

Hate Speech as a Form of Aggression in Nigeria Politics: A Speech Act and P-Crafting Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Hate speech in Nigeria is a complex and multifaceted issue that has been prevent since the country's independence it's often used as a form of verbal aggression, fueled by factors like ethnicity, religion and party politics. This study aimed at exploring the significance of hate speeches used in Nigeria campaigns; to highlight the linguistic elements deployed to communicate hate speeches. the data for the study was collected from print media (Newspapers). The research was conducted using descriptive method to describe the hate speeches used by politicians against their opponents. The choice of this methodology was borne out of the fact that it is interested in describing and analyzing certain variables of interest. The theoretical framework for this study hinges on the speech act theory of Austin (1962) and Searl's (1969) model and P-crafting by leech. Form the analysis, it was found that the representative category of illocution is on the high side. This implies that politicians and other actors of hate speech use this act to state, claim, and assert propositions which are born out of their hate against other political opponents. The study concludes that hate speech is a contemporary existential threat bedeviling Nigeria's election and its prevalent tendencies is becoming worrisome. The study, therefore, recommends that political leaders should always engage one another, the citizens organizations and civil servants with enlightenment programmes for proper understanding of the government activities and plan towards a change of attitude.

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KEYWORDS: Political Campaigns, Hate Speeches, Speech Act, P-Crafting and Politics

INTRODUCTION

Language is a unique attribute of humans., chiefly as a medium of communication for building interpersonal relationships, exchange of ideas and passing of information. It is formidable instrument of communication by which human experiences is analyzed (Martinat, 1970, p.20; Ataman 2023, P.2; Olurunleke, 2023, P.1) as a system of communication, it does not exist in a vacuum but operates in a context of a situation.

Language performs different functions for different groups or individuals in different contexts it can be likened to a two-edged sword, which can make a society to be tranquil and free from terror, abuse or war. On the other hand, it can serve the purpose of stimulating war, chaos, anarchy and protest (Sepuruchi et al. 2020 P.96). Due to the power and functions of language, it is used in all human endeavors. It can appear in form of text, talk or gestures. For Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2010),

language is a medium through which humans share their ideas, feelings, emotions and desire in form of context vocal or written symbols.

Language is employed in virtually every aspect of human enterprise. One of such areas where language is employed is politics. Man as a political animal uses speech or language to indicate what is just and unjust (Aristottle 1932; Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012) and by so doing, forms a political society (Appaclora, 1975). In essence, one of the things that make man a political animal is the ability to discern what is good and evil.

Politics is struggle for power in order to put certain political, economic and social ideas into practice (Bryan 2015, P.23) politics is concerned with the power to make decisions, control resources, control other people's behaviour and at times control their values. In this process, language plays crucial role for

every political action is prepared, accompanied, influenced and played by language.

A political campaign is a strategic mechanism created by political parties to influence the opinions and possible decisions of a group of people. In a democratic setting, political campaigns are aimed at consolidating political representation by political parties of (Oduala & Adeago 2019, P.156).

A political campaign is as old as human civilization and is necessitated by the need for a structure that promotes political activities within societies. It is conscious effort of someone or individuals who seek the support of public or group of people to win an electoral contest. Grace, (2015) opines that “in politics, campaigns have become an essential (tools amongst candidates contesting for various positions to get the electorates to vote for them” (Ojekwe, 2015). The politics of a country is heavily affected as activities and issues are brought to the fore for the public interest. A political campaign is a step in the electoral process of any country and it foreshadows the actual voting process.

According to Mrabure (2016) hate speech is commonly used to describe any message that disparages a specific person or a group of people. Hate speech can be in the form of speech, gesture, behaviour, writing, or display. On the bases of this, politically motivated hate speech is generally an antecedent to election related provocation and violence in Nigeria. Essentially, such speeches rob others of their dignity. Therefore, United Nation (2016) highlighted that hate speech includes: a) all dissemination of ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, by whatever means; (b) incitement to hatred, contempt or discrimination against members of a group on grounds of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin; (c) threats or incitement to violence against persons or groups on the grounds in (b) above; (d) expression of insults, ridicule or slander of persons or groups or justification of hatred, contempt or discrimination on the grounds in (b) above, when it clearly amounts to incitement to hatred or discrimination; and (e) participation in organizations and activities which promote and incite racial discrimination.

Hate speech to Kukah (2015), is any communication that denigrates a particular person or a group on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, or other characteristics. It can be in the form of any speech, gesture or conduct, writing or display, and usually marks incitement, violence, or prejudices against an individual or a group. It is a speech that employs discriminatory epithets to insult and stigmatize others

on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other forms of group membership (Adibe, 2015). In the Nigerian context, hate speech includes acts of insulting people for their religion, abusing people for their ethnic or linguistic affliction, and expressing contempt against people because of their place of origin (Umar, 2015. P.5).

To me as the researcher, hate speech is a deliberate malicious, unjustified and unstained effort to damage the reputation or the credibility of an individual. It is the slandering of a person, usually to destroy his/her public confidence. Hate speech is the act of lowering other individuals in a bit to ruin the character and acceptability of that individual. This destructive phenomenon has been a pandemic found everywhere in our society. From the foregoing definitions, it suffices to align with the thought of a political scientist and media commentator, Adibe (2015) that hate speech is a catalyst for violence and that it is very doubtful if there would be hate-motivated violent attack anywhere without hate speech and the hatred that it purveys. Nigeria as a democratic state has an active political culture and conducts, intensive presidential campaigns which are often content and context-based. Against this backdrop the study does a speech acts and P-crafting analysis of selected hate speeches in Nigeria between the period of 2010 and 2023 general elections.

Statement of the Research Problem

The proliferation of hate speech in Nigeria's political landscape has become a pressing concern and worrisome as it results in violence and aggression. It is often used as a form of verbal aggression fueled by factors like ethnicity, religion and part politics, thereby undermining democratic processes. Previous studies on political discourse in Nigeria have focused on multimodality general stylistic and Text linguistics among other.

For instance, Oduola and Adeagbo's (2019) study centres on Pragma-Semiotic Analysis of selected speeches in 2015 and 2019 Nigerian presidential campaign adverts using Jacob Mey's (2002) pragmatic acts theory and Kres and Van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal discourse approach to provide ground work for the study. Mathew and Chinwe (2017) explore the relationship verbal hygiene, hate speech and society, with emphasis on politeness principles in pragmatics while Al-Faki Ibrahim Mohammed explores the political speeches of some African leaders from a linguistics perspective. The theoretical framework adopted for the study was M.A.K Halliday's "Transitivity" H.P Grice's speech Act Theory.

The above studies are scholarly ground breaking efforts which focused extensively on multi-modal and mono-modal discourse analysis of hate speeches. The present study, therefore adopted speech Acts Analysis theory using Austin (1962) and Searle's (1969) models p-crafting by leech some political n Nigeria examines how hate speech is used as a tool for political manipulation intimidation and control.

Aims of the study

The study aims at investigating the manifestation of hate speeches in political campaign as a form of verb aggression in the country's politics. The specific objectives are;

1. To explore the significance of hate speeches used in Nigeria campaigns
2. To ascertain what kind of hate speeches used by politicians
3. To highlight the linguistic elements deployed to communicate hate speeches
4. To discuss the pragmatic effects of speech acts used to convey speeches in selected Nigerian campaigns.

Significance of the Study

The study is a contribution to linguistic scholarship in multimodality through discourse analysis for meaning making. Apart from exposing hate speech among Nigerian politicians and pragmatics acts in hate speeches, the study seeks to enlighten Nigerians vis-à-vis politicians leaders at various levels. It is expected that academic, students and scholars will immensely gain fresh insight on political speech analysis and pragmatic acts theory as applied to communicates within the Nigeria political space.

In conclusion, finding will boost nation building processes and help to stimulate further studies on hate speeches in Nigeria political space

Conceptual Meaning of Hate Speech

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In conclusion, hate speeches, lead to lower personal self-esteem and a diminished sense of security with short- and long-term consequence which are similar in nature to the effects of other type of traumatic experience (Kiai, 2007; Malik, 2015). "It seeks to create hatred and violence. It could come in term of advertorials and sponsored political news; abusive editorial comments or opinion that denigrate individuals or groups on account of disability, race, ethnicity, tribe, gender or belief". The volatile nature of the nation's ethno-social, cultural and religious complexity makes it fertile soil for hate speech of all kinds to thrive. It is therefore, rewarding to attempt a study of this kind that can bring about national unity, peace and development.

Empirical Works on Hate Speech

Various scholars have conducted in the sub-fields of social, media, legal and political discourse of hate speech. Akinwotu (2015) explores a speech act analysis of the acceptance of nomination speeches of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief M.K.O Abiola

using Austin's (1962) speech Act Theory and Searle (1979). The illocutionary acts of assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative were employed for the analysis of data. The study was concluded on the note that unlike presidential inaugural speeches acceptance (of nomination) speeches were mostly used as mobilization strategies in political campaigns where it was necessary for candidates to persuade their listeners towards a desired goal of winning elections.

Fiberesima et al., (2021) examine social media and hate speech with a view to looking at its implications for social-political stability in Rivers State. His findings revealed that those that propagate hate speech are usually elected officials, political parties and candidates for elective position, opinion makers and civil society officials.

In a similar vein, Rasaq et al., (2017) stressed on the incessant nature of hate speech in Nigeria and implicate the Nigerian media as being responsible for its widespread. The study premised on a critical discourse analysis of hate speech during campaigns which is a likely cause of violence during elections in Nigeria. The study is of the opinion that hate speeches should be discouraged for the development and unity of Nigeria.

Again, Fasekin, Oyero and Oysomi (2017) evaluate the impact of hate speech in electioneering and choice of voters' candidate based on perception before, during and after the election. The study focus on hate speeches in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria underpinned to the social responsibility theory, which delineates on the role of the media and social values as a benchmark for an effective electoral process. Their study concludes with a recommendation of capital punishment for erring media outlets who propagate hate speeches which is detrimental to the democracy in Nigeria.

From the foregoing, it can be established that a sizeable number of researches has been conducted on hate speech, though extremely from the Critical Discourse Analytical standpoint, but insufficient studies on Speech Act, and P-crafting analysis of hate speech. The study intends to fill the gap and also exceed the purview of the above critics.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Linguistic theories have different opinions about language in relation to its components, analysis, and functions. Against this background, the theory on which this study hinges is the speech act theory using Austin (1962) and Searle's (1969) models. The reason for the choice of this theory as a framework is born out of the fact that people perform different actions

through their words and when utterances are made, a particular act is performed. It is intended in this study to explore the different acts performed in the selected hate speeches based on the speech act classifications of Austin and Searle.

As a subfield of Pragmatics, Speech Act Theory propounded by J. L. Austin (1962) and J. R. Searle (1969) expounds how speech act exemplifies action or outcome. In some examples of utterances, Austin (1962: P. 6) explains that an utterance (sentence) is not merely to describe or state what is being done. It is to doing it. What it means is that words match with action. This he proposed to call a "Performative Sentence/Utterance or just a Performative" which is derived from the verb to perform or act. Austin (1962: P.12), therefore, assumes that to say something is to do something. This is because language use is premised on the performance or action. Searle (1979: 22) on his part averred that a theory of language as part of a theory of action is correct. This is because our speech act is a form of rule-governed behaviour. According to Searle (1969. P.16) linguistic communication involves linguistic acts and when one speaks language, one is performing speech acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, and so on. Therefore, according to Searle (1965), there are various acts associated with what a speaker utters. Speech acts are classified into three which include locutionary acts (utterance/meaningful expression), illocutionary acts (the function of what the speaker intends by his utterance), and perlocutionary acts (the effect the utterance has on the hearer). The illocutionary act is the most important of them and given more focus. Against Austin's (1962) taxonomy of speech act, Searle (1976) identifies six weaknesses in Austin's taxonomy of the Illocutionary Act and identifies twelve dimensions in which Illocutionary Acts differ from one another. Among them, the most important which include Illocutionary point, direction of fit, and sincerity condition or psychological state, form the base of his taxonomy against that of Austin. Thus, Searle's alternative taxonomy of illocutionary acts includes representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations as Illocutionary points or dimensions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study is descriptive survey approach which accounts for qualitative findings. With this, the content analysis of the date for adequate interpretation, description and presentation of selected hate speeches should be enhanced in order to feed on the two theories, speeches act theory and P-Crafting approach. The

study thus adopts a purposively sampled five hate speeches selected from various fora. The natural speech forms were generated from the political jousting between 2010 and 2023 presidential campaigns speeches of the three dominant political parties peoples democratic party, (PDP), All

Progressives Congress (APC) and Labour party (LP). The data are to subject to speech act and P-Crafting analysis, the selected sample speech-texts are laid out and sequentially speech-texts are laid out and sequentially numbered as Hs1 to Hs5 i.e (Hate speech 1-5) for easy of reference.

DATE PRESENTATION/ANALYSIS

S/N	Year	Hate Speaker	Hate Speech	Source
1	2011	General Muhammed Buhari, candidate for president of Congress for progressive change	Hopefully, something will happen by the year 2015. If they don't hold a free and fair election, they'll be in a big trouble. The dog and the baboon would be drenched in blood if what happened in 2011 happened again in 2015	Vanguard Newspaper 15/05/12
2	2014	Asiwaju bola Tinubu	A rig and roast is in store. We don't need to go to court; we can just chase them away	Tell, 7/7/14
3	2015	Ayo Fasyosa	Nigerian be warned. I have set before you life and death. Therefore, choose life that both you your seed may live. Will you allow history to repeat itself? Enough of state burial. Nigerians vote wisely vote Goodluck Jonathan	Puch newspaper
4	2023	Chris Agwu	Buhari government is a calamity that befell the Nigeria state	AIT News Paper Review
5	2023	PDP/LP Loyalist	Emi lo kon Emi lo kan Baba wen well E day shout Emi lo kan Hand dey shake Leg dey shake Baba wen no well E day shout Emi lo kan.	

Analysis of Data

Text 1: *Hopefully, something will happen by the year 2015.*

If they don't hold a free and fair election, they'll be in a big trouble. The dog and the baboon would be drenched in blood if what happened in 2011 happened again in 2015

The statement "Hopefully, something will happen by the year 2015. If they don't hold a free and fair election, they will be big trouble. The dog and the baboon would be drenched in blood if what happened in 2011 happened again in 2015" can be analyzed using speech act theory and p-crafting.

Speech Act Analysis

The statement consists of three distinct speech acts:

- **Expression of Hope:** The first part of the statement, "Hopefully, something will happen by the year 2015," expresses a desire for a positive outcome.

- **Warning:** The second part of the statement, "If they don't hold a free and fair election, they will be big trouble," serves as a warning, emphasizing the consequences of not holding a free and fair election.

- **Threat:** The third part of the statement, "The dog and the baboon would be drenched in blood if what happened in 2011 happened again in 2015," is a threat, implying violent consequences if the situation repeats itself.

P-Crafting Analysis

From a p-crafting perspective, this statement can be seen as an example of negative face, where the speaker is expressing a negative opinion about the potential consequences of not holding a free and fair election.¹ The use of the phrase "big trouble" and the metaphor "The dog and the baboon would be drenched in blood" reinforce this interpretation. The statement can also be seen as an example of bald on-record strategy, where the speaker is making a direct and unmitigated statement about the consequences of

not holding a free and fair election.² However, this statement can also be seen as impolite, as it makes a sweeping generalization about the potential consequences and implies violence.

Text 2: *A rig and roast is in store.*

*We don't need to go to court;
we can just chase them away
Let's dive into the Speech Acts
Analysis of the statement.*

The statement "It's going to be rig and roast. We are prepared not to go to court but drive them out" can be broken down into several speech acts.

- **Locutionary Act:** The literal meaning of the statement describes a situation where the speaker and their group are prepared to take action against someone or something, using the phrases "rig and roast" and "drive them out".
- **Illocutionary Act:** The speaker's intention is to:
 - Express determination and readiness to take action.
 - Warn the opposition or adversaries.
 - Declare their refusal to engage in legal processes ("not go to court").
- **Illocutionary Force:** The statement has a strong directive and commissive force, conveying the speaker's commitment to action.
- **Perlocutionary Effect:** The intended effect is to:
 - Intimidate or deter the opposition.
 - Inspire confidence and solidarity among the speaker's group.
 - Create a sense of urgency and confrontation.

This statement can be classified as a Directive Speech Act, as it directs the audience to prepare for action, and a Commissive Speech Act, as it commits the speaker to a course of action. In the context of Nigerian politics, this statement may serve as a rallying cry or a warning to political opponents, emphasizing the speaker's willingness to take drastic measures to achieve their goals.³

P-Crafting Analysis

The statement "It's going to be rig and roast. We are prepared not to go to court but drive them out" exhibits several p-crafting strategies:

- **Bald on-Record:** The speaker makes direct and unmitigated statements about their intentions and actions.
- **Threat:** The phrase "drive them out" is a threat, implying forceful removal or confrontation.
- **Negative Face:** The speaker expresses a strong negative opinion about the potential rigging and the opposing party.

- **Confrontational Tone:** The use of words like "rig" and "roast" creates a confrontational tone, indicating a sense of aggression and hostility.
- **Group Identity:** The speaker uses the pronoun "we," emphasizing group identity and solidarity.

Overall, the statement employs a range of p-crafting strategies to convey a strong sense of opposition, confrontation, and determination.

Text 3: *Nigerian be warned. I have set before you life and death. Therefore choose life that both you your seed may live. Will you allow history to repeat itself? Enough of state burial. Nigerians vote wisely vote Goodluck Jonathan*

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Overall, the statement employs a range of p-crafting strategies to convey a strong sense of opposition, confrontation, and determination.

Text 4: *Buhari government is a calamity that befell the Nigeria state*

The statement is an example of a negative assertion, where the speaker expresses a strong negative opinion about Buhari's impact on Nigeria. The use of the word "calamity" emphasizes the severity of the speaker's criticism.

P-Crafting

From a p-crafting perspective, this statement employs several strategies:

- **Bald On-Record:** The speaker makes a direct and unmitigated statement about Buhari's impact on Nigeria
- **Negative Face:** The speaker expresses a strong negative opinion about Buhari, which may be perceived as impolite or confrontational.
- **Emphasis:** The use of the word "calamity" adds emphasis to the speaker's criticism, making it more forceful and attention-grabbing.

Overall, the statement is a strong criticism of Buhari's leadership and its impact on Nigeria, employing direct and forceful language to convey the speaker's negative opinion.

Text 4: Emi lo kon

Emi lo kan
Baba wen well
E day shout
Emi lo kan
Hand dey shake
Leg dey shake
Baba wen no well
E day shout
Emi lo kan.

The statement "Emi lo kan. Baba wen well E dey shout Emi lo kan" can be broken down into several speech acts:

- **Assertion:** The repeated phrase "Emi lo kan" (I'm the one who knows) is an assertion, expressing

confidence and certainty about one's knowledge or abilities.

- **Description:** The phrases "Hand dey shake Leg dey shake" are descriptions, vividly portraying physical symptoms or reactions.
- **Attribution:** The phrase "Baba wen well E dey shout" attributes a behavior (shouting) to someone (Baba), possibly expressing surprise or emphasis.

P-Crafting Analysis

From a p-crafting perspective, this statement employs several strategies:

- **Bald on-record:** The speaker makes direct and unmitigated statements about their knowledge and abilities.
- **Positive Face:** The speaker attempts to build a positive self-image by asserting their confidence and certainty.
- **Emphasis:** The repetition of "Emi lo kan" and the use of vivid descriptions ("Hand dey shake Leg dey shake") emphasize the speaker's point and create a sense of urgency or importance.
- **Informal Tone:** The use of colloquial language and expressions (e.g., "Emi lo kan", "Baba wen well") creates an informal tone, possibly indicating a sense of familiarity or shared knowledge with the audience.

Summary of Findings

This study has aimed primarily at identifying the speech acts and P-crafting that manifest in the five purposively selected hate speeches made by politicians and political players. The basic findings of this study began with the introduction of this study where language was seen as a social-political issue and a centrality to political stability or polarization. Scheffler (2015) opines that words are poisonous and they are catalyst wars. The speech Act Theory of Austin (1962) and Scarle (1969) and P-Crafting by Leech serve as the theoretical framework for the analysis of data. The choice of this framework was necessitated because it captures the objectives of this study.

This study, so far, investigate hate speech as a form of aggression in Nigerian political landscape. We discovered from the study, that in the process of performing a partials speech act, other acts are being performed through p-crafting. The analysis and the interpretation of the acts has don deep into meanings and has enabled the understanding of various communicative functions performed in the process of making a political hate speech, thereby the understanding of the speeches clear and simple. We

have also discovered that hate speech is characterized by different pragmatic acts such as condemning act, warning act, cautioning act, challenging act and accusing act. It study revealed that political hate speech in Nigeria perform both explicit and implicit function with the primary goal of attacking and threatening opposition.

Conclusion

In Nigeria; hate statement aimed at wining political power sparked violence and weekend democratic consolidation via the institution. Ethnic and religion intolerance have contributed to a dramatic increase in election violence in Nigeria from 2011 to date because of the country's political and social climate of intolerance. Political campaign of column, defamation condemnation and outright disrespect of opposition political parties in the country have become the order of the day, despite the country legal frameworks prohibiting hate speeches; still, this violence-inciting act has continued to permeate every nook and cranny of the county unabated as offenders commit the crime with utmost impunity by undermining the rules and regulations guiding the game of politics in Nigeria.

Recommendation

From the finding, the following recommendations are made.

- Those in authority must be careful of what they do especially in a democratic setting where freedom of speech and other enactments that allow other people to air their views about the running of the government exist.
- There must be enough transparency in the operations of the leaders to enable them to persuade the citizens about the activities of the government.
- The leaders should create channels where they can receive truthful and unbiased feedback to guide them in their administration.
- The government should always engage the citizens, organizations and civil societies with enlightenment program about government policies

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