{Presupposition} = \frac{6 \times 100}{34 \times 1} = 17.6\%$$

$$\text{Implicature} = \frac{8 \times 100}{34 \times 1} = 23.5\%$$

$$\text{Common Ground} = \frac{8 \times 100}{34 \times 1} = 23.5\%$$

$$\text{Grounding Tool} = \frac{6 \times 100}{34 \times 1} = 17.6\%$$

The table shows the predominance of the various types of pragmatic elements used and the grounding tools.

	Pragmatic Elements	Predominant Types	Number of Occurrence (%)
1	Context	Psychological	17.6%
2	Presupposition	Factive	17.6%
3	Implicature	Conversational	23.5%
4	Common Ground	Communal	23.5%
5	Grounding Tool	Installments	17.6%

5. Discussion of Findings

As observed in this study after the analysis of the 12 data, it was discovered that common ground does not make meaning independently; rather, it relies heavily on the provisions of context, implicature and presupposition to constitute the meaning in graffiti. The first among the findings is the contextual features which were observable and they were made reflected in the context types. This constituted in the meaning deduction of graffiti. The frequent appearance of the predominant context type was psychological (17.6%), the implication of this is that most graffiti appeals to emotions, expression of feelings; they teach, admonish and satirise.

Secondly, the predominant type of presupposition which was factive, it substantiated the facts that were made available in the analysed graffiti. The frequent appearance of this presupposition type was (17.6%). The implication of this is that graffiti are true to the happenings of the immediate environment of its writers. Thirdly, it was also discovered that implicature types were prevalent in the graffiti and when this occurred, the implication of this is that the type showed meaning deduction even when the intention of the graffitist is covertly stated. The frequent appearance of this implicature type was conversational (23.5%).

Fourthly, the communal source of CG constituted 25.5% of the analysed data and the implication of this is that graffiti writing are mostly informed by the personal sources of CG more than the communal sources. And the themes are expressed in the communal sources as observable in the themes listed in the Unilorin community. Lastly, the predominant grounding tool with the highest frequent appearance was installments (17.6%). The implication of this is that graffiti does not indulge in ambiguity rather it is plain and always straight to the point. This is encouraged by its authorial anonymity.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to use common ground alongside context, presupposition, and implicature to deduce meaning in graffiti. Having observed graffiti to be channels of communication, the immediate environment of use will always allow for its existence owing to their corrective tendencies which are capable of positive transformations. This shows that graffiti will continue to exist in our society as the best way through which people's intentions can be expressed with liberty. In other

words, the inherent freedom of expression will continue to bring forth the relevance of graffiti in our society.

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