

“Are you saying ...?”

Metapragmatic comments in Nigerian quasi-judicial public hearings

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This study explores metapragmatic comments in Nigerian quasi-judicial public hearings, involving interactions between complainants, defendants and a hearing panel, with a view to investigating their forms, features, distribution and functions. The data are analysed quantitatively and qualitatively from a discourse-pragmatic framework that incorporates Verschueren's theory of metapragmatics, Mey's pragmatic act theory, Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversation analysis. Four types of metapragmatic comments are used: speech act descriptions, talk regulation comments, maxim adherence/violation related comments and metalinguistic comments. Their distribution and functioning are shown to be partly predictable from properties of the speech event, while they also co-determine the nature and development of the analysed hearings.

Keywords: interpersonal functions, metapragmatic comments, Nigerian public discourse, quasi-judicial public hearings, textual functions

1. Introduction

Quasi-judicial public hearings are formal interactions which focus on the retrieval of public testimonies that deal with the contravention of the legal rights of the populace (Meinig 1998). These hearings, otherwise known as investigative hearings, public inquiries or parliamentary inquiries involve formal relations between complainants, defendants and members of a hearing panel (henceforth, HP). Interactants in the hearings employ metapragmatic comments (henceforth, MPCs) which are utterances that comment on the communicative act itself and which speakers use to guide the hearers in the interpretation of their utterances. HP members, especially the chairman of the panel, use these comments to monitor and control how other speakers contribute to talk. Complainants and defendants

also utilise them in order to indicate that they are observing communicative norms and cooperating with the HP members so as to arrive at the true state of affairs in relation to past events.

Despite the significant roles that MPCs play in the public hearing process, a focus on their textual and interpersonal relevance in the hearings is rare. Previous studies on quasi-judicial public hearings have focused on the discourse features, pragmatic features and critical discourse aspects (e.g. Anthonissen 2006; Bock et al. 2006; Bock 2007; Berlin 2007; Verdoolaege 2009a, 2009b; Unuabonah 2012; Unuabonah 2016) without exploring MPCs in the hearings. Although Bock (2008) and (2011) have examined shifts in tense and codeswitching in the South African Truth and Reconciliation hearings, these are implicit metapragmatic acts which do not address explicit evaluation in the hearings. This limited attention on MPCs in investigative public hearings is considered as a significant oversight in the field because MPCs are important in managing discourse and interpersonal relations. Thus, this study examines how MPCs contribute to the quasi-judicial public hearing context by investigating the forms, distribution, features and functions of MPCs in the Nigerian quasi-judicial public hearings on the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) administration. In this introduction, I focus on metapragmatics and metapragmatic comments. Then, I make a few remarks on the FCT hearings and my approach, before proceeding to the findings, discussion, and conclusions.

1.1 Metapragmatics

Metapragmatics is the study of the metalinguistic dimension of language in use (Verschueren 2000). It has been explained by Caffi (1998) in three senses: as an approach to the theory and methodology of describing pragmatics; as the conditions under which communication is carried out; and as the management of discourse. In this paper, I discuss metapragmatics as the management of discourse, in which metapragmatics pays attention to ‘the pragmatics of metacommunicative utterances in use’ and investigates ‘how interactants actually employ meta-utterances to intervene in ongoing discourse’ (Hübler and Bublitz 2007: 1). As Hübler and Bublitz (2007: 3) opine, metapragmatics addresses how interlocutors use metalanguage to “frame their own or other interlocutors’ utterances as true or false, precise or vague, cooperative or uncooperative... in order to secure or change the direction of the current talk, to create or maintain expedient social relationships.” The implication is that metapragmatics deals with both textual and interpersonal relations because it focuses on both the organisation of talk and addresser/addressee relations (see Hübler & Bublitz 2007).

Grundy (2008) suggests that metapragmatics affords interactants ways of signalling their awareness of what they do with words to accomplish acts, and Verschueren (2000: 439) posits that metapragmatic awareness is the “crucial force behind the meaning-generating capacity of language in use.” Verschueren (2000) argues that any item that reflects awareness of a pragmatic effect has a metapragmatic function. Signals of metapragmatic awareness include, for instance, *as you know*, *but*, *since*, and *basically*. Thus, metapragmatic awareness deals with the knowledge and understanding of the pragmatic effect of utterances. Metapragmatic awareness involves metasequential awareness, that is, the awareness of how utterances contribute to talk as constructed events (Grundy 2008). Metasequential markings are linguistic forms employed to guide the hearer’s understanding of the way a turn contributes to a conversation. In other words, they contribute to the organisation of talk. Metapragmatic items or acts are markers that provide comments ‘on how a speaker wants to be understood’ (Grundy 2008: 156). Verschueren (2000) posits that there are two kinds of metapragmatic items: explicit and implicit items. Explicit metapragmatic markers are markers that overtly make comments on the communicative act and they consist of metapragmatic descriptions which include performative verbs and speech act descriptions, self-referential expressions, hedges, explicit intertextual links, quoted and reported speech. Others include mention (vs. use), evidentials and contextualisation cues such as *yeah*, *right*, and *sorry*. Implicit metapragmatic items are markers that make comments on the communicative act in an indirect, covert manner and they comprise deictics, aspect, mood, modality, contextualisation cues such as prosody and codeswitching, and implicit voice.

In addition, Hübler & Bublitz (2007) distinguish between on-line and off-line metapragmatic acts (or items/markers) and occasional and regular metapragmatic acts. On-line metapragmatic acts are acts that align with the ongoing discourse while off-line acts intervene in the ongoing discourse leading to a break, an interruption or a discontinuity. Occasional metapragmatic acts are acts performed occasionally in an unpredictable or unintentional manner while regular metapragmatics acts are done regularly and intentionally in order to achieve a particular pragmatic effect. Hübler & Bublitz (2007) posit that these lead to different combinations such as implicit on-line, explicit on-line, implicit off-line and explicit off-line metapragmatic acts and opine that implicit off-line metapragmatic acts may not exist or be easily observable. In this work, I deal with explicit on-line and off-line metapragmatic acts.

1.2 Metapragmatic comments

In this paper, I focus on MPCs which are explicit modes through which interactants “index the interactional norms that govern language use” and ensure a smooth discourse flow (Blum-Kulka & Sheffer 1993: 200). Hübler & Bublitz (2007: 14) refer to these comments as metapragmatic acts which focus on “general principles of communication, particular communicative acts and accompanying non-linguistic bodily behaviour.” Speakers may use meta-utterances to refer to Grice’s cooperative principle, a politeness principle, socio-cultural norms, speech acts, and non-verbal communication (see also Blum-Kulka & Sheffer 1993). These acts may also be self-directed or other directed and their performance by interlocutors may be symmetrical (i.e. in conversations) or asymmetrical (i.e. in courtrooms) depending on the discourse type (Hübler & Bublitz 2007). They can also be retrospective when they refer to a previous utterance or discourse segment (“Please don’t see him. *That is my advice*”) or prospective when they refer to an upcoming discourse segment (“*This is my advice*: Don’t visit her at night”). They contribute both to the propositional content and procedural meaning of utterances. MPCs can be used to change from one interactional frame to another, from the descriptive to the interpersonal level, the propositional to the evaluative level and to establish common ground and coherence (see Penz 2007). They have the major function of monitoring and highlighting important aspects of the discourse while specific functions include evaluative, communication oriented and instrumentalised functions depending on the discourse type (Hübler & Bublitz 2007).

MPCs have been studied in different discourse types such as family discourse (Blum-Kulka and Sheffer 1993; De Geer 2004), educational discourse (Hongladoram 2007; Smith & Liang 2007; Stude 2007), computer-mediated discourse (Pizziconi 2007; Tanskanen 2007), multilingual contexts (Haberland 2007), therapeutic discourse (Muntigl 2007), gestures (Hübler 2007), media contexts (Ciliberti & Anderson 2007), and courtroom discourse (Jacquemet 1992; Janney 2007; Carranza 2008). For example, Blum-Kulka and Sheffer (1993) suggest that there are three types of MPCs which relate to verbal behaviour and these include talk regulation, maxim violation and metalinguistic comments. However, their discussion did not cover speech act descriptions which play significant roles in legal public discourse (see Janney 2007) and which are similar to what obtains in investigative public hearing contexts. Thus, these studies have focused on MPCs in diverse discourse contexts other than investigative public hearings, which implies that information on types of MPCs and their distribution in the quasi-judicial public hearing genre is scarce. Hence, this study attempts to answer the following research questions: (i) what kinds of MPCs are employed in Nigerian investigative public hearings? (ii) what is the distribution of these MPCs among the different participants in the hearings? and (iii) what are the textual and interpersonal functions of these MPCs in the hearings?

2. The Nigerian federal capital territory administration hearings

The FCT hearings were the first televised quasi-judicial public hearings in Nigeria and they were inaugurated in April, 2008 by the Nigerian Senate in order to probe complaints of illegal demolition, eviction, relocation, sales and concession of government-owned properties. The hearings were constituted by the Nigerian Senate as part of its oversight functions, in order to address issues which had been left unresolved, despite the fact that some of the issues raised were already being heard in the law courts. Even though there were already court orders restricting the activities of some government officials, there was disobedience to some of the court orders by some of these officials. The structure of the hearing sessions comprises an oath-taking ritual, presentation of testimonies by complainants and defendants, interrogations, and admission of exhibits. The hearings, which were headed by the chairman of the Senate committee on FCT, took place in Abuja, the Nigerian capital, from 9th April 2008 to 14th May 2008, and were conducted in English.

3. Methodology

The data for the study comprise forty video recordings of oral presentations and interrogations at the 2008 Nigerian quasi-judicial public hearing on the FCT administration in Nigeria, which consist of eleven hours of talk. The forty video hearing sessions were the ones made available at the discretion of African Independent Television, Abuja, Nigeria, the only television station that covered the hearings. The participants included thirty-one complainants, nine defendants and twenty-one hearing panel members who were all senators.

The data underwent both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The forty hearing sessions were analysed qualitatively from a discourse-pragmatic approach that combines Verschueren's (2000) theory of metapragmatics which has already been discussed, Mey's (2001) pragmatic act theory which focuses on situated speech functions, conversation analysis which focuses on the structure of talk and turn-taking procedures (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson 1974), and Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle which describes communicative norms that guide human interactions or how speakers contribute to conversations. The quantitative analysis was done using a simple random sampling method. One defence case involving 42 minutes of talk and six cases of complaints involving 45 minutes of talk were randomly selected. These were closely analysed to find all instances of MPCs, and their distribution is presented in tables and simple percentages. It is believed that the sampled hearing sessions are representative of the entire data. All personal names in the extracts provided have been changed to fictitious names.

4. Results and discussion

In the analysis, I focus on the forms, the distribution, the features and functions of metapragmatic comments in the hearings. These are discussed in turn.

4.1 Forms and distribution of metapragmatic comments in the hearings

The findings indicate that there are four types of metapragmatic comments in the hearings and these include speech act descriptions (i.e. *My prayer is...*, *Are you saying...*), maxim adherence/violation-related MPCs (i.e. *Just to be brief...*, *You have said that twice*), talk regulation MPCs (*You understand?*, *Please one by one*) and metalinguistic comments (i.e. “We have PHCN. *That’s what?...Power Holding Company of Nigeria*”). The distribution of the MPCs in the selected hearing sessions is presented in Tables 1 to 4.

Table 1. Distribution of MPCs

Metapragmatic comments	Complainants		Defendants		HP members		Total No of individual MPCs	
	No	Rate	No	Rate	No	Rate	No	Rate
Speech act description	17	85%	12	70.6%	41	55.4%	70	63.1%
Talk Regulation	0	0	0	0	21	28.4%	21	18.9%
Maxim adherence/violation	3	15%	4	23.5%	12	16.2%	19	17.1%
Metalinguistic comments	0	0	1	4.9%	0	0	1	0.9%
Total number of MPCs per Participant	20 (18%)		17 (15.3%)		74 (66.7%)		111	

Table 2. HP’s use of MPCs with other participants

Participants	No of MPCs	Rate
Complainants	26	35.1%
Defendants	48	64.9%
Total	74	100%

Table 3.¹ HP's and complainants' use of MPCs in the interactions that occurred between them

Participants	Speech act description		Talk regulation		Maxim adherence/ violation	
	No	Rate	No	Rate	No	Rate
HP members	7	29.2%	11	100%	8	72.7%
Complainants	17	70.8%	0	0	3	27.3%
Total	24		11		11	

Table 4. HP's and defendant's use of MPCs in the interactions that occurred between them

Participants	Speech act description		Talk regulation		Maxim adherence/ violation		Metalinguistic comments	
	No	Rate	No	Rate	No	Rate	No	Rate
HP members	34	73.9%	10	100%	4	50%	0	0
Defendants	12	26.1%	0	0	4	50%	1	100%
Total	46		10		8		1	

Table 1 presents the total number of MPCs employed in the hearings by all the participants and it shows that speech act descriptions (63.1%) have the highest rate of occurrence of MPCs, followed by talk regulation comments (18.9%) and comments on maxim violation/adherence (17.1%). Metalinguistic comments have the least rate of occurrence (0.9%). The table also shows that HP members utilise the highest number of MPCs (66.7%), followed by complainants (18%) and defendants (17.3%). Table 2 shows that HP members employ more MPCs in their interactions with defendants (64.9%) than with complainants (35.1%). Table 3 indicates the number of MPCs that are utilised in the interactions between the HP members and the complainants. Table 3 further indicates that complainants use more speech act descriptions (70.8%) than the HP members (29.2%). Only HP members use talk regulation comments while metalinguistic comments do not occur in the interactions between the HP members and the complainants². Table 4 presents the number and rates of occurrence of MPCs deployed in the interactions between

1. The overall total in Table 3 (46) and Table 4 (65) is 111, which corresponds to the total in Table 1.

2. Metalinguistic comments may occur in other extracts involving the HP and complainants which were not sampled for the quantitative analysis. These, however, are extremely rare.

defendants and the HP members. The table shows that the defendant and HP members use the same number of maxim related comments, while the defendant does not use any talk regulation related comment. The only case of a metalinguistic comment in the sampled hearings is provided by the defendant.

Speech act descriptions occur most in the hearings as speakers explicitly state and emphasise the kind of communicative acts they are performing. This may be the case because of the kind of activities which take place in the hearings, such as the presentation of complaints, defences and interrogation of complainants/defendants in a formal context. For example HP members use speech act descriptions in order to guide the complainants/defendants in the kind of utterances they want from them i.e. an explanation rather than a prayer request. Sometimes, they also use them to inform the addressees about the kind of comments they are making i.e. they distinguish between a warning and a piece of advice. Complainants/defendants equally use them to guide the HP on the kind of comments they are also providing. Examples of these are further discussed in 4.1.1.

Talk regulation comments have the second highest rate of occurrence because of the chairman's need to control the flow of talk among the complainants/defendants and other HP members. These often appear during the interrogative section of the hearings and are further illustrated in 4.1.2. Maxim adherence/violation-related comments are employed by speakers in order to indicate to the hearers that they are cooperating with other participants (see Brown and Levinson 1987 on positive politeness). HP members, especially the chairman, use them to guide others to adhere to communicative principles. Additional information on this kind of MPC is given in 4.1.3. Metalinguistic comments have the lowest rate of occurrence since there is shared knowledge of the linguistic items used in the hearings (see Unuabonah 2014). In family discourse for example, metalinguistic comments and maxim-related MPCs play greater roles than talk-regulation comments (see Blum-Kulka & Sheffer 1993).

Hearing panel members utilise the highest number of MPCs, followed by complainants and defendants. In their interactions with defendants, HP members use more speech act descriptions while in their interactions with complainants, they employ more talk-regulation comments. The high use of speech act descriptions with the defendants may be a result of the fact that the HP members had to conduct a lot of interrogations with defendants who were on the defensive and felt 'threatened' by the questions asked. In many cases, such speech act descriptions are used to remind the defendants about the information needed and emphasise, in some cases, that they are advising them and not warning the defendants. Thus, they are used to save the face of both the speaker and the hearer. In the interaction with complainants, talk regulation MPCs are used to minimise the amount of time that complainants use in their narratives and to control turn-taking procedures by the HP members,

as clarification of issues was paramount in getting the right information from the complainants. It is on the basis of the information obtained from the complainants that it is determined if there is a basis for the complaint, which of the government officials is to be interrogated, and the kind of information that is required from the defendants. In the following sections, I discuss each type of MPC in the hearings.

4.1.1 *Speech act descriptions*

Speech act descriptive MPCs in the hearings appear as objections, requests, apologies, exemplifications, reminders, and advice. These are discussed in turn.

Objections

Objections form a part of the MPCs used by interactants in the hearings as illustrated in (1) and (2):

- (1) HP: [...] In my own view it's absolutely wrong but assuming that that land gets back to you, having spent about 17 years without developing it, what of the family that would have utilized this land?
 Comp.: Thank you//
 HP: //Just leave it to fallow in the central area of Abuja?
 Comp.: *Sir I do not totally agree with you.* All the necessary procedures have to be followed first.
- (2) HP: [...] Otherwise\...otherwise you are trying to tell us that the police under your leadership were undisciplined and//
 Def: //No! No!
 HP: if they were undisciplined, you take responsibility for it.
 Def: *I raise objection sir//*

In (1) and (2), the complainant and defendant respectively disagree with the opinions of the senators and raise objections. The speakers use these comments to indicate their interpretation of the senators' responses and these comments are meant to help the addressee understand the relevance of their upcoming talk, "all necessary procedures...". Thus, utterances indicate metapragmatic awareness explicitly since they have the pragmatic effects of negating the opinion of the previous speaker (the HP members) and defending the current speakers' stance (complainant and defendant). These MPCs are explicit off-line metapragmatic acts as they lead to a discontinuity or break in the discourse of the senators' talk. Since objections are face-threatening acts, they are mitigated in these extracts by the use of the deference marker 'sir' at the initial and final parts of the MPCs respectively. Indeed, these are MPCs that the current speakers need to utter based on their aims and goals in the hearings i.e. complaining and defending.

Requests

Metapragmatic utterances in the hearings also appear to signal specific requests, as shown in (3) and (4). In these cases, speakers use such utterances to specify the kind of communicative act that he or she expects from the addressee. Extracts (3) and (4) illustrate this.

- (3) Chair: Thank you very much gentleman. *A comment before we discharge Dr Isaya?*
- (4) HP: You check the patient, you tell them to go there to get treatment or go there for service. *Please correct me if I am wrong.* I am not a doctor. Thank you.

In (3), the speaker, who is the chairman of the panel, requests for a comment from the other senators and defines what he wants from the HP, that is, a comment and not a question. Such comments also open up the floor for other speakers, thus, indicating the textual functions of MPCs. In (4), the Senator requests for a correction of the information that he had already stated. Thus, requestive MPCs reflect metapragmatic awareness as they have pragmatic effects on the discourse context of the hearings. They are explicit on-line metapragmatic acts because they align with the speaker's line of thought.

Apologies

MPCs in the hearings may also appear as apologies. The extracts (5) and (6) illustrate these:

- (5) HP: Please go to your annual financial report. How much do you think the market was generating?
 Comp.: *I'm so sorry.* I can't say how much because I am not an accountant
 HP: but you have it before you
- (6) Comp: We are all neighbours in the same place and the first people to settle here. It was former minister of FCT, Chief John and from then the others followed. *Sir eh I am not very good in protocol and ...you can forgive me.*
 Chair: Forget about protocol.

In (5), the apology, *I'm so sorry* is an MPC on the upcoming talk, *I can't say...* which indicates the speaker's affective stance towards his utterance. Such a comment reflects metapragmatic awareness of the fact that in the public hearing genre, complainants are supposed to provide all necessary information required by the hearing panel. *I'm sorry* is called an explicit emotional apologising strategy (Aijmer 1996) and the use of the intensifier *so* further heightens the speaker's

ffective attitude. The apology in (6) is a comment on the information given by the speaker and it indicates a shift from an informative frame to an evaluative and interactive frame. These apologetic comments serve as rapport management strategies (Spencer-Oatey 2008), and in (6), the comment is aided by the use of the deference pragmatic marker *sir* which in itself is a metapragmatic marker (Verschueren 2000) which has interpersonal relevance. This apology is based on shared cultural knowledge that apologies should be rendered when certain protocols are not observed. In the MPC, the speaker explicitly requests for forgiveness which Aijmer (1996) categorises as an explicit non-emotional apologising strategy.

Reminders

Metapragmatic utterances may also introduce reminders, as exemplified in (7) and (8):

- (7) HP: [...] *Now the question which will now follow as a reminder*, what did you do? What did you do? What steps did you take on these policemen who aided the flouting of that order?
- (8) Chair: Beautiful. *Just to remind you gentlemen*, those of you that were not here that Dr Tom Isaya was so kind to us, to the committee. Dr Isaya was here on Friday.

MPCs that appear as reminders are uttered by the HP members and in particular, the chairman of the panel. In (7), the senator makes a statement that describes the communicative act that he is about to perform, which is to remind the defendant of the question that he is expected to answer. This utterance, therefore, has a procedural function as it is meant to guide the utterances of the defendant and get the right information from him. The position of the MPC in the middle of the message shows the relevance of the upcoming talk to his prior talk. It indicates an intratextual link as the utterance comments on the current message (Tanskanen 2007). In (8), the chairman also reminds the other senators as well as the audience at the hearing and television viewers of the status of the defendant and describes his utterance as such in *just as a reminder, gentlemen*. This comment also reflects metapragmatic awareness by showing an intertextual link, as the utterance comments on an earlier message (Tanskanen 2007).

Exemplifications

Metapragmatic utterances are also used as comments on other utterances that exemplify or illustrate what speakers want to say, as cited in (9) and (10):

- (9) Comp.: There are a lot of injustices. *I give you two simple quick examples.* WRAPA, Women Rights Advancement Project Alternative. (unclear). It is highly recognised internationally.
- (10) Comp.: *Another last example sir*, there is a very very senior gentleman in this county Chief Malomo of Abia. Mr. Chairman, some of them I was watching them on the screen saying this has no court...no case.

In (9), the complainant utters a comment in the middle of his message which serves to indicate that he will expatiate on the statement, *there are a lot of injustices* and then goes ahead to give the examples that he describes. Thus, the comment has a metapragmatic effect both on the preceding and succeeding discourse. In (10), the MPC, which is an on-line metapragmatic act, describes the upcoming talk. This helps to reassure the addressee that another example is not expected since this will lead to a prolongation of his talk.

Advice

MPCs in the hearings may function as advisories, as cited in (11):

- (11) HP: [...] in exercising whatever powers you have either legally or in discretion, you must please do it in accordance with rationality, morality and rule of law. *That is my speech of advice to you, please.*

The MPC in (11) describes the kind of message given by the speaker as a piece of advice in order to mitigate the threat to the addressee's negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987). Thus, this reflects metapragmatic awareness of how the speaker's utterance will affect the addressee.

4.1.2 Talk regulation comments

Talk regulation comments are comments that specifically deal with the organisation of talk. Such comments are metasequential (Grundy, 2008). Types of talk regulation comments in the hearings include the following:

Turn allocation

- (12) Chair: Thank you very much eh former IG. I think my colleagues will like to ask you one or two questions, *yes Sen. Ajayi.*

Turn negation

- (13) Def.: I want to clarify
 Chair: Okay clarify
 HP: We want to//
 Chair: //You will all talk...you will all talk

Bid for turns

- (14) Def.: *Mr Chairman, can I please sir?*
 Chair: Yes

Upholding of turns

- (15) HP: *Please please I haven't finished. My conclusion is that you are not speaking the truth [...].*

Checking listeners' attention

- (16) Chair: Let everyone come here and say their own view [...] *You understand?*

As stated earlier, talk regulation comments rank second in the types of MPCs employed in the hearings and they are performed by the HP members, especially the chairman (or the vice-chairman) of the panel who allocates turns to the complainants/defendants and other HP members as in (12). He may also negate a turn as in (13) where he stops other HP members from speaking when he has already given the defendant the floor to speak. Equally, other HP members have to bid for turns as in (14), in order to interrogate the complainants/defendants. Sometimes, the HP members may also have to uphold their turns as in (15) when they are interrupted either by the complainants/defendants and other HP members. On a number of occasions, the HP members make comments in order to check the listener's attention as in (16). These are MPCs that the HP members use in order to verify if the complainants/defendants understand their point of view, especially when the HP members make statements that may seem unpleasant to the addressees. Thus, these MPCs are rapport management strategies which help to establish and maintain interpersonal relations between the HP members and the complainants/defendants (Spencer-Oatey 2008) and may be seen as face saving acts. All these indicate metapragmatic and metasequential awareness of the roles that different speakers and their utterances play in the interactions. The HP members understand the power wielded by the HP chairman and reflect their awareness of these by bidding for turns. They also know the power they wield in relation to the complainants/defendants and can uphold their turns, unlike the complainants/defendants who cannot uphold their turns when interrupted by the HP members. The HP chairman's utterances also reflect metapragmatic awareness of how other speakers' utterances contribute to the retrieval of information from the complainants/defendants and thus, decides when each contributor has the floor.

4.1.3 *Maxim adherence and violation*

Maxim adherence/violation-related MPCs are concerned with communicative principles such as the Gricean maxims (see Blum-Kulka & Sheffer, 1993; Hübler & Bublitz, 2007). Different speakers in the hearings explicitly state when they adhere to this principle in order to show that they are being truthful, brief and relevant. Speakers also employ these comments when they want other interactants to adhere to these principles or when they call the attention of previous speakers to a violation of these maxims.

Adherence to or violation of the maxim of quality

MPCs that relate to the adherence or violation of the maxim of quality are made by the complainants/defendants and the HP members. Usually, the HP members call the attention of complainants/defendants when there is a perceived violation of the maxim as in (17), while complainants and defendants utter MPCs that indicate that they are adhering to this maxim as in (18).

- (17) HP: He has taken possession?
 Com.: I think so since he is doing recreation and past//
 Chair: //No! no! If you want to
 say the truth... If you are talking of eh planting flowers and you are
 now mentioning recreation [...]
- (18) Chair: Please, let the former the former IG answer the question.
 Def.: *I want to say with all honesty* that it will be...have been an anathema
 as an IG for the Nigerian Police Force to be used to evict the former
 judicial officer.

In (17), the chairman of the panel makes an MPC that deals with the need for the addressee to say the truth. This is in a situation where a piece of land was taken from a shop owner for recreation purposes. In this case, the senator believes that since this was done in public interest, it would be untrue to say that the land was taken from him illegally. Here, the senator calls the complainant's attention to a possible breach in the maxim of quality and this is an explicit off-line metapragmatic act as it leads to a discontinuity in the complainant's utterance. In (18), the speaker explicitly states that he is being truthful about the information that he is about to give. This statement reflects the speaker's metapragmatic awareness of the need to cooperate with the HP by stating what is true based on his technical knowledge as a former government official. This illustrates the use of an explicit on-line metapragmatic act because it aligns with the speaker's line of thought (Hübler & Bublitz 2007). Thus, the utterance is an MPC on the truthfulness of his submission.

Adherence to or violation of the maxim of quantity

MPCs that relate to the maxim of quantity are usually performed by the HP members when they indicate metapragmatic awareness of cases in which the complainant or defendant gives incomplete information as in (19):

- (19) HP: *You have not told us* eh you said they were given letters of allocation
 Comp.: Yes
 Sen: under what terms? For what periods were they given? Have they been able to...have they been given certificate of occupancy? What terms have been breached?

In (19), one of the panel members makes a comment that indicates metapragmatic awareness of a violation of the maxim of quantity, as the complainant gives incomplete information regarding the allocation given to his client. Thus, he points out other issues that relate to the allocation of land such as the terms under which the allocation was given and terms that have been breached. This is an explicit off-line metapragmatic act because it leads to a break in the complainant's previous line of argumentation.

Adherence to or violation of the maxim of manner

MPCs that relate to the maxim of manner are usually made in relation to clarity and brevity. Clarity on the side of the complainants/defendants is important because this helps the HP members to obtain the right information from the complainants/defendants. Brevity is important especially to the HP members because of their need to hear a large number of cases within the time frame given by the Nigerian Senate to hear the testimonies. Examples (20) and (21) illustrate these:

- (20) Def.: *I want to say quite clearly* and I said it in my presentation that I gave Justice Sule the orderly and FCT commissioner of police also posted guard to his house.
- (21) Chair: Give us your particulars. Please look...time...I wouldn't ...if you wouldn't mind. *Be very brief and summarise*. We have to get ourselves out of this place. Thank you very much.

In (20), the defendant, at the beginning of his utterance, makes a comment on the clarity of the information that he is about to give. Such a comment is meant to emphasise the content of his message, which reflects a metapragmatic awareness of the need to make clear statements about past actions in order for the HP to make appropriate recommendations in its final report. It is a rhetorical statement that functions as a defensive strategy, and also serves as a rapport management strategy, indicating to the HP that he will speak clearly. In (21), the HP chairman,

before the complainant makes his presentation, tells the complainant to be brief. This reflects the chairman's metapragmatic awareness of a communicative context in which speakers tend to spend a long time in their narratives, and in which time is limited. In many cases, the complainants/defendants also explicitly state that they will be brief.

Adherence or violation of the maxim of relevance

Speakers inform their hearers that they are adhering to the maxim of relevance by avoiding information that is not necessary, as in (22). In the case of the HP members, they may call the complainants/defendants' attention when information that is not relevant or beside the point is being given as illustrated in (23):

(22) Def.: We extracted the portion of the white paper *which is relevant to this issue*[...]

(23) Comp.: [...] I am expecting compensation that is fair having spent close to 20 million...close to 15 million//

Chair: // *You have said that before*

In (22), the defendant comments on the relevance of the information that he is bringing forward which is an explicit on-line metapragmatic act. In (23) the HP comments on the irrelevance of the information given by the complainant which makes it an explicit off-line metapragmatic act as it leads to a break in the complainant's utterance.

4.1.4 *Metalinguistic comments*

Metalinguistic comments are utterances which focus on talk about language, such as queries and responses on word meanings. As pointed out at the beginning of Section 4.1, metalinguistic comments play a very small role in the hearings since interactants have shared knowledge of the linguistic items used in the hearings. Thus, there are very few instances of these in the hearings, such as in (24) and (25):

(24) Def.: Sorry...I've never been to Niser...well Niser Primer is essentially, I think, an O and G hospital. I'm a man.

Chair: *What is that?*

Def.: *An obstetrics and gynaecology hospital*, so I don't have any course to go to that private hospital.

(25) Comp.: Thank you Mr. Chairman. [...] I am the legal adviser of Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority. *Em Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority is herein referred to as the NNRA* [...]

In (24), there is a query and a response made by the defendant and the HP chairman respectively, which are based on the meaning of the item *O and G hospital*, the medical acronym for an obstetrics and gynaecology hospital. The common name to many Nigerians is a maternity hospital while the technical name, and in particular, the acronym is used by medical personnel, which may have made it difficult for the chairman to recognise. Thus, the MPCs form metalinguistic comments which deal with the meaning of the phrase *O and G hospital*. Equally, in (25) the complainant from the outset states that he will subsequently use the acronym *NNRA* in place of the full term, *Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority*, and this is a metalinguistic comment which indicates metapragmatic awareness in two ways. The speaker uses *NNRA* since it indicates economy of language use which would be appreciated by the HP members who want complainants/defendants to be brief in their presentations. Also, warning the addressees about the meaning of *NNRA* is meant to forestall any metalinguistic query on this, which will also help to minimise time. This, in a way, indicates the speaker's need to be clear. Thus, the comment reflects the speaker's awareness of the addressees' need for clarity and economy of time. This also shows the difference between the mention and use of a word (Verschueren 2000). While the first citation of *Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority* shows the use of the phrase, the second indicates the mention of the item (Verschueren 2000).

4.2 Features of metapragmatic comments

Metapragmatic comments have different characteristics which are based on positioning and direction. These are explained in turns.

4.2.1 Direction

MPCs can be described on the basis of the direction or the focus of the comment: All the examples given in this paper are either self-directed or other-directed. Tables 5–7 present the distribution of the MPCs based on direction.

Table 5. Participants' use of MPCs based on direction

Participants	Self-directed		Other-directed	
	No	Rate	No	Rate
HP members	25	46.4%	49	89.1%
Complainants	16	28.6%	4	7.3%
Defendants	15	25%	2	3.6%
Total	56	100%	55	100%

Table 6. Distribution of MPCs between complainants and HP members

Direction	Complainants		HP members	
	No	Rate	No	Rate
Self-directed	16	80%	5	19.2%
Other-directed	4	20%	21	80.8%
Total	20	100%	26	100%

Table 7. Distribution of MPCs between defendants and HP members

Direction	Defendants		HP members	
	No	Rate	No	Rate
Self-directed	15	88.2%	20	41.7%
Other-directed	2	11.8%	28	58.3%
Total	17	100	48	100%

Table 5 indicates that there is an approximately equal number of self-directed MPCs ($n = 56, 50.5\%$) and other-directed MPCs ($n = 55, 49.5\%$). When all the interactions are combined as shown in Table 5, the HP members utilise the highest number of both types of MPCs, with a larger number of other-directed MPCs ($n = 49, 66.2\%$) than self-directed MPCs ($n = 25, 33.9\%$). However, as Table 6 indicates, complainants employ more self-directed MPCs ($n = 16, 76.1\%$)³ than the HP members ($n = 5, 23.8\%$). As Table 6 shows, complainants use more self-directed MPCs ($n = 16, 80\%$) than other-directed MPCs ($n = 4, 20\%$). Table 7 also shows that defendants also utilise more self-directed MPCs ($n = 15, 88.2\%$) than other directed MPCs ($n = 2, 11.8\%$). Extracts (26–28) show examples of these two types of MPCs:

Self-directed MPCs

- (26) Def.: Thank you very much sir. *Let me just give a small background.* The Federal Government in late 2003 undertook a comprehensive health sector reform with the aim of strengthening the weak health systems.
- (27) Comp.: Yes sir. *My complaint is very very brief. Sir, I am going to be very brief.* Since yesterday, I have been observing. You are in need of time. Em first of all, let me state that I... I am representing 23 other complainants.

3. The percentages “76.1%” and “23.8%” have not been indicated in Table 6 but have been calculated based on the number of MPCs produced by the complainants (16) as against those produced by the hearing panel (5).

Other directed MPCs

(28) Chair: Dr Ali Usman please. *Just to remind that you are under oath.* Do you agree that you are still under oath or do you want to affirm?

(29) Comp.: [...] I am expecting compensation that is fair, having spent close to 20million – close to 15million//

Chair: //You have said this twice.

The almost equal numbers of occurrence of self- and other-directed MPCs indicate that the participants are interested in reflecting their awareness of the need to guide hearers in the interpretation of their utterances and also to guide them to adhere to communicative principles. Self-directed MPCs help the speakers to reveal their epistemic and affective stance towards the content of the speakers' messages and the addressee, while other-directed MPCs help the speakers to indicate their epistemic stance towards the addressees and the addressees' messages. HP members have a higher preference for other-directed MPCs than for self-directed ones because of the chairman's need to guide the complainants/defendants and other members in the flow of talk. The chairman also utilises them to define the kind of information he wants from other speakers and which the hearing panel itself wants from the complainants/defendants. Both the complainants and defendants employ more self-directed MPCs than other-directed MPCs because of the need to define their talk in order to guide the hearers (HP), especially as they have to answer questions rather than to ask them. This can be seen in (26) and (27). The infrequent use of self-directed MPCs by the HP members in their interactions with the complainants indicates that the HP members do not really need to assert themselves, emphasise the content of their message or define the kind of communicative act that they are performing. This may be as a result of the fact that the complainants are not in a defensive role which would require the HP members to assert themselves or define the kind of message they are performing.

4.2.2 *Positioning*

MPCs can also be classified based on their positioning: they can be prospective, mid message or retrospective (see Tanskanen 2007). Prospective comments are those that occur at the beginning of the speaker's utterance, mid message MPCs occur in the middle while retrospective MPCs occur at the end of the speaker's utterance. Table 8 shows the distribution of the MPCs in the hearings based on positioning.

Table 8. Distribution of MPCs based on positioning

Positioning	Complainants		Defendant		Hearing panel		Total	
	No	Rate	No	Rate	No	Rate	No	Rate
Prospective	11	55%	1	5.8%	22	29.7%	34	30.6%
Mid message	5	25%	15	88.2%	38	51.4%	58	52.3%
Retrospective	4	20%	1	5.8%	14	18.9%	19	17.1%
Total	20	100%	17	100%	74	100%	111	100%

Table 8 indicates that mid message MPCs have the highest rate of occurrence, followed by prospective and retrospective MPCs. Equally, HP members and defendants have a preference for mid message MPCs while complainants have a preference for prospective MPCs. MPCs that occur in the middle of the utterance are illustrated in (30):

- (30) Comp.: [...]the Minister of FCT has in the essence of power conferred on him under Section 28, subSection 5A and B of the Land use Act 1978, revoked your right and interest over plot 415 within Maitama A05, [...] *What we are saying* is that we are Federal Government agency, statutory agency for that matter and we all know the meaning and purpose of Section 28, subSection 5A and B which is purportedly quoted as the reason for the revocation. *This I don't need to repeat*. Tedox has made a case and this is the requirement for land, for the overriding public interest[...]

Mid message MPCs have the highest rate of occurrence as speakers employ them to foreground the kind of message they are communicating, and hold the attention of their hearers during narratives and interrogations. In (30), the complainant uses the comment *what we are saying* to foreground the importance of his utterance and the relevance of his upcoming talk to the previous discourse. He equally uses the MPC *This I don't need to repeat* to show that he is managing time and does not want to bore the addressees with information that is known and shared.

Prospective MPCs occur next as speakers use them early on to define the kinds of message they are about to relay as illustrated in (31):

- (31) Chair: *Before you say anything, let me give you a a an advice*. The question that was asked by Senator Akinwale Brown, I said you might not be in the right position here to answer any of these questions

In (31), the speaker, at the beginning of his utterance, utters two MPCs. The speaker positions these comments at the beginning of his utterance for two reasons. He uses the first clause, *before you say anything*, to interrupt the previous speaker

and gain the floor. In the second clause, *let me give you a a an advice*, he makes a comment on the kind of message he wants to pass across in order for him to guide the mental state of the addressee, so that he can interpret his message as an advice and not as an order.

Retrospective MPCs have the lowest rate of occurrence as speakers use them to reemphasise or remind hearers of the kinds of messages that have already been delivered. Example (32) exemplifies this:

- (32) HP: [...] Please get us the information and let us be sure that you are working in the interest of the Nigerian populace. *That is the only thing I can advice.*

In (32), the speaker utilises an MPC that describes the kind of message he has passed across at the end of his utterance. This speech act description serves to mitigate the force of the directive in his utterance, indicating that the addressee is not obliged to carry out the action. It is an explicit on-line metapragmatic act and it is intratextual as it is a comment on the current message (Tanskanen 2007).

4.3 Functions of metapragmatic comments in the hearings

The MPCs have textual and interpersonal functions. These are discussed in 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

4.3.1 *Textual functions of the metapragmatic comments in the hearings*

Apart from talk regulation comments which primarily perform textual functions such as turn management and checking listener's attention, other types of MPCs aid the cohesion and coherence of utterances in the hearings. They are used to indicate discourse boundaries, interrupt others, and serve as topic control; thus, they reflect metapragmatic and metasequential awareness.

Topic Control

Speakers use MPCs to control topics and direct the discourse of others as well as their own, as cited in (33):

- (33) Comp.: My names are Ayo John. I reside at eh above beside Mesh permanent suite. I want to thank this committee first of all for creating this forum for all us to come//
 Vice-chair: // *Don't worry. Don't worry. Just go straight to the point...what happened? Are you representing the entire?*

(33) is a maxim-related MPC which the vice-chairman employs to interrupt the complainant in order to guide his talk in the right direction. The complainant starts his talk by introducing himself and thanking the hearing panel. Because of time restrictions, the HP vice-chairman wants the complainant to go straight to the point and makes an MPC to that effect. For the panel, the complainant is violating the maxim of relevance. The vice-chairman does not find the appreciation relevant to the testimony being presented and thus points him in the expected direction.

Indicate discourse boundaries

Speakers in the hearings also use MPCs to indicate boundaries in their utterances, as shown in (34) and (35):

- (34) Comp.: Now...lastly, the earlier of March, we wrote the second reminder on the same issue, to which nothing has come out. We are very grateful when this committee was set up and we saw it on paper. So we quickly obliged. *And our prayers have been*, relocate us to another simple place with infrastructures.
- (35) Chair: We want to thank you for the presentation and eh *maybe my colleagues will want to ask you question but if they don't have, I will ask you one or two*. Eh one of interest to me, you did mention passively in your submission that even the past administration headed by Mallam Nasiru was desirous to go and value the houses[...]

In (34), the MPC *and our prayers have been* indicates the boundary between the speaker's presentation and his prayer. This indicates a shift from one interactional frame to another (Hübler & Bublitz 2007) as the speaker uses this comment to indicate the end of his story and the beginning of his prayer request. This signal is necessary in order to guide the mental state of the addressee from the narrative context to a requestive context, which indicates metapragmatic awareness. In (35), the HP chairman utilises the MPC *maybe my colleagues will want to ask you question but if they don't have, I will ask you one or two*, to signal the boundary between the complainants' testimony and the beginning of the interrogation. This also indicates a boundary between the narrative context and the interrogative context which changes the mental state of both the complainant and other members of the hearing panel.

Interrupt others

Interactants in the hearing also use MPCs to interrupt speakers, as illustrated in (36) and (37):

- (36) Comp.: [...] They write their things and backdate and because the...this is the post office. They are registering everything an...and I'm leaving this with you. My prayers over this matter//
 Chair: //before the prayers eh eh before...before the prayers sorry, you said in your presentation...
- (37) Comp.: [...] Then the water board again supplied water to the area and government provided access road to this area. In 2004//
 Chair: // When you say government, Municipal or FCDA?

In both (36) and (37), the chairman of the panel employs an MPC to interrupt the complainants during the narration of their story and prayer respectively. This is an act mainly performed by the chairman, which indicates that the use of MPCs to interrupt others, is asymmetrical. Although complainants and defendants interrupt the hearing panel members on a few occasions, most of the time it is the hearing panel members who interrupt the complainants/defendants since they have more power than the complainants/defendants in the hearings.

4.3.2 *Interpersonal functions*

Interpersonally, MPCs are deployed to provide evidence, express affective stance, respond to comments, and claim attention.

Expression of evaluative stance

One of the functions of MPCs in the hearing is the expression of affective stance as illustrated in (38):

- (38) Def.: *I want to say with all honesty* that it will be...have been an anathema as an IG for the Nigerian Police Force to be used to evict the former judicial officer

In (38), the statement *I want to say with all honesty* is a metapragmatic comment on the rest of the speaker's utterance because the speaker uses it to guide the hearer in the interpretation of the succeeding discourse. Apart from placing some degree of importance on what is about to be uttered, the speaker indicates his attitude towards the content of the message and the way in which he wants his utterance to be understood by the hearer. Thus, it indicates a change from the propositional level to an evaluative plane (Hübler & Bublitz 2007). He places it on record that he is adhering to the Gricean quality maxim. He equally reduces the hearer's processing effort by making his communicative intention explicit. This is done in order to convince and persuade the hearing panel that he is telling the truth and not guilty of the accusations raised against him.

Response to comments

MPCs in the hearings are also used as responses to earlier MPCs made by previous speakers :

- (39) Comp.: The letter to me...to us was allocation of warehouse for Garki main market. *But to be brief*, last year March, we got a letter of demolition.

In response to an earlier request made by the chairman of the panel for the speaker to be brief, the speaker signals explicitly that he is adhering to the Gricean maxim of manner. Thus, the MPC *but to be brief* has interactional value in the discourse because it indicates that the complainant is cooperating with the HP member. It also indicates that the speaker is observing the politeness principle by performing a face-saving act. If he is not brief in his explanation, then he will be performing a face-threatening act by disobeying the order to be brief. Thus, to be brief minimises the threat to the speaker's negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987). *But* itself is a contrastive pragmatic marker, indicating that the speaker is consciously and deliberately changing his communicative intention in order to adapt to the wants (positive politeness) of the hearer. All these are done in order to obtain favour and positive recommendations from the hearing panel.

- (40) Def.: Mr...Mr Chairman, *I am on oath to speak the truth and I will only speak of matters within my personal knowledge as IG*. If somebody said El-Rufai phoned me and told me to provide policemen. That is hearsay...that is hearsay.

In (40), the speaker utters the MPC *I am on oath to speak the truth...* as a response to the complainant's previous discourse. As a response, he indicates his attitude to both his own and the other's discourse. In this comment, he places it on record that he is adhering to the quality maxim and the reference to his office as IG indicates shared knowledge of what the functions of the IG are. In addition, the phrase *within my personal knowledge as IG* is a hedging device that cuts out any other kind of knowledge not known to him, which may make him guilty. This is a rhetorical strategy used by the speaker in order to defend himself.

Emphasising the content of the message

Interactants in the hearing also employ MPCs in order to emphasise the content of their messages. This is explained with the examples in (41) and (42):

- (41) Comp.: No operator of equipment will ride equipment to demolish anybody without somebody above him asking him to do it. They did it. On the day, they demolished the place, I was in Turkey, I was not in the country. God saved the situation. *This is the truth* because I know how much we lost there.

- (42) HP: *In addition to that, Mr Chairman has said it: maybe just to underscore it. This committee is a fact-finding committee. Nobody is on trial. We are just trying to establish facts on matters that have come before us and we are going to make our recommendations to the senate. It is the Senate that will take final decision on this. So please this matter should be noted by the public.*

In the hearings, it is important for speakers to emphasise the content of their message in order to achieve their goals of obtaining favourable recommendations, interrogating and finding out the truth about events that have taken place. In (41), the speaker complains about the demolition of his landed properties which have adversely affected a sizable number of his employees. He then utters an MPC, *This is the truth*, in order to emphasise the content of his message, a comment which indicates that the speaker is cooperating with the addressee by adhering to the truth maxim. In (42), one of the hearing panel members makes an MPC, *in addition to that, Mr Chairman has said it, maybe just to underscore it*, that emphasises the message that the panel chairman has already delivered. The speaker utters a retrospective MPC, *so please this matter should be noted by the public*, in order to further heighten the focus on his message.

Claiming attention

Speakers in the hearings also use MPCs to claim the attention of the hearers. Examples (43) and (44) illustrate this:

- (43) Comp.: In revoking the land, no grace period, no nothing was given to us as a government agency. *Sir it will be noteworthy* that as soon as we got the letter, we sent them a letter of appeal saying we have appropriation already to commence development of this plot
- (44) Def.: *You see chairman let me say quite clearly.* I do not submit to police being used to evict people. I don't.

In (43), the complainant uses an MPC that contains a deference marker which adds to the attention getting function of the MPC. The main clause *it will be noteworthy* indicates that the information that is about to be given is of great importance. In (44), the MPC, *you see let me say quite clearly* is a maxim adherence-related comment which the defendant combines with a number of pragmatic markers. He uses the comment clause, *you see*, which is also used to claim attention and provide an explanation for a previous claim (Brinton 2008). He then uses a direct address by naming the chairman. The use of the pronouns *you* and *me* further foregrounds the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the hearer. He then indicates that he is cooperating with the hearer by being clear. He also uses the evidential pragmatic marker *clearly* which is further foregrounded by the use of the intensifier *quite*. All these are used to claim the attention of the addressee.

5. Conclusions

This work has contributed to the linguistic study of public hearings by exploring how MPCs contribute to the context of investigative public hearings. The analysis indicates that MPCs influence and are influenced by the context of interaction. MPCs in the hearings influence the context of interaction by changing it from the narrative to the interrogative or from the narrative to the requestive. Equally, contextual factors such as participant status and physical activity determine the kind of MPCs used in the interactions. The roles of participants also determine the type of MPC produced by the participants, and the types and frequency of MPCs elicited from others, as in the case of defendants whose defensive roles elicit more MPCs from the HP members. MPCs reflect and contribute to the asymmetrical relationship between the HP on the one hand and complainants and defendants on the other hand, as can be seen in the case of talk regulation comments which are performed mainly by the HP members. In addition, speakers in the hearings favour the use of speech act descriptions in order to guide their hearers in the kinds of communicative acts they are performing. Moreover, there is almost an equal use of self-directed and other-directed MPCs, which mainly appear in the middle of the speaker's utterances. These MPCs have textual and interpersonal functions, which indicates the linguistic choices that speakers make in order to fulfil different communicative needs (Verschueren 1999). In the hearings, MPCs are used to manage turns, check listener's attention, indicate discourse boundaries, interrupt and control topics. Interpersonally, they are used to emphasise the content of a message, express evaluative stance, respond to comments and claim attention. In all, this study has contributed to the research on MPCs and the investigative public hearing genre. Future studies can focus on MPCs in other investigative public hearings in order to see if there are similarities and differences in the communicative behaviour of Nigerians and speakers from other parts of the world in these kinds of hearings.

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Transcription convention

...	pause
[...]	ellipted talk
//	interruption

Abbreviations

HP	Hearing Panel members
Chair	Chairman of the Panel
Vice-chair	Vice-chairman of the panel
Comp.	Complainants
Def.	Defendants

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