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ABSTRACT This study applies a computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) to the study of discourse structures and functions of '419' emails – the Nigerian term for online/financial fraud. The hoax mails are in the form of online lottery winning announcements, and email 'business proposals' involving money transfers/claims of dormant bank accounts overseas. Data comprise 68 email samples collected from the researcher's inboxes and colleagues' and students' mail boxes between January 2008 and March 2009 in Ota, Nigeria. The study reveals that the writers of the mails apply discourse/pragmatic strategies such as socio-cultural greeting formulas, self-identification, reassurance/confidence building, narrativity and action prompting strategies to sustain the interest of the receivers. The study also shows that this genre of computer-mediated communication (CMC) has become a regular part of our internet experience, and is not likely to be extinct in the near future as previous studies of email hoaxes have predicted. It is believed that as the global economy witnesses a recession, chances are that more creative and complex ways of combating the situation will arise. Economic hardship has been blamed for fraud/online scams, inadvertently prompting youths to engage in various anti-social activities.

KEY WORDS: *computer-media communication, deceptions, discourse, email, '419', fraud, hoax*

Introduction

The deceptive tendencies of several forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) have been an issue of concern over the years. In the last five years especially, there has been the proliferation of deceptive online messages ranging from funny 'spam' mails to criminally-oriented ones. Hence, digital deceptions, which began as hoax computer virus warnings in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Heyd, 2008), became big time fraud-oriented internet businesses/online scams. In the Nigerian sense, any form of advance fee fraud or online deceptivity aimed at defrauding someone is known as '419' – a term derived from the Nigerian penal

code, addressing advance fee/online fraud. This article focuses on this type of online criminally-oriented emails, that is, scam emails, usually sent to receivers' inboxes, or as spam mails. Three types (with their sub-types) are examined here, namely: i) hoax e-lottery 'winner' notifications; ii) '419' business solicitations; and iii) deceptive fortune bequeathing information.

The first type is a notice sent to a receiver's inbox informing him/her that he/she has won an online lottery worth millions of US dollars or euros from a 'Microsoft Online Promotion', 'UK National Lottery Board', 'E-Lottery Bonanza', or 'Australia Lotto Lottery Inc'. The aim is perhaps to get the attention of the receiver and eventually ask him/her to pay a fee before he/she could claim the prize money. The second type is the '419' business solicitation, where the receiver is urged to invest (e.g. in gold) in South Africa or Burkina Faso with a profit-sharing formula to be decided. A sub-type is when the receiver is asked to make his bank account available for a transfer of some huge sum of money from abroad. After the transfer, the account owner gets about 35 percent or 40 percent of the total sum if successfully transferred. Also in this category is when the receiver gets a mail from 'a sister in Christ', whose husband died leaving her a fortune and at the point of writing has been diagnosed with a lethal cancer that would kill her in eight months. Now she needs a 'born again' individual who would use the money for charity as the receiver would be instructed, etc. The third type, which I have tried to describe as 'deceptive fortunes bequeathing information', is asking the receiver to act as a next-of-kin to a client who dumped some millions of dollars in the 'African Development Bank, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso', or 'Bank of Africa', Burkina Faso, and had died in a plane crash; since the Bank cannot use the money and the dead businessman leaves no relative, the receiver is to act as the next-of-kin, claim the money and share it with the writer of the business proposal. A sub-type of this is when the receiver is told that a multi-millionaire had died in a foreign country, and had left for the receiver all his wealth, worth millions of US dollars in a foreign bank; the bank suddenly discover the receiver's name as the beneficiary of the abandoned money. For any of these 'winnings' and 'business' proposals, the receiver is required to send his name, home address, phone numbers and other relevant personal details to the writer of the hoax email in order to facilitate a speedy processing of the jackpot or execution of the business.

As more and more people become aware of this kind of mail sent to their email accounts as scam mails or directly to their inboxes on a regular basis, the natural questions that come to mind are: Who are the writers of these mails and why are they writing them? Why do people still fall prey to this kind of deception despite their widespread suspicious nature? This article aims at:

- i) Examining the discourse structures of the above hoax electronic mails, for example their openings and closings.
- ii) Describing their discourse strategies, such as announcing, or narrating.
- iii) Analysing the discourse pragmatic tacts in the emails.

This approach will generally account for the power of persuasion of the deceptive emails and the kind of effects they have had in the past; why they have

continuously existed despite the fact that more people have gained increasing knowledge of 'email hoaxes', and the issue of sincerity and reliability that has shrouded CMC right from the onset (Heyd, 2008). It will also explain the reason for the spread and proliferation of this kind of email messages in recent times.

Review of literature

As electronic mail (email) becomes a tool of mass global communication with the advantages of simplicity, cheapness and flexibility (Lan, 2000), users have exploited this medium for both personal and business-related communications. Email also affords users the functional platform for attaching visual items such as pictures or articles to their messages and may be forwarded or copied to several other receivers across the globe. Studies reveal that both personal and workplace emails perform significant functions and roles, including social, cultural and economic (Collot and Belmore, 1996; Skovholt and Svennevig, 2006; Yates, 1996). At the workplace, email communication increases access to new people, weakens spatial and status barriers, and provides access to information that otherwise would have been unavailable (Garton and Wellman, 1995). It also enables managers, for instance, to control their subordinates at a distance (Brigham and Corbett, 1997) and since in some organizations employers have access to their employees' email accounts, the email system facilitates monitoring and control of the ongoing working process (Skovholt and Svennevig, 2006).

The study of email as a tool for disseminating digital deceptions and fraudulent practices has not yet received so much attention by scholars in CMC research. Among the first studies on 'email hoaxes' are Fernback (2003), Blommaert (2005) and Heyd (2008). Fernback's is a textual study of spurious e-mail virus warnings; Heyd's (2008) is an extensive genre study of email hoaxes, mainly fake virus warnings among others. The study includes the forms, discourse structures and pragmatic analyses of 'digital lies'. Kibby (2005) deals with textual analyses of forwarded and unsolicited mails, while Barron (2006) takes a macro-textual approach in the study of spam emails from medical supplies. Other studies on web hoaxes and counterfeit sites (Mintz, 2002) and 'junk mails' (Orasan and Krishnamurthy, 2002) have also been concerned mainly with the textual features and the unreliability of this kind of digital communication.

Closely related to the present study and one of the very first studies of '419' mails is Blommaert (2005). The study takes a sociolinguistic approach and is more concerned with the 'grassroots' level of English of the writers which ironically does not match their advanced digital literacy. Blommaert however suggests that the linguistic, stylistic and generic features of such texts should be studied. The present study is a follow-up to Blommaert's study. While Blommaert identifies some generic features of this kind of genre with its special kind of English that gives off all kinds of indexical information, the present study ignores issues that border on grammaticality or the fact that the writers 'fail to realise the requirements for success in handling the complex and demanding

genre task they engage with' (2005: 22), to what we may consider as more serious discursive implications of this genre. Hence, the present study examines the discourse/pragmatic contents of the emails that give them their persuasive influences, despite their generic inadequacies. The '419' mails which Blommaert suggests originate from 'somewhere in the periphery of the world and [are] sent to a large number of addressees in the core countries of the world system' (2005: 2) are referred to as 'Nigeria mails' by Heyd (2008). The generic label – 'Nigeria emails' – however, runs the risk of unilaterally isolating Nigeria as originator of online fraudulent mails, and this may not be true. Interestingly, some of the emails in the data betray evidence that they could have emerged from any African country, Asia or even Europe. Our data show that the hoax emails are assumed to originate from 17 countries representing African, Asia/Middle East, Australia, Europe and North America. In the BS category, 60 percent of the mails are said to be sent from Africa with more than half of this number coming from Burkina Faso. Over 85 percent of the FBI category has no identifying locations. A few others in the BS and EWN categories also have no identities (see Table 1 for details). Whoever the writers of the 'Nigeria mails' or '419' mails are, our intention here is to contribute to the growing CMC research and to create the awareness which this brand of digital communication deserves. It is also our conviction that the greater the awareness the fewer the number of people that might fall victim to the deceptions.

The figures in Table 1 are assumed and indeed suspicious. It is difficult to really determine the actual locations of the writers. However, this is not too important to this study.

TABLE 1. *Assumed location of the writers of the deceptive emails*

<i>Country</i>	<i>No. of emails</i>
Burkina Faso	18
Nigeria	2
Ghana	3
Côte d'Ivoire	2
Republic of Benin	1
Serra Leone	1
Zimbabwe	1
Canada	1
USA	2
UK	4
Hong Kong	3
Singapore	2
China	1
Taiwan	1
Bahrain	1
Kuwait	1
Oman	1
Total	45

Theoretical considerations

The study applies a computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) to the study of text-based CMC, that is, email, which 'provides a unique environment . . . in which to study verbal interaction and the relationship between discourse and social practice' (Herring, 2001: 612). Hence, the discourse analytical methodology applied here is such that views discourse as a social practice (Fairclough, 1989) – an attempt at analysing signifying practices as discursive forms (Howarth, 2000). Computer-mediated communication in this context is such that all forms of communication/messages produced and transmitted through computer networks are viewed as discourses, revealing feature of real life identities and dimensions of social practices. Because it focuses on language and language use in computer network environments, CMDA examines language use and how the different linguistic properties are influenced by their socio-cultural context. According to Herring (2001), CMDA will pay attention to the various way users of the various networks 'do interactional work' through text-based discourses, which allow them to 'negotiate, intimidate, joke' and of course cheat and deceive.

Herring (2001: 622) also observes that some researchers have erroneously believed that CMC was a 'cool medium well suited to the transfer of data and information, but poorly suited to social issues' but the present day avalanche of social life on the internet confirms that the internet (in this context, emails) does indeed provide a rich source of data for the study of discourse and social practice. The extension of discourse to include some wider sets of social practices and phenomena began with the influence of post-structuralism, Marxism and post-Marxism in the social sciences in the 1970s, drawing extensively from the works of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Discourse became associated with social actions, attitudes, concepts and practices. Everything became discourse, including the world itself. And this is based on the fact that all objects and actions are meaningful, and that their meaning is a product of historically specific systems of rules. It thus enquires into the way in which social practices construct and contest the discourses that construct social reality (Howarth, 2000).

The CMDA framework describes different levels of analysis including structure, meaning, interaction management and social practice (Herring, 2001). Interaction management analysis which involves the study of the patterns of turn-taking is not applicable to this study since email, like away messaging or text messaging, is bidirectional and single-channel text; it is therefore concerned more with the analysis of social and contextual factors that shape discourse. In examining structure, meaning and social practice, analyses also draw from pragmatic principles, since the research also seeks to explore some pragmatic tact/mechanisms in the texts as provided by the resources of language in use. Because computer-mediated communication is sensitive to social practice, it becomes useful to integrate a socio-linguistic approach to enhance the level of analysis to show the strong interface between people's language and their socio-cultural practices. It mirrors how language becomes a tool to the

understanding of cultural resources, and how language relates to people's beliefs, worldview and social understanding (Agyekum, 2008). This study particularly views greetings, modes of address and language preferences as social practice. Hence, CMDA examining discourse structure and meaning alongside social practice integrates both pragmatic and socio-linguistic approaches to examine discourse/pragmatic strategies in the body of the email text samples, since analysis is to seek and expose the real intention of the email writers by the use of certain linguistics properties/discourse strategies in the emails.

Data and method

The corpus comprises 68 individual email samples, collected from: i) the researcher's own inboxes; ii) the researcher's friends'/colleagues' mailbox traffic; and iii) the researcher's students' email accounts. The challenge with collection of data of this nature is their brief life-span. What this means is that most people that receive deceptive or '419' mails quickly delete them. Many who receive spam mails hardly open them for fear of viruses, so it became very difficult to collect many such emails. Those that made theirs available were told in advance not to delete them as they were being used for a study. So our data were assembled between the early part of 2008 and early part of 2009 in Lagos and Ota regions of Nigeria.

Data are divided into three areas, namely: i) e-lottery 'winner' notifications (EWN); ii) business solicitations (BS); and iii) fortune bequeathing information (FBI). The sub-types of these broad headings will also be examined. The distribution of the above emails in the data is shown in Table 2.

As already stated in the introduction, analysis of data is qualitative, focusing on discourse structure such as opening (greeting forms) and closing, discourse/persuasive strategies and pragmatic facts in the emails.

Analysis and findings

OPENING FORMULA: GREETINGS AND POLITENESS STRATEGY

Heyd (2008) observes that the suggestive or persuasive power of many email hoaxes relies partly on their address formulas, especially where deictic references are so strong. In most of the EWNs, however, the address formulas are absent since the information is presented as a form of notice or announcement. Interestingly, 'winner' notices from organized government institutions, such as the 'Australian Lottery Lotto' and 'Loterij-Awards International, Amsterdam, The Netherlands', begin with formal polite opening 'Sir/Madam' or 'Dear winner', accounting for

TABLE 2. *Distribution of email categories in the data*

BS	EWN	FBI	Total
46	15	7	68

about 5 percent of the data in this category. This kind of address often functions as 'key-starter', likely to fire the reader's mind with expectation. Most of the data in EWN go straight to the information, as in the following examples:

(EWN 19) Your ID won £850,000.00 pounds from the Lottery draw, contact Mr. Pharel Smith: mr.pharels08@yahoo.de with details below.

(EWN 23) Your email address has brought you an unexpected luck, please read through this message. You have been approved to claim a total sum of 1,500,000.00 GBP (One million five Hundred Thousand Great Britain Pounds) in cash credited to file MSW/9080118308/02/LA.

Contact Person: Name: Mr Harris Howell.

E-mail: harrishowell01@gmail.com

Tel: +44-702-408-0951

(EWN 37) Your Email ID won 1,000,000 GBP in our annual Draw. Contact (mr.anthonycb@yahoo.co.uk) for claims.

(EWN 43) You won the sum of £1,000,000.00 GBP from our monthly Promotion, to claim your prize get back to us with your full Names, Address, Occupation, Age. Contact: Mary Sandra, Email: (mary.sandra@btinternet.com). Rose Wood

(EWN 10) Congratulations your email is among the two lucky winning (One Million United State Dollars) that drew the winning No: 4 13 17 25 36 48 with a bonus No: 28. In the just concluded draw held to promote 2010 World Cup, sponsored by Canadian/UK Governments and Windows Live Comp, for urgent release of your fund, please contact our Agent in South Africa immediately, Call Him Mr. Jonas Radebe, on this phone number+27-727471100 Fax:+27-86 608 9440. Or email him on clsa2010sa@live.co.za

EWN 23 is said to come from 'Microsoft Online Promotion', while EWN 10 is sponsored by 'Canadian/UK Governments and Windows Live Comp'; the others are not identified with any sponsoring agency whatsoever. It is arguable, however, that the currency (i.e. GBP) stated in the notices links them with the British. EWN 10 opens with 'congratulations' without any formal opening formula; this tends to function both as discourse opening and greeting. The absence of formal openings in this context does not however imply a lack of politeness. Expectedly, breaking news like a lottery winning announcement does not really warrant any rigid address tag. The excitement that follows such news is assumed to have enough intrinsic force to pay for any lack of compliments. Email is often viewed as not requiring mandatory opening formulas especially where the addressee is unknown to the sender (Gains, 1999). In most cultures, however, forms of address/greetings are a product of social recognition of the addressee's age, status and social role. In a case where the addressee is unknown, greeting forms are often ignored particularly depending on the kind of messages involved.

In Nigeria, like in many other cultures, greeting is used to judge politeness, where politeness is viewed as proper social conduct/etiquette and a tactful consideration of others (Agyekum, 2008; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Grundy, 2000). This is done deliberately and is always expected in order to give a message the kind of response the sender desires (Ide, 1989). Since it is expected as a

social norm for speech/writing, absence of it is viewed as disrespect or impolite. Greetings perform very important socio-cultural roles in emails written by Nigerians especially informal ones. The Yorubas, for example, are often said to be addicted 'greeters', because their tradition provides for greeting forms for all seasons, times and social activities. The forms of greeting would generally construct the addressee social status and will sometimes suggest his roles within some specified social groups. In emails, greetings will naturally set in motion the tone and content of the message. Greetings and closing remarks usually establish the basis for future communication (Waldvogel, 2007) and in most cases reflect cultural discursive traits.

In most formal letter writings, subscriptions such as 'Dear sir', 'Sir/Madam', or 'Dear Mr/Miss/Mrs . . . (Family name)' are common while in informal mails address formula such as 'dear . . . (plus the first name of the addressee)', or simply the first name of the addressee is used as a form of opening. In the business solicitations (BS) and fortune-bequeathing information (FBI) above, most of the mails, though formal in content, convey personal tones. Table 3 gives a general overview of the 49 opening formulas in both BS and FBI categories.

Gains (1999) observes that about 92 percent of commercial emails studied contained no openings at all because they are not really mandatory in email

TABLE 3. *Distribution of opening/greeting formulas in the corpus of BS and FBI*

<i>Opening/greeting formula</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Dear friend	16	35
Hello friend	2	4.0
Hello	3	6.1
Hello, hope you're ok	2	4.0
Dear Sir	2	4.0
Dear Sir/Madam	2	4.0
Sir/Madam	1	2.0
Attention	1	2.0
Attention friend	1	2.0
Attention dear	1	2.0
Attention beneficiary	1	2.0
Attention fund beneficiary	1	2.0
Dear beloved one	1	2.0
Dearest one	1	2.0
Dearest in the Lord	1	2.0
Dearest in Christ	3	6.1
Good day	4	8.1
Greetings	2	4.0
Compliments of the Season	1	2.0
Happy New Year	2	4.0
With due respect	1	2.0
Asalam-Alaikom	1	2.0
Total	49	

communications. Our finding in the current study is that 49 out of 53 (92%) emails of both BS and FBI are introduced with formal openings/greeting forms. Surprisingly, the writers choose to introduce formal mails with informal openings. The few cases of 'sir', 'dear sir', 'dear sir/madam', constitute only about 8 percent of the entire corpus in the business category with seeming impersonal notes. The remaining 8 percent of the emails do not include any opening at all probably due to the assumable hysterical condition in which the writers find themselves. BS 14 below is an example where the writer appears desperate and hysterical.

(BS 14) Flag this message

Reply Soon!

Saturday, October 4, 2008 6:32 AM

From: "David Ibrahim" <diddibrahim@gmail.com>

To: undisclosed-recipients

My name is David Ibrahim, a merchant in Oman. I have recently been diagnosed with esophageal cancer, which has defiled all medical treatment. Expert diagnosis has shown that I have few months to live. The intention of this email is to employ the expertise of a business entrepreneur, who can identify a viable investment and guarantee reasonable returns on my wealth. This is to secure a future for my 4 years old son who lost his mother during birth. I cannot rely on his closest relatives any more, as they did not show responsible behaviour two years ago when I entrusted half of my wealth to them to invest on his behalf. They thought I wouldn't survive the operation and then used the money for their personal needs. To prevent any more mishaps, my attorney will act as a check, monitoring every aspect of the investment. Funds should be split in half and distributed to charity organisation and the other half, as investment for my son. If this interests you, please reach me on the email address: david.ibrahim@mcom.com to discuss terms and compensation.

Kind regard

David Ibrahim

BS 52 is another example but then, the subject matter of the email is 'greetings'.

(BS 52) From: Jabolynne@aol.com from your e-mail list

To: ichiluwa@covenantuniversity.com

Sent: Sat, 28 Feb 2009 6:23 am

Subject: Greeting

I am Mr. Patrick Chan from hang seng Bank Hong Kong, there is the sum of \$12,500,000.00 in my bank and i need you to work together with me to claim it, we shall then share in the ratio of 60% for me, 40% for you. Contact me for more details
Email: patrickchan.12@hotmail.com

Informal address patterns and greetings such as 'dear beloved one' or 'dearest one' is generally associated with deep feeling and passion for the addressee, often common in love letters. It is strange that '419' emails address an anonymous addressee in these terms. One would conclude that this is simply a subtle discursive inroad to the mind of the reader, a discourse function that is likely to trigger off some emotion because anyone addressed with this kind of emotional appeal

would want to listen to or read what the speaker/writer has to say. Significantly, this manner of address exploits some religious sentiments (Chiluwa, 2008a). Sequel to the opening 'dearest one' is an introductory note that says: 'actually I did not want to discuss this matter with you before but after fasting and prayer I just decided to contact you for your help' (BS 50). We are living in a highly religious world, where we get defrauded at some points and enjoy some privileges at others in the name of a particular religion we profess. It is not altogether unusual therefore that fraudsters are coming in the name of God. BS 16, 26, 27 and 48 open with 'dearest in the Lord' or 'dearest in Christ' in appealing to Christian sentiments, while BS 5 opens with 'Asalam-Alaikom', again going by the Islamic platform. By greeting the religious way, the writer identifies with Christianity or Islam and in turn defines his own social identity (Chiluwa, 2008b); this is often very powerful in today's world. There have been cases, however, where religious people who in the circumstance appear more gullible than the secular minded have been defrauded. A sincere Muslim or Christian will often open his door to anyone who claims to be a 'brother' or 'sister'. Hence, the hoax email writers exploit this opportunity. Some others identify with the mood of seasons; hence 'happy new year' or 'compliments of the season' is used as openings in some of the mails.

DISCOURSE STRUCTURE: NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

Interestingly, all the mails in the lottery (EWN) group share similar discourse structure. First, they are written as formal announcements with the deployment of technical business English. Second, the subject header is also businesslike with memo-like features. As a form of business discourse, the mails have three segments, namely: i) the subject header, which includes information about the lottery sponsoring agency; ii) the message; and iii) the closing. The sign-off includes the name of the writer and his contact information. Examples are shown below:

(EWN 9) 2009 E-LOTTERY BONANZA: CONFIRM YOUR PRIZE AWARD ASAP.
 Thursday, January 29, 2009 9:20 AM
 From: "mohn@eircom.net" <mohn@eircom.net>
 Add sender to Contacts
 To: markvanbossen2010@yahoo.com

2009 E-LOTTERY BONANZA: CONFIRM YOUR PRIZE AWARD ASAP.
 Sponsor Loterij~ Awards International Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
 Lottery Claims/Service Department.

Sir/Madam,

This is to inform you of the Lottery Result of The Sponsor Loterij~ Awards International, which was held on the Monday 26th January 2009, with the aid of the E-Ballotting System.

Your e-mail address attached to E-Ticket Number: 34-11-27-51 (4-82), with Reference Number: NW-417-8090-08 and Batch Number: AMSNL2ND-0110 drew a prize of 500,000.00 (Five Hundred Thousand Euros). This lucky draw came first in the 2nd Category of the Sweepstake by an e-ballot draw from over 50,000,000

e-mail addresses (personal and corporate e-mail addresses). To receive your won prize you are advised to contact our appointed claim agent for you below who will facilitate the process of the claim of your won-prize. Note That because of the amount of winners in the different categories our management has out sourced the claim procedures and processes to the Government Accredited Agent below to assist all prize award winners complete all claims procedures so that the paying bank can then effect payment.

Contact your Appointed/Accredited Claim Agent:

Mark Van Bossen.

Tel/Fax: 0031-847-304-770

Email: kingzefinancialbv@aol.nl

markvanbossen2010@yahoo.com

Accept our heartfelt congratulations on your lottery prize winning.

Paula Van Mohn

Lottery Co-ordinator.

N.B: All claims must be completed within 14 working days of receipt of this notification. All responses regarding this award must be sent to the Agent via-kingzefinancialbv@aol.nl/ markvanbossen2010@yahoo.com The Agent has been sent a copy of this notification as well

(EWN 10)

Flag this message

[No Subject]

Friday, January 23, 2009 12:46 PM

From: "cl sa" <sacl13@web.de>

Add sender to Contacts

To: c.draw28@yahoo.it

Congratulations your email is among the two lucky winning that (One Million United State Dollars) that drew the winning No: 4 13 17 25 36 48 with a bonus No: 28. In the just concluded draw held to promote 2010 World Cup, sponsored by Canadian/UK Governments and Windows Live Comp, for urgent release of your fund, please contact our Agent in South Africa immediately, Call Him Mr. Jonas Radebe, on this phone number+27-727471100 Fax:+27-86 608 9440. Or email him on, clsa2010sa@live.co.za

Yours Sincerely,

Ms. Stella Elizabeth

Tel/Fax u.k: 44 7005947171.

Tel/Fax Canadian: 1 2708973411

Winning numbers for Sat Jan 3, 2009 draw, visit: <http://www.canada.com/findit/lotteries/results.aspx?id=6> Confirm under Lotto

(EWN 20)

Message

Monday, August 4, 2008 10:32 PM

From: "NATIONAL LOTTERY" <message@uklotto.com>

Add sender to Contacts

To: undisclosed-recipients

Lansdowne Row, Berkeley Square
 London, W1J 6H, United Kingdom.
 Ref: UK/7803XI/04, Batch: 03/BT25/0306

NOTICE OF CONSOLATION PRIZE WINNING!!

On the behalf of the Uk National Lottery Board, I hereby announce that your email has been drawn winner of the Draw (#1168) of the online UK National Lottery program held on Sat 12 Jul 08. Your e-mail address attached to Ticket Number: 2006680 with Serial number 2378/06 drew the Winning numbers: 16 27 28 29 30 42 Bonus Ball 43, which subsequently won you the lottery in the 2nd category i.e. match 3 plus bonus. You are hereby entitled to 500 000GBP (Five Hundred Thousand Pounds). To file for your claim. Please contact our Fiduciary Agent for validation. Endeavour to email them the following informations for immediate processing, verification and legalization of claims in order for payment to be made to you as required in accordance with our payout policy: Full name, address, Nationality, Occupation, age, telephone (home/mobile) amount won, ref. Number, winning number, ticket number.

Mrs. Sarah Vincent
 email: sarahvincent@live.com
 Tel: +447024035150; +447023057123

Like the normal business announcement, the tone is impersonal. The writer pretends not be personally involved with the addressee. Apart from the neutral 'Congratulations' in EWN 10, the others just go ahead to announce the 'winning'. One of the two cases above includes a detached 'sir/madam'. Most of them do not begin with an opening as expected but all include the names of the senders and their contact addresses. Two of the above examples attempt to explain the procedure for selecting the winning numbers, but more than 80 percent of the corpus in this category does not. Blommaert (2005) observes that the authors of these emails are well aware of the connections between particular styles and the shapes of utterances and particular indexicalities. So they endeavour to keep within the discourse tradition of the existing genre in order to appear real and eventually convince unsuspecting victims.

The discourse structure of the BS and FBI categories are constructed as narratives in the following order:

- i) Opening/greeting.
- ii) Introduction (including the identity of the writer and often an apology for making contact without prior notice).
- iii) A narrative, which includes a description of: a) the origin of the money deposited in a foreign account which the addressee is made a beneficiary; b) a painful experience of the death of a spouse and the money he kept in a dormant account abroad to be used for charity or for raising his kids; c) a story of a wealthy client who deposited some millions of dollars in a foreign account and had died, leaving the money for the addressee; or d) an investment opportunity abroad worth millions of dollars or pounds sterling, etc.
- iv) An invitation to the receiver to be engaged in the business with an offer of a revenue sharing formula.

- v) Request for confidentiality or an invitation to the addressee to indicate interest.
- vi) Closing (including a request to the receiver to reply immediately).

Because of their narrative structure, the mails are usually long, often taking a whole page of an A4 paper. Some short ones take half a page. A sample of one of each of the BS and FBI and their sub-types in the data (five in all) are reproduced here in the course of the analysis as we examine the discourse/pragmatic strategies in the BS and FBI categories in the next section. The opening/address formulas have been discussed in the earlier section. The following section examines the dis-course and pragmatic strategies in the introduction, body and concluding part of the email discourse.

DISCOURSE/PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES

In the analyses below, the following discourse/pragmatic strategies are identified:

- i) Discourse initiation/self-identification.
- ii) Narrativity/tellability.
- iii) Reassurance/confidence building.
- iv) Confidentiality offering.
- v) Action prompting tact/closing.

i) Discourse initiation/self-identification

The next stage of discourse initiating strategy following greeting/address forms is a formal introduction, sometimes in the form of an apology for initiating discourse. In the representative samples above, a prelude to self-identification is evident as in the following brief introductions:

- a) This message might meet you in utmost surprise however, it's just my urgent need for a foreign partner that made me contact you for this transaction. (BS 5)
- b) This mail will come as surprise for you to receive this mail. Welcome this letter in the Great Allah. (BS 18)
- c) First of all, let me introduce myself to you. (BFI 40)
- d) Please endeavour to use it for the children of God. (BS 48)
- e) It's good thing to write you, we come to you with due respect and equally with heartfelt of tears and sorrows since we have not known or met ourselves previously, Please, we mean no harm to you only that we are in a desperate situation and need urgent help. After going through this mail, it will be your decision, whether to help us or to leave us our faith, but whatever you decide, bear in mind, we are in trouble and need your help, we are asking for your assistance. we will be so glad if you can allow and lead us to the right channel towards your assistance to our situation. We would like to use this opportunity to introduce our self to you. (BS 60)

In the African context, like in many other cultures, a background interaction prior to the speaker's actual message is often required. According to Adegbija (1988) this functions as 'atmosphere sanitizing' tact, thus watering the ground for the seed of the interaction to germinate. It is also generally considered grossly

impolite to initiate a conversation where the addressee is a total stranger to the situation, especially if he/she lacks prior knowledge of the subject matter. In this context, an older addressee would generally feel slighted and disrespected to be forced into a conversation unprepared. So the writers of the hoax mails apply this strategy, even before introducing themselves. In some of the mails in the data, the writers ask for forgiveness for intruding into the receiver's privacy, or for choosing that medium for communicating such serious/sensitive business. The writer of BS 60 below appeals to the addressee's emotion through a lengthy prelude, pretending to be desperately helpless, while writers BS 18 and BS 48 appeal to religious sensibility of the receivers. Email 18 is a direct speech act, specifically instructing the addressee to 'Welcome this letter in the Great Allah', tactically challenging the addressee's value of religion and his fear of the great Allah. By apply this discursive means, the receiver is almost intimidated into accepting the writer's offer in the name of God.

Self-identifying strategy also demands the name and contacts of the writer. In the representative data above and in 95 percent of the entire corpus of the BS and BFI categories, the names and assumed business affiliations of the writers are clearly stated. Hence:

- a) I am the manager of auditing and accounting department of AFRICA BANK (AB) here in Ouagadougou Burkina Faso. (name omitted, BS 5)
- b) I am MR.Kazim Usman, the director of the account & auditing dept, at the African Development Bank (ADB) Ouagadougou Burkina Faso West Africa. With due respect, I have decided to contact you on a business transaction that will be beneficial to both of us. (BS 18)
- c) I am Dr.Williams Smith, the personal assistant to the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Prof. Chukwuma C. Soludo. I am a man of conscience who has the fear of God and human sympathy. (BFI 40)
- d) I am Mrs Mary Williams from Kuwait. I am married to Dr.Henry who worked with Kuwait embassy in Cote d'Ivoire for nine years before he died in the year 2002. We were married for eleven years without a child. He died after a brief illness that lasted for only four days. Before his death we were both born again Christians. Since his death I decided not to re-marry or get a child outside my matrimonial home which the Bible is against. (BS 48)
- e) I am Mike and my sister Mary, only son and Daughter of our late parents Mr and Mrs Turey Williams, My father was a highly reputable business magnet (a cocoa, diamond and Gold merchant) who operated in the capital of Ivory Coast during his days. (BS 60)

As is expected in any business-oriented letter, the name and contact address of the writer serve as both social and legal identities. In this kind of sudden contact with an unknown addressee, the addressee is usually suspicious until a clear and elaborate introduction is done. The writers are aware of this, so they endeavour to claim high administrative positions, often addressing themselves as 'Dr.'. Especially in Nigeria, where there is a hunger for titles, individuals easily claim high titles such as 'Chief', 'Dr.', 'Reverend', 'Apostle', etc. in order to gain social respect. As a matter of social practice, the average Nigerian (male or

female) likes to be recognized and addressed by all the social heights/titles he/she has attained. In some cases certain individuals are addressed as 'Rev. Dr . . .' or 'Chief Dr. Engr . . .', etc. all at once, reflecting the many academic degrees/traditional titles they have acquired. It is often taken seriously if a younger person fails to recognize an elder by adding 'sir', or a title like 'doc.' 'prof' or 'chief'. Usually, the multi-million business is such that relies so much on trust, integrity and credibility. The Nigerian hoax email writers and those that understand the Nigerian title mentality are simply buying into the social psyche and religiosity of the Nigerian people. The writer of BFI 40 ironically describes himself as 'a man of conscience who has the fear of God and human sympathy', unwittingly leaving his next statement highly suggestive. So the self-identifying strategy not only identifies the writer but gives the proposal an assumed sort of credibility.

ii) Narrativity/tellability

It is important to remark here that narrativity in computer-mediated communication is neither new nor strange. The use of language in a narrative form, according to Dautenhahn (2004), is an efficient means of 'social grooming' that maintains group coherence, and is in fact an elementary and important quality of human discourse, not limited to fictional prose (Heyd, 2008). Because of their 'tellability', the '419' mails introduce some long stretches of event sequences, thereby showing how narrative discourse incorporates evidence of pragmatic tacts, either as performing actions (Austin, 1962), complying with or violating 'cooperative principles' (Grice, 1975) or deploying other forms of discourse strategies. Tellability is the quality of telling, narrating and sometimes including aspects of description. In the data, the contents of both the BS and FBI are similar with accounts of the source of deposited/dormant funds, etc. Examples below are from data samples:

BS 5

In my department I discovered an abandoned sum of US\$10.5m dollars Ten Million Five Hundred US dollars) in an account that belongs to one of our foreign customer GEORGE BRUMLEY that who died in a plane crash in Kenya 2003. You can confirm the genuineness of the deceased death by clicking on the website below <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/africa/07/20/kenya.crash/index.html>. Since we got information about his death, we have been expecting his next of kin to come over and claim his money because we can not release it unless some body applies for it as next of kin or relation to the deceased as indicated in our banking guidlings and laws but unfortunately we learnt that all his supposed next of kin or relation died alongside with him at the plane crash leaving nobody behind for the claim. It is therefore upon this discovery that I now decided to make this business proposal to you, so that the money can be release to you as the next of kin or relation to the deceased for safety and subsequent disbursement since nobody will come for it and we don't want this money to go into the bank treasury as unclaimed dormant fund.

The banking law and guideline here stipulates that if such money remained unclaimed after TEN YEARS the money will be transfered into the bank treasury as unclaimed dormant fund. The request of foreigner as next of kin in this business is

occasioned by the fact that the customer was a foreigner and a Burkinabe like me can not stand as next of kin to a foreigner. (BS 18)

At the bank's last account/auditing evaluations, I came across an old account which was being maintained by a foreign client who we learnt died on a sudden motor accident along Togo road on his way back to Burkina Faso with his entire family his wife and his only child on 6th Nov.2003. Since the deceased was unable to run this account since his death. The account has remained dormant without the knowledge of his family since it was put in a safe deposit account in the bank for future investment by the client. Since his demise, nobody, not even the members of his family have applied for claims over this fund and it has been in the safe deposit account until I discovered that. it cannot be claimed since our client is a foreign national and we are sure that he has no next of kin here to file claims over the money. As the director of the dept, this discovery was brought to my office so as to decide what is to be done. With the few personnel in my dept, I decided to seek ways through which to transfer this money out of the bank and out of the country too.

The total amount in the accounts is ten million five hundred thousand dollars (USD 10,500,000.00). with our positions as a staff of the bank, I am handicapped because I cannot operate foreign accounts and cannot lay bonafide claim over this money. while contemplating on what to do, I came across your email contact in the internet directory and I decided to ask you for help to transfer this money out of the country to your account in your country.the client is a foreign national and you will only be asked to act as his next of kin or business partner. (FBI 40)

For some years now, your funds that is supposed to be transferred into your account as a foreign contractor or next of kin who is entitled to inherit the deceased money has been delayed base on series of unnecessary reasons. The funds have not yet been transferred into your account, while you have been suffering and spending a lot of money on documents also paid a lot of charges which is demanded from the people who is helping you to get this funds transferred into your account but all their efforts has not yielded any fruit. The truth of the matter is that my boss, Prof. Chukwuma C. Soludo, the Governor of the CBN and some Government officials deliberately did not allow the money to be transferred into your account. Maybe for his selfish interest or he wants the money to yield much interest and he will use of the interest and get the total sum released to you after he has made a lot of profit. That has been the system here in Nigeria and it will last for years. Our old president has left because he had been an obstacle but we thank God that we have a new president now and all problems are solved. This morning, our new president sends us a written note that all outstanding funds had to be released to the owners with immediate effect. Call me immediately. You are a lucky person because on 12th, we have settled with the United States Monetary Fund Agent also Europe and you will receive your fund in a very wonderful way. My boss is on leave which started Friday officially and it will take him one month to resume back to office and I am the person in charge of any transfer and all the signatories that will be endorsed before approval of any fund is transferred out of the country. (BS 48)

When my late husband was alive he deposited the sum of 2.5Million U.S. Dollars) with one BANK in Cote d'Ivoire. Presently, this money is still with the BANK. Recently, my Doctor told me that I would not last for the next three months due to cancer problem. Though what disturbs me most is my stroke Having known my condition

I decided to donate this fund to church or better still a Christian individual that will utilize this money the way I am going to instruct here in. I want a church that will use this to fund churches, orphanages and widows propagating the word of God and to ensure that the house of God is maintained. The Bible made us to understand that blessed is the hand that giveth. I took this decision because I don't have any child that will inherit this money and my husband relatives are not Christians and I don't want my husband's hard earned money to be misused by unbelievers. I don't want a situation where this money will be used in an ungodly manner. Hence the reason for taking this bold decision. I am not afraid of death hence I know where I am going. I know that I am going to be in the bosom of the Lord. Exodus 14 VS 14 says that the lord will fight my case and I shall hold my peace. I don't need any telephone communication in this regard because of my health, because of the presence of my husband's relatives around me always. I don't want them to know about this development. With God all things are possible. (BS 60)

It is sad to say that he passed away mysteriously in France during one of his business trips abroad. Though his sudden death was linked or rather suspected to have been masterminded by an uncle of his who travelled with him at that time. But God knows the truth!. Our mother died when I was just 6 years old and my sister was 3 years, and since then our father took us so special. Before he made the trip to France that lead to our misfortune (his death) He called us, explained to us the reason why he will make the trip. And also told us that he has the sum of (USD\$9.5 million) United State Dollars left in one of the leading security company here in Abidjan Ivory coast West Africa. He disguised the real content of the box as contain family valuables, which means that the security company is not aware of the real content of the box as contains money rather family valuable. This he told us that, is for the safety of the money in the box. Except me my sister and my late father, no one is aware of the money in the box that is in the security company.

We are presently staying in a guest house here in Abidjan Cote D, Ivoire, this is because we have suffered a lot of set backs as a result of incessant political crisis here in Ivory coast. The death of our father actually brought sorrow to our life. Dear, we are in a sincere desire of your humble assistance in this regards. Your suggestions and ideas will be highly regarded.

In the entire corpus, there is the preponderance of doubtful information as manifested in the above samples, some which arguably lacks logicity and common sense. The tellability of most of the narratives is sustained by assertions that are exaggerated, suggestive and outright lies. While some claims contradict general knowledge, the validity of some of the claims may still be verified even on the internet (Heyd, 2008). One of the cases is worth mentioning here. In BS 39, the writer's office address is '1095 Eagle House Crescent V/L, Marina, Lagos'. It is common knowledge, however, that there is no such place in Lagos abbreviated as 'V/L'. If the writer meant, V/I (Victoria Island), the information is still deceptive because Victoria Island is not in Marina as the address claims. In fact, it is doubtful that the writer is a Nigerian because even a newcomer to Lagos easily comes to know these two major areas in the Lagos Metropolis. It is certain therefore that the so-called '1095 Eagle House Crescent V/L' does not exist. Notice also that all the narratives involve the death of a person and in most cases with his entire family. Over 85 percent of the deaths are accidental, mostly by plane crash. Those

whose husbands or parents died by other means have no relatives or next of kin. If they are alive, they are either not available or somehow unreliable.

In BFI 40, the writer begins with 'For some years now, your funds that is supposed to be transferred into your account as a foreign contractor or next of kin who is entitled to inherit the deceased money has been delayed base on series of unnecessary reasons.' This kind of beginning certainly leaves the receiver guessing: 'what funds, what deceased money . . .?', etc. The writer fails to realize that no intelligent person is likely to act on information that has no beginning; there is no previous information about funds anywhere. While he claims that the new Nigerian president has solved all problems involving transfer of the so-called funds, he went on to say that 'we have settled with the United States Monetary Fund Agent also Europe . . .', and one wonders what this means and the connection here. This writer talks about 'deceased funds' at the beginning of his narrative, surprisingly towards the end, it turns out to be 'contractor's funds'. One wonders which is which. Is the 'beneficiary' also the 'contractor'? Similarly in BS 48, the 'woman' that claims she lost her husband refuses to remarry 'or get a child outside my matrimonial home which the Bible is against'. This evidently reveals this writer's ignorance of the Bible that encourages young widows to marry and bear children (1 Cor. 7:9; 1 Tim. 4:17). He also quoted Exodus 14:14, which has no connection whatsoever with her earlier statement about dying and going to be with God. This same woman who claims not to have anyone to use her money for charity and to fund churches is unable to fund her own local church. She is silent about her own local pastor, her doctors or perhaps lawyers who could do her biddings. The entire corpus is replete with these kinds of inconsistencies and falsehoods.

One can conveniently conclude with Heyd (2008) that these hoax emails are non-cooperative; they overtly violate the cooperative principles proposed by Grice (1975), particularly the maxims of quality ('do not say what you believe to be false'). Going by the case under study we can therefore assume that 'cooperation is the standard and unmarked case in communicative exchanges, however, everyday experience suggests that cooperation may be suspended in particular talk exchanges: speakers (or writers) can and do behave highly non-cooperatively' (Heyd, 2008: 134). In our case, non-cooperative behaviours in CMC are deliberate and clearly informed by an intention to deceive and defraud people. Worthy of note here is the fact that those who are easily deceived by this kind of hoax are themselves culpable of fundamental moral problems. Notably, it is only the excessive 'get rich quick' craving that can fall for this temptation. However, it is argued that the general economic insecurity in many countries has driven young people into new and creative ways of socio-economic sustenance, many of which involve crime and fraud. Taking advantage of hi-tech devices and global communication media like the internet, the fear is that the rate of online fraud is likely to increase following the current global economic recession.

iii) Reassurance/confidence building

Generally, highly suspicious mails or information often generate fear, anxiety and disbelief. Writers of such mails therefore endeavour to calm the receivers

through discursive means. Since email communication is essentially bi-directional, it is impossible to assess the receiver's physical or visual reactions, so the writers of the hoax mails introduce communicative methods that would serve as buffers to their claims, or as reassurance/confidence building strategies. In the data, the writers would generally make offers after informing the receiver what roles he is to play. The receiver is to trust the writer and be convinced that the business is genuine. A few examples are given as follows:

a) I have decided to give away forty (40%) to you for your assistance and ten (10%) for any expenses that might arise during the transaction of this transfer. I want to assure you that this transaction is absolutely 100% guarantee since I work in this bank which is why you should be confident in the success of this transaction because you will be updated with information as at when desired. (BS 18)

b) I agreed that 30% of this money will be for you as a respect to the provision of a foreign account, 10% will be set aside for expenses incurred during the business and 60% would be for me. (BS 5)

c) I am a man of conscience who has the fear of God and human sympathy . . . I will take it upon myself and make sure that you will be among the contractors that will receive their contract funds in the next day. Upon your acceptance reply to this transfer deal. I will do all the underground work here in the CBN to make sure that the funds will be transferred to you through the appointed paying bank. (FBI 40)

d) This is a legitimate business. I will give you more details upon the receipt of your response. (BS 54)

e) I guarantee that the transaction will be executed under a legitimate arrangement that will protect all from any bridge of law. (BS 42)

Interestingly, the writer of BS 48 presents his confidence-building strategy in the form of questions and seeks the receiver's advice. Rather than appear too direct in his approach, he throws the issues at stake back to the receiver to decide the next line of action:

f) Your suggestions and ideas will be highly regarded. Now permit me to ask these few questions:

1. what is your advice to us on this very project and what do you do for a living?
2. Can you secure this fund for us in a viable venture and willing hand over to us when we are capable that is after we must have finished, our education in your country?
3. Can we completely confide in you without any breach of trust?
4. Surely you will be highly compensated but I need to know what you need us to offer you in returns of your assistance to us?
5. Can you tell us about you/your culture?

In most of the cases, the writers rely on their supposed identity as bank managers, legal practitioners, physicians or as highly intelligent men of industry to reassure the receivers of their sincerity and good intentions. Some present themselves as religious people or 'born again'. Under this confidence-building strategy there appear evidences of commitment on the part of the writers. Promises triggered by statements such as 'I have decided to give . . .', 'I agree that 30% of this money will be for you . . .', 'I will take it upon myself to make sure . . .',

are commissive speech acts (Searle, 1969), which indicates that anyone making a commissive should be in a position to fulfil it before it can be considered felicitous (Adegbija, 1988). But there have been reports that people who get themselves into online scams eventually lose their money and sometimes property. This shows that the apparent commissive acts turn out to be mere communicative strategies to sell fraudulent businesses to the prospective victims.

iv) Confidentiality offering

In many of the emails in the BS and FBI categories, the writer urges the addressee to keep the business proposal confidential. This advice often comes at the closing of the mails. In some, it is the subject header that reads: 'Top Secret.' Examples in the data include:

- a) Please be informed that your utmost confidentiality is required. (BS 2)
- b) I will please wish you keep this transaction secret as I am hoping to retire with my share of this money at the end of transaction. (BS 18)
- c) I advice that we should make secrecy and confidentiality as our primary working condition. (BS 35)
- d) Needless to say, **UTMOST CONFIDENTIALITY** is of vital importance if we are to successfully reap the immense benefits of this transaction. (BS 42)
- e) Please keep this proposal as a top secret and delete if you are not interested. (BS 64)

Ironically, many of the mails ask for sincerity, trust and confidence from the addressee. In fact one of them says: 'if you're sure of your honesty, reply'. So they emphasize the need for trust and strict confidentiality. 'Confidentiality' in this context is probably not to report to the police but a presupposed form of making the receiver perceive the offer as genuine and worth investing in alone without involving anyone else. It is an anxiety booster on the receiver to act quickly before others get to know about it. They are simply playing on the demand–supply mentality of the average business person. This also implies that the business can proceed without any formal legal procedures or negotiations. The impression that the initial demand of the transaction is basically trust and confidentiality is a mere pretence.

v) Action prompting closing/sign off

Blommaert (2005) observes that writers of hoax emails often borrow from established genres of discourse. For instance, the closing formula of most of the E-lottery Winner Notifications (EWN) is patterned after the business/commercial and promotional discourse. The writers do this because they are familiar with the 'orders of indexicality attached to genres such as these and organise their messages formally and structurally according to them' (2005: 11). So the more businesslike a message appears the more people tend to believe them. Indeed, the basic intension of the writers is simply to sound convincing and subsequently deceive, hence they apply all writing conventions available to them without really knowing whether or not they satisfy the requirements of the genre they are deploying. Some 87 percent of the EWN mails end with a formal closing

often with the name of the writer as sign off. For example, most of the emails end in the following order:

(EWN 22) Once more, all the members of Motorola Company say congratulation to you.

For more information, Contact us with the below information.

Mr Roland Peter,
motopr42@hotmail.com

(EWN 24) Note, all winnings MUST be claimed on or before the 30th of July 2008, otherwise all funds will be returned as Unclaimed and eventually donated to charity.

Yours Sincerely,
Tracy Hunter
(co-ordinator).

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL.CONTACT YOUR CLAIMS AGENT:
george.meyers01@gmail.com
Congratulations once again on your winning.

(EWN 43) Contact: Mary Sandra, Email:(mary.sandra@btinternet.com).
Rose Wood

But this is not the case with the closing and sign-offs of the Business Solicitations (BS) and Fortune Bequeathing Information (FBI) emails. (BS and FBI categories are being analysed together because of their similarity of structure and content.) 47 out of the 53 emails in the two categories (i.e. 89%) end with closing and sign off with a mere 17 percent ending formally with 'yours faithfully' or 'yours sincerely'. Most of them end on an informal and religious note. Table 4 gives a more vivid picture of the closing and sign-off formulas.

The study shows that closing remarks and sign-offs occur more frequently than the opening formulas. Since hoax emails attempt to emulate the business style of commercial communication, it is therefore not fashionable to end a 'business mail' without a source or the identity of the sender. Even the emails without greetings whose writers appear desperate and hysterical at the beginning end with closings and sign offs. Only about 12 percent of the BS and FBI categories are without closing. Half of this number though still endeavour to sign off with personal names, the reason being that the writers expect a reply, so they include their 'names' and contact emails. Some of the closings are actually a direct or implied instruction to reply or 'act fast' as we see in the examples below:

- i) Trusting to hear from you immediately.
- ii) God bless you as you listing (*sic*) to the voice of reasoning.
- iii) May God bless you as you write back.
- iv) God bless you for your anticipated understanding and cooperation.

Significantly, some of the mails that didn't even begin on religious notes end with them, often betraying some misleading interpersonal/emotional tones. Many of them actually sign off with 'God bless you', 'thanks and remain blessed', or 'God bless you and your family'. As noted earlier this is merely a discursive strategy to play the religious card and eventually deceive the addressee.

TABLE 4. *Closing and sign-off formulas in the corpus*

<i>Closing and sign-off</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Yours faithfully	8	17.0
Yours sincerely	1	2.1
Sincerely	2	4.2
Thanks	1	2.1
Thanks and best regards	1	2.1
Best regards	6	12.7
Best regards and wishes	1	2.1
Kind regards	2	4.2
Regards	10	21.2
With regards	2	4.2
I await your call, best regards	1	2.1
Have a great day, yours faithfully	1	2.1
Thanking you in advance	1	2.1
Trusting to hear from you immediately	1	2.1
Please keep this proposal a top secret, regards	1	2.1
God bless you	1	2.1
Thanks and remain blessed	1	2.1
Remain blessed in the name of the Lord	1	2.1
Yours in Christ	1	2.1
God bless you as you listening to the voice of reasoning, yours in Christ	1	2.1
May God bless you as you write back, yours in Christ	1	2.1
God bless you for your anticipated understanding and cooperation, Best regards	1	2.1
Respectfully submitted	1	2.1
Total	47	

Personal/place names are often found in the emails. In particular, personal names are usually found in the address information at the email header, showing the sender and often the receiver. They also form part of the email narrative or as part of the footer information/sign off. Because the '419' mails are designed to deceive and exploit the receiver, the writers employ symbolic strategies to make the mail appear authentic. One way they do this is by linking the names of very important personalities such as heads of states or their spouses, top government officials or business people. In recent times, names of academics and editors are also faked. However, most of the names are fictitious, usually introduced in the mails as 'foreign customer' or 'client' that 'died in a plane crash', or 'suicide bomb attack', or died after a 'cardiac artery operation', etc. In FBI 40, the writer claims to be the personal assistant to Prof. Chukwuma C. Soludo, Nigeria's Central Bank Governor; BS 45 links a certain huge sum of money dumped in a safe with the late Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The writer of email (BS 7) claims to be 'Innocent Chiluwa' (the author of this article). Other familiar names are

'James Koromah' (Sierra Leone) and 'Marian Kibaki' (Zimbabwe). Proper names therefore perform communicative roles such as naming the writer of the mail, or as reference to a third person. The third person may be a prospective recipient of certain favours in the message or simply a means of attracting some credibility to the hoax mail. A few of the invented names in the data with their countries are as follows:

Saliu Kabore, Burkina Faso
Yi Kwan, Hong Kong
Joseph Chau, China
James Park, United Kingdom
David Ibrahim, Oman
Mrs Rosemary, Bahrain
Rebecca William, Baltimore, USA
Elina Robert, Côte d'Ivoire
Mariam Kibaki, Zimbabwe
Mary Benson, Dublin
Dr Steve Boateng, Ghana
Barr. Dan Johnson, Nigeria
Mike Liang, Singapore
Mary William, Kuwait
Flora Abed, Sierra Leone
Mr Yang, Taiwan
Paula Van Mohn, Amsterdam
Tracy Hunter, Australia
Stella Elizabeth, Canada, etc.

Conclusion

This study has endeavoured to describe the manifestations and discourse pragmatic features/functions of '419' emails, that give them their persuasive strength. Either as online lottery winning announcements, email business proposals involving money transfers/claims or as beneficiary of a dormant account, the mails have become a regular part of our internet experience. A previous genre study of email hoaxes has characterized '419' mails or 'Nigeria mails' as a genre of CMC, necessitating further study as they stand the risk of extinction in the near future (Heyd, 2008). From Heyd's study of 'form, function, and genre ecology', she hypothesized that email hoaxing may actually be passing. Her conclusion stems from the study that a genre that began in the mid-1990s as virus warnings has indeed begun to disappear over the years due to increasing digital literacy. Ironically however, this has indeed become the very important reason for the spread of '419' emails in recent times. The opportunity offered by the internet for sending messages while remaining anonymous and the control of advanced internet skills have fully incorporated this branch of CMC into the economies of global communication (Blommaert, 2005). In fact, Blommaert

concludes that these writers are fully competent manipulators of technological and infrastructural dimension of globalized communication, though fail to demonstrate sufficient technical skills to construct the messages in order to correspond to the variety of linguistic, stylistic and generic criteria required for them to pass as business proposals. Unlike Blommaert however, the present study shows the discourse/pragmatic strategies available in both the structure and content of the mails which give them their persuasive influences, their generic/linguistic lapses notwithstanding. It is likely that up to this moment, certain individuals are still being hoodwinked by these hoax mails.

While Heyd foresees the extinction of hoax virus warnings, we predict an increase in the spread of online deceptions in form of hoax lottery winning announcements or '419' business solicitations. As a matter of fact, the global economic downturn may eventually serve as a breeder to many more online scams, to which '419' mails are only the precursors. It is believed that socio-economic problems result in the multiplicity of crimes and fraudulent practices. Email virus warnings may be harmless though with moral implications, but '419' mails are both dangerous in their conception and outcome. Reports say that victims of '419'/online scams often go bankrupt and some even commit suicide. This study is a contribution to CMC research as much as it is a warning to email users. Extinction of '419' emails is not likely in the near future; rather than disappear, these are much more likely to develop other complex varieties as society becomes more complex and provides greater impetus for its spread.

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