Pragmatics of the 31st March 2015 Telephone Conversation between Ex-President Goodluck Jonathan and General Muhammadu Buhari

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Abstract

This survey study is a pragmatic analysis of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and General Muhammadu Buhari's 31st March 2015's telephone conversation, while collation of the presidential election results was still on-going. The conversation was selected largely due to its linguistic textual quality, and perhaps the quality of attention that the presidential election generated. Data was obtained through transcription of the conversation as published by The Punch newspaper of Friday, April 3, 2015.Relevant literature in the field of pragmaticswas reviewed. Searle's (1969) adapted in George Yule's (1996)taxonomy of speech acts was considered useful for identification and classification of the utterances of the conversation into speech acts.Analysis has revealed that all the twenty-three (23) utterances of the conversation satisfied the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner on the strength of common ground which the speakers and we, the listeners/analysts, share. It is also obvious that Expressive, Declaration, Directive, Representative and Commissive acts characterized the telephone conversation.The conclusion is that manipulation of common ground serves both interactional efficacy and social affiliation, and the choices speakers make is a reflection of the level of intimacy and intensity of social relations among speaker, addressee, and referent. And the text of this telephone conversation has demonstrated that.

Introduction

Before the 2015 general elections, political activities have heightened, in Nigeria, creating tension everywhere, especially in party politics. The two main political parties in contention for power at the federal level were the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (a party that had controlled the nation at the federal level since 1999) and the All Progressive Congress (APC) (a party that evolved from an alliance of some progressive political parties).

The political activities climaxed with the general election time table which slated elections for February 14th and 28th 2015. But there was a postponement of the dates of the elections. The presidential election earlier slated for February 14, 2015,

eventually took place on March 28th 2015. Out of the 14 political parties that contested for the office of the president, the PDP and APC candidates were the most prominent and celebrated. They were the two parties whose electioneering campaigns were most glamorous and full of 'hate campaign' in terms of linguistic and graphic expression.

On March 28 2015, elections took place into the Federal House of Representative and Senate but that of the office of the president was of more concern to most Nigerians. By the midnight of 28th of March, 2015, elections could not hold in some local government areas in some states, and they continued on Sunday 29th of March, 2015. That obviously delayed the release of results. By the evening of Sunday the 29th, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) started a gradual release of results state by state, and by 5pm of Tuesday 31st March, results from about 33 states of the federation had been collated and released to the public. By then, it was obvious that the candidate of the APC was in the lead; thus the then sitting President, and the presidential candidate of the PDP, President GoodluckEbele Jonathan (GEJ), henceforth GEJ, put a call through to General MuhammaduBuhari (GMB) henceforth GMB, the presidential candidate of APC. The text of that telephone conversation forms data for this study. GEJ and GMB rely greatly on the above background, as common ground for the progression of the telephone conversation, as no direct mention of the words 'political parties', 'election(s)' or 'result(s)' was made throughout the conversation.

The choice of this text as the preferred data is justified by the quality of attention it has attracted; again its content is significant for the political stability of Nigeria, the largest nation in sub-Saharan Africa. The pragmatics of the conversation has continued to shape people's (politicians and the electorate and the international community) views, actions and reactions about the final results declared by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the early hours of Wednesday, April 1, 2015.

To properly situate the study, some theories of pragmpatics are reviewed, and, in particular, Grice's (1975) Cooperative

Principle, which is considered appropriate for analysis of the data. Common Ground is also examined as a veritable tool in conversation analysis. Some typologies of Speech Acts are reviewed, after which Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts is selected for consideration of the speech acts identifiable in the text of the conversation.

Literature Review

Some comments are provided on Pragmatics, Common Ground, and H.P Grice's Cooperative Principle as literature to generate background for this study. Also some taxonomies of Speech Acts are reviewed.

Nature and Scope of Pragmatics

Scholars of the field of pragmatics believe that language use is of great importance to mankind. Early philosophers such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and later Grice (1975) underline the fact that the occasion of an utterance is important, and that its total context must be understood before the meaning and intention of an utterance can be fully grasped. Crystal (1987:120) explains that Pragmatics studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction, and the effects of our choice on others.

In his own view, Dijk (1992:218) believes that the basic idea of Pragmatics is that when we are speaking in certain contexts, we also accomplish certain social acts. Our intentions for such actions, as well as the interpretations of intentions of actions of other speech participants, he adds, are based on a set of knowledge and belief. Ayodabo (1995) has added the dimension of the essence of language function to this discussion on Pragmatics, when he observes that Pragmatics focuses on illocutionary actsas an aspect of speech act that specifies what the language is being used for, in a given occasion, whereas Kempson (1996:561) views Pragmatics as the study of interpretation from the perspective of psychology; in other words, the study of the general cognitive principles involved in the retrieval of information from an uttered sequence of words.

Lawal (1997) is of the opinion that Pragmatics evolved as a result of the short-comings of structural semantics to capture satisfactorily the sociological and other non-linguistic dimensions of verbal communication. What can be deduced from the above is

that the goal of the pragmatician is to describe, adequately, the components of effective use of language. There is a relationship between how language is used and where it is used. However, Adegbija's (1999) explanation of Pragmatics is rather comprehensive. According to him, 'Pragmatics may be seen as the study of language use in particular communicative contexts or situations.

It is obvious from the few definitions examined above that Pragmatic theory has drawn inspiration from logic. The field draws mainly upon the philosophy of language and 'the theory of speech act', in particular, as well as the analysis of conversations and of cultural differences in verbal interaction. This makes this study a justified one, since telephone talk is in the realm of conversation. Pragmatic theories are basic to the study of human speech. All pragmaticians appear to agree that pragmatic approaches to language study are concerned about language in use in social context, particularly with reference to the functionality of utterances performed in different contexts of interaction. And for the success of any pragmatic analysis, there is usually much shared ground, which has been variously discussed under different concepts and expressions such as mutually shared beliefs, common ground or common knowledge.

Common ground as a resource for social affiliation
Common ground constitutes the open stockpile of shared presumption that fuels amplicative inference in communication (Grice 1989), driven by intention attribution and other defining components of the interaction engine (Levinson 1995, 2000, 2006). Any occasion of "grounding" (i.e., any increment of common ground) has consequences for future interaction of the individuals involved, thanks to two perpetually active imperatives for individuals in social interaction. According to Enfield (2008:225) an informational imperativecompels individuals to cooperate with their interactional partners in maintaining a common referential understanding, mutually calibrated at each step of an interaction's progression. Here, common ground affords economy of expression. The greater our common ground, the less effort we have to expend

to satisfy an informational imperative. Also, an affiliational imperative compels interlocutors to maintain a common degree of interpersonal affiliation (trust, commitment, intimacy), proper to the status of the relationship, and again mutually calibrated at each step of an interaction's progression. In this second dimension, the economy of expression enabled by common ground affords a public display of intimacy, a reliable indicator of how much is personally shared by a given pair of interactants. In these two ways, serving the ends of informational economy and affiliational intimacy, to increase common ground is to invest in a resource that will be drawn on later, with interest. This perhaps accounts for quite a lot of presupposition and implicature that often characterize telephone conversations between and among intimate persons. The case of GEJ versus GMB is not different.

A canonical source of common ground is joint attention; a unique human practice that fuses perception and inferential cognition (Moore and Dunham 1995; Tomasello 1999, 2006). In joint attention, two or more people simultaneously attend to a single external stimulus, together, each conscious that the experience is shared, and this is typical of a telephone conversation between two people who are familiar with each other. This time, the presidential election in Nigeria is the external stimulus, which is the main source of common ground.

A cursory look at Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP), as a theoretical model is germane at this point, since our analysis of data will rely mainly on CP's maxims.

Grice's Model of Verbal Communication
Paul **Grice** proposes that in ordinary conversation, speakers and hearers share a cooperative principle. Speakers shape their utterances to be understood by hearers. The principle can be explained by four underlying rules or maxims. A critical look at the maxims is germane to this study, because we intend to use the CP as a theory for our analysis of the telephone conversation that took place between GEJ and GMB.

Grice's position is that interlocutors should make their conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which interlocutors are engaged. He labels his theory

Cooperative Principle, on the assumption that it is acceptable by the generality of language users. Grice (1975:48) further distinguishes four categories of maxims, each of which has some other more specific maxims and sub-maxims. These are *Quantity, Quality, Relation* and *Manner*.

In summary, the Quantity maxim provides that speakers should be as informative as is required for the conversation to proceed. It should be neither too little, nor too much. Quality maxim expects speakers to be truthful. They should not say what they think is false, or make statements for which they have no evidence. With Relevance maxim, we expect that speakers' contributions should relate clearly to the purpose of the exchange. Lastly, Manner maxim expects that speakers' contributions should be perspicuous: clear, orderly and brief, devoid of obscurity and ambiguity. See Grice 1975: 48 for fuller discussion.

In this approach, utterance interpretation is not a matter of encoding and decoding messages. Rather it involves taking the meaning of the utterance together with contextual information and inference rules, and working out what the speaker means on the basis of the assumption that the utterance conforms to very general principles of conversation.

Grice's thesis is based on the view that our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and could not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree, cooperative efforts. Grice does not of course prescribe the use of such maxims. Nor does he suggest that we use them artificially to construct conversations. But they are useful for analysing and interpreting conversation. However, very often, we communicate particular non-literal meanings by appearing to "violate" or "flout" these maxims.

We find this theory quite useful for the analysis of GEJ and GMB's telephone conversation, because of Grice's belief that the observance of the Cooperative Principle (CP) and the maxims, in a talk exchange, could be thought of as a quasi-contractual matter, with parallels outside the realm of discourse.

Though Grice did not use the term pragmatics, it seems he was trying to provide a general framework into which every aspect

of utterance interpretation can be accommodated, and that all aspects of the total meaning of an utterance belong either to what is said, or to what is implicated. Justification for the use of this theory, here, rests on the currency of the topic of discussion, the common ground shared by all Nigerians and non-Nigerians on the 2015 general elections in general, and the presidential election in particular, and the fears of possible post- election crises.

All these further constitute common ground for the telephone conversation under study. Having looked at issues in pragmatics, common ground and cooperative principle, there is the need to look at some classifications of speech acts. This is imperative because language is meaningless without its function; the main goal of any pragmatic analysis is the identification of the speech acts that such utterances perform.

Taxonomy of Direct Speech Acts

Austin (1962) remarks that engaging in a speech act means performing the complementary acts of locution, illocution and perlocution. A locutionary act is a sentence uttered with a determinate sense and reference; an act performed in order to communicate. An illocutionary act is said to be a non-linguistic act performed through a linguistic or locutionary act. Illocutionary acts include commanding, daring, nominating, resigning, etc, and can be effected through performative sentences, whether or not they contain performative verbs (Fromkin and Rodman, 1983). A perlocutionary act results from a language user's utterance, and it is the intended or unintended consequence of, or reaction to what is said. However, this act is not part of the conventional meaning of the utterance, it is derived from the context and situation of the utterance.

Austin (1962) classifies speech acts into five categories of Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behabitives, and Expositives, while Searle's (1969) categorization of illocutionary acts is based on the argument that Austin's (1962) classification is deficient; that Austin did not provide a foundation for his classification. Searle also points out that there was too much overlap in Austin's taxonomy. Based on those observations, Seale (1969) has come up with a five-class categorization: Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives and Declarations.

Bach and Harnish (1979) recognize two main categories of illocutionary acts. These are communicative and non-communicative. Communicative acts have four main sub-categories of Constatives, Directives, Commissives and Acknowledgments, while Non-communicative class has two sub-categories, which are Effective and Verdictives.

Trauggot and Pratt's (1980) classification of illocutionary acts are: Representatives, Expressives, Verdictives, Directives, Commissives and Declaratives (Trauggot and Pratt 1980:229-230). Leech (1983:105) writing under 'varieties of illocutionary function' has classified illocutionary acts through their functions into four types (according to how they relate to the social goal of establishing and maintaining comity): these are Competitive, Convivial, Collaborative and Conflictive.

It is instructive to observe that some of the taxonomies, classes and sub-classifications discussed, so far, are products of the efforts by the various scholars to contribute to the dynamic field of utterance analysis. To avoid confusion and verbosity, we have decided to use Searle's 1969) adapted in George Yule's (1996) general classification system, which appears to summarise previous efforts. He lists five types of general function performed by speech acts. These are: *declarations, representatives, expressive, directives* and *commissives.* These are simple enough to grasp, particularly when the relationships between worlds and words are considered. Let us elaborate on this classification.

Declarations are those kinds of speech acts that change the *world* via words. The speaker must have a special institutional role, in a specific context, in order to perform a *declaration* appropriately. In using a *declaration*, the speaker changes *the world* through *words.*

Representatives are those kinds of speech acts that state what the speaker believes to be the case or not. Statements of facts, assertions, conclusions, and descriptions are all examples of how the speaker represent*the world* as he or she believes it is. In using a *representative,* the speaker makes *words* fits *the world* (of belief).

Expressives are those kinds of speech acts that state what the speaker feels. They express psychological states, and can be statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, or sorrow. They can be caused by something the speaker does or the hearer does, but they are about the speaker's *experience.* In using an *expressive,* the speaker makes *words* fit the *world* (of feeling).

Directives are speech acts that speakers use to get someone else to do something. They express what the speaker wants. They are *commands, orders, requests, and suggestions.* They can be positive or negative. In using a *directive,* the speaker attempts to make *the world* fit *the words* (through the hearer).

Commissives are speech acts that speakers use to commit themselves to some future action. They express what the speaker intends. They are *promises, threats, refusals, pledges,* and they can be performed by the speaker alone, or by the speaker as a member of a group. In using a *commissive*, the speaker undertakes to make *the world* fit *the words* (via the speaker).

Methodology

This is a survey study, hence the approach is descriptive. A study of discourse is the study of units of language and language use consisting of more than a single sentence connected by some system of related topics. The study of discourse is sometimes more narrowly construed as the study of connected sequences of sentences (or sentence fragments) produced by a single speaker. When more than one person is involved, we talk of a conversation or more generally, a talk-exchange.

Since it was GMB that broke the news of the telephone conversation to the public on Tuesday, April 1, 2015, it was impossible to record the telephone conversation personally. We relied on newspaper publications. Data for this study is therefore obtained from The Punch newspaper of Friday April 3, 2015 (See the appendix for the full text as published by the newspaper), and presented as such for analysis. Four people participated in the conversation, and these are President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's Aide (GEJ's Aide), General Muhammadu Buhari's Aide (GMB's Aide), President GoodluckEbele Jonathan (GEJ) and General Muhammadu Buhari (GMB). There are twenty-three (23) utterances in all, with each speaker's speech taken as an utterance.

Because the entire conversation is not much, we have decided to present and analyse the entire 23 utterances.

For analysis, each of the 23 utterances was examined based on fulfilment or otherwise of the CP maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner. The fulfilment is also hinged on the amount of common ground harnessed by the speakers. Then, Searle's taxonomy of speech acts is used to identify the speech act(s) that each of the utterances performed. Each of the utterances is labelled U 1 – U 23.

Data Presentation and Analysis
In this analysis, Jonathan's Aide is tagged 'GEJ's Aide', while General Buhari's Aide is tagged 'GMB's Aide'. President Jonathan is tagged GEJ, and General Muhammadu Buhari is tagged GMB. The twenty-three (23) utterances (U.1 – U. 23) are presented below for analysis, in pairs. Each pair is established on the basis of initiator/opener and response, that is:

     i)   GEJ's Aide and GMB's Aide;
     ii)   GBM's Aide and GEJ;
     iii)   GMB and GEJ.

For analysis, two levels are considered: a) each of the established pairs is analyzed on the extent of fulfiling the four maxims of Grice's CP, given the strength of common ground shared, and b) the speech acts performed by each of the utterances is identified, using George Yule's (1996) taxonomy of speech acts. A summary of the analyses is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1
Distribution of Speech acts in the Telephone Conversation

Speech Act Types	Utterances Numbers								Total
Expressive acts	1	12	13	15	17	19	21	22	**8**
Declaration acts	7	9	11	12	13	14	20		**7**
Commissive acts	4	6	8	10	14	23			**6**

Directive acts	3	5	16	18					**4**
Representative acts	13								**1**

On the bases of the CP and Common Ground, the distribution of speech acts in the utterances is presented in the table above. There are nine Expressive acts (Utterances 1, 2, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 22) performed in the telephone conversation. This is followed by seven Declaration acts (Utterances 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 20). Commissive acts come next with six occurrences (Utterances 4, 6, 8, 10, 14 and 23). There are four Directive acts (Utterances 3, 5, 16 and 18). And there is only one instance of Representative act (Utterance 13). What is significant, here is that in U.13, 3 speech acts are identifiable, since the utterance has three segments.

Summary of findings

In summary, all the twenty-three (23) utterances analyzed derive their fulfilment of the maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner from the commonly shared grounds of information about preparation, personalities, conduct, and post-election related activities, including counting of votes, and outcome of the results of .the general elections of March 28 and 29th, 2015.

Discussion and conclusion

Arising from data, the presentation and analysis, we now discuss the findings. All the twenty-three utterances have been analysed on the bases of Grice;s CP maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner., and with the belief that all the speakers in uttering U.1 to U.23 have commonly shared grounds.

Fulfilment of Quantity Maxim

On the strength of the Quantity maxim, all the utterances are informative. In particular, the mention of names such as '…*General Buhari*…' in U.3, and '…*President Goodluck Jonathan*…' in U.5 is a maximum identifying mechanism to create a common ground. There is also the abundant use of honorific terms to mark politeness, and to suggest acknowledgement of power, as in '*Your Excellency*' in Utterances 1, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 19, used by nearly all the speakers. GEJ's Aide used the

expression in U.1, while GEJ used it in Utterances7, 9 and 12, while GMB used it in Utterances 11, 13, 15, 19 and 23.

All the utterances (1-23) therefore provide enough information to either initiate the conversation, as in utterances 1 and 2; to seek clarification, as we have in Utterances 3 and 12; to provide specific information, as in Utterances 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 18; or to confirm situation of things, as in Utterances 11, 12 and 13. Some are even uttered to ask questions, as in Utterances 3, 12 and 16. We equally have some sizeable number of utterances that acknowledged power and status. These are in Utterances 1, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 19.

Common ground is a resource that speakers exploit in inviting and deriving pragmatic inference, as a way to cut costs of speech production by leaving much to be inferred by the listener. This is the situation as in the use of the expressions: '*Your Excellency*', and '*Congratulation*' in many instances in the telephone conversation. Fulfilment of the Quantity maxim in all the utterances largely depends on the common ground that obtains among the speakers, particularly between GEJ and GMB. It is the common ground that GEJ shares with GMB for GEJ and GMB to address each other as '*Your Excellency…*' in the course of the telephone conversation. Common ground also produced the utterance of '*Congratulation*s…', despite the non-mentioning of words like election, political parties, etc pertaining to the general election. This is a typical case of the display of an exquisite minimality and efficiency of information, which GEJ and GMB commonly share.

Fulfilment of Quality Maxim
Common knowledge and ground play a significant role here, as the truth values of all the utterances depend on the shared grounds and knowledge of the presidential election and the results, which are not directly mentioned. Such common grounds are that: GEJ was the sitting president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; GMB was a former military Head of State of Nigeria; both GEJ and GMB are presidential candidates of their respective parties; as at the time the telephone conversation was going on, GMB was clearly on the lead

in the already declared results of a number of states; even if the results of the remaining two or three states being awaited, as at then, were counted in favour of GEJ, GEJ was not likely to be declared the winner of the presidential election; the presidential candidate with the highest number of declared votes cast was to be declared winner of the presidential election; and Nigerians and members of the international community were monitoring the collation and state by state release of the results, either through physical presence or through the television and radio broadcast medium. All the utterances therefore derive their quality from the knowledge of the facts stated above. In other words, the knowledge of all these enhanced the quality of all the utterances.

Apart from the use of '*Your Excellency*' by GEJ, his utterance of '*Congratulation*s' (in Utterances 14 and 20) is a clear demonstration of the acceptance of the outcome of the presidential election, despite that the final results had not been collated. Thus, by uttering 18, the intention of GEJ is no longer in doubt. What is observable here is that as explained by Enfield (2008:223), 'common ground affords economy of expression.' The greater the speakers' common ground, the less effort they have to expend to satisfy the informational implicature. They have seen here that an affiliational imperative has compelled the interlocutors to maintain a common degree of interpersonal affiliation proper to the status of the relationship, and again mutually calibrated at each step of an interaction's progression.

In all, the quality of the utterances relies heavily on the economy of expression enabled by common ground. This affords a public display of intimacy; a reliable indicator of how much is personally shared by a given pair of interactants, such as we have in GEJ and GMB's utterances in this telephone conversation.

Fulfilment of Relation Maxim
All the utterances are relevant to the subject matter of the telephone conversation. This can be drawn through inference in Utterances 7, 9, 12, 14, 18 and 20. Every other utterance derives its relevance from Utterance 18, in which GEJ invites GMB to plan a transition programme. Though we can structurally divide the text into three segments,: the opening/introductory part (Utterances 1-13),

middle/nucleus part (14-20) and closing/ending (21-23), all the utterances (1-23) are inter related in structure and content.

Though there are instances of outright repetition of expressions, the entire conversation remains a unified text. Textuality in a text is a product of good use of cohesive ties, and these abound in the conversation. Common knowledge is the main key through which some of these cohesive ties are inferred and worked out. The main reason for this situation is that the text is a transcribed speech, and in spoken conversation, presuppositions and implicature abound. Though GEJ and GMB make minimal reference to the past shared experience, listeners and analysts will need to rely on some pragmatic mappings to effectively decode the utterances. Commonly shared ground that is general/central to all the utterances has helped to weave all the utterances together.

Fulfilment of Manner Maxim

All the participants in the telephone conversation have engaged in conscious use of language. This is attributable to the sensitive nature of the subject of discussion, the temperament of Nigeria as a nation, at that point in time, and the consciousness of the power ratio among the participants in the telephone conversation.

By the economy and brevity of these exchanges, the participants show that they share a great deal of common knowledge, including common knowledge of the status and power of two of the main participants (GEJ and GMB). This may be of immense value for negotiating the vaguely defined level of interpersonal relationship among the speakers. In conversing, they test for, and display common ground, and through the interplay of their contributions to the progressing trajectory of the talk, they demonstrate a hard-to-fake ability to know what is being talked about, even when it is not mentioned directly.

We can see in this telephone conversation that GEJ's information processing mechanism is strategic. This strategic manipulation of information involves the incrementing, maintaining, or presupposing of common ground.

It is in the common ground that GEJ is the current president of Nigeria; GEJ was a presidential candidate of the PDP; GMB was

a former Nigerian head of State; GMB was a presidential candidate of the APC; that presidential election took place in Nigeria on Saturday 28th March and Sunday 29th March 2015; and that as at the time of the telephone conversation, results of the presidential election were being collated and released to the generality of the public. All these pieces of information shaped GEJ's information processing strategy. He never mentioned any of those directly. It can only be deduced that he has employed formulating reference strategy to communicate some of these unmentioned facts. Thus, the utterance of '*Congratulations*' becomes of a more specific reference to concession of victory at the polls.

Speech Acts performed in the utterances
Given the fulfillment of Grice's maxims, and taking cognizance of the common ground that produced all the utterances, all the speech acts worked out are legitimate acts. While many are direct speech acts, a few are indirect acts. In other words, some of the utterances perform functions that are different from what their surface structures display. Only one utterance (U.13) performs three functions, because structurally, the utterance can be broken into three segments. Valid as it is that we have used Yule's (1996) classification model, here, it is instructive to state that any other typology such as Searle's, Trauggot and Pratt's, or any uncumbersome classification model can as well handle the utterances in this telephone conversation.

In terms of distribution, GEJ's Aide produced three utterances (Us.1, 3 and 5) with one being Expressive act (U.1), and the other 2 (U. 3 and 5) being Directive acts. This is not a surprise because he is an aide that is merely acting on the instruction of his principal. He was directed by GEJ to put a call across to GMB.

GMB's Aide spoke five times, as we have in Us 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10. Only U.2 is Expressive, while the rest are Commissive acts. All the commissives derive their success from the fact that GMB's Aide is committing himself to connecting GEJ with GMB, on phone, in the 4 utterances.

GEJ contributed eight utterances to the telephone conversation (Us7, 9, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20 and 22). The volume contributed justifies his role as the initiator of the telephone conversation. While Us.7, 9, 12, 14 and 20 are Declaration acts,

perhaps because of his power status, Us 16 and 18 are Directive acts. The only Expressive act is U. 22. It is his contributions that shape the direction of the conversation. All other participants in the telephone conversation rely on the quality of GEJ's contributions to offer responses. He is the driver of the course of the conversation.

GMB contributed seven utterances, with 6 of them being Expressive acts (Us. 13, 15, 17, 19, 21 and 23). Only U.11 is outright Declaration act, while U.13 is a combination of three acts: Representative (*I'm alright…*), Expressive (*… thank you very much…*') and Declaration (*Your Excellency*') acts. The overriding Expressive acts that characterize GMB's contributions constitute pleasant surprise (I don't think he ever expected the telephone call, partly due to the hate-campaign that preceded the presidential election) or deliberate minimization of speech. He merely salutes GEJ (Us 11, 13, 15, 19 and 23 where '*Your Excellency…*' appear), and thanks GEJ (Us 13, 15, 19 and 21, where the word '*Thank…*' appear) for either putting the call through or for concedingdefeat. GMB did not provide any new information throughout the telephone conversation.In all, the entire conversation is not monolithic, in terms of speech acts display, rather different types are used.

Concluding remarks
The analysis has revealed that all the utterances satisfied the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner on the basis of common ground which the speakers and we, the listeners/analysts, share. It is also obvious that Expressive, Declaration, Directive, Representative and Commissive acts characterize the telephone conversation.

The manipulation of common ground serves both interactional efficacy and social affiliation. As seen in this study, richer common ground means greater communicative economy, because it enables greater ampliative inferences on the basis of leaner coded signals. This is so with GEJ's use of the hedge '*Yeah…*' in U.16, and in GMB's use of '*Well…*' in U.17. In a social-affiliational dimension, the resulting streamlined, elliptical

interaction has a property that is recognized and exploited in the ground-level management of social relations.

Thus, the choices speakers make will, in general, reflect the level of intimacy and intensity of social relations among speaker, addressee, and referent, and this more directly concerns the common ground of speaker and addressee. In sum, we agree with Enfield's (2008:225) view that 'common ground is a resource that speakers exploit in inviting and deriving pragmatic inference, as a way to cut costs of speech production by leaving much to be inferred…' by other contributor(s) or listener(s). And the text of this telephone conversation has demonstrated that, quite well enough.

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Appendix
The Punch, Friday April 3, 2015
The following conversation ensued between Jonathan and Buhari:

Jonathan's Aide: Your Excellency, Sir.
Buhari's Aide: Good evening
Jonathan's Aide: Hope I'm speaking with General Buhari, Sir.
Buhari's Aide: Yes.
Jonathan's Aide: Ok, President Goodluck Jonathan will like to speak with you, Sir.
Buhari's Aide: Ok, ok, I'm connecting you, sir.
Jonathan: Your Excellency.
Buhari's Aide: Hold on…. I'll connect you, Sir.
The phone rings for a moment
Jonathan: Your Excellency
Buhari's Aide: Hold on, Sir
Buhari: Your Excellency
Jonathan: Your Excellency, how are you?
Buhari: I'm alright, thank you very much, Your Excellency
Jonathan: (laughs) Congratulations.
Buhari: Thank you very much, Your Excellency (laughs)
Jonathan: Yeah, so how are things?
Buhari: (laugh) Well …
Jonathan: So, you'd find time to come one of these days so that we can sort out how to plan the transition period..
Buhari: Thank you very much, Your Excellency.
Jonathan: Congratulations
Buhari: Thank you.

Jonathan: Ok
Buhari: My respect, Your Excellency.