

Metalinguistic evaluators and pragmatic strategies in selected hate-inducing speeches in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Hate-inducing language, which has become a recurrent decimal in Nigerian socio-political discourse, is not unconnected to the deep-seated boundaries existing amongst different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Linguistic studies on hate language in Nigeria have largely utilised pragmatic and critical discourse analytical tools in identifying the illocutions and ideologies involved but hardly paid attention to the metalinguistic forms deployed in hate speeches. Therefore, the present study, aside adding to the research line of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM)—which has unduly focused on language typology, explores the metalinguistic evaluators that index hate speech in Nigeria, and relate them to specific pragmatic strategies through which hate speech producers' intentions are communicated. To achieve this, three full manuscripts of hate speech made by three groups (i.e. Arewa Youth Consultative Forum, Youths of Oduduwa Republic, and Biafra Nation Youth League) from three (northern, western, and eastern, respectively) regions of Nigeria are purposively sampled from Google directories and Radio Biafra archives, subjected to descriptive and quantitative analysis, with insights from the NSM theory and aspects of pragmatic acts. Two categories of metalinguistic evaluators were identified, positive (GOOD) and negative (BAD) evaluators; and these are associated with three pragmatic strategies; namely, blunt condemnation, unshielded exposition, and appeal to emotion. While the condemning and exposing strategies largely utilise negative evaluators in initiating hate on target groups, the emotion-drawing strategy largely employs positive evaluators in boosting the image of the hate-speech producing group in the eyes of the audience. With these findings, the study takes existing scholarship on violence-inducing language a step forward, especially in providing a pragmatic explanation to the proliferation of hate crimes in Nigeria. It also offers a holistic linguistic database and critical meta-language for the teaching of hate-related language and crime, especially in second-language situations.

Keywords: Ethnic diversity; hate speech; natural semantic metalanguage; Nigerian political discourse; pragmatics acts

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INTRODUCTION

Despite different international laws and local legislations against free speech and such defamation as libel or slander, different forms of hate speech still abound today, not only because of the increased

awareness in the freedom of expression in modern societies, but more uncontrollably as a result of the advances and hence ease in social media communications. These forms, according to Posselt, (2017, p. 8), range from

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insulting utterances and injurious speech, religious and political forms of propaganda ... and incitement of hatred, to the rapidly growing problem of cyber-bullying and cyber-harassment, we are confronted with a wide variety of symbolic and medial forms of violence in our everyday life that have to be acknowledged and dealt with.

What this means is that there is a complex relation between language use and the incitement of hatred and hence probably violence, and this has been at the focal point of many debates on hate speech in recent times.

The concept of 'hate speech', as Weber (2009) recognizes, has "no universally accepted definition ... most States have adopted legislation banning expressions amounting to 'hate speech'" (p. 3). The definition by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Recommendation 97(20), which has come to be widely accepted and referred to, states that:

the term 'hate speech' shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin. In this sense, 'hate speech' covers comments which are necessarily directed against a person or a particular group of persons. (cited in Weber, 2009, p. 4).

There are quite a number of definitions on hate speech. If that above is applied here, it includes studies such as those on hate messages against Muslims (e.g. Samaratunge & Hattotuwa, 2014), online violence-inciting speeches against opposing groups (e.g. Sambuli, Morara & Mahihu, 2014), racism and xenophobia on Facebook in the wake of refugee arrivals (Rowbottom, 2012), hate speech used by men to target women (Kimmel, 2013; Kimmel & Kaufman, 1994; Messner, 1998), among others. Generally, the bulk of the research on hate and hate speech has explored the practices, discourses, and violence of hate groups (Waltman & Haas, 2011; Waltman, 2014). However, evaluating target groups through pragmatic strategies—being the major means through which supremacist groups achieve their intention (Citron & Norton, 2011, p. 1437)—has not duly been accommodated in the literature.

In Nigeria, for example, previous linguistic scholarship on hate speech, which is steeped in the use of critical discourse analytical and speech act tools, has largely focused on the underlying ideological motivations and illocutionary patterns of hate speech, despite the importance of the evaluative and pragmatic strategies in the execution of hate language. Within the theoretical complementarity logic of merging semantics and pragmatics, therefore, the present paper—being part of a broader pioneering research aimed at making a metalinguistic inventory of hate speech in Nigeria—seeks to: 1, identify the metalinguistic evaluators that index the hate speeches, and 2, reveal the pragmatic strategies through which the intentions are passed across

to the target audience. The proposed findings will provide a holistic linguistic database and critical meta-language, which will enhance not only global efforts at combating hate crimes, but also expose hate-related language both in (in)formal settings. In the remaining parts of this section, the research context is described, and situated within the hate linguistic discourse in Nigeria. In the following sections, the method and theories of analysis are described; then the findings are discussed and finally, conclusion.

The peculiarity of hate speech in Nigeria is such that it is connected to not only ethnic and religious grouping, but also to political and economic allocation. In all these patterns of ordering in Nigeria, there are opposing sides who most times resort to using hate speeches to slight other groups or diminish their relevance in government (Edewor, Aluko & Folarin, 2014, p. 72). Hate speech has been in Nigeria for a long time but became more prominent during the 2015 general election campaigns. For a nation that has fought a civil war that was largely fuelled by hate speech, Nigeria does not take the issue of hate speech lightly. Hence, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), declaring hate speech as "a species of terrorism", has invoked the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2013 as amended, against purveyors of hate speech. Despite this Act, citizens and political party opponents still generated different sensitive issues against other ethno-religious groups and party candidates in the wake of the elections (Rasaq, Udende, Ibrahim, & Oba, 2017, p. 241).

Therefore, to avoid a repetition of this situation, some legislations have been made, one of which is the Hate Speech Bill by the Nigerian Senate. According to a *Vanguard* editorial, the bill,

is the culmination of threats by senior government officials railing against 'hate speech' in response to criticism and inter-ethnic tension, especially the deep alienation felt, and recently stridently expressed, by some sections of the country angered by Buhari's glaring sectionalism in appointments and actions" ("Hate Speech," 2017).

In its sponsors' view, the bill seeks to check the use of hate speech by prescribing stiff penalties to discourage harassment based on religion, ethnicity, race, among others. According to the document, as captured in *Punch's* editorial,

Any person who uses, publishes, presents, produces, plays, provides, distributes and/or directs the performance of any material, written and/or visual, which is threatening, abusive or insulting or involves the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words, commits an offence ...[and] a jail sentence of not less than five years or a fine of "not less than N10 million" or both for these offences. Capping it all is the prescription of the death penalty where any form of hate speech results in the death of another person ("That outrageous bill," 2018).

In addition to the Hate Speech Bill, the Nigerian Press Council has recently engaged in a continuous

capacity building programme in the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. The programme is aimed at sensitising stakeholders on the need to eschew hate language which has marked the Nigerian political discourse in recent times.

Many studies have been undertaken to explain the prevalence of hate language in the Nigerian political discourse. The bulk of the research on hate-inducing language in Nigeria can broadly be categorised into linguistic and non-linguistic studies. The latter category spans across works on the social dynamics (e.g. Fasakin, Oyero, Oyesomi, & Okorie, 2017; Ezeibe, 2014), legal implications (e.g. Alakali, Faga, & Mbursa, 2016) and workable solutions (e.g. Isola, 2018) of hate speech in Nigeria. The former category, being the one that is relevant to this study, includes linguistic efforts that have utilised mainly pragmatic (e.g. Okafor & Olarenwaju, 2017; Akinwotu, 2015) and discourse analytical (e.g. Rasaan et al., 2017) tools in analysing the Nigerian hate-inducing communication discourse.

Okafor and Olanrewaju (2017) aim to establish “the relationship between utterances and actions from the perspective of pragmatics using instances of hate speeches made by political actors during the 2015 general election campaigns in Nigeria” (p. 61). Relying on instances of hate speech reported in selected Nigerian newspapers and magazines, which are analysed with insights from Austin’s (1962) and Searle’s (1969) speech act theories, the study reveals different patterns and strategies of illocutionary acts performed both directly and indirectly by specific news actors. The study departs from the present one based on theoretical approaches and data sets. While the latter employs a combination of semantic and pragmatic tools in handling full manuscripts of hate speech from different regions of Nigeria, the former relied solely not only on speech act pragmatics but also on random patches of hate language reported in the print media. Akinwotu (2015) explores the pragmatics of assessing the personality or reducing the stance expressed by election debate candidates. Specifically, the study analyses the “pragmatic strategies deployed by participants in the management of their frame and that of their opponents in the Ondo State Governorship Election Debate of 2012” (p. 135) drawing insights from a combination of Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness and facework and Watts’ (2000, 2005) relational work and frame theory. He discovers three pragmatic (persuasive, offensive and defensive) politeness strategies. While the persuasive politeness strategy projects polite verbal behaviour, the offensive and defensive politeness strategies criticise and construct candidates as corrupt, inept, incompetent, unfit, dishonest, deceitful, and project impolite verbal behaviour (2015, p. 142). Like Okafor and Olanrewaju (2017), Akinwotu (2015) differs from this study in terms of theory and data representativeness.

In the discourse analysis subcategory, Rasaan, et al.’s (2017) is a critical discourse analysis which sheds light on the linguistic discursive dimensions of hate

speeches published in newspapers during the Nigeria’s 2015 general elections “which has become a social and cultural phenomena and possible helix of violence” (p. 244). They observe that the media, especially the newspaper, sometimes perspectivise politicians’ views to help them achieve their selfish interest. They therefore recommend that the media as the watchdog of the society should take up the responsibility by bringing to the forefront the fiercely devastating effect of hate speech. The study, in not having a precise model of critical discourse analysis and method of analysis, obviously falls apart from this study.

Generally, the small number of studies reviewed above shows that more linguistic effort is needed in understanding the linguistic strategies and forms that may characterise the intentions behind hate language. At the level of data analysed, the previous studies are largely limited to commentaries on the 2015 general elections from different news media. The present study however goes away from media reportage of 2015 general elections to consider real manuscripts—bearing different forms and motivations—of hate speech that are rooted in the ethnic and religious, as well as political divisions in Nigeria. At the level of theory, the pragmatic studies have principally focused on speech act and politeness pragmatics, while the ones on discourse analysis are fixated on CDA.

The present paper moves these a step further by not only exploring a different set of data, but also utilising both pragmatic and semantic tools, particularly pragmatic act and Natural Semantic Metalanguage theories. Ononye & Nwachukwu (2017) is one work that has something in common with the present study in terms of combining semantic and pragmatic models. However, it goes apart from the latter with its focusing on substantives and students’ interaction, as against the latter which deals with evaluators and hate speech. The main motivation for combining these tools here is to be able to identify the evaluative primitives used in the hate speeches, and reveal the pragmatic strategies through which the evaluation is realised. Generally, this provides a metalinguistic inventory of hate-inducing language in Nigeria and the pragmatic intentions behind its use. Next is a description of the methods through which the hate speeches selected for the study are analysed.

METHOD

This study is based on the theory of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), which was started by Wierzbicka (1972, 1992, 1999), and later notably joined by Goddard’s (1994, 1997, 2006), Goddard and Wierzbicka (2002, 2014), and many other scholars. Being one of the contemporary approaches to semantics, the NSM methodology has been developed as an independent tool for identifying and explicating semantic primes (also known as ‘primitives’) or “words or word-like expressions in all languages, and [establishing] that they share a universal grammar of

combination, valency, and complementation” (Goddard 2006, p. 3). According to Goddard (1994), the NSM approach has a “commitment to semantic representation in discrete terms”, which distinguishes it from other semantic theories which “propose scalar notations for semantics” (1994, p. 8). The theory, especially the aspects upon which the present study is anchored, is based on three principles. First, the ‘Semantic Primitive Principle’, which proposes the existence of a finite set of indecomposable meaning—semantic primitives, points out that “The elements which can be used to define the meaning of words (or any other meanings) cannot be defined themselves; rather, they must be accepted as ‘indefinabilia’, that is, as semantic primes, in terms of which all complex meanings can be coherently represented” (Wierzbicka, 1972, p. 10). The Semantic Primitive Principle itself is also hinged on the ‘Natural Language Principle’ which states that “semantic primitives and their elementary syntax exist as a minimal subset of ordinary natural language” (Goddard, 1994, p. 10). By subset here is meant that “human concepts are hierarchical, in the sense that there are more complicated and sophisticated concepts as well as relatively simple and intuitively understandable concepts” (Durst, 2004, p. 159). What this implies is that more complicated concepts are reduced into simpler

and intuitively understandable ones in order to make definition (often called ‘explication’) to be clearly understood (Yoon, 2008). The data analysed in this study satisfy these NSM principles because understanding semantic primitives in the Nigerian hate speech happens “intuitively on the basis of ordinary [or natural] language” (Lyons, 1977, p. 12).

The value of the two principles above is therefore expressed on the principle of ‘Expressive Equivalence of NSMs’, which relates to the universal existence of primitives in all natural languages (Wierzbicka, 1996). The principle holds that the NSMs derived from a variety of languages will have the same expressive power; that is, will “be semantically equivalent” (Wierzbicka, 1996, p. 42). Put in another way, any simple proposition expressible in an NSM based on English will be expressible in an NSM based on simple language that will be accessible by all persons.

The lexicon of NSM theory consists of around 63 lexical items, although—according to Goddard (1997, p. 3)—the semantic primes are proposed by “a great deal of trial-and-error experimentation in diverse areas of semantic analysis” in different languages over the years. Table 1 contains the current inventory of the proposed semantic primes:

Table 1: Inventory of the proposed semantic primes by category (adopted from Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014, p. 12)

Category	Example
1. Substantives:	I-ME, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING-THING
2. Relational substantives:	KIND, PARTS
3. Determiners:	THIS, THE SAME, OTHER ELSE
4. Quantifiers:	ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL, MUCH-MANY, LITTLE-FEW
5. Evaluators:	GOOD, BAD
6. Descriptors:	BIG, SMALL
7. Mental predicates:	KNOW, THINK, WANT, DON’T WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR
8. Speech:	SAY, WORDS, TRUE
9. Actions, events, movement, contact:	DO, HAPPEN, MOVE, TOUCH
10. Location, existence, possession, specification:	BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, BE (SOMEONE)’S, BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING)
11. Life and death:	LIVE, DIE
12. Time:	WHEN-TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT
13. Space:	WHERE-PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE
14. Logical concepts:	NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF
15 Intensifier, augmentor:	VERY, MORE
16. Similarity:	LIKE-AS-WAY

The inventory of semantic primes in Table 1 above is one of the most current, updated in Goddard and Wierzbicka (2014). As the table shows, there is a total of 63 semantic primes, which are categorised into 16 broad parts. The first category among them is Substantives while the last on the list is Similarity. The present paper’s application of the NSM primes, being part of a broader research on the entire categories which may not all be accommodated in this small paper, is delimited to the fifth item, Evaluators, which includes two semantic primes, *viz.* GOOD and BAD. The focus

on evaluators is for the reason that hate speech, as Pohjonen and Udupa (2017, p. 1174) pointed out, is largely evaluative and hence subjective. The Nigerian hate speech, from an earlier pilot study, reflects other exponents of these broad primes. In other words, any expressions used in assessing entities in the discourse as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ fall under the semantic prime of Evaluators.

The paper is a descriptive survey which comprises full manuscripts of hate speech selected from the declarations made by three groups from the three major

(northern, western and eastern) regions of Nigeria. These are obtained from the internet using Google Directory and Radio Biafra media archives. (Biafra was a state in West Africa—made up of the states in the Eastern Region of Nigeria—which existed during Biafra-Nigeria civil war, between 30 May 1967 and January 1970. There has been a resurgence of the secessionist movement by a south-eastern Nigerian group, Biafra Nation Youth League, and their major rhetorical tool is Radio Biafra. Hence, Radio Biafra media archives have become one reliable way of obtaining some hate-inducing speeches targeted at other opposing ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.)

The speeches from Google Directory were subsequently transposed to writing for ease in linguistic analysis, while the speeches from the Radio Biafra archives are already type-written manuscripts. The first speech is The Kaduna Declaration (a joint position paper) presented on Tuesday, June 6, 2017 by Arewa Youth Consultative Forum (AYCF); the second is the Declaration of the Youths of Oduduwa Republic (YOR) on June 10, 2017; and the third is a response by Biafra Nation Youth League (BNYL) aired by Radio Biafra on August 29, 2017. The speeches by the northern (AYCF) and western (YOR) youths are focused on threatening the Igbo (one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria) living in the northern and western parts of Nigeria (ordering them to leave the regions), while that by the eastern (BNYL) is partly a response to the first two but largely focuses on the position of the Igbo regarding the threat to the re-arrest of one of their leaders. The speeches were compiled and presented as one data set, which was analysed using insights from Goddard and Wierzbicka’s (2014) theory of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) and aspects of pragmatic acts as modified in Odebunmi and Oloyede (2016).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Metalinguistic evaluators are observably used in the data as a primary tool through which hate speech users assess their target group or individual. Through specific pragmatic strategies, therefore, they pass their assessment across to the public. In the data, three—out

of the seven pragmatic strategies proposed by Odebunmi and Oloyede (2016)—have been identified; namely, Blunt Condemnation, Unshielded Exposition, and Appeal to Emotion. By Blunt condemnation is meant the way the hate speech users express their displeasure towards the target group or individual (Odebunmi & Oloyede, 2016, p. 269). With this strategy, the hate speech users without mincing words or downplaying their disapproval, directly condemn or criticize the personality of the target group or individual, their activities and everything related to them. The classes of words used to realise this strategy are mainly emotive nouns and adjectives. Unshielded exposition is different from blunt condemnation in that the hate speech users use the former to negatively depict and frame some activities of their target group or individual as bad (Odebunmi & Oloyede, 2016, p. 269). Here, the activities of this set of people are described without any form of mitigation. Through the strategy, the hate speech users intentionally evoke the antecedent activities of the target groups. By evoking the antecedent, the target group or individual is indicted for the crimes of their past leaders (or ancestors). This strategy is realised mainly through noun group modification to accommodate subjective descriptions. The last strategy identified in the data is Appeal to Emotion. Like the name implies, the strategy is basically utilised to draw sentiment and support from the audience (Odebunmi & Oloyede, 2016, p. 270). By this, the hate speech users present themselves and their arguments as credible. This is usually done with the intention of convincing the audience to support the group’s point of view. To achieve this aim, conceptual metaphors and emotive adjectives are largely employed. The three pragmatic strategies will be discussed below with their respective metalinguistic evaluators.

There are explicit uses of metalinguistic evaluators in the data which appear as blunt condemnation with respect to the intentions of the speakers. The evaluators, going by Goddard and Wierzbicka’s (2014) framework, are classified as GOOD and BAD, which are operationalised here as positive evaluation and negative evaluation, respectively. However, only the latter, as Table 2 represents, is observed in blunt condemnation in the data:

Table 2: Blunt condemnation realised through metalinguistic evaluators

S/n	Pragmatic Strategies	Metalinguistic Evaluators	Distribution	Examples
1.	Blunt Condemnation	Positive	Nil	
		Negative	105	Cruel, ingrate

The table confirms that negative evaluators have a very high distribution (105 instances), while there are no occurrences of positive evaluators. That blunt condemnation does not employ any positive evaluator is not surprising because the hate speech producers, in their intent to express their displeasure, are constrained to use only negative evaluators. This preponderance of negative evaluators goes a long way to attest to the fact that “hate speech is a different type of speech that

strategically selects negative lexical items that would be fundamental to the understanding of its intent” (Seitz, 2016, p. 259). The negative evaluators utilised for blunt condemnation in the data have been observed to have two motives; namely, to condemn people’s personalities and people’s activities or positions in the Nigerian political discourse. The hate speech users, in their bid to condemn and show their displeasure towards their targeted group or individual, resort to calling of names,

which are largely characterised by emotive nouns and adjectives. These names are entirely derogatory and betray their underlying hatred for the group or individual. Some of the metalinguistic evaluators are italicised in the extracts below:

Extract 1:

The persistence for the actualization of Biafra by the *unruly* Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria... (Lines 17-18)

Extract 2:

Any leader that functions as one in servility is a *gloried slave*. (line 28)

Extract 3:

Paul Unongo is an *aged fool*! (Line 212)

Different emotive nouns and adjectives are used to subjectively refer to the targeted groups and individuals. In Extract 1, for example, the people of the South-Eastern part of Nigeria known as the Igbo are referred to as “unruly” by the hate speech producer. An unruly person is one who is wild and uncontrolled, and this group is so called because, as used in context, the hate speech users perceive their persistence for the secession of Biafra to be characteristic of a group that lacks control and culture. Aside the adjective, “unruly”, the nominal phrases “glorified slave” and “aged fool” (used in Extracts 2 and 3) appear in a different context. Here, the hate speech user expresses a contemptuous regard for the targeted individual, who is a leader of the group referred to above. This leader is portrayed as one who is insensitive to the need and troubles of his people. For this insensitivity, the hate speech user calls the leader “a gloried slave” and “an aged fool”. These names, to a great extent, reveal the contempt the speaker has for his targeted individual. The leader, by virtue of these names, is represented as lesser than who he really is and thus not deserving of the position he occupies. By calling their targets these derogatory names, the hate speeches tend to evaluate the targets and bluntly condemn their personalities.

Aside people’s personalities, blunt condemnation has equally been used to evaluate people’s activities or

positions in the larger political scene in Nigeria, and emotive adjectives come in mostly handy here. The hate speech users mainly use derogatory adjectives to condemn the activities of their targets as can be observed in the extracts below:

Extract 4:

For Nwodo’s Ohaneze, the move by the Attorney-General of Nigeria to have the Court revoke the bail granted to Nnamdi Kanu is an act in *bad* faith, for it shows that the like(sic) of Unongo is happy that Nigeria operates a *cabal-based* society. (Lines 214-218)

Extract 5:

It is OK to be a fool, but it is *abominable* to be an aged fool. Paul Unongo is an aged fool! (Lines 211-212)

Such metalinguistic evaluators as “bad...”, “cabal-based...” (in Extracts 4) and “abominable...” (in Extract 5) are all exponents of the negative evaluative prime, BAD. As emotive adjectives, they are respectively used in describing the “faith”—with which Nnamdi Kanu (the leader of Biafra Movement) was granted bail, the society—in which Nigeria operates, and being an aged fool. The language producer uses these adjectives to condemn the activities of the leaders in the discourse. While the adjectival items in Extract (4) condemn the action taken by the Attorney-General and Paul Unongo’s (former co-convenor of Northern Elders Forum) alleged feeling, that in Extract (5) further condemns Unongo’s elder statesmanship and leadership position in Nigeria. Let us consider how evaluators are utilized for unshielded exposition.

As earlier pointed out, unshielded exposition mainly assesses and frames the actions of specific discourse participants with a view to revealing some areas that may indict the participants or make them look bad (Odeunmi & Oloyede, 2016). In exposing such actions, the hate speech producers, more often than not overtly negatively evaluate their target. The evaluators used here also fall under the NSM criterion of GOOD (positive) and BAD (negative) as are represented in Table 3:

Table 3: Unshielded exposition realized through metalinguistic evaluators

S/n	Pragmatic Strategy	Metalinguistic Evaluators	Distribution	Examples
1.	Unshielded Exposition	Negative	36	<i>Forceful lockdown, prolonged counter-productive chain of military dictatorship</i>
		Positive	01	<i>Kanu is not the problem in this case but the solution</i>

Within the unshielded exposition strategy (as seen in Table 3), evaluators have 37 occurrences with 36 belonging to the negative category. The only positive evaluator used for unshielded exposition by the hate speakers is observed with the Igbo leader who projects the contribution of the Biafra leader in propagating Igbo inclusion in Nigerian politics. However, considering the insignificant number of positive evaluators here, it can still be said that unshielded exposition is characterised by negative metalinguistic evaluators. This is not

surprising also because just like blunt condemnation, the hate speech users choose their words carefully and aim to identify and deliberately frame selected activities of their opposing or target group as not good. The strategy as earlier hinted, is achieved mainly through the modification of nominal groups to include subjective opinions. When evaluating the activities of target, the hate speech users go about it in two ways. Let us consider the following extracts, the relevant parts of which have been represented in the table below:

Extract 6:

The Igbo are also responsible for Nigeria’s *cultural* and *moral degeneracy* with their *notorious involvement* in all kinds of crimes, including international networking for *drug and human trafficking, violent robberies* and *kidnappings, high-profile prostitution and advanced financial fraud*. (Lines 79-84)

Extract 7:

We wish to make it abundantly clear that we shall no longer tolerate the *madness* of the Igbo region’s *intimidating, harassing* and *defrauding* the Yoruba nation with their *empty calls* for Biafra. (Lines 140-143)

Extract 8:

The *bloodletting herdsmen* ransacked Agatu for a very long period, involving *killing, raping, and destroying*

properties belonging to indigenous farmers and villages. (Lines 261-262)

Table 4 shows the grammatical analyses of some of the clauses in the extracts above. Going by the pragmatic strategy in question, the focus here is on the Complement column, with emphasis on the nominal group modifications (as italicised in the cells). In the nominal group in Extract (6), for example, such metalinguistic evaluators as “cultural and moral degeneracy”, “notorious involvement...”, “international networking ... [negative in this linguistic context]”, “violent robberies and kidnapping”, and “high-profile prostitution and advanced financial fraud” are all exponents of the semantic prime, BAD.

Table 4. Noun group modification showing negative evaluators used for unshielded exposition

	Subject	Predicator	Complement
Extract 6	The Igbo	are	responsible for <i>Nigeria’s cultural and moral degeneracy with their notorious involvement in all kinds of crimes, including international networking for drug and human trafficking, violent robberies and kidnappings, high-profile prostitution and advanced financial fraud</i>
Extract 7	...we	shall ... tolerate	the <i>madness of the Igbo region’s intimidating, harassing and defrauding the Yoruba nation with their empty calls for Biafra</i>
Extract 8	...herdsmen	ransacked	Agatu for <i>a very long period, involving killing, raping, and destroying properties belonging to indigenous farmers and villages</i>

These negative evaluators are chosen not only to depict the alleged actions of the Igbo, but also to frame their general existence and contribution (in the broader Nigeria’s socio-political scene) as bad, and hence not worth allowing the Igbo to continue co-habiting with other regions of Nigeria. In a similar fashion in Extract (7), other evaluators like “intimidating”, “harassing”, and “defrauding”, which are equally of the BAD semantic primitive category, have also been used to modify the initial subjective lead opinion encapsulated in the noun group, “the madness of the Igbo region”. Also, describing the target group’s (Igbo) agitation for secession as “empty calls” implies that the target’s agitation and activities have been evaluated as not only causing a nuisance (as underscored by *intimidating, harassing, and defrauding*), but are also useless and would yield no result. In the same vein, the example in Extract (8), although coming from the opposing Igbo group, takes the same pattern of noun group modification. Specifically, by modifying the noun group (“a very long period”) with such negative evaluators as “killing”, “raping” and “destroying”, a clearer picture is allegedly created with respect to exposing the kind of atrocities “the bloodletting herdsmen” perpetrated on Agatu kingdom. Revealing the activities of their target (northern herdsmen) and framing the target with such negative evaluators tend to serve as a justification for the hate speech producer’s continued call for Biafra secession.

Another way through which people’s personalities and actions have been framed to look bad is the inclusion of linguistic quantification to mark the oddity of the ‘negative’ activities perpetrated. This

quantification is usually placed within the linguistic context of negative evaluation. Some recurrent markers of quantification found in the data include *reliving* and *first*. Let us observe their strategic patterns and uses in the texts below:

Extract 9:

The Igbo people of the 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 agitation that led to the very *first* bloody insurrection in Nigeria’s history. (Lines 97-101)

Extract 10:

The cruel Igbo have done and are doing more damage to our collective nationhood than any other ethnic group; being responsible for the *first* violent interference with democracy in Nigeria resulting in a prolonged counter-productive chain of military dictatorship. (Lines 82-86)

From the above extracts, it can be seen that the present Igbo (being ordered to exit from the northern region) are indicted for the alleged crimes of their predecessors. In Extract (9), for example, by placing the linguistic item “reliving” within the co-text of “boldly” (which is in this negative context associated with ‘remorselessness’ and ‘shamelessness’), the Igbo are evaluated and framed as a people who have been in the character of disturbing the peace of other tribes in Nigeria. A similar pattern is also observed with the use of “first” (in Extracts 9 and 10). Collocating “first” with “bloody insurrection” (in Extract 9) and “violent interference” (in Extract 10) is what Crystal (1999, p. 343) refers to as saying the same thing in different

ways. The lexical item “first”, in isolation, does not have any negative meaning. However, within this linguistic context of having not experienced a “violent” or “bloody” crime before, “first” brings an intensifying attribute to the negative semantic primes, because it does not relate to the frequency of occurrence of the crime, but to the oddity of having that kind of crime in the Nigerian history.

Contrary to blunt condemnation and unshielded

exposition which help the hate speech producers to assess their target’s personalities and frame their actions using largely negative evaluators, appeal to emotion utilises mainly positive semantic evaluators in favour of the hate speakers themselves. Observably, this strategy is often used to present an impressionistic image of hate speakers or their group in the data. The metalinguistic evaluators realised through this strategy are represented in the table below:

Table 5: Appeal to emotion realised through metalinguistic evaluators

S/n	Pragmatic Strategy	Metalinguistic Evaluators	Distribution	Examples
1.	Appeal to Emotion	Negative	04	Lazy
		Positive	28	Law-abiding

The table reveals that appeal to emotion is indexed more by positive evaluators (28 instances) than negative evaluators, which are insignificantly used in the data to appeal to the emotion of the audience. Positive evaluators predominate here because this strategy aligns with one of the chief motives of hate speech producers; namely, “to present themselves, their group and position in good light in order to gain credibility to criticize others” (Smith, 2010, p. 59). Like the negative evaluators, the positive evaluators here also have emotive nouns/adjectives and metaphors as their predominant lexical indices. In the following extracts, some positive evaluators utilised for appeal to emotion can be examined:

Extract 11:

If you want to live within the Oduduwa Republic, you must henceforth shut up, shut down your agitation for Biafra, respect us as a *sovereign people, your loving and accommodating hosts* and choose to live in peace with us. (Lines 115-118)

Extract 12:

Oduduwa lineage is *never a cowardly race*, we only *don’t react intuitively*. (Line 121)

Extract 13:

Someone should tell me why Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, *the peacemaker and superman of our time*, should not be treated as *thin god*? (Lines 201-202)

The first two extracts (11 and 12) are produced by the Oduduwa (western Nigerian) youth while the last extract (13) is a response to some of the issues raised in the first two. Such metalinguistic items as “sovereign”, “loving and accommodating” (In Extract 11), “never a cowardly—meaning *brave*”, “don’t react intuitively—meaning *calculative*” (in Extract 12), “peacemaker and superman of our time”, and “thin—understood in this context as *homegrown*” (in Extract 13) are all positive evaluators of the semantic primitive, GOOD. While metalinguistic evaluators in the first two extracts feature more of emotive adjectives, the ones in third extract are examples of metaphor. By choosing the mental verbs, “loving and accommodating” (in Extract 12), which positively appeal to the ‘sensors’ (the audience), the (western Nigerian) Oduduwa Republic are presented as credible. In a similar fashion, to positively present the

Biafran leader—Nnamdi Kanu to the audience (in Extract 13), for example, the metaphorical items “peacemaker and superman”, sourced from two domains of ‘peace’ and ‘bravery’, are brought in to sell the leader’s personality.

Aside positive evaluators, few instances of negative metalinguistic evaluators have also been used to appeal to people’s emotion. Like their positive counterparts, negative evaluators here are found to be indexed by emotive adjectives. The text below exemplifies some cases that cannot go unnoticed in the data:

Extract 14:

Our people are lazy and beggarly as you will always claim, yes, I know; but you cannot divorce me and still insist on sleeping with me forever, it cannot just work. You divorce me, you go your way and allow somebody else who values me, who will not be abusing and cursing me every day of my life to move in and occupy the space. (Lines 4-10)

The extract above is taken from the portion of the hate speech produced by the (northern) Arewa youths against the (eastern) Igbo living in the northern part of Nigeria. Such emotive adjectives as “lazy” and “beggarly” are negative evaluators belonging to the semantic prime, BAD. These semantic primes are accommodated by the speaker as a negative assessment of his group/tribe. This negative assessment is however mitigated by including the clause, “as you will always claim”, which links it to the usual regard (by most Nigerians) that most northern youths are indolent. According to Omozuwa and Ezejideaku (2009), the strategy of self-evaluating oneself negatively, or accommodating other people’s negative opinions about oneself, adds a modest outlook, which boosts the credibility of the language user (p. 49). Hence, the hate speech producer here deploys the negative evaluators to draw the sentiments of the public on the fact that his tribe are still accommodating and fruitful to many other tribes in Nigeria (particularly the Igbo), against the erroneous belief that his tribesmen are believed to be “lazy” and “beggarly”. The positive sides of the speaker’s people, clearly implied in the subsequent part of the extract, are probably what attract the Igbo so dearly to the north.

CONCLUSION

In the present paper, we have accounted for the metalinguistic evaluators that mark hate speech in Nigeria and discussed the pragmatic strategies through which the evaluators are deployed. Selecting hate speech manuscripts produced by three groups (i.e. AYCF, YOR, and BNYL) from three (northern, western, and eastern, respectively) regions of Nigeria, and analyzing them through insights from the NSM theory and aspects of pragmatic acts, the paper first establishes that hate speech in Nigeria is not unconnected to the inherent socio-political rivalries and distrust amongst the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. It also reveals two categories of metalinguistic evaluators, positive (GOOD) and negative (BAD) evaluators; and these are associated with three pragmatic strategies; namely, blunt condemnation (assessing the target groups' personality/positions as bad), unshielded exposition (framing the activities of the target groups as bad), and appeal to emotion (drawing the sentiments of the audience to support the hate speech producers). While the assessing and framing strategies largely utilise negative evaluators in initiating hate on target groups, the sentiment drawing strategy largely employs positive evaluators in advancing the image of the hate-speech producing group in the eyes of the audience. With these findings, the study adds to the research line of the NSM which is unduly steeped in language typology between English and other languages. It also moves existing studies on violence-inducing texts a step forward, especially in providing a pragmatic explanation to the proliferation of hate crimes in Nigeria and many parts of Africa. If similar studies are carried out on other forms of violence-inducing texts using other semantic primes (aside evaluators applied here), a holistic linguistic database and critical meta-language can be provided for the teaching of hate-related language and crime.

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