

The Lexicography and Significance of Ranks and Ranking in the Nigeria Police Force

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Abstract

Appropriate communication requires the use of appropriate words in a given context. Most often, people find it difficult to communicate accurately because of their dearth of knowledge of the appropriate vocabularies or registers to use in each situation. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and the Nigerian armed forces tend to prove some reasonable level of difficulty for people to discuss as they are not conversant with the terms and terminologies used in the forces. To proffer a little solution in this direction, this paper embarks on a presentation and discussion of ranks and ranking in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), bringing out the implications of such old-time practice in the force. It is obvious that ranks and ranking are but a minute aspect of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), meaning many other aspects abound for further discussion. This paper therefore leaves room for other scholars to investigate into those other aspects for the ease of linguistic and professional communications in the domain of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

Keywords: Lexicography, Ranks, Ranking, Nigeria Police Force

INTRODUCTION

Lexicography is the theory and practice of writing dictionary. The term 'dictionary' refers to a book of a list of words of a language in alphabetical order that explains what the words mean. The term itself is derived from the word 'diction' which means choice and use of words in literature; suffice to say 'diction' refers to 'words'. Therefore 'dictionary' is a book of words and their meanings in a language. English dictionaries are books of words and their meanings in English, from which a speaker makes choice when speaking the language.

In making his choice from the words of a language, the speaker or the writer takes into consideration the context in which he is speaking or writing. The term 'context' refers to the situation in which the speech or on which the writing is being made. J.L. Austin (1962) explicates the concept of context as the situation which yields the sense intended by the speaker. Pushpinder and Jindal (2010; 58 – 60) relate Austin's (1962) idea of context to that of 'register'. They see register as using different varieties of a language depending upon the situation. Language according to the situation is register. By dictionary definition and linguistically, register is the level and style of a piece of writing or speech that is usually appropriate to the situation that it is used in.

Pushpinder and Jindal (2010) attempt a classification of registers into those according to field of discourse and those according to mode of discourse. By register according to mode of discourse, they are referring to style or context of situation, whereby one can choose to be formal or informal, frozen, consultative or intimate. The style of speaking depends on the situation that the speaker has found himself in. the mode of talking to a spouse (in a bedroom) of course is different from the mode of talking to a colleague in the office.

The focus of this article is on register according to field of discourse. This refers to a range of words that are appropriate in talking about a particular field of endeavour. Certain words used in talking about medicine may not be readily called up when talking about law, politics, education, agriculture, etc. those words which are peculiar in discussing medicine are the registers of medicine; so do we have registers of law, politics, education and so on. Registers are used to name or express actions or things or concepts in different fields of discourse. The police force is a field of discourse or endeavour.

Naming, as mentioned or expressed above, calls up the concept of 'onomastics'. Onomastics or onomatology, according to Wikipedia, is the study of proper names of all kinds and the origins of names. By this definition, one will be tempted to think of nouns, particularly proper nouns, as the only business of onomastics. But that is misleading as Merriam – Webster's (2013) 'Quizzitive', a vocabulary quiz application on internet defines 'onomastics' as the science or study of the origins and forms of words especially in a **specialized field**; it is the system underlying the formation and use of words especially for proper names or of words used in a **specialized field**. Of interest to this paper is the phrase or expression 'specialized field'. This calls up the idea of field of discourse and/or field of endeavour, all of which, are

specialized and point to the concept of register. The concept of register is also lexical or an issue of lexicography. By semantic implication therefore, lexicography, which is the theory and practice of writing dictionary, includes registers and vocabulary development of a language.

Vocabulary of ranking in the Nigeria Police Force is synonymous with the Register of Ranks in the Nigeria Police Force. The crux of the matter lies on the term 'rank' or 'ranking'. In the context of this paper, ranks refer to positions in organisations such as the army, navy, air force, police force, etc. Ranking is the act of positioning people or things on a scale that shows how good or important they are in relation to others in the group. An example is Tomori's (1977) of the grammatical units of meaning in English, where the units of morpheme, word, phrase, clause and sentence are presented in a hierarchical order, meaning that one is lower than the other and the other higher than the one. This means a movement from the lowest rung to the highest rung in the ladder of rank.

Tomori (1977), also Quirk and Greenbaum (1982) call it 'taxonomy' which means a particular system of classifying things, moving up from the lowest to the highest, or moving down from the highest to the lowest in the hierarchy. In the example of the grammatical units cited above, the sentence is the highest unit of meaning in grammar while the morpheme is the lowest in rank.

RANKS AND THEIR MEANINGS IN THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE

It is important to note that apart from the Nigeria Police Force where ranks and ranking are significant, the practice has been earlier rooted and entrenched in the Nigerian armed forces which include the army, navy and the air force. Officers in the Nigerian armed forces are categorised into commissioned and non-commissioned. The commissioned officers are the ones in senior ranks while the non-commissioned are the rank and file, the very junior officers. The Nigerian armed forces ranks (commissioned officers) are thus presented:

ARMY	NAVY	AIR FORCE
Highest rank: (1) Field Marshal	Admiral of the Fleet	Marshal of the Nigerian Air Force
(2) General	Admiral	Air Chief Marshal
(3) Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral	Air Marshal
(4) Major General	Rear Admiral	Air Vice-Marshal
(5) Brigadier General	Commodore	Air Commodore
(6) Colonel	Captain	Group Captain
(7) Lieutenant Colonel	Commander	Wing Commander
(8) Major	Lieutenant Commander	Squadron Leader
(9) Captain	Lieutenant	Flight Lieutenant
(10) Lieutenant	Sub-lieutenant	Flying Officer
(11) Second Lieutenant	Acting Sub-lieutenant	Pilot Officer
Lowest rank: (12) no equivalent	Mid Shipman	No equivalent

The Nigerian armed forces ranks (non-commissioned officers) are also presented:

ARMY	NAVY	AIR FORCE
Highest rank: (1) no equivalent	Warrant Chief Petty Officer	Air Warrant Officer
(2) Warrant Officer Class 1	Chief Petty Officer	Master Warrant Officer
(3) Warrant Officer Class 2	Petty Officer	Warrant Officer
(4) Staff Sergeant	Leading Rating	Flight Sergeant
(5) Sergeant	As above	Sergeant
(6) Corporal	No equivalent	Corporal
(7) Lance – corporal	Able Rating	Lance – Corporal
(8) Private	Ordinary Rating	Air Craftman
Lowest rank: (9) Recruit	Trainee	Recruit

[Adapted from Wikipedia (2013) as powered by NewArkHost.com & falae.com]

In the Army, among the commissioned officers, the fifth rank is decorated with one star and referred to as one-star General; the fourth is two-star General; the third, three-star General; the second, four-star General; and the first, five-star General. Their equivalents in the Navy and the Air Force are starred in like manner.

As in the Nigerian Armed Forces, ranks and ranking in the Nigeria Police Force are taxonomical, hierarchical, meaning that their arrangement indicates that one is higher than the other and the other lower

than the one. In other words, the highest rank is on top and the lowest rank is below all others. In their order of ranks the Nigeria Police Force are thus classified:

1. The Inspector-General of Police (IGP) is **the highest rank**; there is only one serving Inspector-General at a time in the nation.
2. Deputy Inspector-General (DIG) of Police is next in rank to the IGP; there may be more than one Deputy Inspector-General at a time.
3. Assistant Inspector-General (AIG) of Police is next to the DIG and the third highest rank in the police.
4. Commissioner of Police (CP) is the fourth rank; a CP is the one in charge of contingents in a state.
5. Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) is next to the CP.
6. Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) is the sixth and last rank of the commissioned senior officers in the police force.
7. Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP) is the seventh rank in the police and the first of the intermediate officers.
8. Superintendent of Police (SP) is the eighth rank.
9. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) is the ninth rank.
10. Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) is the tenth rank in the police force.
11. Inspector of Police (IP) is the eleventh rank and the last of the intermediate officers in the police force.
12. Sergeant Major (SM) is the twelfth rank and the first of the rank and file junior officers in the police force.
13. Sergeant is the second of the rank and file junior officers.
14. Corporal is the first rank of promotion in the rank and file of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).
15. Constable is **the lowest rank** in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

[adapted from Wikipedia (2013) as powered by NewArhHost.com and falae]

The implications of ranking in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) are various. Obviously ranks have their meanings, that one in a particular rank knows one's position in relation to other members of the force. This means that giving and taking of orders are determined by the rank one has attained in the force. The Corporal receives orders from the Sergeant and gives same to the Constable. By this, ranking calls for respect among members of the force. Members should be conscious of their ranks and treat superior officers with respect, even if it is pretended.

Ranking indicates orderliness. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is an orderly organisation; it is a system in which one can grow, meaning that it is an organism which has the capability of developing cells and shedding off some. Members can grow from rank to rank, and can be laid off the system or demoted from one rank to a lower one, all depending on their recognition of the orderliness in the system.

The ranks also call up a sense of responsibility. It is obvious that in a group of policemen, the highest rank takes charge. For instance, if five police officers are found in a place and the highest rank there is a sergeant, obviously the sergeant takes charge without waiting for any order. It means that if he allows any thing to go wrong, he would be blamed or held responsible. The lower ranking officers there can take action(s) depending on his order to them. Many other implications of the ranks and ranking in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) abound that require investigation by scholars.

CONCLUSION

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF), like the Nigerian Armed Forces and other organisations, smacks of ranks and ranking. The force is an organism in which members, like cells, can be promoted or demoted. It is also a system. The ranks and ranking in the force are also indicative of orderliness. They challenge members to a sense of respect and responsibility.

It is therefore suggestive that the vocabulary of ranks in the force should be used by members to make appropriate reference to one another. It also affords members of the general public the appropriate nomenclatures for members of the force and the appropriate diction or registers too talk about the Nigeria

Police Force (NPF).

Policemen and women are therefore enjoined to be aware of their ranks and to behave accordingly. The general public are also enjoined to keep abreast of the ranks in the police force and the words used in talking about the organisation and its members. In so doing, they can easily talk about and make easy reference to the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigerian Armed Forces including the army, navy and the air force. As expressed earlier, this paper leaves enough grey areas for further investigations by scholars.

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