# Affordances and Common Grounds in Buyer-Seller Interactions

Christiana Ngozi Ikegwuonu
Department of Linguistics and Igbo, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria

Princess Ngozi Ndibe
Department of Igbo and Other Nigerian Languages, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, Anambra State, Nigeria

*Abstract*—**This study examines the interactions between buyers and sellers in the market setting using the common ground theoretical framework. From the existing literature, it is observed that no research work has examined the above subject matter in the Igbo language using the above mentioned theoretical framework. This is the lacuna in the literature that this study intends to address. The specific objective is to explore the interactions between presuppositions, stages of understanding an utterance and reception strategies in buyer-seller interactions during haggling. Ten interactions were recorded and three of them were sampled in this study. The data were analyzed using the common ground theory. The findings of the study reveal that both the seller and buyer often have the generic structure of buyer-seller interactions in their subconscious, which they put into practice when they engage in market discourse. Also, the buyers and sellers update their personal or emergent common ground as they negotiate meaning during interactions. Furthermore, as the result of the common ground shared by the buyer and the seller, they interpret every utterance based on the affordances of a speech event in a market setting where a buyer is under no obligation to buy after haggling nor is the seller obligated to sell. It also discovers that presupposition is at the heart of grounding because at every interactive turn, a speaker believes that the addressee understands his/ her intentions. The researcher recommends further research on the pragmatic implications for the use of multiple codes during buyer-seller interactions in Igbo land.**

*Index Terms*—**affordances, interaction, common ground, presupposition, buyer-seller**

## I. Introduction

The study of buyer-seller interactions has been critically studied from different perspectives: Pragmatic Acts (Alo & Soneye, 2014), Speech Acts (Chakrani, 2007); Power Asymmetry (Lampi, 1993); Generic Structure Potential (Mitchel, 1957; Long 2012), Systemic Functional Grammar (Jatmiko, Setiawan & Sulistyo, 2018), Transaction Cost (Morsy, 2017) and Discourse Strategies (Ayoola, 2009; Moseri, 2010). On the other hand, the common ground theory has been explored in other discourse and activity types excerpt market discourse (Monk, 2003; Kecskes & Zhang, 2009, 2013; Vandergriff, 2006).

Interactions between interlocutors can take place anywhere, be it at the roadsides, markets, buses, classrooms, school environments, hospitals and offices (Suwandi, 2008). The conversational setting which is emphasized in this paper is the interactions that take place in the market, which are referred to as market interactions, market discourses or buyer-seller interactions. As participants engage in market discourses, they often negotiate meaning through a process known as haggling. According to Alo and Soneye (2014), haggling is an important aspect of the social activity of buying and selling in which Vendors and their prospective customers engage in different socio-pragmatic acts in the processes of negotiating and making compromises, using a language or different languages. As buyers and traders meet, they come with their goals and during the interactions, negotiate meaning based on the common ground they have about market interactions. Market discourses are not done haphazardly. In other words, it follows a sequence or structure. Alo and Soneye (2014) posit that there are five stages in market interactions:

> **Salutation:** This is the beginning of the proceedings with appropriate salutation by the participants. When it occurs, it involves at least two speakers – a buyer and a seller. **Enquiry:** as to the object of sale which consists of question and answer pairs. **Investigation:** This relates to the object of sale which may involve at least two people. **Bargaining**: This takes place between the buyer and the seller until an agreement is reached. **Conclusion**: This may involve the final tone of one of the participants or both (emphasis in the original) (p. 45).

Comparatively, Long (2012) identified eight stages of market interactions in Sibu, China which include following: Sale Demand, Sale Investigation, Sale Commencement, Greeting or Salutation, Sale Agreement, Goods Supply or Handover, Purchase and Purchase Conclusion or Closure. Out of the eight stages, Long, further contends that four of the stages such as: Sale Demand, Sale Agreement, Purchase and Goods Supply or Handover were compulsory stages of

the retail encounter with Sale Demand, Purchase and Goods Handover stages being obtained without verbal utterances or words. As will be shown in this study, ethno-pragmatic factors such as model of goods sampling and time-saving motive can make a buyer to skip the stages of salutation, enquiry and investigation. This may happen when the seller may have seen what he/she intends to buy and moves straight to bargaining.

Since there are differences across languages and cultures, there is a propensity for the existence of differences in the mutual knowledge shared by interactants in market discourse. As such, Chakrani (2007) contends that market discourse does not require one to know the ethnolinguistic rules that regulate interpersonal relationships but also knowledge of which locutions are appropriate to a specific discourse or activity type. This implies the mutual contextual beliefs which exist in different speech communities differ. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the interactions between presuppositions, stages of understanding an utterance and reception strategies in buyer-seller interactions through the theoretical insights of common ground and generic structure of market discourse.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Theoretical Studies

Here, different theories which can be used to analyze the data for this study are reviewed for proper understanding.

### 1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis, which henceforth will be called CDA, is an aspect of discourse analysis that deals with the relationship between discourse and power. It is credited to Norman Fairclough. It was developed and advanced from what was previously stated by Teun Van Dijk (1995). According to the proponents, CDA studies power and power relations, and how power is reproduced in the society. In analyzing power, the critical discourse analyst looked at the reproduction of power in the society (this is in line with Dijk's argument). CDA examines context, ideology and power. In his 1989 and 1995 models for CDA, Fairclough lays down three inter-related dimensions and three inter-related processes of analysis for the dimensions. The dimensions comprise: the item of analysis (comprising verbal/spoken, visual/visible, or verbal/spoken and visual/visible texts); the procedures alongside the mode to which the item is made and acquired (writing/speaking or uttering/designing and reading/listening/viewing) by human subjects; and the socio-historical situations that guide these procedures. A distinct type of analysis needed according to Fairclough (1995) for each of this dimensions are: (i) Text Analysis (description) (ii) Processing Analysis (interpretation), and (iii) Social Analysis (explanation). This approach is useful as it permits one to centre on the signifiers that constitute the text, their particular linguistic selection, the way they are juxtaposed, the way they are sequenced, and their layouts.

Van Dijk's (1995) approach to CDA is ideology based. For him, what people talk about and what they say represents what is conceivable in their minds. As such, he adopts a socio-cognitive approach in his model. Wodak (1996), on her part, approaches CDA from the historical aspect saying that the past and present should account for discourses. Its multidisciplinary nature is where the strength lies. But this on the other hand gives the researcher tedious work in trying to proffer a specific solution or an adequate interpretation to the context or text in question. Another shortfall as seen in Breeze (2011) is that it is highly conditioned by political choice other than scientific investigation. Based on the power relations of CDA, it can be used to analyze how power asymmetry manifests in buyer-seller interactions. This will enable an understanding of who holds more power between the buyer and the seller. However, CDA is not used for analysis in this study because unraveling power asymmetry is not the focus of this study.

### 2. Common Ground Theory

The Common Ground Theory (henceforth, CGT) is a theory of communication which emphasizes context and presupposition for interpretation of meaning. CGT was propounded by Stalnaker (1974, 1978) and has been applied by several formal pragmatists such as (Heim, 1983; Beaver, 1997; Von Fintel, 2006). Stalnaker (1978) maintains that for interlocutors to be able to co-construct meaning effectively, they must have a communicative background between them. Communicative background means that the interlocutors must have a mutual understanding of the information being exchanged in communicative events. The necessity of having a mutual understanding of the communicative events makes presupposition an important concept in CGT.

Stalnaker (1974) postulates that:

> A statement P is a pragmatic presumption or assumption of a speaker in a particular situation/setting just in case the speaker presumes or believes that P presumes or believes that his addressee presumes or believes that P, and presumes or believes that his addressee acknowledges that he is making or building these presuppositions, or has these beliefs (p. 573).

Stalnaker (1978) adds that, "presuppositions are what is taken b the speaker to be the common or usual base of the partakers in the conversation, what is treated as their common usual knowledge or reciprocated knowledge" (p. 30). As such, the hearer should be able to interpret the referential information being communicated at the time of discourse. Heim (1990) supports Stalnaker's (1978) claim that common ground and presupposition are related because the common ground of a context of utterance is the concurrence of all those propositions that speakers presumed in that context either as they are constantly apportioned beliefs in their community, or as they have been constituted at the period of the previous conversation. Similarly, Kecskes and Zhang (2013) concur that there is a relationship between

propositions and common or usual ground that in propositions what a sentence requires are just those that must be required by the common or usual ground of any situation that is to allow that particular sentence. Stalnaker (2002) opines that "it is common or usual ground that of a class, if all members *accept* (for the aim of the conversation) that *Y*, and all *believe* that all accept or welcome that *Y*` etc" (p.716). This implies that once interlocutors have no difficulty in understanding each other, they have a common ground between or among them. Scholars have variegated views about CGT. Allan (1986) conceived it as a theory of context. Duranti (1997) referred to it as theory that emphasizes sensitivity to cultural and procedural knowledge while Temitope (2015) describes it as a theory of shared public data structure.

Kecskes and Zhang (2009) assert that there are three distinct means intention and attention influence the structure of common ground in the mode of communication. According to them, the first one is that the speakers activate mental exhibitions of shared information that they already have. The second way is that speakers look for knowledge that possibly helps communication as reciprocated information. They note that before the speaker builds the seeking attempts, the bit of information is not important in the hearer/listener as background underlying the anticipated conversation/discussion. The third is when the speaker puts forward her personal or individual information and makes it a part of common/usual ground. The speaker has some personal or individual information that she perceives is not accessible or unattainable to the hearer/listener, and she embraces it as common or usual ground in the belief that it enables the conversation/discussion and that the hearer/listener will accept it readily.

In CGT, distinction is made between communal and personal common ground (Clark, 2006) or what Kecskes and Zhang (2009) refer to as core and emergent common ground. The two terminologies discuss the same thing. Communal or core common ground refers to the knowledge that the whole community has. This knowledge does not change and they are binding on all the members of a given speech community. On the other hand, personal or emergent common ground is the knowledge that changes and is particularized, which is shared and privatized by individuals. (cf. Clark, 2006; Kecskes & Zhang, 2009). In the Igbo context for instance, the saying *ezigbo mmadụ ka chinchi* (used in expressing fake care) is a communal common ground in the sense that any Igbo person who is competent in the language will be able to understand the message contained in the statement. At the personal level, two persons may have different expressions to communicate the same message, which may not be understood by a third party. It is worthy of note that in most cases, personal common ground may become communal especially in this 21st century when expressions are publicized through music, movies and jokes and social media platforms (cf. Aboh, 2018).

Furthermore, common ground is updated at every turn in interactions through a process known as grounding (Clark & Schaefer, 1989). Clark (1996) contends that "people try to ground what they do together" (p. 221) during interactions as well as other forms of joint actions such as playing chess, shaking hands or playing a duet. Clark and Brennen (1991) add that as interlocutors further their discussion, they maintain their common ground and update it at every turn. They further remark that as interlocutors continue in their joint action, they come to share more and more information. In this way, common ground piles or increases (Clark & Brennan, 1991). As Clark and Brennan (1991) posit, each contribution in interactions contains two phases: the presentation phase and acceptance phase. In the demonstration stage, "A" presents utterance [u] for "B" to think about. He does so with the presupposition that, if "B" offers evidence [e], he can believe that she comprehends what he means by [u]", whereas at the welcoming or receiving stage, "B welcomes utterance [u] by showing [e] that she believes she comprehends what A means by [u]. She does so on the presupposition that, when "A" registers that evidence, he will also believe that she comprehends" (Clark & Brennan 1991 p. 130). They further add that anytime A makes an utterance, the speaker sees himself in one of the four conditions for all or part of the utterance [u]. The four conditions are:

State 0: "B" didn't observe that "A" spoke any *u*.
State 1: "B" observed that "A" spoke some *u* (but was not in Condition 2).
State 2: "B" rightly heard *u* (but was not in Condition 3).
State 3: "B" comprehended what "A" meant by *u*.

From these four conditions, it could be deduced that they spanned from not hearing the utterance to understanding the message communicated by the speaker. Kecskes and Zhang (2013) submit that sometimes the hearers may disregard common or usual ground that is operated by a presumption, or they may also miss the knowledge upgrade by a statement and so on. This may take place as a result of lack of care, or there remain other cognitive barriers like amnesia or other mental disorders disarrays. In such cases, vigorous attempts are called for to accomplish common or usual ground for the partakers. In line with these states, Vandergrift (2007) develops grounding techniques or strategies for face to face interactions. The four strategies which Vandergrift developed are: global reprise, specific reprise, hypothesis testing, and forward inference that will enable a listener to play an active role in order to fulfill the goal(s) of the interaction. The strategies are summarized in the table below:

TABLE 1
RECEPTION STRATEGIES

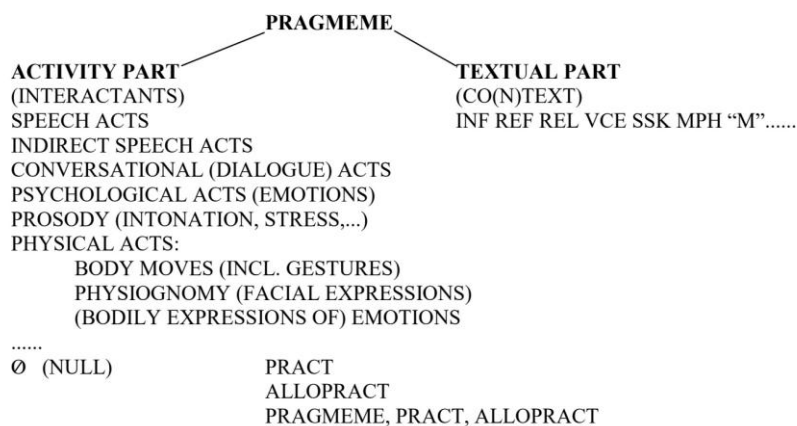| Reception Strategy | Definition | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Global reprise | Listener/recipient queries straight away for repeating, rephrasing or simplifying of a previous utterance. | I beg your pardon. |
| Specific reprise | Listener/recipient queries an interrogation remarking a particular word, term or piece that wasn't comprehended in a preceding utterance. | Ekene went where? |
| Hypothesis testing | Listener/recipient queries a question concerning facts/realities in a previous utterance to prove that s/he has comprehended | Ekene went to the market? |
| Forward inference | Listener/recipient openly shows her present condition of comprehending by asking a question employing particular (presented) knowledge | [If Ekene went to the market] why did he not pick up some cake on the way back? |

Adapted from Vandergrift (2007: 470)

The essence of the reception strategy is to ensure that all interlocutors understood all that have been said. From the table above, it can be deduced that reprises, on the one hand, show lack of clear understanding, hypothesis testing and forward inferences show partial understanding as well as the desire to fully understand the discourse. Suffice it to say that these reception strategies are a subset of grounding tools (Clark & Brennan, 1991).

Another aspect in CGT is coordinating devices. Coordinating devices are rationale for mutual anticipations that make partners believe they will converge on the same joint action (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986). Two major aspects of coordinating devices are conventional procedure and explicit agreement. According to Bamgbose (2019), conventional processes extend from rules and regulations to less formal codes of suitable conduct. They are not habits or practices but rules such as ending at the red traffic light or putting knives on the right hand. Explicit agreement is occurrences of dialogue in which parties explicitly communicate their own intentions. In other words, explicit agreement is whatever that is clearly stated in the discourse which is expected to guide the joint activity.

*3. Pragmatic Acts Theory*

It is pertinent to note that in order to make up for the inadequacies of Speech Acts theory, the pragmatic acts theory was proposed. Mey (2001) in particular, asserts that the speech act theory is non-located: therefore, there is need for the pragmatic act theory that centres on the analysis or investigation of a text in its context. He develops the concept of pragmeme which is presented in the schema below:

```
                              PRAGMEME
                          /              \
ACTIVITY PART                        TEXTUAL PART
(INTERACTANTS)                       (CO(N)TEXT)
SPEECH ACTS                          INF REF REL VCE SSK MPH "M"......
INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS
CONVERSATIONAL (DIALOGUE) ACTS
PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTS (EMOTIONS)
PROSODY (INTONATION, STRESS,...)
PHYSICAL ACTS:
      BODY MOVES (INCL. GESTURES)
      PHYSIOGNOMY (FACIAL EXPRESSIONS)
      (BODILY EXPRESSIONS OF) EMOTIONS
......
Ø  (NULL)              PRACT
                       ALLOPRACT
                       PRAGMEME, PRACT, ALLOPRACT
```

Adapted from Mey (2001)
Figure 1: Illustration of Tenets of Pragmatic Acts

Mey (2001) in his view asserts that Pragmatic Act Theory centres on "the context in which both speaker and hearer/listener detect their affordances, such that the whole condition is brought to bear on what can be said in the condition, as well as what is really being said" (p. 221). This idea is expressed as a pragmeme, a generalized pragmatic act considered as the only force correlated with making utterances (Odebunmi, 2008). A pragmatic act is manifested through an ipra or a pract, which recognizes a pragmeme. Furthermore, Mey (2001) adds that a pract is "the same as an allopract, that is to say a physical manifestation of a specific pragmeme" (p. 221). What determines a pract is the partakers' knowledge of the context of interrelationship and the possible or expected consequence of a pract in a specific context. Practing resolves the problem of differentiating illocutionary force from perlocutionary force (Odebunmi, 2008).

From the foregoing schema, it is observed that the column to the left lists the different choices that the [S]peaker and [H]earer have at their disposition when they are speaking. Thus S may select one of the options; if all the cells are

empty, the matrix goes to zero, showing the borderline case of silence (Mey, 2001). The column to the left shows the textual part, that is, the environment within which the pragmeme functions. Ajayi (2017) maintains that:

> For relevant communication, the interactants hang on such speech act kinds as indirect speech acts, conversational ('dialogue') acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts and concrete acts . These are used in settings, which comprise: INF depicting "inference"; REF, "relevance"; VCE, "voice"; SSK, "shared situation knowledge"; MPH, "metaphor"; and M "metapragramatic joker". The interrelationships among the activity and textual parts result in a pract or an allopract (p. 313).

*B. Empirical Studies*

Vandergriff (2007) examined how common ground is negotiated in computer-mediated versus face-to-face discussions. The objective of the study was to compare learners' use of reception strategies in traditional face-to-face (FTF) and in synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC). In this study, a total number of eighteen students of advanced German took part. In the subsequent semesters, ten men and eight women were register in one of two advanced German courses for students with at least two full years of university-level German. The study identified specific types of reception strategies used in negotiating common ground. The finding reveals that the medium alone appears to have slight influence on grounding as showed by use of reception strategies. It was revealed that part takers accommodated the strategies to the goals of the communicative relation as they employed them mainly to bargain and upgrade common ground on their collective activity rather than to recompense for L2 inadequacies. The relationship between Vandergriif's research and the present one lies in the fact that they explore common ground in interactions. But they differ in the nature of data. The former made use of CMC data, the latter made use of face-to-face market interactions.

Long (2012) studies the discourse characteristics of vendor-customer interactions in a transactional context in Malaysia. The research centers on the schematic structures of negotiations in the retail engagement and the languages employed for several villages of the encounter. For the analysis of the study, a total of number of 100 naturally-occurring interactions or negations among vendors and customers in a traditional Chinese cake shop in Sibu were recorded in audio form. Appropriate contextual information and non-vocal utterances of the vendors and customers were remarked and recognized. The study adopts semi-structured interviews with the sellers to get their views of the transactions. In this study, a total number of fourteen transactions were recorded and analyzed to verify the discourse characteristics of the retail encounter in the cake shops of the same type. The findings reveal that the cake shop businesses were obtained in eight functional stages namely: Sale Demand, Sale Investigation, Sale Commencement, Salutation, Sale Agreement, Goods Supply or Handover, Purchase and Purchase Conclusion or Closure. Out of the eight stages, the study reveals that four of the stages (Sale Demand, Sale Agreement, Purchase and Goods Supply or Handover) were compulsory stages of the retail encounter with Sale Request, Purchase and Goods Handover stages being realized non-verbally. Stages which functioned as salutations and closings were rarely existed in the retail engagement of the present study. All the stages of this study weren't confined by any particular sequence. The outcomes also show that the choice of language for interaction relied on the ethnicity of the customers, in which Mandarin and Chinese vernacular languages (Foochow, Hokkien) were used for intra-ethnic communication whereas Bahasa Melayu and Bazaar Malay were used for inter-ethnic communication. The choice of language for the transactions in this study was defined by the customers and the sellers adjusted to the choice by code switching. Long (2012) found out that switching in the content words correlated to price, type, quantity, turn, availability and appreciation showed the directed significance of such words in transactional interactions, and to the stages of the Investigation, Sale Demand and Purchase Conclusion or Closure being represented in a language that was distinct from the language of the transactions. Inasmuch as both Long's (2012) research and the present one focus on market interactions, they differ in geographical area of study and theoretical framework.

Alo and Soneye (2014) explored haggling or bargaining exchanges among vendors and their three big open air market places in Southwest Nigeria; one in Ibadan (Bodija market) and two in Lagos (Katangwa and Agege) metropolis respectively from a socio-pragmatic perspective. The objectives of the study were to: determine socio-pragmatic patterns in language use in contact situation in the Nigerian multilingual/multicultural market context; determine language choice pattern in these situations, and establish peculiar socio-pragmatic characteristics with reference to specific speech acts and their functions. The data for the study were obtained through audio recording of eight interactions between vendors and customers. The data were analyzed using Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication, aspects of Mey's pragmatic acts theory and Gricean cooperative maxims. The study reveals that various languages such as English, Yoruba, Pidgin, Igbo and Hausa come into contact with one another in the market transactions in Lagos and Ibadan metropolis in Nigeria. It also discovers that vendors and their customers make use of numerous bargaining and pragmatic tactics which consist of greetings, humour, cajoling, flattery, pleading, swearing, abuse together with code-switching and code mixing. The study further shows the pragmatic use of interrogatives, declaratives, exclamatives and imperatives in bargaining interactions. Inasmuch as both Alo and Soneye's (2014) research and the present one focus on market interactions, they differ in geographical area of study and theoretical framework.

Jatmiko, Setiawan and Sulistyo (2018) explain the function of language in Sell-buy transactions in Klewer Market Surakarta (Indonesia). The study covers instrumental function, regulatory function, representation function, interaction

function, individual function, heuristic function, and imaginative function. It adopts Halliday's systemic functional grammar as the theoretical framework. In this study purposive sampling method was used to obtain the data from the transcript of the sale and purchase dialogue in Klewer Market Surakarta. The study discovers that heuristic function dominates or overtops the conversation and the form of bargaining between seller and buyer in Klewer market Surakarta can be employed as the Indonesian language learning material in senior high school. Inasmuch as Jatmiko, Setiawan and Sulistyo's (2012) research and the present one focus on market interactions, they differ in geographical area of study and theoretical framework.

*C. Summary of the Literature Review*

Under literature review, some competing theories that can be used to analyze buyer-seller interactions were reviewed. Related empirical works which researchers and scholars have done were also reviewed. From the empirical review, it was observed that attention has not been given to buyer-seller interactions from the common ground perspective. This lacuna is what this research wants to fill.

*D. Theoretical Framework*

The theory that is used for the analysis of data is the common ground theory. There are many theoretical insights in CGT but this research will focus only on the interaction among presupposition, stages of understanding of utterance and reception strategies in the data for the study. This kind of analysis aids in capturing the role of common ground in understanding utterances.

## III. METHODOLOGY

Data for this study were obtained from Eke Awka, a market in Awka metropolis, Anambra State in the Southeast Nigeria. Ten market interactions which were carried out in the mother-tongue were audio recorded and translated. The recording was done surreptitiously in order not to taint the naturalness of the encounter. Because of space and to avoid repetition, three buyer-seller interactions were sampled and used for analysis in this study. The data were analyzed using the theoretical framework of common ground.

## IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

**Common Ground in Buyer-Seller Interactions**
**Text A**
1. Buyer:      Madam, kee ka i si ere azụ ndị a?
                     (Madam, how do you sell these fish?)
2. Seller:     Nke a N250. Nke a N300. Nke a N600, i kwee ọnụ obere.
                     (This one is N250. This one is N300. This one is N600, then you price a bit).
3. Buyer:      Madam, azụ gị ndị a galakwara ọnụ o.
                     (Madam, these fish of yours is costly o).
4. Seller:     Mama anyị gotekwara ha ngala ọnụ. Ma ka osiladị gwa m oge ole ị ga-achọ izụ ha.
                     (Our mother bought them very costly. Also, but all the same, tell me the price you would like to buy them).
5. Buyer:      Nke a, ọ bụrọ N300? (Pointing at the one of N600)
                     (Is this one not N300?)
6. Seller:     Mba, ọ dịrọ mma. Ngwa wete N450.
                     (No, it is not good. Okay, bring N450).
7. Buyer:      Ị ga-enye m ya N350?
                     (Will you give me for N350?)
8. Seller:     Tinye ya N50 ka m mete gị kọstọma.
                     (Add N50 let me make you my customer).
9. Buyer:      Ngwa kechie ya.
                     (Package it then).

In the above interactions, there is a common ground between the buyer and the seller that since the point of interaction is not a supermarket where there are price tags to the goods; it then presupposes that bargaining is allowed. Both the buyer and the seller also have a common ground that they have their turns to speak. Inasmuch as greeting has been identified as one of the elements of buyer-seller interactions, from the above excerpt, it can be deduced that greeting was optional. The buyer who is older than the seller feels it is unimportant to greet her younger one. Also consider the cultural aspect because in Igbo land, adults do not greet the younger ones. But on the other hand, she prefers to call the seller *Madam* as a pragmatic strategy of persuading her to lower the price for her.

All the interactive turns in text A operated at the stage 3 of understanding of utterance because at each turn, the hearer understood what the speaker said. As such, they have the characteristics of the forward inference reception strategy. In the first turn (1-2), the buyer asked a question and this presupposes that the question was directed to someone and that it needs an answer. Based on the communal common ground that when a buyer requests for a sale and

there are different sizes to the same commodity, the seller is expected to list the prices of these different sizes (2). The seller achieved this through combining verbal (saying the price) and nonverbal (pointing to the different sizes) means of communication.

Furthermore, the buyer and seller share a common ground on pricing in market setting. In communicating this common ground, the seller did not say exactly the price of the fish because she knows that saying the exact amount and sticking to it may deter the buyer from buying since there is no fixed price for the commodity. The buyer presupposes that the initial price is not always the final price and so she starts bargaining and negotiating meaning with the seller from turn 1 to 8 until when the bargaining was closed in turn 9 when the buyer asked the seller to package the fish.

**Text B**
(The seller beckons on the buyer)

1. Seller:     Costumer, bịa ka m resị gị, aga m eresị gị ọfụma.
              (Customer come, I will sell to you at a better price)
2. Buyer:      Nke a bụ oge ole?
              (How much is this?)
3. Seller:     Weta N350.
              (Bring N350)
4. Buyer:      Hịa! obere ihe a.
              (Hịa! This little thing)
5. Seller:     Lịtụlụ kwa? Kweenụ ọnụ.
              (Little? You are free to price)
6. Buyer:      Ọ bụrọ N200?
              (Is it not N200?)
7. Seller:     Mba ọ dịrọ mma. Tinye ya N50 ka mụ jụstụ resị gị ya.
              (No, it is not good. Add N50 let me just sell it to you).
8. Buyer:      Mba! O peka na N250. Ị ma enye m ya N200? Nyenụ m ya.
              (No! It is too small for N250. Will you not give it to me for N200? Sell it to me).
9. Seller:     Mba ọ dịrọ mma. Mụnwa egoterọ ya N200 fọkwa ire N200. Geenu m wụ sọọsọ N30
              (No, it is not good like that. I did not even buy at N200 talk more of selling it for N200. My profit is
              just N30).
10. Buyer:     Okay o!. Ị chọrọnụ iresị m. Ka m pụbanụ. Ọ kwa ime ahịa ka m nọ?
              (Okay o!. You don't want to sell to me. Let me leave. Am I not in the market?)
11. Seller.    Gawanụ. Amosu.
              (Leave then. Witch).

Normally, it appears rude for someone to beckon on someone he/she does not know. But in the market setting, the seller and the buyer share a common ground that everybody that comes to the market has a transaction in mind. It then presupposes that even though someone did not come to the market for a transaction, he will not be angry if a seller beckons on him/her. This is evident in text B where the seller beckons on the intending buyer. In text B also, it can be seen that there was no greeting. The pragmatic function of the use of 'customer' is to create a feeling of familiarity between the seller and the buyer even though the buyer may not have bought something from the seller before. From turns 1-10, the interlocutors engaged in the process of grounding as they bargain.

The turns in text B have the features of forward inference because the messages are in the bid to move the communication forward. In turn 4, the effect of the buyer's expression of surprise, shock and anger using the discourse marker *Hịa*!, is a strategy to make the seller reconsider lowering the price. When the buyer and the seller could not update their common ground to the point where they will reach a consensus, the buyer left without buying. In reaction, the seller called her *Amosu*. Due to the fact the buyer understands the common ground in market interactions; she did not react to the derogatory remark because she knows that it is wont of many sellers. If someone had called her *Amosu* in another setting maybe in an office, she would have confronted the person. Inasmuch as Chapman and Routledge (2009) state that talk in social interactions is a collaborative process where a conversation is not ended in an abrupt manner that would deprive any of the participants of the right to contribute, yet in haggling, perhaps due to lack of money and the very little resources of some buyers, the interactions ended non-cooperatively, thereby, violating the cooperative principles.

**Text C**

1. Buyer:      Mkpụrụ beans gị ndị a amaka. Kee ka i si ere ofu painter?
              (These beans of yours are very good. How much is one painter?)
2. Seller:     Sọọsọ one thousand naira.
              (Only one thousand naira)
3. Buyer:      Sọọsọ kwa? Ihe a na-ere N750. Kee zị mgbe o ruru one thousand?
              (Only? What is sold for N750? When did it reach one thousand?)
4. Seller:     Kee mgbe i goro ya last?
              (When was the last time you bought it?)

5. Buyer:      Does it matter?
6. Seller:     Yes na. Maka na ihe e gotere taa abụghị ihe a ga-egote echi. O nwere ike price adaa or rịgoo.
               (Yes of course. Because the price it was bought for yesterday is not the same for today. It may rise or
               fall).
7. Buyer:      Madam rapụ akụkọ. Ego ole ka ị ga-enye m last?
               (Madam stop telling a story. How much is the last price?)
8. Seller:     Ngwa wete N950
               (Bring N950 then).
9. Buyer:      Hmmm Madam, ị ka nọkwa far. Ọ dị ka ị chọrọ ka m gote gị ahịa ka i mete m customer.
               (Hmmm Madam, you are still far. It is like you don't want me to be your customer by selling the
               goods to me).
10. Seller:    Kee kwanụ ihe ọzọ m ji pụta ebe a? Ka ị chọziri ka m ree nke m ga-ere hapụ ipụtazi ọzọ. Kwuzienụ
               ọnụ ka m resị gị.
               (What else brought me here? Or do you want me to sell the one I will sell and I will not come out
               again. Bargain well let me sell to you).
11. Buyer:     Ngwa ka m tinye N50.
               (Okay, let me add N50).
12. Seller:    Mba. Oya wete N900. Ọ dị mma na N900. Gakwaa ebe ọzọ kwee ọnụ.
               (No. Bring N900 then. It is good at N900. Go another place and price).
13. Buyer:     Ị ma nye m N850?
               (You won't sell for me at N850?)
14. Seller:    Mba. Ọ dịrọ mma.
               (No. It is not good).
15. Buyer:     Ngwanụ ka m kwee ọnụ ebe ọzọ.
               (Okay then, let me go and haggle at another place).
16. Seller:    Nsogbu adịrọ. Ọ bụrụ ofu ihe, ị bịa tụnyere m.
               (No problem. If it is the same thing, come and patronise me).

Just like in the other interactions, there was no greeting in the interactions in text C. Due to the common ground shared between the buyer and the seller that greeting in this kind of interaction is optional, the seller even though she was older than the buyer did not consider it as an obligation for the buyer to greet her nor her (the seller) to be greeted. As such, the global reprise was not employed. In addition, irrespective of the fact that the buyer did not greet the seller, she (the buyer) exhibited traits of politeness by the use of honorific like *Madam*. The pragmatic motive for using this honorific is to appeal and persuade the seller. By addressing the seller using the honorific, sellers are lured into selling at a cheaper price. Also, both the seller and employ code-switching during course of haggling to keep the transaction going smoothly

In turn 2, the seller demonstrates that she fully understood the utterance made by the buyer in turn 1, based on the common ground she has that when a buyer asks a question, the seller is expected to answer. If the seller fails to answer, the buyer may be moved to go to another seller. Furthermore, the seller also presupposes that since the buyer has indicated interest to buy from the commodity, she is expected to convince the buyer to buy from her. Hence, the statement she made in turn 2. By using the word *sọọsọ* 'only', she communicates to the seller that one thousand naira is not expensive. In reaction, the buyer applies the reception strategy of hypothesis testing by asking *Sọọsọ kwa?* to fully capture the facts in the preceding utterance in order to verify that she understood the seller. The adoption of this strategy demonstrates a misconstruction of meaning by the two interlocutors. Whereas one thousand appeared cheap to the seller, it was too expensive for the buyer. In order to update their common ground, the buyer priced N750 based on the previous communal or core common ground she has before as her pricing was based on what the cost was initially. During this interaction with the seller, the buyer and the seller understood that common ground can be emergent that was why the seller requested to know when the buyer bought the last paint of beans (4-8). In the bid to attune herself to the emergent common ground, the buyer offered to add N50 naira (11).

The negotiation continued until the point when the two parties could not reach at a consensus. The seller based on previous knowledge presupposed that it is not a must for a buyer to buy a commodity at the end of the haggling. Hence, she offered the buyer an alternative, which is to price elsewhere. This strategy was in the bid to make the buyer know that she is not hiking the price. This is the opposite of what happened in text two where the seller was impolite to the buyer. The pragmatic effect of this polite closure of bargaining is to persuade the buyer to come back and buy from her if she eventually discovers that the price is the same. It is worthy to note here that the seller made such polite requests because of background knowledge she has about sellers who often come back to the place they first haggled when they discover that the prices did not differ.

The buyer did not verbally complete her turn of the interaction. Rather she adopts the pragmatic strategy of silence as she leaves the place. The seller did not interpret the silence as impolite because based on the affordances and the common ground in market discourses, the silence has passed across a message which may be approval or disapproval of her request. If it had happened in another discursive event between mother and daughter and the mother is talking to the

daughter while the daughter walks away from her, based on the common ground shared in such speech event, the action of the daughter would be considered impolite. This is because she violated the Igbo pragmatic principle of *ezigbo nwa* (a well-mannered child).

## V. CONCLUSION

This study has examined common ground in buyer-seller interactions. The study revealed that both the seller and buyer often have the generic structure of buyer-seller interactions in their subconscious. As they interact, they unconsciously put into practice the common ground i.e. what they have taken for granted during the interactions. The study further discovered that buyers and sellers update their personal or emergent common ground as they negotiate meaning during interaction. The study also revealed that presupposition is at the heart of grounding because at every interactive turn, a speaker assumes or believes that the hearer understands his/her intention. The findings of the study revealed that due to the common ground shared by the buyer and the seller, they interpreted every utterance based on the affordances of a speech event in a market setting where a buyer is under no obligation to buy after haggling neither does the seller have the right to force the buyer to buy. All the seller can do is to either adopt the pragmatic strategy of humour or honorifics to persuade the buyer to patronize her.

One of the findings of this study concurs, on the one hand, with that of Long (2012) who identified greeting in buyer-seller interactions as optional. On the other hand, it departs from the finding of Alo and Soneye (2014) that identified greeting as an obligatory element in buyer-seller interactions. The reason for this departure may be because of the differences between how Yoruba people (who were used in Alo and Soneye's study) and Igbo people (used in this study) value greetings. According to Odebunmi (2015), greeting in the Yoruba culture is a core component of *Ọmọlúàbí* (a gentleman). Therefore, based on the affordances within the reach of the buyers and sellers used in this study, they did not feel offended when there was exchange of greetings or pleasantries. But in order to show an atom of respect, the buyers in some cases use the honorific *Madam* as a politeness marker.

This research work cannot claim that it has captured everything in buyer-seller interactions in Igbo land. It did not address how buyers and sellers use multiple codes while interacting neither did it dwell on politeness in market discourse. These areas should be looked into by researchers who want to examine buyer-seller interactions in Igbo land in the future.

## REFERENCES

[1]   Aboh, S. C. (2018). *Communicating post-truth ideologies in Nigerian cities: A discourse historical analysis.* Unpublished M.A. Seminar Paper, Department of Linguistics, Igbo and Other Nigerian Languages, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
[2]   Ajayi, T. M. (2017). Unvelling of sexual literature in the Beulah Yoruda/English Bilingual Parallei Bible. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies.* vol. 10, no. 1, 309-324.
[3]   Allan, K. (2013). *Common ground.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
[4]   Alo, M. A. & Soneye, T. O. (2014). Haggling as a socio-pragmatic strategy in selected urban markets: An amalgam of English and Nigerian languages. *Marang, 24,* 43-62.
[5]   Ayoola, K. (2009). Haggling exchanges at meat stalls in some markets in Lagos, Nigeria. *Discourse Studies*, *11*(4), 387-400.
[6]   Bamgbose, G. A. (2019). Common ground theory. In A. B. Sunday & F. O. Egbokhare (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in language studies* (pp. 187-196). Ibadan: Scholarship Publishers (Nig.).
[7]   Beaver, D. I. (1997). Presupposition. In J. van Benthem & A. ter Meulen (Eds.), *Handbook of logic and language* pp. 939–1008. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
[8]   Breeze, R. (2011). Critical discourse analysis and its critics. *Pragmatics,* 21(4), 493-525. Chakrani, B. (2007). Cultural context and speech act theory: A socio-pragmatic analysis of bargaining exchanges in Morocco. *Texas Linguistics Forum*, *51*, 43-53.
[9]   Clark, H. H. & Brennan, S. E. (1991). Grounding in communication. In L. B. Resnick, J. M. Levin, S. D. Teasley (Eds.), *Perspective on socially shared cognition* pp. 127-149. Washington: APA Books.
[10]  Clark, H. H. & Schaefer, E. R. (1989). Contributing to discourse. *Cognitive Science, 13*, 259-294.
[11]  Clark, H. H. (1996). *Using language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[12]  Clark, H. H. (2006). Context and common ground. In J. Mey (eds.), *Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics* pp. 116-119. Oxford: Elsevier.
[13]  Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic anthropology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[14]  Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. London: Longman.
[15]  Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Longman.
[16]  Heim, I. (1983). On the projection problem for presuppositions. West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics, 114–125. Republished in 1991 S. Davis (Ed.), *Pragmatics: A reader* pp, 397-405. New York: Oxford University Press.
[17]  Jatmiko, H. T., Setiawan, B & Sulistyo, E. T. (2018). The language function in oral discourse a sell-buy transaction in Klewer market Surakarta and its relevance as Indonesian learning materials in senior high school. *Proceeding of 2nd International Conference of Arts Language and Culture,* 478-494.
[18]  Kecskes, I. & Zhang, F. (2013). On the dynamic relations between common ground and presupposition. In A. Capone (ed.), *Perspectives on linguistic pragmatics* pp. 375-395. Hague: Springer International Publishing.
[19]  Kecskes, I., & Zhang, F. (2009). Activating, seeking and creating common ground: A sociocognitive approach. *Pragmatics and Cognition*, *17*(2), 331–355.

[20] Lampi, M. (1993). Discourse organization and power: Towards a pragmatics of sales negotiation. *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, *4*, 195-208.

[21] Long, K. L. (2012). *Discourse features of vendor-customer interaction in a transactional setting in Sibu.* Unpublished M.A. dissertation, Centre for Language Studies, University of Malaysia, Sarawak.

[22] Mey, J. L. (2001). *Pragmatics: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford. New York.

[23] Mitchell, T. F. (1957). The language of buying and selling in Cyrenaica: a situational statement. *Hesperis, 26*, 31–71.

[24] Monk, A. F. (2003). Common ground in electronically mediated communication: Clark's theory of language use. In J. M. Carroll (ed) *HCI models, theories and frameworks: Towards a multidisciplinary science* (pp. 265-289). San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann.

[25] Morsy, H. M. (2017). Buyer-seller relationship and power position: Interchanging. *International Journal of Supply and Operations Management, 4*(1), 33-52.

[26] Odebunmi, A. (2008). Pragmatic functions of crisis-motivated proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to blame*. *Linguistik Online, 33*(1), 23-35.

[27] Odebunmi, A. (2015). Omoluabi. In J. Ostman, & P. Verschueren (Eds.) *Handbook of pragmatics* (pp. 1-13). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

[28] Stalnaker, R. C. (1974). Pragmatic presuppositions. In M. K. Munitz & P. K. Unger (Eds.), *Semantics and philosophy* pp. 197–214. New York: New York University Press.

[29] Stalnaker, R. C. (1978). Assertion. *Syntax and Semantics*, *9*, 315–332.

[30] Suwandi, S. (2008). *Serbalinguistik: Mengupas Pelbagai Praktik Berbahasa*. Surakarta: UNSPRESS.

[31] Temitope, S. A. (2015). *Common ground theory: Principles and applications*. Unpublished PhD Seminar Paper, Department of English, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

[32] van Dijk, T. A. (1995). Discourse semantics and ideology. *Discourse & Society, 6*(2), 243 -289.

[33] Vandergriff, I. (2006). Negotiating common ground in computer-mediated versus face-to-face discussions. *Language Learning & Technology, 10*(1), 110-138.

[34] Vandergrift, L. (2007). Listening comprehension in L2/FL learning. *Language Teaching, 40*, 191-210.

[35] Von Fintel, K. (2006). *What is Presupposition accommodation, again?* Draft paper for Workshop on Presupposition Accommodation at The Ohio State University.

[36] Wodak, R. (1996). *Orders of discourse*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

**Christiana Ngozi Ikegwuonu** was born in Enugu City in Enugu State on 4th April, 1962. She had her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education at the University of Nigeria Nsukka. She obtained M.A Degree in Linguistics at the University of Nigeria Nsukka in 2008 and PhD Degree in Linguistics at the University of Calabar, Calabar in 2014. Her areas of research interest include: morphology, syntax, semantics, phonology, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics and Igbo grammar. She has a number of scholarly publications to her credit. These include: ''On the syntax of Manner Adverbials in the Igbo *Language'' 'in IOSR. Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IORS-JHSS) Vol.24.Issue 4 Series 9, 5-14*, ''*An Exploration of Gender System in the Igbo Language''* in *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics.9, 245-253*, ''Aspect: An Element of INFL Phrase'' in *International Journal of Language, Linguistics and Gender Studies. LALIGENS) Vol. 8 (2), S/No.18, 25-45.*

Her professional association include: Linguistic Association of Nigeria, Igbo Studies Association USA, and Igbo Studies Association Nigeria.

**Ndibe Princess Ngozi** was born on 4th June, 1979. She had her Bachelor Arts Degree in Education at the University of Nigeria Nsukka. She obtained M.A Degree in Education/Igbo Linguistics at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University in 2006. She is a doctoral student in the Department of Linguistics and Igbo, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. She specializes in Igbo Language and Culture. She has a number of scholarly publications to her credit. These include: ''Enhancing National Integration and Unity among Nigeria Youth through Language'' *Ideal International Journal of Igbo Scholars Forum. Vol.13,2020, "Onodu iri ekpe n'ala Igbo''in Ekwe Journal, Vol.4, 2017* and ''HPSG Analysis of Reflexive Constructions in Okija and Idemmili Dialects of the Igbo *Language'' Academic Global International Journal of Research (Multidisciplinary). Vol 1, 2019*. Member Women In Colleges of Education (WICE) and Member Teacher's Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN).