AN ANALYSIS OF THE SEMANTIC FUNCTION OF THE PARTICLE 'TÈ' IN THE NSUKKA DIALECT

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Abstract
The research aims to examine and describe the particle 'tè' in the Nsukka dialect. It commences by looking at the treatment of grammatical particles in the German language, which serves as the theoretical basis for understanding the general notion of grammatical particles. It also looks at the presentation and the description of grammatical particles in cognitive linguistics through a comparative approach. These background approaches were used to establish the fact that the particle 'tè' is comparable to other particles in the grammars of well-researched and established languages. The particle 'tè' was subjected to the basic grammatical tests that confirm the status of a word as a particle. The particle in question passed all the tests and could in addition fulfil the requirements of a composite lexical unit as stipulated by cognitive linguistics. Through the elicited language data used for analysis in this work, it was established that the particle 'tè' fulfils different semantic roles in utterances they appear in. This is comparable with the semantic functions of the German particle 'doch'. It is through these roles that one can fully examine and describe the meaning and functions of this particle in any given utterance. The research concludes that 'tè' in the Nsukka dialect is a full-fledged particle that has all semantic functions that are attributed to particles of every established language.
Keywords: word class, reference word, composite lexical unit, particle verb, semantic value, utterance, discourse and focus

1. Introduction

The issues of 'particles' have long been considered as problematic in various human endeavours. In the natural sciences, it was established for a long time that atoms were the most fundamental building blocks of all matter until the end of the nineteenth century. The discovery of the electron shattered this belief and science books have to be rewritten. Not only in natural science are particles an issue, but also in our daily lives we deal with all sorts of particles that are either inconveniencing or hazardous to us. The same issues and controversies apply to particles in languages. They have been a source of confusion and dispute among linguists due to their unique nature of being there but not easy to classify.

Particles do not seem to belong to any of the established word classes in the traditional grammar of languages. Even though some are identical to prepositions and adverbs, they are different because of their syntactic functions. Their existence has been acknowledged and described in different languages and their respective grammars. This notion of particles has also been addressed in the recent enterprise of Cognitive Linguistics, where it is bunched together with its reference word as a 'composite lexical unit'. This hints that particles are mostly bound to reference words.

This work examines the particle 'tè' in the Nsukka dialect of the Igbo language which has not yet been researched by any work known to the author. The examination of the Nsukka particle is done through the comparison with a similar phenomenon in the German language. The work presents the modal particle 'doch' in the German language and uses it as a basis of comparison with the Nsukka dialect particle 'tè'. This work is therefore aimed at filling the aforementioned research gap and thereby encouraging other researchers to embark on similar studies. The work looks at the use of 'tè' in different contexts and identifies the semantic and pragmatic differences of these different roles. It also looks at the application of cognitive linguistics notion of a *composite lexical item* to 'tè' and its reference words.

The work is structured to proceed as follows. Section (2) presents the treatment of particles in German language. The next section (3) presents the methodology of the research work and samples of the language data elicited for this study. Section (4) presents the analysis of the language data, while section (5) summarizes and concludes the work.

2. Theoretical background

This section will look at the description and treatment of particles in German language, which will provide the necessary theoretical background needed to understand particles in general. It will show how the German language group their available particles and the functions ascribed to them. Furthermore, this section will look at the cognitive linguistics understanding of particles. It will also look at the relevance of the description of particles in Cognitive Linguistics to the research at hand. Finally, the Nsukka dialect shall be introduced in addition to giving a list of the other groups of dialects in the Igbo language.

2.1 German particles

From the point of view of the traditional grammatical classification, particles have been established as an independent word class that belong to the so-called closed groups of word classes. Their major characteristics are that they are neither declined nor conjugated (cf. Eisenberg 1998: 35). They are also grammatically productive in the German language, as they create a group of verbs known as the particle verbs. In this grammatical operation verbs are combined with prepositional (or other) units but these are not the usual prefixes. The major difference between these particles and the regular verbal prefixes lies in the stress pattern. While the prefixes are unstressed the particle of the particle verbs are stressed. Examples are:

1 Verbs	verb particles	translation
(a) legen	anlegen	(to invest)
(b) stehen	aufstehen	(to stand up)
(c) kommen	Mitkommen	(to come along)

Table 1 examples of verbs and verb particles in the German language

The particle verbs share this characteristic with some nominal prefixes, for instance; *un* and *miß*, and like the nominal prefixes they are also modifiers. Above all, verb particles have other characteristics that make their status as bound morphological units questionable. They comport themselves in most cases as independent and free units, as words so to speak. Most salient is how the particle verbs form their past participle, the past participle prefix *ge* does not appear in front of the whole construction but rather in between the verb composition:

Past participle forms	
(d) angelegt	(invested)
(e) aufgestanden	(stood up)
(f) mitgekommen	(came along)

Table 2 past participle forms of verbs

The whole construction does have the characteristics of one morphological unit, but the particle is only attached to the stem of the verb (Eisenberg 1998: 244-245).

In general, particles primarily fulfill a variety of tasks in everyday spoken language, for instance, they can indicate the degree or intensity of a speech event. Particles can also help the speaker emphasize and express her inner attitude and emotions, which are vital while conducting a conversation. It is also peculiar to all particles in the German language that they do not change their form, either by inflection or conjugation. They have no tangible lexical meaning, as opposed to the lexical units of the three main word classes (noun, verb, and adjectives) and the majority of the adverbs. They are also different from the prepositions and the conjunctions as they possess no grammatical functions. Another important characteristic of particles lies in their inability to function as a formal part of a sentence (cf. Duden: Die Grammatik: 370).

Particles in the German language could, according to Duden: Die Grammatik, be subdivided into five classes, these include; a) Degree particles, also known as the particles of intensity. These are responsible for indicating the degree to which a characteristic in a speech event is pronounced. b) Focus particles are responsible for emphasizing a particular part of a statement. c) Modal particles are those that express the speaker's attitude to what is being said and also give a statement a certain tone. d) Speech particles are responsible for the modulation of a conversation. e) Negation particles are used to negate concepts or notions in a speech event (cf. Duden: Die Grammatik: 371). Following in Table 3 below is a brief overview of the five sub-classes of particles in the German language and examples. These five sub-classes are not cast in stone, as presented in some works like Hoffmann (2016: 55), which also include the class of 'connection particles'. As the name reveals, these are the particles responsible for connecting sentence elements. Some works also do not differentiate between modal and speech particles. Therefore Table 3 should, as already mentioned above, not be seen as apodictic.

Particles	Examples	Translations
a) degree	Sie ist *sehr* schön	She is *very* beautiful
b) focus	*Besonders* ihr Mann hat sich amusiert (andere haben sich ebenfalls amusiert)	*Especially* her husband amused himself (others amused themselves too)
c) modal	Da sollte *aber* die Polizei hart durchgreifen	In this case the police should *definitely* take a tough action
	Du siehst müde aus. Geh *doch* heute früher ins Bett als sonst	You look tired! Go to bed earlier than usual today

d)	speech	Einleitend: *Also*, ich bin davon nicht überzeugt Abschließend: Du hilfst mir doch, *nicht wahr*?	Introductory: *Well*, I am not convinced about that. Concluding: You are going to help me, *not so*?
e)	negation	Ich bin *überhaupt* nicht eifersüchtig	I am not jealous *at all*

Duden: Die Grammatik: 370, 686

Table 3 A brief overview of the sub-classes of particles in the German language

From a different perspective, the particles when compared to the adverbs do not have the characteristics of a sentence component. They do not occupy an independent position in sentences; rather they are always attached to their reference words when changing positions in a sentence. Following are comparative examples of particles and adverbs.

2 (a) *Ziemlich* **gut** hat er die Prüfung bestanden. (Partikel)
(b) Er hat die Prüfung *ziemlich* **gut** bestanden.
(c) Die Prüfung hat er *ziemlich* **gut** bestanden
He passed the Examination pretty well.

3 (a) *Diesmal* hat er die Prüfung gut bestanden. (Adverb)
(b) Er hat die Prüfung *diesmal* gut bestanden.
(c) Die Prüfung hat er *diesmal* gut bestanden.
(d) Gut bestanden hat er die Prüfung *diesmal*.
This time he passed the examination very well.

The above examples show the major peculiarities of a particle concerning its grammatical functions. In comparison with adverbs, one can see that particles are not independent sentence components but rather are dependent on their reference words. In 2 (a) the particle *ziemlich* is attached to its reference word *gut*, both showing together the degree of '*how well*' the examination in question was passed. The other variations of the sentence (b) and (c) also show the particle always moved together with its reference word. Example 3(a) depicts an adverb *diesmal*, which is not attached to 'gut'. It is an independent component of the sentence and does not have a reference word like the particle. This is shown in sentence variations (b), (c), and (d), where the adverb could be moved around to different positions in the sentence without being rigidly attached to any reference word (cf. Helbig and Buscha 1995: 188).

Furthermore, it is worthy of note that some particles in the German language could at the same time be used as particles and as adverbs but with different meanings. As the examples of those particles are shown below in Table 4, they have different meanings when they act as particles and vice versa.

	As particles	As adverbs
Besonders (particularly, especially)	In erster Linie (primarily), vor allem (above all), in hohem Maße (to a large extent)	Getrennt (seperated), gesondert (separately), für sich allein (on its own)
Selbst (even)	Sogar (even)	Höchstselbst (in person), in eigener Person (oneself in person)
So (so)	Denn (because, for, than), eigentlich (actually), überhaupt (at all), ebenso (as well).	Auf diese Art und Weise (in this manner)

Table 4 Particles versus adverbs (Helbig and Buscha 1995: 189)

The examples in Table 4 outline three particles that are classified under the focus particles but could also act as adverbs in the German language. The first example '*besonders*' could be used as a particle to draw the attention of the listener to a particular discourse element. In spoken language, together with the accent, it ensures that this part of the sentence has the highest communication value.

4(a) *Besonders* gute Leistungen hat er in Mathematik.
His performances are above all good in Mathematics.

The same lexical item could be used as an adverb having the meaning of something separated, standing alone highlighting a particular unit while leaving the other elements in the background.
(b) Ich mag Musik, *besonders* Afrobeats.

I like Music, especially Afrobeats.

The second example in the table is '*selbst*'; this is used as a particle to depict a marked unit in a speech event. It puts the focus on a particular element while downplaying the other elements.

5(a) *Selbst* der Busfahrer hatte Alkohol getrunken (nicht nur die Fahrgäste).
Even the bus driver had drunk alcohol (not just the passengers).
The same lexical unit can also be used in a sentence as an adverb indicating that something was done by someone in person.
(b) Der Rektor erschien *selbst* zur Eröffnung der Konferenz.
The rector himself appeared at the opening of the conference.

The last example on the table '*so*' like the other examples above could also be used as a particle and as an adverb in the German language. The usage as a particle shows that one element in the speech event could be compared to another element based on some qualities and characteristics.
6(a) Er läuft *so* schnell wie ein Fahrrad.
He runs as fast as a bicycle.

When it is used as an adverb, it shows how something is done. It puts a focus on the action being carried out and highlights or comments on the actions.
(b) *So* konnte er die Arbeit nicht schaffen.
He could not do the work in this manner.

The above examples from Table 4 show the grammatical peculiarities of particles in the German language. They could be used as both particles and adverbs depending on the context. The contexts they are used in determine if they function as particles or adverbs in the sentence.

2.2 The Modal Particle 'doch'

The modal particle 'doch' in German will be looked at closely in this section; this will establish a basis of comparison between this German modal particle and the Nsukka particle 'tè', that seems to evince the characteristics of a modal particle. The German modal particle 'doch' is in its use in the spoken language versatile and could be compared to the use of the Nsukka dialect particle 'tè'. The particle 'doch' performs different semantic functions in spoken language, as the following examples will show.

	Speech samples	Translations	Semantic functions
7	Du siehst müde aus. Geh doch heute früher ins Bett	You look tired! Go to bed earlier today	Advice
8	Das ist doch blöd! Ich glaube das nicht!	That is simply/obviously stupid! I cannot believe that!	Anger
9	Pass doch auf!	Be careful!	Urgent request
10	Das gibt es doch nicht! Sie hat kaum gearbeitet	That is unbelievable! She barely worked	Voicing disappointment
11	Ich habe es dir doch gesagt	I already told you that	Voicing irritation
12	Aber du machst es doch schon so gut, du schaffst das	But you are already doing it so well, you can do it (you can make it)	Encouragement
13	Oh nein, jetzt habe ich doch ganz vergessen, Brot einzukaufen	Oh no, I completely forgot to buy bread	Acknowledgement of mistake
14	Du wolltest doch, dass ich dir die Modalpartiken erkläre	You wanted me to explain the modal particles to you	Reminder

Table 5 diverse semantic functions of the particle "doch"

2.3 Particles from a Cognitive Linguistic Perspective

The cognitive linguistic enterprise was firmly established in 1987 with the publication of two important works namely: Lakoff's *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* and the first volume of Langacker's *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. These two publications argued that the form of a linguistic expression is not exclusively the result of an encapsulated, specialized rule system or an autonomous generative grammar as postulated by

Chomsky 1975. The latter approach postulates that this specialized rule system has no relation with more general aspects of human cognition. Whereas the approach of the former on the contrary, holds that linguistic form always reflects basic cognition. Moreover, two expressions that are truth conditionally identical involve two different ways of 'conceptualizing' or 'construing' a given scene. The two works take a 'sign-based' and a 'category-based' approach to grammar. A grammar is considered sign-based if it is entirely made up of form-meaning pairings. It means that every linguistic symbol of that grammar has a corresponding meaning attached to it, be the symbol simple or complex.

Grammar is category-based if these form-meaning pairings do not exist in isolation but participate in categorizing relationships (cf. Cappelle 2005: 49). These two fundamental characteristics are envisaged when Langacker (1987) puts forward the definition of the grammar of a language as 'a structured inventory of conventional linguistic units' (cf. Langacker 1987: 57). The author goes on to analyze the two main orderings of the transitive verb-particle construction as depicted below:

15(a) Would you please turn on the radio?
(b) Would you please turn the radio on?

A short description of Langacker's analysis will clarify the fundamental organization of his approach to the grammar of a language. Under the caption 'Composite Lexical Units' he describes the two complex linguistic symbols 'turn on the radio' and 'turn the radio on', which are instances of what Langacker postulates as two different 'constructional schemas' or 'construals' for the transitive verb-particle combination 'turn on'. These two constructional schemas can be represented as follows: [[TURN ON] NOMINAL] and [[TURN NOMINAL] ON], respectively, where nominal stands for the cognitive linguistic term for a noun phrase (henceforth NML). In his words "[TURN] designates a process whose trajectory induces a change of state in its primary landmark; this landmark serves as an e-site for the valence relation with [NML], and the resultant state for the relation with [ON]". In the diagram below (a), [TURN] is elaborated by [ON] at the first level of constituency, and [TURN ON] by [NML] at the second. The dependent prediction is in each case the profile determinant, so the composite structure [TURN-ON-NML] is processual. In diagram (b), [NML] elaborates on the landmark of [TURN] at the first constituency level, and [ON] elaborates on the resultant state at the second. The composite structure [TURN-NML-ON] is completely identical to [TURN-ON-NML]. The bracketing system used in the illustration of these schemas refers to the stages in the particular assemblage process that the component parts go through to form the structural whole.

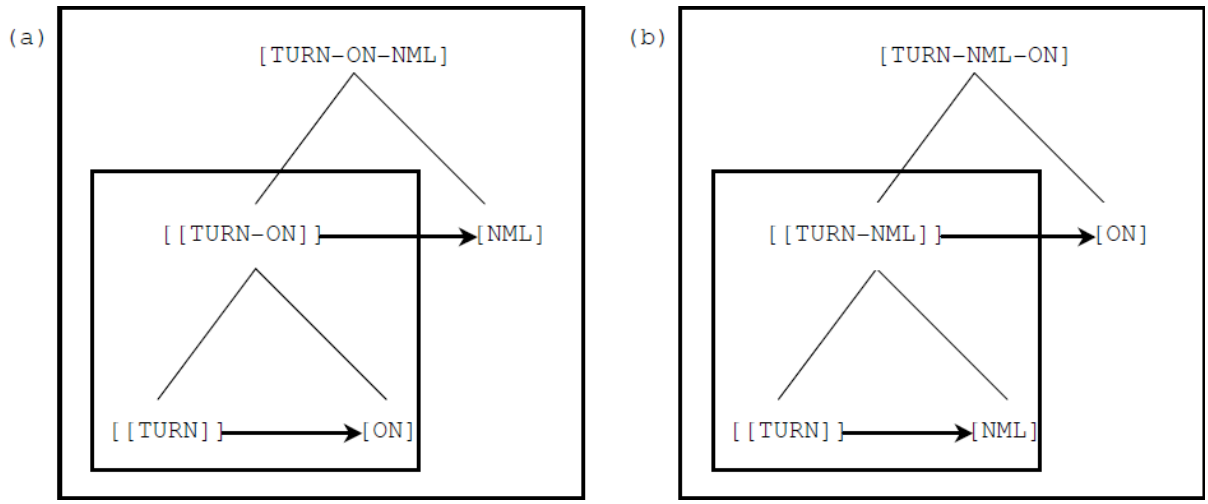

Figure 1 Two different construals (only the semantic pole) of 'turn on' + Nominal, from Langacker 1987: 476

Even though the two versions have different compositional stages, the outcome structures at the top of each diagram have the same semantic value. The composite form [TURN-NML-ON] is identical to [TURN-ON-NML] the two versions are unified semantic structures, and the ordering elements in this abbreviatiory notation is simply a memory aid for the contrastive word orders at the phonological pole (cf. Langacker 1987: 476).

The notion that 'turn on the radio' and 'turn the radio on' are semantically identical would appear to contradict a sign-based approach, in which all forms are paired with meaning, but Langacker (1987) asserts that this is not the case. To clarify this misconception Cappelle (2005) draws attention to the lexicon which is full of items with phonological variants, for instance: life, knife, wife, elf, leaf, scarf, hoof, etc. These signs have for most speakers of the English language two phonological variants, one ending in an *-f* sound and another ending in a *-v* sound

usually before the plural morpheme. In analogy to these, the author argues that nothing is preventing lexical items like 'turn on' from similarly having variant manifestations. Therefore the case of 'turn on' should not contradict the notion that grammar is entirely made up of form-meaning assemblies. One must bear in mind that the two poles of each such unit can fan out into a range of different allomorphic variants at the form pole and different semantic extensions at the meaning pole.

About the category-based character of grammar, Langacker envisages what happens in the minds of language users when they are confronted with large numbers of verb-particle combinations. He postulates that through the basic cognitive process of abstraction, more schematic structures are likely to emerge in their mental grammar. Therefore, from the many structures that are formally like structure (a) in Figure 1, speakers probably extract the higher-order schema [[VP] NML] (whereby V and P are respectively schematic for verb and particle). Whereas, speakers extract from structures like (b) an equally abstract structure [[V NML] P]. This shows how apparent the category-based nature of Langacker's framework is, that through the process of schematization, speakers establish higher-level categories which help to classify lower-level items.

Since most verb-particle combinations allow the sequence alternation depicted in Figure 1 above (example: 'chat up someone' and 'chat someone up'), the similarity of the two alternative sequences is supposedly also part of speakers' encyclopedic knowledge of verb-particle combinations. Langacker (1987) represents this systematic relationship between the two orderings as follows:

[[[VP] NML] ← - →[[V NML] P]]

He asserts that this generalization is 'roughly analogous to the classic Particle Shift transformation' (cf. Langacker 1987: 447). He buttresses further that such a high-level correspondence is not a necessary linguistic tool but rather a natural result of the human ability to abstract from a large portion of data. Additionally, such a relationship does not consider any of the orders as superior compared to the other.

Cappelle (2005) raises an important question concerning the two versions of the nominal and particle sequence being identical. He wonders why Langacker did not recognize the application of information structure in the two variations. The two orderings could be compared in terms of their differences in focal prominence (cf. Cappelle 2005: 27). This is also the view favored by this research and will be dwelt on in detail later in the analysis of the linguistic data examined for this research.

2.4 Nsukka Dialect

According to the work of Nwaozuzu (2008), the Igbo language comprises eight groups of dialects namely: West Niger Group of Dialects (WNGD), East Niger Group of Dialects (ENGD), East Central Group of Dialects (ECGD), Cross River Group of Dialects (CRGD), North Eastern Group of Dialects (NEGD), Southern Eastern Group of Dialects (SEGD), South Western Group of Dialects (SWGD) and Northern Group of Dialects (NGD). The WNGD include: Agbọ, Asaba, Ogwashiuku, Iseleuku, Ukwuani, Ibusa Akoko, Kwale etc. The ENGD include: Onitsha, Obosi, Awka, Amawbia, Ogidi, Alor, Abatete, Enugwuukwu, igboukwu, Nibo, Nimo, Nri, Ihiala, Oba etc. The ECGD includes: Owerri, Uratta, Ọkpụala, Mbaitoli, Ikeduru, Mabaise, Awomama, Orlu, Umuahia, Okigwe, Mbano, etc The CRGD includes: Abriba, Ohaffia, Afikpo, Abam, Bende, Omasiri, Arochukwu etc. The SEGD include: Ikwerre, Ohaji, Egbema, Mgbirich, Umuagwo etc. The NEGD include: Abakaliki, Izzi, Ezza, Ikwo, Ohaozara, Ezamgbo, Uburu, Okposi, etc. The SWGD includes Ngwa, Azumili, Oboohia, Asa, Akwete, Ohambele, etc. The NGD includes Nsukka, Enugu Ezike, Udi, Oboloor Afor, Ikem, Ngwo, etc. (cf. Dilibe 2019).

This work focuses on the Northern Group of Dialects and deals precisely with the description of the particle 'tè' in the Nsukka central dialect. Below is the Map of the Nsukka local government area showing the geographical region that speaks the Nsukka dialect. The particle 'tè' has not been dwelt on in any research known to the author of this work. The main

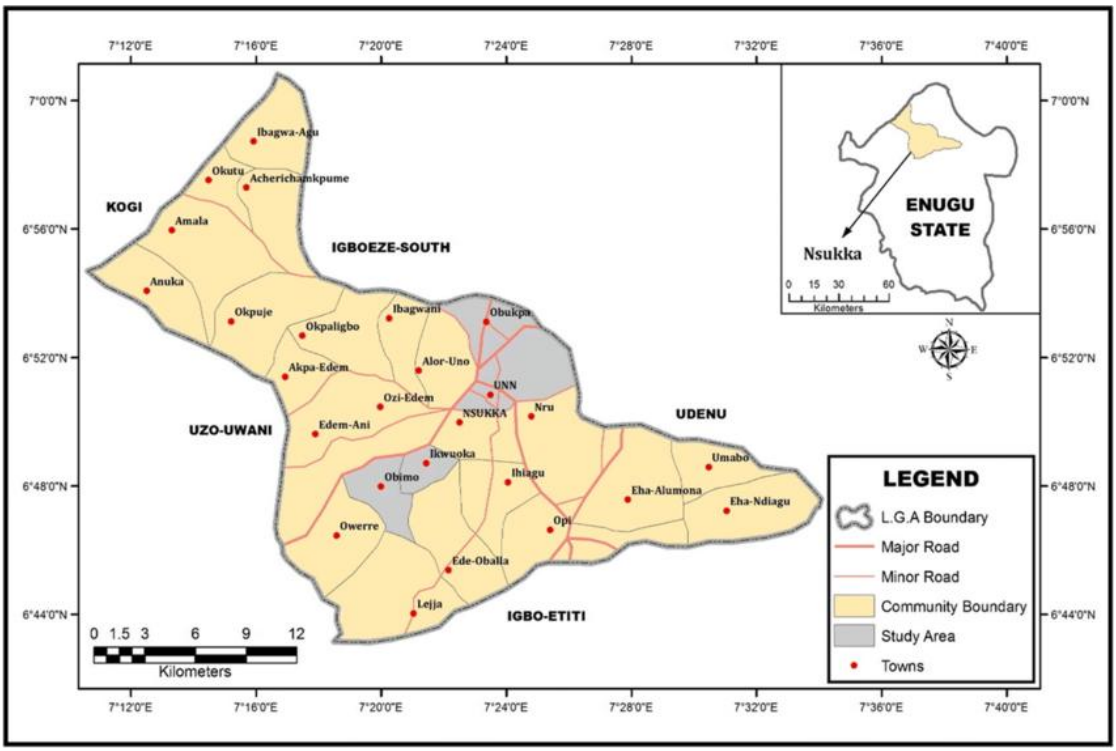

Figure 2. The geographical location of Nsukka Local Government Area.

aim of this work remains to offer an extensive description of the particle 'tè' and to identify its various semantic functions in the Nsukka dialect.

3. Methodology

The description of this particle is different from the approach used above in analyzing the particles of the German language. The German language has various particles grouped into different grammatical functions. A brief attention will be given to other particles in the Nsukka dialect just to demonstrate that 'tè' is not the only particle that could be identified in the dialect. However, in this case, only the particle 'tè' is described according to its various semantic functions. 'Tè' could grammatically be considered a particle because it has wholly comparable grammatical properties like the particles of the German language. Examples of other particles in Nsukka language that add semantic or pragmatic functions depending on the context to the basic meaning of the utterances are as follows;

16(a) **With the particle 'ṅtà'**
Ámà – g m tà íhé m j' – émé
Know – NEG[1]. I Part. thing I Aux. – do
'I do not have any idea *at all* of what I should do'.

16(b) **Without the particle 'ṅtà'**
Ámà – g m íhé m j' – émé
Know – NEG. I thing I Aux. – do
'I do not know what to do'.

Table 6 presentation of the particle 'ṅtà'

17(a) **With the particle 'ọnwá'**
Gédé ọnwá béé yé
Where Part. house his/her
'Where on earth is now his/her house'?

17 (b) **Without the particle 'ọnwá'**
Gédé béé yé
Where house his/her
'Where is his/her house'?

Table 7 presentation of the particle 'ọnwá'

Above is a brief presentation of other particles in the Nsukka dialect which are also modal in nature. They show all the grammatical characteristics that make a particle, three of these characteristics will be listed briefly below.

[1] The abbreviations used here are; NEG-negative, AUX-auxiliary, DET-determinant, PART-particle, EMPH-emphasis

The first is that of not having a syntactical function in a sentence and therefore could be left out without interfering in the overall semantics of the sentence. The second characteristic is that it is permutable to various positions in the utterance without affecting the overall meaning of the sentence.

18(a) Á má – g m èhà yá.
Know Neg. I name her/him
'I do not know her name'.
(b) Á má – g m tè èhà yá.
Know Neg. I Part. name her/him
'I do not even know her name'.
(c) Á má – g m èhà yá tè.
Know Neg. I name her/him Part.
'I do not even know her name'.

Table 8 establishing that the particle "tè" does not have a syntactic function

The examples above show that the absence of 'tè' in 18(a) does not affect the core meaning of the sentence, which remains intact even if the particle is omitted. In 18(b) 'tè' functions as a particle and does not have any syntactical function in the sentence. It does not belong to any word class and is thus not an obligatory component of the sentence. The second characteristic is that the particles in German language are meaningless on their own and are always attached to other words to create new meanings. As the examples in 18(a) and (b) show, the basic meaning of the sentence remains intact with or without the particle, but the inclusion of the particle adds a nuance of indifference to the semantics of the sentence. Example 18(c) shows that they do not have any binding reference word that they must be attached to. Therefore they could be moved to various positions in the utterance. The final characteristic is from a Cognitive Linguistic perspective, which shows that these particles build composite lexical units that could alternate their sequence while still retaining the fundamental semantic of the sentence. This ability to permute before and after the reference word is one of the key characteristics of a particle. This is shown in the examples below.

19(a)*Tè* g ọzè b mbé?
Part. You too live here
'Even you too live here'?
(b) G ọzè b *tè* mbé?
You too live Part. here
'You too live also here'?

Table 9 the particle "tè" before and after the reference word

The examples above also support the observation of Cappelle (2005) regarding the ability of particles to be deployed in the construction of the information structure. Looking at Langacker's centrality of the notion of construal, this should have been a suitable moment to consolidate this notion. Here he could have shown how differences in focal prominence are brought about through the exchange of positions of lexical items in a complex linguistic symbol as the case was in the examples: 'turn on the radio and turn the radio on'. The examples in 19(a) and (b) demonstrate clearly that with the shift of the particle 'tè' the focal prominence of the utterance changes. While on one hand 19(a) focuses on the personal pronoun 'g' (you) stressing the fact that 'even' the addressee lives in the place. On the other hand, the focus of 19(b) is on the place of abode in question. It stresses the fact that the addressee also lives in the place of focus.

The particle 'tè' will be described based on its use in utterances and the different meanings it conveys depending on the context. The Language data was elicited from subjects who are native speakers of the dialect. They were asked to send their speech data to the researcher via Whatsapp voice note. The speech data were transcribed, grouped into six different categories and will be presented and described in the following analysis.

4. Analysis of the Nsukka dialect data

It has already been mentioned above that particles can also act as markers for indicating the mood or attitude of the speaker. In the following data analysis, they perform semantic and pragmatic functions, adding alternative meanings to utterances depending on the context of the utterances. Such variations of meanings can be observed in the use of the particle 'tè' in various utterances examined below. These semantic differences have been grouped here under six titles and will be presented as follows. The tables below will depict the language data elicited with the particle 'tè' and the same sentences without the particle. This will enable the reader see the semantic impact of the particle to the sentences.

(1) Confirmation of indifference

The first function of 'tè' in a discourse is seen as the confirmation of the speaker's indifference in an utterance over a subject matter. All the tables in the analysis will present the utterances with the particle 'tè' on the left rows. On the right rows for the purpose of comparison will be the same utterances without the particle.

20 (a) **With the particle 'tè'**	20 (b) **Without the particle 'tè'**
Á má g m tè èhà yá. Know Neg. I Part. name her/him 'I do not even know her name'.	Á má g m èhà yá. Know (neg. Morph.) I name her/him 'I do not know her name'.
(c) Á n g m éjé tè ụkà. Neg. Morph. I go Part. church service 'I do not even go to church service'.	(d) Á n g m éjé ụkà. Neg. Morph. I go church service 'I do not go to church service'.

Table 10 confirmation of indifference

In the above examples 'tè' is used to indicate the speaker's personal evaluation of the subject matter she is referring to. In 20(a) the speaker using the particle indicates how insignificant the person in question is to her. This indifference extends to the fact that she does not even know her name. The same is the case with the second example 20(c) using the same linguistic tool (the particle 'tè') the speaker shows her indifference about attending church services.

(2) Defending one's inability to do or to know something

The next group of the function of 'tè', is using the particle to defend the speaker's inability to do or to know something.

21(a) **With the particle 'tè'**	21(b) **Without the particle 'tè'**
É b g m tè mbé nà Neg. Morph I Part. place dem. Det. this 'I do not even live here'.	É b g m mbé nà Neg. Morph I place dem. Det. this 'I do not live here'.
(c) Á mà g m tè ès nrí n f. Know Neg. I Part. cook food (dem. Det.) that 'I do not even know how to cook that food'.	(d) Á mà g m ès nrí n f. Know Neg. I cook food (dem. Det.) that 'I do not know how to cook that food'.

Table 11 defending one's inability

The above examples depict in 21(a) the utterance of a speaker who has been confronted with a situation regarding something wrong in a particular living environment. The speaker indicates clearly that she does not live at the place in question and therefore could not care less about whatever the case may be. Similarly, in 21(c) the speaker has been confronted with her opinion about a particular type of culinary dish. Based on such a reply one can ascertain that the speaker does not have any knowledge on the preparation of the dish in question and does not see anything wrong with that.

(3) Degrading particle

In this group, the particles are used as degrading elements in the utterances. In such a construction the particle is attached directly to the personal pronoun 'g' (you). This construction is used to express a degrading and condescending attitude towards the addressee.

22 (a) **With the particle 'tè'**	22 (b) **Without the particle 'tè'**
Tè g n'été égwú disko ? Part. You dance music disco 'Even you dance to disco music'? or 'Do you also dance to disco music'?	G n' été égwú disko ? or I n' été égwú disko ? You dance music disco 'You dance to disco music'?
(c)Tè g b mbé nà? Part. You live place here 'Even you live here'? or 'Do you also live here'?	(d) G b mbé nà? or I b mbé nà? You live place here 'Do you live here'?

Table 12 degrading particle

The example in 22(a) shows the utterance of a speaker who does not see her addressee as capable or even worthy of dancing to disco music. If it were a mere expression of surprise the speaker would simply ask the addressee 'Í n' été égwú disko?' (Do you dance to disco music?). The inclusion of the particle 'tè' makes it very obvious that the speaker does not think that the addressee should be dancing to disco music at all. In the construction 'tè g', the 'tè' is interrogating 'g' (you). The second example (c) also expresses a similar pejorative attitude towards the addressee. In this case, the speaker is clearly saying that the person in question is not worthy of the environment

she is living in, maybe due to socio-economic inequalities. Also as in the first example 22(a), if the speaker is merely expressing her surprise, she would have asked the addressee: 'Í b mbé nà ?' (Do you live here?). In extension, one could also describe the particle 'tè' as having a pragmatic function. It could be seen as playing the role of an illocutionary force identification device (IFID). It is responsible for marking the speech act of insulting someone[2].

(4) Expression of disappointment or even betrayal (Et tu Brute?**)**

The examples below belong to the group of constructions where 'tè' is used to express the speaker's disappointment towards the addressee. In such constructions 'tè' is used together with another particle 'ọzè' to stress a conscious involvement of oneself in an action. The semantics of such a construction could be described best with the famous line 'Et tu Brute?' spoken by Caesar in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.

22(a) **With the particle 'tè'**	(b) **Without the particle 'tè'**
Tè g ọzè so hè jé ábiá?	G ọzè so hè jé ábiá?
Part. You Emph. with them go come	You Emph. with them go come
Even you yourself came with them?	
'Even you came with them'?	'You came with them'?
(c)Tè g ọ̀zè sò jé échí yé íhé?	(d) G ọ̀zè sò jé échí yé íhé?
Part. You Emph. with go beat he/her thing	You Emph.with go beat her thing
Even you yourself were with (in) beating her?	
'Even you yourself were involved in beating her'?	'You were involved in beating her'?

Table 13 expression of disappointment

The first example 22(a) is an utterance for a speaker accusing someone she deems close to her for participating in a visit that was not favorable to the speaker. The speaker might not be particularly surprised about the participation of the majority of the group but feels betrayed by the presence of the one person she addresses with construction 22(c). The second example expresses the same type of disappointment as in (a). Here the speaker confronts one of the people who was involved in beating someone and expresses her surprise and disappointment to the addressee.

(5) Cautioning against prejudice

In this group of constructions the particle 'tè', is used to warn or advise the addressees against prejudice. In such constructions, the addressee is being advised to try an alternative approach instead of the one she has concluded to follow. It could also be used to point out the addressee's mistake in the past, as shown in 23(c).

23(a) **With the particle 'tè'**	(b) **Without the particle 'tè'**
I jé mé d n tè…	I jé mé d n…
You go first Part.	You go first
'You go there first, before ….(making a judgment)'	'You go there first'
(c) I s d n g m bia tè …	(d) I s d n g m bia …
You say first Neg. I come Part.	You say Neg. I come first
'You did not even ask me to come, before...'.	'You did not ask me to come first'.

Table 14 cautioning against prejudice

Example 23(a) shows a speaker encouraging or suggesting to the addressee to give something a chance by going there to check it out herself before making conclusions. The second example (c) shows the speaker complaining to the addressee for not inviting her to exonerate herself before she was condemned by the addressee. The unique feature of this construction is that the particle 'té' is always at the end of the initial clause.

(6) Downplaying the importance of something

The last group that can be differentiated in the semantic functions of the particle 'tè' in utterances is the pragmatic function of politely downplaying a thing or a situation. This comes into play when the speaker is politely declining praises or gratitude therefore stressing the insignificance of the subject matter.

24) (a) **With the particle 'tè'**	(b) **Without the particle 'tè'**
Gédé tè égó ọ́m	Gédé égó ọ́m
Where Part. money Det.	Where money Det.
'Where is even the money'?	'Where is the money'?
(c) Gédé tè nrí ọ́m	(d) Gédé nrí ọ́m
Where Part. food Det.	Where food Det.

[2] For more information on speech acts and IFIDs cf. Austin, J. (1962) and Searle, J. (1969)

‘Where is even the food’? ‘Where is the food’?

Table 15 downplaying the importance of something

The first example 24(a) is the utterance of a speaker who is being thanked for giving someone money or making a donation. The speaker politely downplays the act by asking: ‘Where is even the money’ simply stating that the money she has given is insignificant and does not warrant being thanked for. The second example 24(c) also shows a similar situation; in this case, the speaker is politely rejecting the gratitude being shown by someone she has given food. In a response similar to (a) the speaker asks ‘Where is even the food?’ meaning that the food is not worth being grateful for. One could see the utterance as a semantic equivalent of the English language ‘Don’t mention’. This construction is entrenched into the Nsukka dialect and is a standard way of replying politely when an interlocutor expresses appreciation and gratitude.

5. Conclusion

The underlying aim of this work is to describe and outline the function of the particle ‘tè’ in the Nsukka Dialect. It started by looking at the notion of particles in the grammar of the German language as a basis for the theoretical background. Looking at the German language it was shown that there are numerous particles in the language. They are predominantly (but not only) from the word class of prepositions, with which the so-called particle verbs are constructed. The particles are classified into four groups (focus, modal, speech, and negation) according to their functions in a sentence. Examples from each group were looked at and also those that can be either particles or adverbs were outlined.

The work went further to look at the notion of particles from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. There it was seen that particles and their reference words are seen as ‘composite lexical units’. There Langacker (1987) demonstrated the feature of particles which allows the permutation of the particles to before or after the reference words without any semantic consequence. The potentials of this feature were further buttressed by Cappelle (2005), who suggested a realization of a difference in focal prominence due to the alternation of the positions of the lexical items. This work further explored the possibilities of the permutation invoking a change in the focal prominence of the lexical items. This idea was adopted and applied to the analysis of the particle ‘tè’. The examples 18(a) and (b) were used to demonstrate this notion successfully.

The work went on to present the main aim which is the analysis of the particle ‘tè’ in the Nsukka dialect. The speech data was elicited from native speakers. The subjects were asked to send their language data through a Whatsapp voice note. The data was then transcribed and analyzed by the researcher. The particle was shown to have various semantic and pragmatic functions in utterances. This work was able to differentiate six different functions, which were buttressed with elaborate examples and descriptions. These functions are: 1) Applying the particle as a linguistic means to assert one’s indifference. 2) Using the particle in an utterance to defend one’s inability to do or to know something. 3) The particle assumes the role of degrading or even insulting someone. 4) Using the particle as a means of expressing disappointment or even betrayal. 5) The particle also functions as a means of cautioning an interlocutor against prejudice. Finally 6) presents the particle in its function as a means of downplaying the importance or significance of something, this acts as a pragmatic tool of politeness.

Due to the novelty of this research topic, the author did not have the fortune of visiting already existing literature on the topic. The work could only be realized through a comparative approach with established languages. In this case, the German language was used as the basis of the theoretical foundation. Looking at the description of the particles in this language one could then establish the basic characteristics of a particle and see how it applies to the particle ‘tè’. It will be worthwhile to further examine other possible particles in the dialect and their respective functions. Through such research, an inventory could be compiled and grouped into specific functions as the case is with the German language.

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