**National Cohesion, Democratic Consolidation and the Challenges of Hate Speech in Nigeria**

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Abstract

*The governing argument of this paper has been that while the Arewa Youths frame the Igbo negatively, they do so through distortion of ‘fact’. When fact is distorted to insult a racial, ethnic or political group, a clear case of hate speech is established. If ‘fact’ were overtly distorted, the text consumer’s attention would easily be drawn to it but it isn’t so. This accounts for the holistic attention that the present work accords it. Five frames of the Igbo and a frame of the Northern leaders are identified in the text. Each of these frames is erected through the employment of varying degrees of pragmatic strategies and practs realized through various speech acts. Eight pragmatic strategies are utilized in assembling different frames of the Igbo in the text: Self Relegation and Positive Projection (SRPP), Agency Generalization (AG), Blunt Condemnation (BC), Binary Identity Construction (BIC), Appeal to Emotion (AE), Evocation of Antecedent (EA), Negative Labeling (NL) Strategic Role Allocation to Self (SRAS) and Tension Activation (TA). The text play up a preponderance of Assertive, Verdictive and Performative utterances as the Arewa Youths continue to give information, accuse and pass judgment on the Igbo through deployment of material process verbs in activating agency status for the Igbo where there is heavy lexicalization belonging to the semantic field of violence.*

**Keywords: Arewa youths, Igbo, pragmatic strategies, frames, agents, social action.**

**Introduction**

Nothing could be more valid than the claim that Nigeria is embattled with degrees of crises ranging from socio-political, religious to ethnic tensions. The above, more than anything else, has threatened the foundations of democracy and decimated the rope of cohesion in the nation. This is largely attributable to the fact that the nation has not been able to extricate itself from the travails and polarizing influence of ethnocentrism (the belief in the inherent superiority of one’s ethnic group to others). Elimination of ethnic discrimination and stereotypes will make way for all citizens in the country to have a sense as well as a feeling that they are members of the same country, engaged in a common enterprise and facing shared challenges. National cohesion becomes workable when the individuals in a country are availed with the opportunity, resources and motivation to participate in society as fully as they wish and on equal basis with others. Pathetically, the above is still a distant mirage in Nigeria.

When the rights of citizens are not respected, there can neither be peaceful co-existence nor any valid claims to the consolidation of democracy. The history of democracy in Nigeria is a checkered one with the punctuations of military intervention found, virtually, in all its paragraphs. After independence in 1960, Nigerians became citizens of the 4th biggest democratic country in the world. The country experienced its first military coup six (6) years after; then came the civil war that spans 1967-1970. The democratic model was restored in 1978 but was over by 1983. Abdulsalami Abubakar who took power after the death of Sani Abacha kept to his promise of returning the country to the part of democracy and this ushered in the government of Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. Obasanjo’s regime marked an end to military hiccups in the Nigerian democracy till date. Regrettably, the Nigerian democracy has democratized corruption. It has, as IkhideIkheloa puts it,set the country back decades and provided a perfect alibi for the political class to bankrupt and burry the country once and for all.

The bill for this brand of destructive democracy is being paid with the lives and limbs of Nigerians. Pathetically, the Nigerian masses do not seem to understand whom the real enemies of the people are. They are pitched against one another. Nigeria’s fractured, dangerous democracy, engendered by the (political) elites fosters what Dambisa Moyo (2009, p.11) calls “costly ethno-partisan impasses that stifle development and productive economic change.” This elite unanimity in perpetuating themselves at the corridors of power even in the face of brazen incompetence is sustained by their ability to fan the embers of ethnicity thereby polarizing the same people that have been objectified by their (in) actions. This has engendered malevolent animosity and the use of unprintable words against different ethnic groups in Nigeria thereby threatening further the already shattered foundation of national cohesion and democratic consolidation in the country through the use of hate speech (henceforth HS).

Words could be likened to bullets. When maliciously used, they are sure to slay the human target, leaving in their wake intolerance, hostility and penchant for more destruction. Words so used instantiates HS. Lying in a complex nexus with HS is freedom of expression, individual, group and minority rights. The definition of HS is, therefore, problematic and often contested. However, there is unanimity in the views of scholars on the major property of HS as including, but not limited to, any speech, gesture, conduct, writing, or display capable of inciting people to violence. It is “all communications that insult a racial, ethnic or political group” (Neisser 1994, p.337); “a war waged on others by means of words” (Kayamanzithu & Moyo 2002,p.150); “speech designed to promote hatred on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity or national origin” (Rosenfeld 2001, p.2). The threat posed to the unity of Nigeria by HS and its potential to trigger off violence in the country and, most importantly, the dangers of stereotypes (oxygenated by HS) and how it fuels morbid disdain, murderous intent and genocidal acts against a people define the scholarly concern that this paper accords it. An inevitable corollary of HS is distortion of ‘fact’. The peddlers of HS understand that if the object of hate is not vilified, the hate narrative will not draw the expected attention. Consequently, ‘fact’ is heavily distorted in the construction of stereotypes using linguistic items which, ultimately, mark the stereotyped as the alienated, the polluted and the subhuman. This work interrogates the linguistic cum extra-linguistic variables constraining lexical choices in the 2017 Kaduna Declaration asking the Igbo to vacate Northern Nigeria. Attention is accorded the construction of frames for both the Igbo and other categories of actors in the text, especially the Northern leaders. Insights from the present investigation are potential to leading to a deeper understanding of the doctoring of ‘fact’ in the ‘Declaration’ and drenching the flaming appetite for destruction in people who are usually radicalized through distortion of ‘fact’ in HS.

**Situating the Research**

Here, the existing body of scholarship on HS has been grouped into two major perspectives, namely: linguistic and non- linguistic studies. The latter category constituting a catholicity of works in HS discourse spans the difference between HS and freedom of speech (Alkali 2016;Abdulrazaq 2017; Horne 2018), legal implication of HS (Sharon 2013; Joel 2012), HS and electoral violence (Ezeibe 2014; Fasakin 2017; Jibrin 2017). The former category, enjoying scant membership, more central to the present scholarship, navigates works dealing with aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) pragmatics and grammar utilized in exploring the ideological current of text producers, the pragmatics of HS and certain linguistic preferences that aid HS.

Okafor and Alabi (2017) embark on a speech act analysis of HS in 2015 general election campaign speeches in Nigeria. Utilizing Searle’s (1969) speech acts of assertive, directive, commisive, declarative, expressive and Austins’(1962) verdictive category for explication of data. The work reveals efforts made by politicians to intimidate perceived political opponents, warn the electorate to cast their votes ‘wisely’ or stand to regret their actions and foregrounds their readiness to seize power by force. The above is made manifest by the preponderance of assertive which constitute 45% of the data while the other speech act categories share the remaining percentage thus: Directive 27%, Commisive 15%, Verdictive 7.5%, Declarative 5% and Expressive 5.5%. Okafor and Alabi (2017) conclude that Nigerian political rhetoric during 2015 campaign is characterized by elements of hate capable of serving as catalyst to violence, with the potentials of not only endangering the nation’s democracy but also jeopardizing the unity of the country. Okafor and Alabi’s work differs from the present scholarship in two meaningful ways: As distinct from the present investigation, it is an analysis of instances of HS as reported in some selected newspapers and magazines in Nigeria while the present investigation is focusing on a ‘Declaration’ straight from first-order text producer(s) and free from the stints of media reportage. Similarly, it privileges Searle’s (1969) speech act theory for analysis while the present study taps into the theoretical insights from a combination of Kreidler’s (1998) Speech Act, Fillmore’s (2009) Framing Theory and Van Leun’s (2008) (multimodal) approach to critical discourse analysis.

Rasaq et al (2017) examine the role of media and politics in the promotion of HS in Nigeria. Through the analytical tools of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) and critical race theory (CRT), they x-ray how media and politics are, literally, accomplices in the fertilization of HS, and capture the possible consequences of unmitigated propagation of HS in Nigeria. The paper shows that Nigerians suffer such disparaging attacks on two major areas of ethnic and religious statuses. The paper accuses the media of aiding HS by failing to sanction what they produce for people’s consumption even when there is a clear case of vituperation by politicians against perceived opponents. The paper, therefore, recommends that the media as the watchdog of society should take up the responsibility by bringing to the forefront the devastating effect of HS and telling politicians, in most clear terms, that HS does not win elections. While Rasaq et al’s (2017) work relates to the present scholarship in that it adopts ideological based approach in Van Dijk’s approach (socio-cognitive), the present research contrastively utilizes Van Leun’s multimodal approach to CDA.

Lastly, Carney (2014) adopts a forensic linguistic approach in interpreting a HS case. The work which utilizes Austin’s (1962) speech act and Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory is an attempt to see if the court can determine whether a person’s words are hurtful or otherwise with the use of linguistic cues. Carney argues that if the speech acts of a verbal exchange are studied and the levels of politeness are gauged, a court would be able to affirm the hurtfulness or harmfulness of a speaker’s words. The work reveals that a close study of the linguistic choices of a speaker can guide the court in drawing conclusions and passing judgments. The research binary between Carney’s work and the present investigation is the fact that while her work focuses on linguistic choices in a courtroom through the lens of speech act and politeness theories, the present work focuses on a ‘Declaration’ text, relying on speech act, process and participants, framing and ideological theories for explication of data.

In the light of the above, the present scholarship is, evidently, an attempt to fill the void created by the fact that no study that we are aware of has focused exclusively on the framing of the Igbo by the Arewa youths from a pragmatic perspective. It is the hope of the researcher that this work will expose the reading public to the potency of linguistic items being manipulated in constructing negative frames for the stereotyped.

 **Theoretical Considerations and Methodology**

Just as we have rightly pointed out, this research taps into theoretical insights from a combination of Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) Systemic Functional Grammar, Van Leun’s (2008) (multimodal) approach to critical discourse analysis, Fillmore’s (2009) framing theory and Kreidler’s (1998) speech act theory. When synergized, these theoretic perspectives have the potentials to cue us in on the processes and participant role relations of the social actors in the text, the pragmatic strategies utilized in framing the social actors, the type of frames that have been constructed and the speech act types that play up in the construction of the frames. The contemporary use of the term ‘speech act’ dates back to J. L. Austin’s (1962) development of performative utterances and his theory of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The theory of speech act has enjoyed heavy scholarly attention and has been largely modified by many scholars (e.g. Levin, 1977; Bach and Harnish, 1979; Levinson, 1980; Adegbija, 1982, Yule, 1996; Kreidler, 1998). Speech acts are commonly taken to include such acts as promising, ordering, greeting, naming, warning, inviting or congratulating.

A locutionary act is the performance of an utterance and its ostensible meaning, comprising phonetic, phatic and rhetic acts corresponding to the verbal, syntactic and semantic aspects of any meaningful utterance (Austin, 1962). An illocutionary act is concerned with the pragmatic illocutionary force of an utterance, thus its social significance as a socially valid verbal action. It marks ‘the actual linguistic communication, where the speaker’s intention has been stated’ ( Ononye, 2016, p.352). Perlocutionary act is the actual effect such as persuading, convincing, enlightening, scaring, inspiring or otherwise getting someone to do or realize something, whether intended or not. It is the consequential effect (not involving conventional effects) of an utterance on an interlocutor. (Austin, 1962).

In consonance with Austin’s *felicity condition*, Kreidler (1998) maintains that every utterance has a purpose and in order to achieve that purpose, several conditions are necessary. In his words “the lexical content of the utterance must be appropriate, the social situation in which it occurs must be appropriate, the speaker must be sincere in what he says and the hearer(s) accept the utterance as having that purpose” (Kreidler,1998, p.183). Improving on Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) who have identified five categories of illocutionary acts apiece, Kreidler (1998) nominates a set of speech acts which tend to encompass both Austin and Searle’s categories and their conditions in an easy manner (Ononye, 2016). He identifies seven kinds of utterances in respect to their general purpose, thus: 1. Assertives-*concerned with facts* (related to Searle’s representatives) ; 2.Performatives-*speech acts that bring about the state of affair they name* (related to Searle’s declarations); 3.Verdictives-*speech acts in which the speaker makes an assessment or judgments about the acts of another, usually the addressee* ( related to Austin’s verdictives);4. Expressives-*speech acts that spring from the previous actions or failure to act of the speaker , or perhaps of those (in)actions;* 5. Directives- *speech acts where the speaker tries to get the addressee to perform some act or to refrain from performing an act* (corresponding with Searle’s directives); 6. Commissives- *speech acts that commits a speaker to a course of action* (related to both Austin and Searle’s commissives); 7. Phatic utterance-*speech acts used to establish rapport between members of the same society* (differs from any of Austin and Searle’s categories). The present investigation privileges Kreidler’s (1998) version of speech acts. This draws impetus on our conviction that his simplified but encompassing approach to speech acts typology will aid, in a very significant manner, our understanding of the practs and/ or allopracts in the Kaduna Declaration.

Frame semantics is a theory of linguistic meaning developed by Charles Fillmore that extends his earlier case grammar. It relates linguistic semantics to encyclopedic knowledge. The basic idea is that one cannot understand the meaning of a single word without access to all the essential knowledge that relates to that word. For example, one would not be able to understand the word "sell" without knowing anything about the situation of commercial transfer, which also involves, among other things, a seller, a buyer, goods, money, the relation between the money and the goods, the relations between the seller and the goods and the money, the relation between the buyer and the goods and the money and so on. Thus, a word activates, or evokes, a frame of semantic knowledge relating to the specific concept to which it refers (or highlights, in frame semantic terminology).

A semantic frame is a collection of facts that specify "characteristic features, attributes, and functions of a denotatum, and its characteristic interactions with things necessarily or typically associated with it." A semantic frame can also be defined as a coherent structure of related concepts that are related such that without knowledge of all of them, one does not have complete knowledge of any one. Frames are based on recurring experiences. So the commercial transaction frame is based on recurring experiences of commercial transactions.Words not only highlight individual concepts, but also specify a certain perspective from which the frame is viewed. For example "sell" views the situation from the perspective of the seller and "buy" from the perspective of the buyer. This, according to Fillmore, explains the observed asymmetries in many lexical relations.

Securing uptake from Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p.43) who are credited with the view that ‘frame is a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, suggesting what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue’, Odebunmi and Oloyede (2016) intone that framing and news or event representation can be said to have a significant effect on the way events becomes understood by recipients. Entman (1993, P.53) talks about individual frame which he defines as ‘mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individual’s processing of information’. The individual frame is further categorized into global and issue related frame of reference. The latter will be accorded greater attention in this work because it has much influence on the way individuals perceive, organize and interpret information for drawing of inferences. This means that the stereotyping of the Igbo in the Kaduna Declaration will gain prominence and philosophical solidarity as a result of its nexus with previous negative semantic framings of the same people.

Multimodal critical discourse analysis combines two distinct disciplines of applied linguistics which embrace multimodality and critical discourse analysis. Odebunmi and Oloyede (2016, p. 271) are credited with the view that ‘it studies both the verbal and visual properties of text and connects them with the ideological engagements of discourse participants’. Van Leueen(2008) avails us with two major categories of representation to be considered in multimodal approach to CDA analysis to include social actors and social actions. Given the role of the Arewa Youths in the declaration, we shall be focusing on social actors while social actions will be largely backgrounded.

The following have been found to be particularly relevant to our analyses of data: assimilation, nomination and categorization, functionalization and identification, exclusion and role allocation*. Assimilation* occurs when individuals are represented in a text as a group. Social actors in *nomination and categorization* are, citing Odebunmi and Oleyede (2016) ‘represented as having distinct or shared identities’ (p.272). *Functionalization* and *identification* depict *status assignment* on the basis of an activity such as occupation or role or in terms of what they stably or otherwise are (Leeuwen, 2008). *Exclusion* pictures how social actors are schemed out of representation intentionally. It could assume the forms of *suppression* or *backgrounding. Suppression* is realized through agency passivation while *backgrounding* is realizes through agency deletion which is achieved through either of ellipses or with the use of the infinitival *to* clause category. While there is no reference to the social actors in *backgrounding*, *suppression* is further realized when non-finite clause categories are made to function as grammatical participants, or through hypotactic projection as against paratactic projection (Bloor and Bloor, 2004). *Role allocation*, on the other hand, delineates how roles are assigned to social actors through grammatical activation and passivation. For data, the Kaduna Declaration by the Arewa youths asking the Igbo to vacate Nothern Nigeria is selected. This is largely because of the huge reactions that trailed the declaration both locally and internationally.

**Analysis**

Five frames of the Igbo and a frame of the Northern leaders have been constructed in the text. Each of these frames is erected through the employment of varying degrees of pragmatic strategies and practs realized through various speech acts.

We expound the frames, thus:

1. The Igbo as law breakers
2. The Igbo as agent of immorality
3. The Igbo as a catalyst of disunity in Nigeria
4. The Igbo as facilitator of genocide
5. The Igbo as tenants in Nigeria
6. The Northern leaders as naïve representatives
7. **The Igbo as lawbreakers**

The Arewa Youths (henceforth AY) utilize eight pragmatic strategies in assembling the frame of the Igbo as law breakers, namely: Self Relegation and Positive Projection (SRPP), Agency Generalization (AG), Blunt Condemnation (BC), Binary Identity Construction (BIC), Appeal to Emotion (AE), Evocation of Antecedent (EA), Negative Labeling (NL) Strategic Role Allocation to Self (SRAS) and Tension Activation (TA).

By self relegation and positive projection is meant the AY’s representation of the non-Igbo, who do their legitimate businesses within the Igbo geographical enclave, as the alienated and, at the same time, capturing the said ‘alienated’ as law abiding and peace loving people. This strategy is used to clue the reader in and capture the ‘hostile’ nature of the Igbo. AG delineates the AY’s indexing of a group known as Independent People of Biafra (henceforth IPOB) [a fragment of the Igbo] as the Igbo. This is achieved through crashing lexicalization and criminalization of the entire Igbo without boundaries. BC bespeaks the AY’s densely worded disapproval of the Igbo. This is achieved through the speech act categories of assertive, verdictives and expressive. BIC is concerned with the binaries between social actors in a text. The Igbo is captured as agent of disunity in the country while non-Igbo are presented as apostles of national cohesion. This is further achieved through BC, indicting them through EA and eulogizing the non-Igbo through SRAS. SRPP differs from BIC in that in the former, there is the objectification of (a group) social actors courtesy of the activities of an agent leading to *actor-patient* relation while in the latter, the social actors (the groups) assume agency status performing asymmetrical social actions. EA delineates a strategic pragmatic tool used by the AY’s to radicalize the non- Igbo against the Igbo by making reference to the challenges that the country has encountered in the past and activating the Igbo as the culprit. NL is a pragmatic strategy adopted by the AY to vilify the Igbo in order to draw the expected attention while SRAS instantiates a pragmatic ploy by the AY to show how central they (the North) are to the Nigerian project. This is achieved through the use of linguistic items for construction of positive image of ‘self’ while using negative attributive adjectives such as ‘ungrateful,’ ‘uncultured,’ ‘unruly,’ etc to index the Igbo. TA is a pragmatic strategy employed in the text to induce fear in the Igbo, especially those residing within the Northern region as they are mandated to vacate the North within a period of three months.

The first extract from the ‘declaration’ labeled text1 instantiates SRPP, AE and NL.

 **Text 1**

 The persistence for the actualization of Biafra by the unruly Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria has lately assumed another alarming twist which involved **the forceful lockdown of activities and denial of other people’s rights to free movement in the South East…the latest action and similar confrontational conducts which amount to a brutal encroachment on the rights of** those termed non-indigenous people residing and doing lawful business in *those areas illegally demarcated and defined as Biafra by the Igbo*, are downright unacceptable and shall no longer be tolerated.

The portion in bold font instantiates AE through brute lexicalization belonging to the semantic field of violence: ‘forceful’, ‘lockdown’, ‘denial’, ‘confrontational’, ‘encroachment’. The above lexical choices aptly frame the Igbo as a group obsessed by violence, with the potential to radicalize the non –Igbo against the Igbo (especially in the Northern part of Nigeria). Another pragmatic ploy here is SRPP. This is achieved through agency activation and patient passivation. The phrase ‘the unruly Igbo of South- Eastern Nigeria’ is an activated agent showing discourse clarity while ‘other people’ in “… the denial of other people’s rights” is a passivated patient obstructing discourse clarity. When the patient is assigned agency status (non-indigenous people) in the underlined part, what we actually see is quasi-agency situation as the agency status seem to have been activated by the active agent (the Igbo) using a material verb ‘termed’ in “those termed non-indigenous people residing and doing normal business….” *Self relegation* is instantiated in ‘non – indigenous people’ and in asymmetric relation with *positive projection* also instantiated in ‘…doing lawful business’. Three general speech act categories of assertives (informing), verdictives (accusing) and commissives (threatening) are also identified as having been employed in the pragmatic strategies utilized in framing the Igbo as law breakers. The part in italics delineates the use of AG in regularizing the entire Igbo as accomplices in the ‘alleged’ demarcation of some areas as Biafra. This does not take into account the fact that most Igbo (especially the elites) are not apostles of Biafra. This homogenizing of the Igbo leads to her being threatened by an unspecified agent(s) through TA: ‘…the denial of other people’s rights…is downright unacceptable and shall no longer be tolerated.’

1. **The Igbo as agent of Immorality**

Framing the Igbo as agent of immorality in the country means constructing them as destroying the image of the country both locally and internationally, and standing at the centre of all criminal acts in the country. BC and NL are the two pragmatic strategies drawn upon in this regard as shown in text 2:

**Text 2**

The Igbo are also responsible for Nigeria’s cultural and moral degeneracy with their notoriety in all kinds of crimes including international networking for drug and human trafficking, violent robberies and kidnapping, high profile prostitution and advanced financial fraud…[we] have since ceased to be comfortable or safe to continue sharing the same country with the ungrateful, uncultured Igbo who have exhibited reckless disrespect for the other federating units and stained the integrity of the nation with their insatiable criminal obsession.

Through BC and NL, AY charges the Igbo with national disaster with the practs of indictment and denunciation. This is realized through negative foregrounding, unmitigated lexicalization and effective backgrounding of the positive aspects of the Igbo. NL is given impetus in text 2 through the paradigmatic choice of intensifying adjectives: ‘international’, ‘violent’, ‘high profile’, ‘advanced’, ‘ungrateful’, ‘uncultured’, ‘reckless’. BC is utilized to incite Nigerians against the Igbo as the unrepentant villain. Also playing up in text 2 are two speech acts: Assertives (informing, reporting), eg. “…the Igbo are also responsible for Nigeria’s cultural and moral degeneracy”, Verdictives (criticizing, blaming) eg. “…the ungrateful, uncultured Igbo who have exhibited reckless disrespect for the other federating units and stained the integrity of the nation with their insatiable criminal obsession.”

1. **The Igbo as a catalyst of disunity in Nigeria**

Framing the Igbo as a catalyst of disunity in Nigeria means representing them as people who fan the embers of sectoral violence and active participants in every act that threatens the unity of the country. This is achieved through EA, BIC and AE, as captures in text 3:

**Text 3**

The Igbo of South East, without remorse for the carnage they wrought on the nation in the 1960s are today boldly reliving those sinister intentions connoted by the Biafran agitations that led to the very first bloody insurrection in Nigeria’s history. The Igbo similarly orchestrated the first and so far the only civil war in Nigeria that consumed millions of lives and sowed the seed of the current mutual suspicion and distrust

 Here, the AY code the Igbo as agents of disunity by evoking her ‘antecedents’. Her previous activities are re-enacted while sustaining the contention that the Igbo are still running the country down. This is done to condemn the activities of IPOB (generalized as the Igbo) and incite Nigerians against the Igbo. Evocation of antecedents (EA) is lexicalized with time adverbs such as: ‘in the 1960s’, ‘first’, etc. Appeal to emotion (AE) is realized through over lexicalization of the Igbo using negative epithets: ‘carnage’, ‘sinister’, ‘bloody’. Two major speech act type are also identified in text 3. They are Assertives (informing) and Verdictives (criticizing, blaming)

1. **The Igbo as facilitators of genocide**

Coding the Igbo as facilitators of genocide means that the genocidal activities of the Boko Haram sect and Fulani Herders are transferred to the Igbo through agency activation. The activities of the said sects are suppressed through grammatical passivation while the Igbo are meant to shoulder the responsibility through grammatical activation as indicated in text 4

**Text 4**

*At the peak of the devastating Boko Haram violence in some parts of the North, available records show that the Igbo people have variously been apprehended while attempting to convey catches of dangerous arms and ammunition to the troubled regions.* There are today sufficient reasons to suspect that some Igbo masquerade as Fulani herdsmen to commit violent atrocities across the country in order to cause and spread ethnic disaffection

In the italicized portion of the text, the Igbo are indirectly classified as terrorists while the real terrorists are backgrounded. The agent (Boko haram) is passivated as they make time adverb ‘at the peak…’ to occupy the traditional subject position and the true agent is made to function as a modifier ‘… Boko haram violence’. Discuss clarity is lost when reference is made to ‘available record’ because it lacks specificity. NL and AE are the pragmatic strategies utilized in this portion playing up a preponderance of the assertive speech act typology.

The portion underlined also plays up an instance of loss of discourse clarity as the entire discourse is built around non-specific vocabulary choice: ‘sufficient reason’. The Igbo is made to assume the agency position occupied by the Herdsmen and are consequently presented as the major actors in the spread of ethnic disaffection while the status of the real agents as active social actors in the discourse is strategically deleted. Verdictive utterances are largely implicated in this portion of the text.

**(e) The Igbo as tenants in Nigeria**

Framing the Igbo as tenants in Nigeria delineates asking them to quit the North (a place within the Nigerian geographical sphere) thereby coding them as not part of the critical players in the Nigerian Project. The above is overtly instantiated in text 5.

**Text 5**

Since the Igbo have clearly abused the unreciprocated hospitality that gave them unrestricted access to the ownership of landed property all over the North, our first major move shall be to reclaim, assume and assert sole ownership and control of these landed resources… The North, a critical player in the Nigerian project hereby declares that it will no longer be disposed to coexisting with the Igbo.

The preponderance of material process verbs in text 5 reflects the dominance of physical action attributable to the AY: ‘reclaim’, ‘assume’, ‘assert’. This is achieved through the use of BC, NL, and TA as pragmatic tools that invoke tension on people. The Igbo are strategically alienated through the paradigmatic choice of exclusion lexicalization: ‘the unreciprocated hospitality that gave them unrestricted access…’, ‘our first major move shall be to reclaim, assume and assert sole ownership of …’ The pract of the North occupying strategic position in the Nigerian discourse, unlike their alienated counterpart, is achieved through BIC and SRAS as the sayer –patient context is manipulated to ascribe ultimate power to the AY. Verdictives (judging), Assertives (informing) and performatives (declaring) are the prominent speech acts utilized in text 5.

**(f)The Northern leaders as naïve representatives**

Coding the Northern leaders as naïve representatives delineates indexing them as a group who lacks the requisite boldness to protect her people. The accusation, if not well managed is potential to provoking resentment in the Northern leaders towards the Igbo. This is largely achieved through the verdictives (accusing, indicating) as materialized in text 6.

**Text 6**

… leaders of the North whose people are at the receiving end of the threats, appear helplessly unperturbed… leaders of the region at every stage tend to hide under the cover of a flimsy and long discarded excuse of having fought in the 60s to keep Nigeria United. These Northern leaders have adopted and have been dragging its people into a pitifully pacific position…

Through the use of heavy lexicalization belonging to the semantic field of weakness: ‘receiving end’, ‘helplessly unperturbed’, ‘hide under the cover of a flimsy and long discarded excuse’, ‘dragging’, ‘pitifully’, the entire Northern elders are parenthetically marked as timid. Of particular critical discourse effect is the mental process in the phrase ‘helplessly’ which clues the reader in on the central mandate of the AY which is to activate acrimonious perception of the Igbo in the Northern leaders. To be helplessly unperturbed means that even if they were perturbed, they should pretend not to because they can practically do nothing about it. Nothing could be more indicting than the above. The expressions: ‘receiving end’, ‘helplessly unperturbed’, ‘dragging its people’, further provoke material encounters which accentuate the negative influence of the Northern silence. This is evidently achieved through the pragmatic ploy of BC and AE strictly realized through the verdictives.

**Conclusions**

The governing argument of this paper has been that while the Arewa Youths frame the Igbo negatively, they do so through distortion of ‘fact’. When fact is distorted to insult a racial, ethnic or political group, a clear case of hate speech is established. If ‘fact’ were overtly distorted, the text consumer’s attention would easily be drawn to it but it isn’t so. This accounts for the holistic attention and analysis that the present work accords it. Five frames of the Igbo and a frame of the Northern leaders are identified in the text. Each of these frames is erected through the employment of varying degrees of pragmatic strategies and practs realized through various speech acts. Eight pragmatic strategies are utilized in assembling different frames of the Igbo in the text: Self Relegation and Positive Projection (SRPP), Agency Generalization (AG), Blunt Condemnation (BC), Binary Identity Construction (BIC), Appeal to Emotion (AE), Evocation of Antecedent (EA), Negative Labeling (NL) Strategic Role Allocation to Self (SRAS) and Tension Activation (TA). The text play up a preponderance of Assertive, Verdictive and Performative utterances as the Arewa Youths continue to give information, accuse and pass judgment on the Igbo through deployment of material process verbs in activating agency status for the Igbo where there is heavy lexicalization belonging to the semantic field of violence.

Through the intervention of pragmatic investigation, the paper shows that interventionist approach should be adopted by the Nigerian government to stop hate speech as it is capable of invoking a genocidal action against a people. The government should also, through all available means, endeavor to reduce hunger in the country for a popular saying has it that a hungry man is an angry man. Future research could be directed to the response texts by the Ohaneze Youths, the Oduduwa youths and the Niger delta youths to see how each of these groups has framed the stereotyped.

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