A Lexical Pragmatic Analysis of Elugwu Ezike Igbo Marriage Dowry Negotiations

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Abstract
Marriage dowry negotiation is a unique cultural practice in Africa; more specifically, among the Elugwu Ezike Igbo people of Enugu State in Southeeastern Nigeria. The characteristic feature of this practice is the choice of particular lexical items. This paper examines the lexical items used during Elugwu Ezike Igbo dowry negotiations and their meanings. The objectives of the study are to identify the lexical choices that are used to create and maintain interpersonal relationship during marriage negotiation processes and to identify the lexical items which are in everyday usage but acquire specific meaning in a marriage dowry negotiation context among the Elugwu Ezike people. A descriptive research design is used for the study because it describes the state of affairs as it exists. The lexical pragmatic theory is adopted in analyzing the data. Four marriage negotiations were sampled because the terminologies used in the negotiations are similar. Data for the study was collected through observation, interview and audio-recording. The data collected are analyzed by categorizing the lexical items used to maintain interpersonal relationship in the negotiations and identifying the lexical items which are in everyday usage but have acquired specific meanings in marriage dowry negotiation. The findings of the study reveal that, the meanings of lexical items which are used in every day conversations are broadened or narrowed contextually during marriage dowry negotiations. The findings buttress the conclusion that speaker-hearer orientation enables correct interpretation of the lexical items used in marriage dowry negotiation.

Introduction
Marriage is an important aspect of most cultures in the world. It is an institution that is governed by rules as designed by the culture and customs of a particular community. According to Needham (2015), the history of marriage customs in Africa has taken on at least principal forms, namely: marriage by force, marriage by purchase, and marriage by capture. He argues that marriage customs in other parts of the world have patterns or were very similar to the history of marriage customs in Africa. In marriage by capture, the bride-to -be is either kidnapped or captured during the wedding. At the time of wedding festivities, friends of the couple may kidnap the bride and release her only after the groom negotiates for and pays her ransom.

Needham (2015) further says that, in Zaire for example, the groom brings two copper rings or an arrow to the bride and her family. Upon acceptance of the gifts, the couple becomes officially betrothed. Marriage by choice is a situation whereby a young man starts looking for a lady to marry and when the finds one, he informs his parents or an elder in his family about his intentions. The parents or the elder thereafter seek necessary information about the lady's family background and the character of the lady in question. When their findings show that the lady is morally worthy and the family background is good, the young man begins to visit the

bride- to- be with his parents or friends to seek the lady's hand in marriage. This is the type of marriage that is practiced in Elugwu Ezike Igbo.

Marriage negotiation "*ilu nwanyi*" in Elugwu Ezike Igbo is a very important cultural practice. It begins from the time a son introduces a lady he wants to marry to his parents and the parents take on the initiative to visit the lady's home to seek her hand in marriage from the lady's parents. Once the negotiation begins, the son begins to be referred to as the groom while the lady becomes bride. These are terms used to express cultural values and norms. Many Africans desire a marriage which reflects their native heritage. However, before the actual ceremony, there are various traditional requirements that need to be fulfilled by those intending to marry. One of these requirements is that bride price be negotiated. Bride price is commonly referred to in many parts of Igbo land as "ime ego". Bride price or dowry is payment made by a groom or his kin to the kin of the bride in order to ratify a marriage.

Dowry negotiation is a domain of language use. This domain of language use like others requires certain skills and one of these skills is the skill of persuasion. Reardon (1981) defines persuasion as an activity or process in which a communicator attempts to induce a change in the belief, attitude, or behaviour of another person or group of persons through the transmission of a message in a context in which the persuader has some degree of free choice. The language used during these negotiations is not plain but indirect. According to Ngugi (1986), language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through oration and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and place in the world. He further says that, communication between human beings propels the evolution of a culture and continues to say that language also carries the histories, values and aesthetics of a culture along with it. Like all other people, the norms, values and beliefs of the Elugwu Ezike people are embedded in their various cultural practices such as marriage negotiation.

According to the *Oxford Leaners Dictionary*; negotiation is a formal discussion between people who are trying to reach an agreement. It could be on peace matters, trade or wages. In marriage negotiation processes, the parties get into negotiation until an agreement is reached. That is what this study seeks to bring to light, especially, as it manifests among the Elgwu Ezike people. Sanibel (2009) says negotiating is part of everyday life but in business it is absolutely critical to one's success. In negotiation therefore, preparation is key. The buyer for example should be thoroughly familiar with the product or service that would be the subject of negotiation. In the case of marriage dowry negotiations, the negotiating parties discuss and agree on the amount of dowry before the marriage of their children is sealed. The parents of the groom must be familiar with the girl's background; her level of education, and character as well as the history of the would-be in-laws.

Arming themselves with this knowledge would enable them lay down negotiation strategies. The best is usually a win-win negotiation. Communities in conflict may resolve their disputes through negotiation and peace is eventually attained. Conflict may arise during marriage negotiation. At such times, both parties need to employ proper negotiation skills through proper selection of words so that at the end of the negotiation, the agreement reached does not cause ill feelings on either side. Marriage dowry negotiation is a process that requires a lot of patience on the side of the groom's family and the correct choice of words at each point of negotiation is very important as it determines the outcome of the whole process. This study

is focused on the Elugwu Ezike Igbo lexicon used during marriage dowry negotiation among the Igbo people because word choices determine the success or failure of marriage negotiations.

Marriage negotiation is an aspect of culture; language is used as a form for expressing it. Kiriro (2011) defines culture as the totality of a people's way of life and values as influenced by the process of continuity and change. It includes all aspects of human life such as language, beliefs, taboos, behaviors, religion and literature. Culture, therefore, plays a role in the way linguistic items are chosen and used as per their meanings. Language provides a medium for describing the contents of our conscious experience. We use it to share our perceptual experiences, thoughts and intentions with other individual. The idea that language guides our cognition was clearly articulated by Whorf (1956) who proposed that an individual's conceptual knowledge is shaped by his or her language. Pragmatics on the other hand studies the way in which context contributes to meaning. Unlike semantics, which examines meaning that is conventional or coded in a given language, pragmatics studies how the transmission of meaning depends not only on structural and linguistic knowledge (grammar, lexicon) of the speaker and listener, but also on context of the utterance, any preexisting knowledge about those involved, the inferred intent of the speaker, and other factors. In this respect, pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity, since meaning relies, among others, on the manner, place and time of an utterance. This study takes a pragmatic perspective as it investigates the marriage negotiations lexical items in context of use and their meanings as interpreted per context; for example, "okoko" (flower) on daily usage means a plant used to beautify a compound, but in marriage negotiations in Elugwu Ezike Igbo, it means a girl who is betrothed and negotiations are underway for eventual marriage. Negotiation, therefore, involves exchange or conversation and hence the lexical items used in the discussion will be studied in this study.

Marriage negotiation among the Elugwu Ezike Igbo is a significant cultural practice and a lot of events transpire in the process. Marriage negotiation in itself is a speech act event as negotiations are done through language. The lexical items used in the negotiations create a bonding between the negotiating parties, as a consequence; the terms need to be studied. Much research has been done on Igbo proverbs and their meanings, stylistic and pragmatic aspects of Igbo dirges and other Igbo oral literature, but attention has not been given to Elugwu Ezike Igbo marriage dowry negotiation lexicon. Marriage dowry negotiation involves a lot of figurative use of language. Decoding the meanings of the lexical items through a pragmatic investigation would be an interesting linguistic exercise.

Marriage negotiation among the Elugwu Ezike people is a significant cultural practice and a lot of events transpire in the process. Marriage negotiation in itself is a speech event as negotiations are done through language. The lexical items used in the negotiations create a bonding between the negotiating parties as a consequence; the terms used during this event could be in daily usage but acquire specific meaning in the context of marriage. Research has been done on the stylistic and pragmatic aspects of Igbo funeral and birth songs as well as Igbo proverbs among others. However, attention has not given to Elugwu Ezike marriage negotiation lexicon which is equally important and needs to be discussed. Marriage negotiation involves the use of figurative expressions with encoded meanings. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate lexical items used in marriage negotiation in Elugwu Ezike with the intention of

unravelling the coded meanings given to these lexical items which are used in daily communication. The study seeks to identify lexical items used in everyday communication but acquire specific meanings in marriage dowry negotiation context and the figurative language used in Elugwu Ezike marriage dowry negotiation.

Review of Related Studies

This section discusses past studies related to this study under the following subheadings: Conceptual framework, theoretical studies, theoretical framework, previous studies and summary of the reviewed literature. Under conceptual framework, the working definitions of the following concepts are provided: negotiation, dowry, context, figurative language, culture and pragmatics.

Negotiation. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines negotiation as a formal discussion between people who are trying to reach an agreement. Negotiation therefore, involves exchange or conversation. Johnson (1993) says negotiation is a process in which individuals or groups seek to reach goals by making agreements with others. This process often includes offering concessions and demanding them from other parties, but it functions best when it serves as a method of discovering mutual interests and joint pay off. In this study, negotiation occurs between parties because both have something to offer and gain. The parties are willing to invest in the relationship and would like to use negotiation as a means to maintain a long- lasting relationship.

Context. Context is the main source of information for determining if the speaker and hearer's meaning correspond. A hearer is guided by two types of contextual chis-extra-linguistic and meta-linguistic clues to access the speaker's meaning. Extra-linguistic clues lead to the addressee's knowledge of the world, while meta-linguistic clues have to do with his or her knowledge of linguistic structures and conventions. Mey, (1994) defines context as the surrounding in the widest sense, that enables the participants in the communication process to interact and that makes the linguistic expressions of their interactions intelligible. He further observes that context is more than a matter of reference and of understanding what things are about. Practically speaking, context is what gives our utterance their deeper meanings. Context in the context of this study is the linguistic materials that accompany marriage dowry negotiation in Elugwu Ezike Igbo.

Pragmatics. Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning communicated by a speaker or writer and interpreted by a listener or reader. In other words, pragmatics is the study of language in context. Pragmatics has more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what words or phrases in those utterances might mean by them. In the context of this study, pragmatics is the study of speakers meaning, the study of contextual meaning and how meaning gets communicated than how it is said. According to Levinson (1983:24), pragmatics is "the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with contexts in ways that would be appropriate". This branch of linguistics is concerned with the ways in which people produce and comprehend meanings through language. It addresses expressions at the

level of utterances, which can range from one word to a lengthy discourse. Pragmatics as used in this study, is the study of language from the point of view of its users, the choices they make and the difficulties they encounter in using language in social interaction and how their use of language affects participants in communication.

Dowry. Dowry, sometimes referred to as bride price and known as "ime ego n'isi nwanyi" in Elugwu Ezike Igbo, is a form of marriage transaction in which the bride's family receives a payment in the form of money or other valuables from the groom's family for the right to marry their daughter.

Culture. Culture refers to a society and its way of life. Lee (2006) defined culture as a set of valuables and beliefs or a cluster of learned behaviour that we share with others in a particular society, giving us a sense of belonging and identity. Hall and Hall (1990) defined culture as a system for creating, storing and processing information. The forms culture takes depends on what individual humans can think, imagine and learn, as well as how collective behaviour shape and sustain viable patterns of life in the ecosystem. In the context of this study, culture refers to shared symbols, norms and values in a social organization.

Marriage. The concept of marriage is a universal phenomenon which occurs in most cultures of the world and this is reflected in the large body of literature on the topic by researchers from all walks of life. Marriage in the context of this study is seen as a special ritual, that is, rite of passage that culturally marks a person's transition from one stage of life to another and redefines social and personal identity. Marriage is shaped by cultural norms and practices which tend to influence people's attitude towards it.

Theoretical Framework
This study is premised on lexico-pragmatic theory propounded by Blutner (1998). The lexical-pragmatics model comprises of two tenets namely; the lexical semantics and conversational implicature. Lexical semantics refers to word meaning while conversational implicature refers to the relationship between what is meant in a conversation and what is said (Grice, 1991). A conversational implicature deals with what is inferred from the use of a certain utterance from the context. The lexico-pragmatic theory was proposed and developed by Blunter (1998) in the journal of semantics. The recent development states that, the meanings of words are frequently pragmatically adjusted and fine-turned in context to express meanings that a speaker intended to convey. The researchers used lexico-pragmatic theory in order to find out how metaphorical language function in context in a conversation.

According to Mc Gregor (2009), the notion of meaning in linguistics concerns that which is expressed by sentences, utterances and their components by language. The message or thought in the mind of a speaker is encoded in a way that it sends a signal to the hearer in a manner that enables reception of the message. He explains further that, the context which is being communicated in a language is the meaning which makes a language effective. Sperber and Wilson (1986) developed relevance theory. In the fields of pragmatics and semantic, relevance theory is the principle that, communication process involves not only encoding,

transfer and decoding of messages but also numerous other elements, including inference and context. Sperber and Wilson (1986) still argue that, relevance is conceived as relative or subjective, as it depends upon the state of knowledge of a hearer when they encounter an utterance. This study, therefore employs lexico-pragmatic theory which deals with seeking meaning as per context and not based on the knowledge of the hearer.

The lexico-pragmatic theory is chosen because of its capability to explain how lexical items in the selected marriage negotiations are affected by the discourse context. Context plays a major role in meaning as some lexical items acquire different meaning under certain contexts. The contexts expressed by use of a word may go beyond the concept that was initially encoded. The lexico-pragmatic theory is applied it combines the idea of semantics under specification in the lexicon with a theory of pragmatics. It handles issues on lexical semantics, nature of concepts, their role in communication, utterance meaning and how they are processed as well the development of lexical pragmatic abilities. In lexical pragmatics, the concepts communicated by the use of words may differ from the concepts encoded in the following ways: lexical narrowing, lexical broadening and lexical borrowing.

Empirical Review

In recent years, many scholars have investigated the field of pragmatics in relation to different aspects of life or point of view. Others have researched on bride price in general. To the best of the researchers' knowledge there has been no research on the lexico-pragmatic analysis of dowry negotiations in Elugwu Ezike Igbo of Enugu State, Nigeria. This section is however necessary in other to help identify the specific knowledge gap and link this research to what has been documented so as to make meaningful contribution to existing literature.

Gachara (2012) looked at metaphors of Gikuyu marriage negotiations using a cognitive linguistics perspective. This study identifies, describes and analyses the metaphors used in the Gikuyu marriage negotiations from a cognitive linguistics perspective. The researcher audio-recorded discourse from two marriage negotiation gatherings followed by transcription of data and then identification of metaphorically used items. These metaphors were then analysed in terms of their linguistic forms and conceptual structures. The study was anchored on the career of metaphor theory which helped the researcher in identifying the base and target domains for conventional metaphors and the topic, super ordinate and subordinate vehicle concepts for novel metaphors. The finding of the study reveals that, metaphors used in Gikuyu marriage negation largely treat women as objects and organisms which commodify women. Men on the other hand are treated like weapons of war in turn informing the concept "sex is war".

This study relates to the current study in the sense that it discusses metaphor which is also one of the key concepts discussed in the current study. It differs from the current study in the area of methodology and theoretical framework employed. The study was premised on career of the metaphor theory while the current study employs a lexico-pragmatic theory in its analysis of the data collected.

George (2014) carried out a study of communicative effectiveness in Giriama wedding songs. This study focused on the communicative effectiveness of Guinea wedding songs: how effective the songs and the language used to communicate in the discourse around wedding ceremonies are. The study was anchored on lexical pragmatics theory. Under lexical

pragmatics, the study looked at the lexical adjustment processes which include lexical narrowing and lexical broadening. The data for the study was collected by conducting interviews which employed face to face conversations. Both the purposive and snowballing type of sampling of data were used. The findings of the study reveal that movements, facial expressions, gestures, dancing and paralinguistic features were identified as modes of communication in Giriama wedding songs. The study relates to the current study in the sense that both of them employed lexico-pragmatics theory and used the same method of data collection such as interviews and observation. However, it differs from the present study in the areas of data analysis techniques.

Genevieve (2015) conducted a study on the language of customary marriage among Akans of Ghana. The objective of the study was to attempt a linguistic analysis of the language of Akan customary marriage, focusing on how language is used to express the culture of the people. The study was essentially based on primary data recorded from selected Akan Customary marriage ceremonies. The study examined how language is used as a tool in the expression of concepts such as negotiation, persuasion, conflict, resolution and linguistic etiquette, which are all crucial to the marriage contract. The stylistic devices in the language were also explored. The study was premised on Fairclough's (1995) model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The findings of the study reveal that the embellishment of the language of the spokesperson with the use of such stylistic devices as metaphors, proverbs and humor were highly appreciated. Again, in-dept linguistic skills were required for negotiations, conflict resolution and expression of linguistic etiquette such as thanking, greetings and requests. The effective use of language in these situations ensured a smooth and peaceful marriage contract. Using Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study revealed a strong interrelation between text, discourse practice and socio-cultural practice. Thus, both speakers and audience must draw on a common socio-cultural knowledge in the production and interpretation of text for effective understanding. This study relates to the present study in the sense that, both discuss the stylistic features embedded in customary marriage negotiations but differ in the theoretical frameworks employed.

Kaititi (2011) conducted a study on the contextualization of lexical items in Chinua Achebe's literary work, Arrow of God. The objectives of the study were: to identify the lexical items which reflect the society's worldview in Arrow of God, to find out the similarities and differences in the semantic and pragmatic use of lexical items in the literary work and to explain the features of context brought about by the use of the lexical items by the writer. The social language theory and Sapir Whorf hypothesis guided the study in identifying the contextual features of the sampled lexical items. The lexical items confirmed that the writer was influenced by the societal worldview as revealed in the findings. The research design adopted was extensively used in the process of data analysis. The qualitative design used was content analysis as the research identified lexical items which had contextual features through interference and were subjected to descriptive analysis to identify the aspects of the Igbo worldview and contextual features that they represented. The sample consisted of twenty lexical items. The meaning, both semantic and pragmatic were portrayed and were compared to a prospective reader's interpretation without considering the context. The finding of the study revealed that, Achebe used lexical items as dictated by the worldview of his society. The lexical

items showed different aspects of the Igbo worldview. However, the semantic and pragmatic use of the lexical items did not show great differences which could interfere with a reader's comprehension. This study relates to the present study in the sense that it discussed lexical items using lexical pragmatic approach which the current study is focused on but differs in the theoretical framework adopted.

Wathika, (2016) carried out a study on the analysis of language used in Gikuyu marriage negotiation discourse. The study focused on language use within journal discursive process of negotiating and legalizing marriage in the domain of bride wealth payment amongst the Gikuyu of Kenya. The focus of the study was on language elements that are both linguistic and non-linguistic and their influences on the concept of gender and power as identified through the data collected for the study. Data consisting of five recorded discourses from sampled negotiation sessions and five focus group discussions from Kiambu County Kenya, were translated, transcribed and analyzed with a view of examining how people use language to accomplish social acts. The findings of the study revealed that language use, linguistic or non-linguistic demonstrates that Gikuyu marriage negotiation discursive domain is male dominated. It constructs roles and identities and also defines how people can have power over others to a level that they control their behavior. This study is related to the present study because the study focused on language use in marriage negotiation discourse. However, they differ in the sense that the focus of the current study is on lexical items used in Igbo traditional marriage negotiation using a lexico- pragmatic theory.

Chalwe (2016) looked at pragmatics of persuasion in Bemba with special reference to bride price negotiations. The objective of the study was to examine the pragmatics in Bemba bride price negotiation within the framework of the pragmatic theory. The study applied Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969), Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and the notion of face and Grice's (1975) conversational analysis theories. The study attempted to discuss the various linguistic expressions that suggest persuasion: some categories of persuasion and carry out analysis of how the various implications of the persuasive expressions function as strategies of persuasion. The findings of the study suggest that there are indeed various linguistic expressions that are used during bride price negotiations that stir the emotions of the hearer to the extent of changing their attitudes towards a previously held belief. During the negotiation, the speaker presents information to the hearer in such a way that it appeals to their emotions and in a way that the hearer is able to reason and eventually become persuaded. These linguistic expressions are usually understood by people sharing similar cultural background and context. The study further revealed that when uttered, linguistic expressions must be perceived by the hearer as relevant to the conversation in order to make the correct inferences. The study recommended that further studies be carried out to examine the pragmatics of persuasion in different social situations. This study relates to the current study in the areas of methodological approach but differs in the analysis of data collected.

Musonda (2011) carried out a study on a civic perspective of the nature and scope of bride-prices among the Mambwe people of Mbala district of Zambia's Northern Province. The purpose of the study was to investigate the nature and scope of bride price among the Mambwe people of Zambia from a civic perspective. The research employed a qualitative approach. A case study design was applied. The target population included marriage counselors, 26

participants were used which comprised four (4) marriage counselors, four (4) head men and eighteen (18) married men and women. Purposive sampling procedure was used in the selection of participants. The research employed thematic analysis method complimented by in depth explanation presented in narrative form as obtained from the participants, summarizing of key findings as well as the interpretation.

The study found bride price to be an historical cultural practice that was used to validate or solemnize marriages. Bride price was paid in form of money or in kind. The study revealed a number of positive implications that included, sign of respect and honour, sign of love and acts as a unifier and solidifier of marriages. However, the findings revealed that bride price has been changing from time, and because of Modernization, the practice has been influenced by social, economic and cultural changes. From the research findings, bride price payment is seen to be among the causes of gender inequality in households. It has contributed to male dominance in marriages, women sexual abuse in marriage, limited decision making for women and economic burden on the part of men. This study relates to the present study in the sense that, it discussed the nature and shape of bride price in Africa but differs from the current study in terms of its focus which is a lexico-pragmatic analysis of bride price negotiations in Elugwu Ezike Igbo.

Methodology
This section presents the methodological design of the study. It also examines the instruments used for data collection, the methods of data collection and method of data analysis. This study adopts a descriptive design. A descriptive design is one in which information is collected without changing the environment. In this study, the researchers interacted with the participants in an interview format to collect the necessary information. The bulk of the data was collected by means of recording of four (4) bride price negotiation sessions from four communities in Elugwu Ezike namely, Ikpanodo, Amufe, Umuida, and Igogoro. From these recordings the researchers made a list of linguistic expressions that were used during the negotiations. The study also employed the use of audio-recording and interview in the collection of the items and linguistic expressions used during bride price negotiations.

Data was analyzed qualitatively. The dialogues and lexical items of the four sampled marriage negotiations were translated from Igbo to English. The lexical items which occur in regular daily conversations, which have acquired different contextual meanings in the marriage negotiation discourse where isolated from the audio recording and explained, using a lexico-pragmatic theory.

Data Presentation and Analysis
This section presents and analyses the data for the study. The objective is to bring to light how lexical items, which are used ordinarily in daily conversations, are used to maintain interpersonal relationship, haven acquired new or specific meanings in a marriage negotiation context. Below, is a list of such lexical items and their meanings:

Lexical Items in Daily Use	Lexical Items in Marriage Context
Eka nri 'right hand'	eka nri 'ownership or superiority'
Eka ekpe 'left hand'	eka ekpe 'a possibility of losing in the negotiation
Ọgọ-m 'my in-law'	ọgọ-m ' a relationship of indebtedness'
Ndi ọgọ anyi 'our in-laws	ndi ọgọ anyi 'indicates a successful negotiation'
Ọgọ-m nwanyi 'my mother-in-law	ọgọ-m nwanyi 'earns the groom the title ogo
Ọgọ 'any man intending to marry'	ọgọ-m nwoke 'a man who has married from a family'
Nna nwunye-m 'father of the bride'	nna nwunye-m 'a father who has received a bride price
nwunye 'bride or wife'	nwunye 'a woman betrothed to be married'
okooko/fulawa 'flower'	okooko/fulawa 'the bride'
akwu chara 'ripped palm nut'	akwu chara 'the bride'
oroma chara 'ripped orange'	oroma chara 'the bride'
nwa agbọọghọ a 'this lady'	nwa agbọọghọ a 'the bride'
ifunanya 'love'	ifunanya 'love between the parties
udara chara 'ripped apple'	udara chara 'the bride'
ụzọ mmiri 'water way'	ụzọ mmiri 'endless relationship'
mgbọtọ ọkụkọ 'a hen that has not laid an egg'	mgbọtọ ọkụkọ 'the bride'

Data Analysis

Marriage negotiations require the ability to make correct choice of words in order to create rapport and provide a good ground for negotiations to take place. In Elugwu Ezike, before the marriage negotiations begin, the bride and the groom's families take their sitting positions. The bride's family occupies the right hand side 'eka nri while the groom's family occupies the left hand side 'eka ekpe' The 'eka nri' (right hand side) indicates ownership and superiority. The groom's family sitting at the 'eka ekpe' (left hand side) indicates that, if negotiations do not go well, they could be asked to leave. Interpersonal relationship is strengthened through the use of appropriate lexical items as will be seen in the course of our discussion. Respect for the negotiating families is exhibited through the ability to control their emotions as they frequently referred to one another as ogo-m 'in-law'. The presence of the bride's father and the groom's father is a must or in their absence, a representative from the immediate family is sent. It could be an uncle or a close family member, usually, a male.

According to Blutner (1998), the meanings of words are frequently pragmatically adjusted and fine-tuned in context to express meanings that a speaker intends to convey. Yule 1996) in his view, explains that language is analysed in context. In marriage negotiations in Elugwu Ezike, the bride's father and the groom's father or their representatives refer to each other as ọgọ-m 'in-law'. ogọ-m 'in-law' is a term that indicates that the two fathers are indebted to each other. The people consider marriage as an un-ending relationship which they express in this manner 'anaghị akwụcha ego isi nwaanyị akwụcha' meaning that, the groom is not expected to pay the bride price agreed upon in full even if he had all the money. The two fathers, therefore, from the time they agree to join their children in marriage become indebted to each

other. The term ọgọ-m 'in-law' is used to show great respect between the two fathers and the male relatives of the two families who are age mates of the two fathers.

The in-laws are not expected to call themselves by their names. The term 'ọgọ-m' therefore creates a suiting environment for interpersonal relationship. The groom's spokesman also begins his address to the bride's family by referring to them as 'ndị ọgọ anyị' 'our in-laws'. That sets a good platform for a successful negotiation. Some communities in Elugwu Ezike allow the mothers of the groom and the bride to participate in marriage negotiation, but even in cases where women are not allowed to play active roles in the negotiations, terms such as "ọgọ-m nwaanyị" 'mother-in-law' features because the bride's mother is entitled to a sum of money for the groom to earn the title ọgọ and for his mother to be able to refer to the bride's mother as Ọgọ-m nwaanyị.

'ọgọ' 'groom' is a prominent lexical item that occurs in marriage negotiations although used casually in every day conversation. 'Ọgọ' means any man intending to marry but "ọgọ-m nwoke" 'son-in-law' is a specific term used to refer to a man who has married from a family. This term is used in marriage context only. It is used by the bride's father to refer to the groom. The title 'ọgọ-m nwoke" is earned by the groom after a part of the dowry has been paid. Upon payment of the dowry, the groom then refers to the bride's father as "nna nwunye-m" 'father-in-law' Haven paid the dowry, the groom and members of his family are given free access into the bride's family as in-laws. Another lexical item that occurs during marriage negotiations is "nwunye 'bride'. Nwunye, in marriage negotiations refers to the girl who has been betrothed and negotiations are underway for her eventual marriage. The term is used by all the participants in the negotiation.

At the outset of the negotiations, upon the first visit to the bride's family, the groom's party would usually use metaphorical terms such as 'okooko/fulawa' 'flower', 'akwụ chara n'ezinaụlọ a' 'a ripe palm nut in this family', or 'oroma chara n'ezinaụlọ a' 'a ripe orange in this family' to refer to the girl, whose hand they have come to seek in marriage. These metaphorical expressions are used to establish rapport and prepare the grounds for the negotiation to begin. The metaphorical terms are used only at the outset of the negotiation. Once negotiations are completed, the lady is referred to as 'nwa agbọghọ a' 'this lady'.

The relationship between the bride and the groom's mother is a very significant aspect of the marriage negotiation process. The bride refers to her mother-in-law as 'nne di-m". This term significantly binds her to her new family by virtue of marriage. The groom's mother reciprocates this gesture by presenting a gift to the bride's mother in appreciation of the care given to the bride by her mother while growing up and to enable her assume full responsibility over the bride. The recurrent word during marriage negotiations that enables interpersonal relationship and conflict resolution is 'ịfụnanya' 'love'. Love in marriage negotiations is important because that was what brought the two parties together in the first place. ifunanya 'love' is not mentioned only in relation to the bride and the groom but also between the negotiating families.

Lexical Items in Daily Usage but Mean Differently in Marriage Negotiations Context
The researchers observed that some lexical items which are used in marriage negotiations are also in daily usage but their meanings differ according to the context of use. The lexical items

are analyzed using lexical narrowing. Sperber and Wilson (2004) say that, lexical narrowing increases implications and the hearer is entitled to narrow the interpretation that satisfies his expectation. In marriage negotiations, "okooko", 'flower' 'ụdara chara n'ezinaụlọ a' 'a ripped apple in this compound' akwụ chara n'ezinaụlọ a,' 'a ripped palm nut in this compound', 'mgbọtọ ọkụkọ gbabatara n'ezinaụlọ a' 'a hen that has not laid an egg that ran into this compound' among other items are used metaphorically to mean the young girl who is ready for marriage and negotiators have visited her home to seek her hand in marriage. The terms are used by the groom's party to introduce the theme of their visit. Okooko, Akwụ, mgbọtọ ọkụkọ, ụdara, oroma, 'orange' as used in marriage negotiations do not refer to the items as they are used in ordinary daily conversations, but they metaphorically refer to the bride. Lexical narrowing is applied by the negotiators so that the recipients of the information are expected to give the correct interpretation of the terms and relate them to the context of use.

In marriage negotiation, the expression 'ije anyị bụ ụzọ mmiri na ọ bụghị ụzọ nkụ' 'our journey is that of a water way and not of firewood'. means that the relationship of both parties is endless. In daily usage in Elugwu Ezike, a water way is the road leading to the stream.

In marriage negotiation the spokesman for the groom's side may introduce purpose of their visit by saying that they have come to "ignite fire". This means that the groom's family has come to increase the love the two people who are getting married already have. In daily usage, igniting fire means to put on flames on something. Furthermore, in the context of marriage negotiation, the bride's family spokesman may tell the groom's family to bring them palm wine by saying, "ndị ọgọ wetara anyị obele" 'Our in-law bring us a calabash' meaning that their wine is finished and that their in-law should fill their calabash with palm wine, In daily usage, calabash means an empty container used in collecting and selling of palm wine to buyers or an item used in sending palm wine to users before the introduction of plastic gallons and jerry cans.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study reveal that in marriage negotiations in Elugwu Ezike, interpersonal relationship is created by using various lexical items such as "ọgọ-m" 'my in-law', "ndị ọgọ anyị" 'our in-laws', "ọgọ-m nwaanyị" 'my mother-in-law', "ọgọm nwoke" 'my son-in-law', "ọgọ" 'groom', "nwunye", 'bride' and "okooko nwere isi ọma" 'the flower with good fragrance'' .referring to the bride as one with a good character. The study further revealed that in marriage negotiations, there are lexical items that are in daily usage but mean differently in marriage negotiation context such as okooko, 'flower' ụdara, 'apple' oroma, 'orange' mgbọtọ ọkụkọ 'a hen that has not laid an egg' and akwụ. 'palm nut' all referring to the bride. Also, ụzọ mmiri 'water way' as used in the context of marriage means endless relationship while in daily usage, it refers to a road that leads to a stream. The use of figurative terms such fulawa depict an atmosphere of beauty which surrounds the marriage relationship expressed in the bride. Terms such as udara chara, oroma chara, also depict the fact that, in the African society, particularly in Elugwu Ezike, marriage is expected to be contracted between a male and a female that are mature and ready to raise a family. Preservation of the female's virginity is also another key feature of the terms used to describe the bride. A term such mgbọtọ ọkụkọ 'a hen that has not laid an egg' indicates that, the bride is expected to be chaste. The reception of a

bride into a home or family is expected to bring in good fortunes into the groom's family hence the description-okooko nwere isiǫma 'the bride with a good character' here, good fragrance also indicating good character.

In the African society, particularly among the Elugwu Ezike people, marriage is seen as an endless relationship, that is why the term, ǫgǫ-m 'in-law' exchanged by both fathers' in-law and the negotiating families indicates a relationship of indebtedness. Once the bride's father receives the dowry, that relationship becomes endless. To further buttress this fact, expressions such as ije anyi bu ụzǫ mmiri na ǫ bụghị ụzǫ nku meaning, our journey is that of a water way and not of fire wood clearly indicate that a marriage relationship is not one of just going to shop for an item, but one of perpetual beneficiaries. George (2014)' study of communicative effectiveness in Giriama wedding songs, using the lexical pragmatics theory has a strong bearing with the present study. Under lexical pragmatics, the study looked at the lexical adjustment processes which included lexical narrowing and lexical broadening. From our findings, we observe that in marriage negation contexts in Elugwu Ezike, lexical adjustment is effectively utilized to express cultural values.

Conclusion
The findings of the study buttress the conclusion that effective communication in marriage negotiations depend on shared knowledge between the speaker and the hearer, which allows the hearer to make correct interpretation of the lexical items used. Those who share background information will interpret the lexical items correctly by either narrowing or broadening their meanings, while those who do not are likely to misinterpret them as explained in the lexical pragmatic theory. The result, therefore, may lead to communication breakdown. The paper has also revealed that, the proper use of language is very crucial in contracting customary marriage among Elugwu Ezike people. It is an effective tool for negotiation and resolution of conflict. Though many traditional practices have faded out due to the influence of modernity and Christianity, the customary marriage is still respected as an important aspect of the culture of the Elugwu Ezike people.

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