Title of Article: The Pragmatics of Hoax Email Business Proposals.

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Outlet: Linguistik Online (University of Berne, Switzerland) Vol.: 43, No. 3

Date: 2010

Abstract: This study applies the speech acts theory to the study of discourse strategies and functions of hoax email business proposals otherwise known as "419 emails" – '419' being the Nigerian term for all forms of online/financial fraud. The hoax mails are in form of email 'business proposals' involving money transfers/claims of dormant bank accounts overseas. Five types are identified namely: (i) money transfers, (ii) next-of-kin claims, (iii) fortune bequeathing, (iv) charity donations and (v) investment opportunities. Data comprises 52 email samples collected from the researcher's inboxes, colleagues and students' email inboxes between January, 2008 and March, 2009 in Ota, Nigeria. The study reveals that the business proposals perform speech acts such as expressive, representative, commissive and directive acts; the most frequently used being representative as the proposals are structured as narratives. The expressive act is used in form of greetings and polite address forms in order to win the interest of the receiver. The commissive act is used as a persuasive strategy while making unrealistic and suspicious promises to the receiver, while the directive act is used to urge the receiver to act promptly. The study also shows that this genre of Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has become a regular part of our internet social life, and is not likely to be extinct in the near future as previous studies of email hoaxes have predicted, since economic hardship being witnessed by the world today can force people to criminal activities.