

THE DISCURSIVE PRODUCTIONS OF IDENTITIES IN *TOMBOLA* NIGHT INTERACTIONS IN THE NIGERIAN ARMY

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Abstract

Tombola Night interaction is often being organised for soldiers to make them relax and socialise after some period of regimentation. Despite the avalanche of studies on army discourses, those directly related to *Tombola* Night interaction, and its associated identity, are scanty. This, therefore, constitutes the gap that the present study attempts to fill. The Theoretical Frameworks adopted for the study are Wodak's (2009) model of Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Grammar of M.A.K Halliday (1961, 1994). The data, which were collected through Audio Tape Recorder, comprise oral communication of soldiers of the Nigerian Army during *Tombola* Night interaction, held at both officers' and Sergeants' messes of 2 Division Nigerian Army, Ibadan, in 2021. The data, which were subjected to descriptive/qualitative analytical method, reveal balanced social life identity and two associated activities: *game of ticket* and *bottom plate*, which are indexed with lexical repetition/reiteration and intonation cues. Thus, there is a nexus between the identity constructed in the *Tombola* Night interaction and the linguistic forms that characterise it, the attendant consequence of which could promote the building of the much needed civil-military relationship

The Discursive Productions of Identities in...

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Introduction

In the Nigerian Army, some activities that are not really core and critical to the profession are often being organised for soldiers. These activities are meant to make them relax and socialise after some period of regimentation. One of such activities is *Tombola Night* which serves as an avenue for members of the Nigerian Army to interact with their immediate community in order to create a cordial atmosphere, thereby building the much needed civil-military relationship.

At this event, activities such as *game of ticket*, *bottom plate*, *comedy* and *cultural displays* feature prominently at the event. These activities are meant to evoke laughter in the addressees, to keep them emotionally stable after some period of regimentation. For effective security deployments.. Therefore, the Nigerian Army should not only be seen or portrayed in terms of gallantry, but as a profession laden with social life, aiming at strengthening military relation with the Public.

It is worthy of note that, studies on identity construction in discourse are numerous. However, those directly related to the *Tombola Night* interaction of the Nigerian Army are scanty. These studies include Qaiwer (2016) that is premised on the study of the construction of identity and self-presentation strategies in the discourse of the former President of the United States of America, Barack Hussein Obama. Bernstein (2005) which centres on a review on identity politics; Zaporizhzhya (2021) examines national identity in the discourse of political elites of Poland and Hungary. Al-Mulla (2019) investigates moral order, narratives, power and solidarity, and religious identity in family discourse in Saudi Arabia.; Johnson's (2009) discursive construction of teacher identities in a research interview; Rezai, Samar and Kiany's (2020) exploration of identity representation strategies in English and Persian political discourse, among others.

Besides, despite the fact that numerous studies have been conducted on the Nigerian Army discourse, the ones that directly related to the *Tombola Night* interaction of the Nigerian Army and the negotiation and production of identities, from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis are scanty. Some of these studies are

Ogundele's (2020) discourse issues and contextual constraints in the workshop interaction among the Nigerian military officers, Ogundele and Akinwotu's (2020) morphological examination of the Nigerian Army talks, Okpeadua and Ogundele (2018) that examines the lexico-semantic study of interactions among Nigerian Army officers and men, Ogundele's (2016) language and style in the Nigerian Army parade interaction, Ogundele (2016) that interrogates the context of Nigerian Military parade interaction, Ogundele (2015) which investigates the context and intention in the Nigerian Army parade interaction, and so on.

This neglect, therefore, has prevented sufficient means of projecting the social aspect of life of the Military, especially the Army to the outside world. Thus, this has created a gap, in that existing studies have not been able to account for the context-driven social activities that conditioned the production of identities of soldiers during their interactions at *Tombola Night*. Also, such studies have not been able to provide sufficient explanations about the implications of not projecting the social aspect of life of the Nigerian soldiers to the outside world. The Nigerian soldiers are thus projected as lacking interactional and social relationship with the civilians, and being unnecessarily strict, wicked and tough, thereby, downplaying the much touted military-civil relations in the Nigerian Army, a necessity for effective security deployment to contain insurrection of any form. These gaps have, thus, prevented a full understanding of the totality of professional life of the Nigerian soldiers as effective security personnel in defending the territorial integrity of the nation and respond to the international engagement without jeopardising the much expected civil-military relation aspect of their profession.

Since the social image of the Army, as an institution, is critical to safeguarding the nation from external and internal aggression, it is expedient, therefore, to interrogate the social identity of the personnel, through relevant speeches negotiated in the quasi-asymmetrical power contexts, the linguistics resources that characterise them, and their

significance on the image of the Nigerian Army, nationally and internationally.

It is against this background that we conduct this study. Consequently, this study examines the discursive production of identities in the Nigerian Army *Tombola* Night interactions from the perspective of the model of Wodak's 2009 Critical Discourse Analysis.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study examines the context-driven discursive negotiation of identities in *Tombola* Night interactions in the Nigerian Army. This is with a view to, identify the type of identity negotiated in the *Tombola* Night interactions and its associated activities by Nigerian soldiers, describe the linguistic forms that index the identities in *Tombola* Night interactions, and examine the implications of this identity to Nigeria and the World.

Identity Construction: An Overview

Identity in discourse, generally, is defined as “the sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality” (Oxford English Dictionary online version). Alternatively, Djité (2006:6) says that “identity is the everyday word for people's sense of who they are”. Kroskrity (1999) adds that identity is defined as the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories, saying that though other non-linguistic criteria may also be significant, language and communication often provide important and, sometimes, crucial criteria by which members both define their group and are defined by others.

Two types of identity have been distinguished: *the personal* and *the collective* (Baggioni and Kasbarian, 1996). They submit that “identification” is the process of linking the former (the personal) to the latter (the collective). In this light, Duszak's (2002) says that collective identity is privileged, mainly under the name of “social

identity”, which is, “that part of an individual's self-concept that came from knowledge of his/her membership in a social group, together with emotional significance attached to it” (p.2). The element of membership to a group is also salient in Kroskrity's definition when he says “Identity is defined as the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories” (Kroskrity, 1999:111), indicating that the former is the construction of the latter by linguistic means. This means that identities are projected, enacted or pass across through the instrumentality of language. This position aligns with Versluys, who has earlier expounded the important roles that language and discourse play in the enactment of identity, when he opines that, it is language that gives us the tools to construct and reshape our identities. Davies and Harré (1990) claim that the “self” is constituted through the processes of social interaction. In other words, identity is conceptualized as “the set of verbal practices through which persons assemble and display who they are while in the presence of, and in interaction with, others” (Hadden and Lester, 1978: 331). This identity nomenclature construes the assumption that, identity is neither a given nor a product (De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg, 2006). Rather, identity is a process that (1) takes place in concrete and specific interactional occasions (2) yields constellations of identities instead of individual, monolithic constructs (3) does not simply emanate from the individual, but results from processes of negotiation, and contextualization (Bauman and Briggs 1990) that are eminently social, and (4) entails “discursive work” (Zimmerman and Wieder 1970). This notion of identity would feed this study.

Recent scholarship has also emphasized that identity is a process that is always embedded in social practices (Foucault, 1984) within which discourse practices (Fairclough, 1989) have a central role. Fairclough (1989), therefore, contends that both social and discourse practices frame, and in many ways, define the way individuals and groups present themselves to others, negotiate roles, and conceptualize themselves, as is the case of *Tombola* Night in the Nigerian Army.

History of Tombola

Tombola Night interaction is often being organised for soldiers to make them relax and socialise after some period of regimentation. Piero (2017) submits that *Tombola* was originated in Italy. This event coincides with the Christmas Day. According to him, this occasion is an affair in every household when everybody in the family gathered around the table to catch fun. When the dishes have been cleared away, after lunch, an odd assortment of objects take the place of the dishes and prepare to play *tombola* which is a game analogous to bingo. He contends that the most commonly played form of the *tombola* game is the Neapolitan version throughout the country, and this requires a “cartellone”, or game board with squares containing all the numbers from 1 to 90 used by the people. This croupier covers each number with a “tombollino”, or marker. It has series of numbered cards purchased by the players. Each “tombollino” contains blank squares and 15 squares that contain random numbers. The random numbers are arranged in three rows, each with five numbers. Finally there is 90 rounded wooden or plastic “tombolini” which are kept in a container from 1 to 90. This may vary from a cloth sack to a “panariello” which is a small basket with a hole at the top from which they are extracted (Piero, 2017).

One of them purchases the “cartellone” and becomes the croupier who will shake the bag or basket, extract the “tombolini” and call out the numbers. If a player has the number called he usually places a dried bean or other marker on a number to win a prize.

After deciding on what is frequently a token price for each card, the players buy the one they want, indicating and remembering he has it. The money from the cards would be divided before the game starts into five prizes, from lowest to highest, with *tombola* being the jackpot. The lowest prize, called the “ambo”, means that the player is the first to have two numbers on the same row; the “terno”, three numbers on the same row; the “quaterna”, four numbers on the same row; the “cinquina”, five numbers on the same row; and lastly, the grand prize or the “tombola” for all numbers on the card. (Piero, 2017).

When extracting the numbers from the sack or basket once it has been given a vigorous shaken, the croupier will often use colourful expressions for each one, based on a list known as the Neapolitan “smorfia” (Piero, 2017). Although the origin of the term “smorfia” is unknown, some think it is associated with Morpheus, the Greek god of dreams as events in dreams are sometimes interpreted as numbers that are frequently used in gambling (Piero, 2017). Another theory is that the provenance lies in the Jewish Kabbala tradition, in which words and signs have mysterious meanings in the Bible and each has a specific number. Some of the most popular are number 9 “la rabbia” (anger), #14 “i cornuti” (the cuckolded), #17 “la disgrazia” (bad luck), #23 “la suocera” (mother-in-law), #33 “gli anni di Cristo” (Christ’s age), #77 “le gambe” (legs) and #90 “la paura” (fear) (Piero, 2017).

Thus, it is this pattern of *Tombola* that the Nigeria Army adopts into their social life up till today. It, therefore, calls for study as done in the current study to actually see how the identity of soldiers is projected during *Tombola* activities.

Theoretical Framework

The Theoretical Frameworks that would be adopted for this study are Wodak’s (2009) model of Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Grammar of M.A.K Halliday (1961, 1994). While Wodak’s (2009) model of Critical Discourse Analysis would be utilized to analyze the identity that characterizes the speeches, MAK Halliday;s (1961, 1994) would be used to account for the linguistic forms/resources that marked the identity in the speeches. These theories and their relevance to the present study are examined below.

Wodak’s (2009) Model of Critical Discourse Analysis

As said earlier, this theory would be utilised to analyze all manner of identities that characterize *Tombola* interaction of the Nigerian Army. Since this interaction (*Tombola*) occurred in specified interactive social settings, through language use, it is better described as a social practice one. This aligns with Wodak (2009) which says CDA

sees language as social practice. Thus, since verbal exchanges during *Tombola* are interactively and discursively oriented, the resultant languages, through which the identity is constructed and negotiated during *Tombola* interactions, is an indicator of social practice events (Fairclough & Wodak 1997), hence the adoption of the theory as the theoretical framework.

It is worthy of note that context is very key in this social practice. Lending credence to this view, Wodak (2000, 2008) and Benke (2000) contend that context of language use is considered to be crucial as far as social practice is concern, and *Tombola* interaction in the Nigerian Army (a form of social practice) is not an exception in this regard, hence, the suitability of Wodak's (2009) Model of CDA in analysing its identity features.

According to Wodak (2009), describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. As such, there are many ways by which this could be applied to the present study: (1) The discursive event is analogous to the speech interaction during *Tombola* Night (2) The situation describes the circumstances underscoring the call for *Tombola* Night (which is relaxation of soldiers after some periods of regimentation in our present circumstance) (3) Institution represents the Nigerian Army (4) Social structure is analogous to the status/personality of all the actors/stakeholders in the Nigerian Army and the Civilian present at the occasion.

Consequently, it is the interaction of all these factors that condition the identity that is constructed during *Tombola* Night interactions. Viewed critically, this, practically, aligns with the submission of Wodak (2009) when he says that, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. Wodak contends further that, it is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to

transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, in the opinion of Wodak, it gives rise to important issues of power. As submitted by Fairclough and Wodak (1997), discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people. In this connection, as an institution saddled with defending the Nation territorial integrity as well as exhibiting military-civil relationship among the Nigerian citizens, the Nigerian Army is known for strict status distinction. This places it over and above any other security institution in any security matters on land in Nigeria. As such, the Nigerian Army has unequalled power as regards the security of the Nation against insurrection on land.

We can thus see from the above the intricate nature of army *Tombola* interaction vis a vis its relatedness with the features of Wodak's (2009) model of CDA. Consequently, it is in view of the foregoing that we would adopt this model as the Theoretical Framework to explicate the discursive negotiation of identity that characterise the speeches of the participants at *Tombola* Night.

Systemic Functional Grammar

This approach is deployed to the analysis of linguistic form/resources that characterize *Tombola* Night interactions. This approach sees language study as a system of meaning. As such, its basis is semantic and not syntactic (Bloor and Bloor, 1995; Halliday and Hassan, 1991; Morley, 1985; Halliday, 1985). This is typical of language in action such as the speeches of the participants during *Tombola* Night activities. Thus, when people use language, as is the case in the present study, their language acts are the expression of meaning (Bloor and Bloor 1995). Thus, the grammar becomes a study of how meanings are built up through the use of words, and other linguistic forms such as *tone* and *emphasis* (which strictly mark *Tombola* Night interaction). In this regard, Halliday and Hassan (1991) assert that SFG is a semantically

driven grammar that seeks to consider and identify the role of various linguistic items in any text in terms of their function in building meaning, and it is for this reason that its practices for interpreting and labeling various linguistic items and groupings are functionally based, and not syntactically based. In other words, there is no dissociation of grammar from semantics or meaning (see Halliday, 1994).

Halliday's systemic grammar is not only semantically oriented because it is concerned with meaning, but also functional because it takes as paramount the diverse ways in which language is used. Intrinsically, SFG operates on the analysis of naturally occurring discourse (written or spoken), otherwise known as text (as is the case in *Tombola Night* interactions). Thus, SFG is a sociological oriented linguistic theory.

From the foregoing, we can see that SFG thrives on texts analysis (written or oral), as is the case in *Tombola Night* verbal interactional texts. Recall that, central to our objectives in this work is the identification and description of linguistic resources that are deployed in the construction, negotiation and enactment of identities in *Tombola Night* interaction. These resources (which are combinations of signs used in making meaning by the speakers) include linguistic items (e.g words, phrases, clauses, sentences and intonation cues) and non linguistic items (e.g gestures and body languages) that can only operate in oral discourses such as *Tombola Night* verbal interactions. As such, they serve as indexical that mark the identities constructed in *Tombola Night* interaction; thus, revealing their significance on the Nigeria Army image and the Nation at large. It is against this backdrop that we adopt SFG as the theory in this study to account for all instances of linguistic forms/resources that project the soldiers' identities in *Tombola Night* interactions.

Methodology

The data for the study, which were interpreted by an army officer in the rank of Captain, comprise oral communication of Nigerian soldiers during *Tombola Night* activities held at both Officers'

and Sergeant messes of 2 Division Nigerian Army, Ibadan, in 2021. These data were collected through Audio-tape recorder during two important activities of *Tombola* Night. These *Tombola* activities are *Game of Ticket* and *Bottom Plate*. The data were subjected to descriptive/qualitative analytical method.

Presentation of Data, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This section of the study is centred on data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings. All these are revealed in the discussion below.

Identity Construction in Tombola Night Interactions

The data reveal balanced social life identity as the main identity that is discursively negotiated in *Tombola* Night interactions of the Nigerian Army. In this paper, balanced social life identity refers to all instances of discursively negotiated interactions tailored toward amusing the audience, and it is found in the informal quasi-asymmetrical power contexts of the Nigerian Army, with activities such as the *game of ticket*, *bottom plate*, *free music* and *comedy* taking place in the night.

The section for the game of ticket is characterised by the marking of numbers on the ticket on the instruction of the Game Director. Bottom plate indicates the sections slated for the collection of donation (by a lady holding a tray) from the dignitaries and other personalities that are present at the event. Free music marks the section for dancing that serves as an interlude between the activities slated for the night. Comedy section reflects comic display by some comedians among the soldiers and the civilians present at the occasion whose verbal exchanges provoke laughter in the audience. As revealed in the data, the issue of hierarchy is very crucial in the Army, to the degree that it is visible in all their endeavours, even in *Tombola* Night interactions. The Excerpts below illustrate this better.

Excerpt 1:

Chairman: *President of the Mess Committee (Henceforth (P.M.C), Warrant Officer, Master Warrant Officers, Invited Senior NCO, Senior NCO, Invited Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen. We are about to start our programme, Tombola Night. Now, before we start our programme, we have to invite our Creator, the maker and creator of everything here on earth and in heaven. We want to call ah Warrant Officer X to pray for us as we start this occasion.*
 Warrant Officer.

Warrant Officer: *(Prays in a Christian way)*

Excerpt 2:

P.M.C: *...We observed that, many of us go to soldiers club instead of coming here. One of the reasons is that Premier League, UEFA; and also the World Cup that is coming they are showing it there. And this is a very responsible social Sergeant Mess. If soldier quarters hear federal league, I don't know why though really why we cannot do that. We can do better. So, as you can see well tonight, any match coming up in any part of the world will be shown here. The ITV, high cable TV has been installed; so, there is no excuse. If you are caught in soldiers club as the senior NCO, you will face the Assembly of this house...The only person that we can see there that we would not stop is the ground patron because, he's the father of all; that is the General Officer Commanding.*

Master Warrant Officer X (Henceforth MWO):
(cuts in comically) what of provost?

PMC: *A provost to arrest will be put there.*

Master Warrant Officer X: *That's not true (comically).*

Soldiers: *(clapping), sabuu.*

P.M.C.:...*you have Tombola; you have the section the section for comedy and free music for us to hear while we relax and finally, the bottom plate will take place. So, as the bottom plate comes round. I hope you are all (sic) Everyone sitted here you must have at least #3,000.00 in your pocket; #3,000.00 in your pocket every one sitted here at least #3,000.00 in your pocket. Thank you very much as we continue with our programme. As we settle down, music please. Thank you.*

Moderator: ...*We would start the ball as expected and by – (sic) (amidst noise and murmuring in the house) I also want to take this opportunity to welcome eh Guest Scholar for the night. The Guest Scholar for the night is a seasoned scholar in the person of...*

In Excerpt1 above, the reference to the President of the Mess Committee (henceforth, P.M.C), Warrant Officer, Master Warrant Officers, Invited Senior NCO, Senior NCO,... Invited Guest; ..., Ladies and Gentlemen indicates that soldiers and civilians are in the social gathering. Then, *Tombola night in We are about to start our programme, Tombola* Nightpoints to the name of the social gathering. All these reveal a balanced social life identity of soldiers in that the gathering constitutes both soldiers and civilians, but with soldiers predominating, at a social event after some period of regimentation.

The observation of the PMC that many of SNCO go to soldiers club instead of coming to the Sergeant Mess in Excerpt 2 points to the dearth of social infrastructure at the Sergeant Mess which led them to seek solace in Soldiers Mess. This, thus, points to the importance attached to social life in the Army.

The reflection of the balanced social life identity of soldiers can also be seen in the choice of the item by the PMC *this is a very responsible social Sergeant Messin Excerpt 2. So, as you can see well tonight, any match coming up in any part of the world will be shown here. The ITV, high cable TV has been installed; so, there is no excuse said by the PMC lend credence*

attached to soldiers' relaxation. To give strength to his words, he then jocularly issues a threat thus: *If you are caught in soldiers club as the senior NCO, you will face the Assembly of this house...The Assembly of this house* here indicates the disciplinary committee charged with the responsibility of effecting compliance of this rule. This, no doubt, portrays Nigerian soldiers as a sociable personnel that accommodates civilians in their midst, thereby, strengthening the relationship between them. Suffice to consider other Excerpts below:

Excerpt 3

PMC: *Thank you very much, chairman of tombola committee. You are all welcome to today's programme. Our Tombola, for sometimes now, has not come up. So, today is an opportunity; and shortly the GOC may be coming to join us. Therefore, all Master Warrant Officers present; all Masters Warrant Officers present, please come up here.*

Excerpt 4

Game Director: *On the ball. The next game is for night. 2 Div. 2 Div. (pause). Next game, for tonight, on the ball. Our Div. the target is, on 2, and 3. The first number on the game. General Officer Commanding, 2 Div. Lt. General X of number 1. First number on the ball; one on to the ball. Next number coming from the bar; from the bar to the ball Next number is 3 and 9; mark 3 and 9, 39*

In Excerpt 3 and 4 above, GOC (an appointment abbronym for General Officer Commanding), *Master Warrant Officer* (rank collocation), *2 Div.* (a Division abbronym for 2 Division Nigerian Army), *Lt. General* (rank collocation,) reveal, at macro level, the preponderant

of soldiers at the event. The collocation 'Our tombola' stands for the name of the event that foregrounds the nomenclature of the event; thus, revealing the gathering as that of social event. 'Next Number' (a free collocate, constantly repeated) is found in the game of ticket, indicating one of the sub-activities engaged in by the participants at the *Tombola* event, and 'for tonight' indicates that the event is a night programme; hence the signification, *Tombola* Night.

As revealed in the data, we can see a reflection of informal relationship among the participants at the occasion like the one obtains in recreational setting where soldiers meet to socialize with civilian in a bid to douse the tension of soldiers after some period of regimentation. As such, there is no strict exercise of power, as all members and some civilians come to relax during this social event. This, thus, signifies an amiable relationship between soldiers and civilians, capable of dousing tension by the public having seen soldiers in their midst. Let us consider other excerpts below.

Excerpt 5

MWO X: (*Aggrieved*) *Good morning patron. We are in Tombola Night. But ee aam. I have a brief now that am piquet.*

Soldiers: *Laugh*

PMC: *Yes!...In the number of ticket and I say ee Warrant Officers, eee Senior Marshal sit down with the high table.*

MWO X: *But I am standing behind the high table!*

Soldier: (*interrupts*) *Expected!*

Soldiers: *Talks endlessly on the issue*

MWO X: (*Amidst murmuring and noise*)... *Gentlemen, listen! Listen!! Listen!! Sir; gentlemen, listen! Gentlemen. Eh! I want to use this occasion without-...So, gentlemen, I am about to leave. I want eh the high table to know that I am leaving now. Thank you very much.*

- PMC: *Please, let me respond to that. This is the PMC of this house. If you recall; if you recall-All of you, you are my witnesses. I said all Master Warrant Officers should come to the high table.*
- Soldiers: *Yes sir!*
- Soldiers: *(laughing).*
- Soldier: *(hailing the patron rep. PMC) God father.*
- Soldiers: *(yelling at MWO X) Eeeeeee!*
- Soldiers: *(commending the PMC.) God father! Father ever!!*

From the interaction above, the PMC, in line with the dictates of the programme, invites all the Senior Non Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) present at the event to the front seats, with all of them responding to the call, except the MWO X who registers a protest for being “piquet” which, in this context, means “to short change” or “replace” by another person. However, the PMC, despite the fact that he has total control on all the soldiers at the event, being the representative of the GOC, does not feel aggrieved when MWO X despises his order when he says *I am about to leave. I want eh the high table to know that I am about to leave now.* This is possible because of the quasi-asymmetrical relationship that characterises the setting, and which is an indication of balanced social life posture of the Nigerian Army. In spite of the despicable acts of the officer, the PMC still insists that he should come and occupy his seat without taking permission as he is recognised as a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO); hence:

Excerpt 6

- PMC: *You don't need to take permission. You don't need to take permission. Your seat has been empty here.*
- Soldier: *(laughing and hailing). God father!*

The interruption of another soldier in the rank of Sergeant in response to the aggrieved MWO X, using the politeness marker *sir* testifies to the quasi-asymmetrical relationship that characterises this

setting, a reflection of social mingling without strict observance of rule of rank. This is shown below:

Excerpt 7

MWO X: *(still aggrieved)*. Ooh God! Because I have never reported anybody to the house to give reason.

Soldier: *Sir! No; no.*

This type of scenario can only be found in an informal quasi-asymmetrical context of the Army. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that there is no respect for hierarchy in this setting. The demonstration of respect for the army hierarchy is observed in the earlier pronouncement of the PMC when he calls all the Warrant, and Master Warrant officers to the high table, excluding the Sergeant and the Staff Sergeant, in a social manner. The respect for rank in social gathering like *Tombola* is demonstrated in the speech below:

Excerpt 8

PMC: *This house has respect for seniority, as everybody is witnessing. Any time you finish, you are invited to the high table.*

Soldier: *(intercedes)*. O.K

7.2 Linguistic Forms

Linguistic Forms refer to all instances of language resources that index, characterise and ultimately drive the discourse. The linguistic forms observed in the discourse can be categorised into lexical repetition/reiteration and intonation cues. These are discussed below:

7.2.1 Lexical Repetition/Reiteration

The repetitive and reiterating lexical items relate to *slang* and *taboo* as shown in the data. In the context of this work, these constitute vulgar expressions that have restricted meanings in informal quasi-asymmetrical power context of the Nigerian Army such as *Tombola*

Night, and are, therefore, mainly connected with the balanced social life identity associated with *Tombola* Night. These are discussed under two headings: Coded Sexual Encounters and Coded Slang Expressions, as discussed below.

7.2.1.1 Coded Sexual Encounters

As used in this work, it relate to words that are connected with feminine registers. These words constitute taboo, the meaning of which is shared by the participant at *Tombola* Night event especially during the inspection of box and the game of number. The following Excerpt illustrates this:

Excerpt 9

Moderator: *...Honourable member of this house, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. Ah, some of you have been given ah free ticket; if you are ah you have not get free ticket, you can get it there so that we can use that as eh to to test run ah the Tombola Night... But before we can do that, we would now look for- I don't know if there is a virgin in the house. We are looking for a virgin in the house so that he can she can she can inspect ah this box to know the level of corruptness of this box. Any virgin in the house?*

As can be seen in the excerpt above, the use of linguistic item, *a virgin in the house* is a marker of sexual coded expression, and mainly found in the *bottom plate* activity of *Tombola* Night. The reference to *virgin* ordinarily means an undefiled young girl; however, this is not the sense in which it is used in the context of *Tombola*. The moderator is using the word to indicate a girl that will scrutinise the box for the purpose of the activity (*bottom plate*). The moderator utters this word as he his acting on the assumption that the participants understand the expression to mean *any girl* and not *an undefiled girl*. That the

participants share the knowledge of this word is confirmed by their reaction in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 10

Soldier 2: *What are you saying?*

Moderator: *A virgin in the house to inspect this box for us.*

Soldier 3: *Virgin (low tone)*

Moderator: *Yes.*

Soldiers: *(feel with mix talks about the mentioning of virgin in the house)*

Soldier 4: *Let assume you are a virgin.*

Soldier 5: *Yes.*

Soldier 6: *Is it let assume?*

Soldier 7: *(in low tone) junior virgin.*

MWO X: *(loudly) Junior virgin; junior!*

In the above Excerpt, the initial reactions that trail the mentioning of the word suggest the literal interpretation attached to it. This interpretation is made on purpose just to create fun, and not that they are unaware of its social meaning in the context of the utterance. That the participants ultimately share the knowledge of this word is confirmed by the coming out of a girl who certifies *the level of corruptness of this box*. In the choice of this expression, the moderator assumes that the participants share the knowledge of “the level of corruptness of this box” to indicate the ascertainment of the validity of the box. Particularly, he assumes that the participants understand the choice of *corruptness* to mean “genuine”, and not “indecenty” which is the literal meaning. Thus, a box is genuine (in the context of *Tombola*) when it is certified *corrupt* by the *virgin* in the house, after which it can, therefore, be used during the activities; and vice versa if it is not. A critical observation of this encounter portrays soldiers as being jocular, sociable, light-hearted and convivial before the civilians. Thus, this is capable of changing the perception of public that Nigerian soldiers are wicked, crude and unfriendly.

Another example that illustrates the sexual coded language can be considered below:

Excerpt 11

Game Director: *It is the onefat woman with a few leg, big head and fat buttocks. The last number am calling now. Number! Number 43. 43 is my last number*

One fat woman with a few leg, big head and fat buttocks is a sexually coded language used to describe the number to be marked on the ticket during the game of ticket activity of *Tombola Night*. As such, the game director is instructing the participants as regards the number to be marked with the choice of this word, a knowledge also shared by the participants. The game director is describing number 43 which refers to the sexually coded words. The choices of this expression does not attract condemnation as it does not refer to the naked part of a woman, but the description of a number in respect of the game of ticket activity of *Tombola Night*, projecting the Nigerian soldiers as being sociable and amiable contrary to being harsh, bullying and unfriendly as hitherto believe by the public.

Other examples of slang and taboo connected with sexually coded words that are used to describe the numbers to be marked in the discourse are:

Excerpt 12

Game Director: *The last number I am going to call, if any woman at this age and you are not married what are you looking for? What are you looking for? When you have arrived this age and you have passed a biblical age what else again? The last number is number 86.*

Excerpt 13

Game Director: *First number open from the bar. Girl friend age plus 3; Mark 18 Woo o! You win or you no win o, na you sabi.*

Excerpt 14

Game Director 2: O.K. *Next number!* Soldier: (*cuts in*) *Bobo.*

Check your bombom for me. Check your bombom for me.

Game Director 2: *Our number today.*

Soldier: *Check your bombom!*

Game Director 2: *Check your bombom...*

In Excerpt 12, the sexually coded word used is *biblical age*, referring to a woman that has reached 86 years, hence, represented with number 86. For a woman to have passed a *biblical age*, she must have reached a menopause; implying that, the hope of the woman getting married at this age is bleak. The use of the expression here is to achieve fun in line with the social life of soldiers that the setting foreground.

The use of slang and taboo also manifests in Excerpt 13 with the choice of sexually coded words “girlfriend age” that indicates number 15. Here, the addressor attempts to be comical in the choice of this expression to achieve the fun of the moment with their civilian invitees. The addition of 3 years to it (15), gives 18 years which is how number 18 is arrived at. The Game Director employs this sexually coded expression in a jocular manner, which reflects that social gathering interaction is taking place; thus, portrays to the public that Nigerian soldiers are very lively and ready to partner with the civilian to enhance the much touted military-civilian relationship to achieve balanced professional standard, necessary to provide effective security. The preference for the pidgin language, “Woo o! You win or you no win o, na you sabi” employed by the addressor, which is also a slang, indicates unsentimental attitude of the addressor as regards how a winner emerges. Thus, the participants do not interpret it as a mockery on them as they are in social gathering which permits the use of this type of expression.

The choice of slang and taboo also occur in Excerpt 14 during the confirmation of a number from a participant with the choice of nominal elements “Bobo”, and “bombom”, that respectively reveal the slang and taboo. *Bobo*, a slang, refers to a fellow soldier, indicating *friend-friend relationship* found in informal setting of the Army; then, the

choice of *Bombom* (which ordinarily means naked bottom of a lady; hence, a taboo) is employed by the addressor to mean a particular number for which confirmation is being sought. The addressee (a fellow soldier) understands this, and responds appropriately. Then, the echoing of *bombom* indicates that the participants understand it to mean a particular number, and not the naked bottom of a lady. This, as such, is a portrayal of social life aspect of the soldiers as opposed to being just bullying and unfriendly personnel, as widely held by the public.

7.2.1.2.Coded Slang Expressions

These are expressions that are uniquely used in an informal setting of the Nigerian Army. Some of these expressions are English words but the meanings they have in this setting are different from normal English words. The use of slang occurs during the announcement of the winner of the game at *tombola* Night. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 15

Game Director: *Shout house?*

Participants: *House*

Game Director: *Shout house?*

Participants: *House*

Game Director: *That is a very buggy house*

In the Excerpt above, *House* means “hold on I have won”. Shout house is an imperative statement encoded to ascertaining the winner of the game of ticket during *tombola* event. The game director uses this with reference to the emergence of the winner of the ticket game with regard to the use of the imperative, “Shout House”. It is an enquiry as to whether a winner in the game has emerged or not, and not a dwelling place. The slang, *buggy* (an adjective), *house* (a noun) in the collocation *buggy house* means the “the ticket has been checked and you did not win”. As such, the addressor assumes his addressees will recognise that

his utterance is not connected with a place of abode which is the literal meaning of *house*. That the participants share this knowledge is evident in their responsive chorus of *House!*, which means “the winner has emerged” in the contexts of *Tombola*; all in a bid to foreground entertainment capable of dousing tension among soldiers and to project element of civility to the public.

More examples suffice below:

Excerpt 17

Game Director: Olumba Olumba, they would wash my back I wash your back. *Number; Number 56. 56 is on board. Number 60; 60 is on board...My last number is 59. Number, Number 44. Number; Number 78. Number; Number, Number. Remember yes Number; number 83; 83 is my last number. My last number is 83. Shout house! Well, like that.*

Excerpt 18

Game Director: *the centre number is what we are looking for, the centre number is what we are looking for.*

In Excerpt 17, *number*, a common noun, is repeated and reiterated severally. Excerpt 18, a relational clause, above takes the form of total repetition of items. In this Excerpt, the game director is emphasising the actual number to be marked, out of many numbers that are available, and that is the “center number” (an identifier). By that, the participants will be saved of unnecessary search for just any number as his area of focus has been determined.

Reiteration/repetition of items, as discussed above is a common feature of the game section of *Tombola* activities through which the addressor maintains a connection between the information being relayed and the addressees for easier recollection. Particularly, the addressor’s constant repetition of *number* in the Excerpts where they feature is a strategy to ensure that the addressees keep track of the number being called for easier recollection in order to guard against some avoidable errors in the process of marking the numbers. All these

are done to achieve the fun of the moment in line with military-civil relation which is one of the hallmark of the profession.

7.2.2 Intonation Cues

In this work, intonation cues refer to all instances of tonal variation that are superimposed on the linguistic items in the Texts examined. A critical examination of the study reveals that, intonation cues are features of *Tombola* Night activities where they were used to achieve balanced social life identity. Intonation cues in the discourse are used purposely to arrest the attention of the audience, so that they can be attentive to the instructions relayed, and respond accordingly especially in the game of ticket activity of *Tombola* Night.

Two types of intonation cues have been observed: *rising tune* and *falling tune*, but with more occurrences of the former than the latter. The rising tune is prevalent when the addressor relays information on the specific order to be carried out when the activities are in progress; while the falling tune usually rides on the actual order. They serve the purpose of instructing the addressees to execute specific actions where they are used in the discourse, as in the example below:

Excerpt 19

Game Director: *Number* Number 59 the centre number is what we are looking for, the the exact number is what we are looking for. My last number is 59 *Number* Number 44. *Number* Number 78 *Number* *Number* *Number* . What is the last number? 78 on board? Number 82; 82 is my last number, 82 is my last number (low tone). *Shout house*

The intonation cues observed here relate to the game of numbers of *Tombola* activities. The repetition of *Number* by the addressor is to engage the attention of the addressees, and this attracts a rising tune; while the exact numbers to be marked attract falling tunes. Because the game director has already engaged their attention

previously, so calling any number to be marked would not create challenges.

Conclusion

This study has been able to examine the discursive production of balanced social life identity among the personnel of the Nigerian Army. Through a copious analysis of data drawn from *Tombola* Night interactions held at 2 Division Nigerian Army, one of the foremost and largest Division in Nigeria, the study has been able to demonstrate that, apart from the gallantry of the Nigerian Army in both the internal and external callings to wage war against insurrection, they should also be portrayed as having the image of social relation and interaction with civilians, which goes a long way in strengthening the civil-military relations attributes they are known for. Thus, the Nigerian soldiers, apart from having gallantry identity, they also portray social balance identity, as evident in *Tombola* Night interactions. By this, they are able to relate well with the general public, thus, dousing tension anytime they could be sighted by civilians. The resultant effect of which could aid effective security information leading to effective strategy to combat insurrection and other security related challenges in the country.

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