

HATE SPEECHES AND POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN SELECTED TALKS OF FACEBOOK USERS AGAINST NIGERIA'S PUBLIC OFFICERS' INSENSITIVITY

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Abstract

This work examines Hate Speeches, their motivating factors, and politeness strategies in selected talks of Nigeria's Facebook users. Data were collected through purposive sampling of selected Nigerian Facebook users' comments, using an Android Phone, during the outbreak of Covid-19. Utilising Locher and Watts's (2005) Relational Theory as Framework, the data were subjected to content analysis. Insensitivity of the Nigerian public office holders to the plight of the Masses have been identified as the key factor that triggered the hate speeches. The data further reveal three different manifestations of insensitive acts by Nigerian public officers: devilish act, infrastructural neglect and inordinate accumulation of wealth, and marked by impoliteness features. Hate Speeches in Selected Talks of Nigerian Facebook Users are influenced by a shared perception of the insensitivity of Nigerian public officers to the plight of the citizens in the discourse. Thus, there is a close link between the hate speeches, their motivating factors and the politeness features indexing them, the understanding of which provide access to viable information about the feelings of Nigerians to the insensitive acts of their leaders, which are capable of redirecting them to good governance.

Key words: Insensitivity, Covid-19, Nigerian Public Office Holders, Facebook Users, Politeness Strategies

Introduction.

Facebook is, unarguably, one of the world's most popular social media platform through which users, Nigerians inclusive, express their minds on certain issues, covering economy, social, politics and so on. Of all these, in recent times, insensitivity to the plight of the masses by political office holders (otherwise known as public officers in this paper) seems to constitute the subject matter that attracts the scathing comments (known as Hate Speech in this paper) of Nigerian Facebook users to register their discontentment against them.

Undoubtedly, a lot of works have been done on hate speeches. These include Tontodimamma, Nissi, Sarra & Fontanella's (2020) "Thirty years of research into hate speech: topics of interest and their evolution." The aim of the paper is to analyse the knowledge structure of hate speech literature and the evolution of related topics. The study deploys co-word analysis methods to identify different topics treated in the field. The analysed database was downloaded from Scopus, focusing on a number of publications during the last thirty years. The paper concludes that the understanding of how research fronts interact led to the relevance of machine learning approaches to correctly assess hatred forms of online speech.

Maaria Laaksonen et al (2020) is premised on "The Datafication of Hate: Expectations and Challenges in Automated Hate Speech Monitoring." The paper reports and reflects upon an action research setting consisting of multi-organizational collaboration conducted during Finnish municipal elections in 2017, wherein a technical infrastructure was designed to automatically monitor candidates' social media updates for hate speech. The paper identifies participants' aspirations for effective automation as well as the level of neutrality and objectivity introduced by an algorithmic system. The findings also highlight how the powerful expectations related to technology can easily end up dominating a project dealing with a contested topical social

issue. The paper concludes by discussing the problematic aspects of identifying hate and suggesting some practical implications for hate speech recognition.

Ring (2013) whose study is on hate speech in social media explores the problem and its proposed solution. In an effort to identify solutions for curtailing hate speech in social media, the study explores the scope and nature of the problem of hate speech in social media today, using YouTube as an example. A review of arguments for and against regulating hate speech online is presented, along with an overview of current U.S hate speech and Internet regulations and relevant jurisprudence. The paper recommends the encouragement of self-regulation on the part of social media companies, which involves a move from a “.com” generic top-level domain to one called “.social.”

Koncavar (2013) premises his study on hate speech in new media. The study is on how hate speech finds a place in the new media and how this discourse is put into circulation. The study reveals the relationship between hate speech and the mechanisms of power and the media as a result of the structure of language and ideology, and indicates that the new media is a facilitating ground for the spreading of this discourse.

Paz, Montero-Díaz and Moreno-Delgado (2020) carried out a systematized review on hate speech. This review focuses on papers on Hate Speech, particularly in legal and communication studies indexed in Web of Science. It analyses output published in English and in Spanish as well as surveys the predominant disciplines in which these studies are written, their trend over time, the country, and type of document. As revealed by the study, the legal literature is intended to define hate speech and hate crime for the purposes of applying criminal sanctions. The findings further show that analysis of hate speech in the media is very critical to understanding the type of message used, its emitter, the way in which the message rallies supporters, and how they

interpret the message. The paper observes that Spanish studies mostly fall within the legal area, focusing cases of insult directed at the Catholic religion.

Crammer et al (2020) worked on “Hate-Motivated Behaviour: Impacts, Risk Factors, and Interventions.” The study observes that hate-motivated behaviour is a public health threat with structural, interpersonal, and individual antecedents and effects. The study, therefore, concludes that there is a need for interdisciplinary, multilevel research to better understand the causes of such behaviour and to test prevention strategies and interventions.

Alakali, Faga and Mbursa (2015) examine the phenomenon of hate speech and foul language on social media platforms in Nigeria, and assesses their moral and legal consequences in the society and to journalism practice. It uses both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to investigate the phenomenon with employment of survey research methodology to sample 384 respondents using questionnaire and focus group discussion as instruments for data collection. Findings from the research indicate that promoting hate speech and foul language on social media has moral and legal consequences in the society and to journalism practice. Findings also show that although, the respondents understand that hate speech and foul language attract legal consequences, they do not know what obligations are created by law against perpetrators of hate speech and foul language in Nigeria. The paper concludes based on the findings that hate speech and foul language are prevalent on social media platforms in Nigeria and that there are adequate legal provisions to curb the phenomenon.

Bayerbayer (2021) is entitled “High-impact Hate Speech by Persons of Authority: A lower Threshold Needed?” The paper discusses a global trend in the approach to hate speech. It describes how international human rights organisations are recently addressing the

dynamics of hate speech and how academic thinking is stretching the framework of the justification of hate speech regulations. The work analyses the aspect of cause and effect in the light of the role of the speaker; examines the academic argument that content expressed by public figures in authority have a higher impact, in particular, in the context of the digital media ecosystem, with a social media dominance.

We can see from the foregoing that all the studies cited above are premised on hate speech, as is the case in this study. However, they differ from this study, grandly, in that none of them actually deploys overt theoretical commitment to the investigation of hate speech vis a vis the (im) politeness strategies that characterise them. Furthermore, none of the works actually use Nigerian Public Officers as their target studies. It is against this backdrop that this study is conceived. Therefore, the study examines hate speeches and politeness strategies in selected talks of Nigeria's Facebook users against Nigeria's public office holders.

Aim and Objectives

The study aims at interrogating hate speeches and potential violence in selected talks of Nigeria's Facebook users against Nigerian Public Officers. This is with a view to:

- (i) identifying and discussing categories of hate speeches among Nigerian Facebook users against Nigeria's public office holders;
- (ii) examining the (im) politeness strategies that characterise the speeches;
- (iii) recommending ways at reducing hate speeches against the Nigerian Public Officers.

Hate Speech: An Overview

Hate speech is commonly defined as any communication that disparages a person or a group on the basis of some characteristics such

as race, colour, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion etc (Tontodimamma, Nissi, Sarra & Fontanella 2020). In other words, hate speech is any form of expression through which speakers intend to vilify, humiliate, or incite hatred against a group or a class of persons on the basis of race, religion, skin colour, sexual identity, gender identity, ethnicity, disability, or national origin (Ring, 2013).

Ring (2013) says, the word “hate” will be understood as extreme negative feelings and beliefs held about a group of individuals or a specific representative of that group because of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation. It is considered as the conscious and willful public expression of hostility and rejection towards individuals, groups or collectives, whether based on racial, ethnic, religious or national criteria, on the grounds of gender, sexual identity or orientation, or any other criteria (e.g insensitivity of public officers to the plight of the masses) which promote intolerance, discrimination, stigmatization, violence, aggression or, in its most serious form, physical extermination.

These discourses (hate speeches), traditionally reflected in the mass media and alternative circuits, currently focus their dissemination channel through online media, digital communities and social media [e.g. Facebook] (see Caceres-Zapatero, Makhortykh and Segado-Boj, 2022). In general, description of hate speeches tends to be wide, sometimes even extending to embody words that are insulting to those in power or minority groups, or demeaning of individuals who are particularly visible in the society. The prevalence of hate speeches and foul language on social media, bordering on political and national issues, and even social interaction, in Nigeria, especially on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn, is becoming worrisome. This is because, apart from undermining the ethics of journalism profession, it is contributing in bringing disaffection among tribes, political class,

and religion or even among friends in the society. The Nigerian public is inundated with negative media usage such as character assassination and negative political campaigns at the expense of dissemination of issues that help them make informed choices (Alakali, faga, Mbursa, 2015).

Tanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2022) has observed the harms of Hate Speech, ranging from the immediate psychological harms experienced in the moment by the person(s) targeted by an instance of hate speech, to much more long-term impacts that affect not only those targeted but whole communities, and even the strength of an entire nation. However, when discussing these harms, Langton (2012; 2018a) notes that differentiating between “assaultive hate speech” and “propagandistic hate speech” is helpful. As such, Langton (2012) notes that hate speech yelled at an individual on the street, or from a passing car, is a face-to-face encounter, and an assaultive speech act. This is, moreover, most often inter-group hate speech, where the speaker(s) are, for example, white, and the targets are non-white. In this category, “words that are used as weapons to ambush, terrorize, wound, humiliate, and degrade” (Matsuda et al. 1993, 1) are deployed to achieve hate speech.

On the other hand, propagandistic hate speech is often intra-group speech, spoken by members of one group to fellow in-group members (e.g. a white person to other white people). This leads them to focus more on hate speech’s ability to produce “direct, immediate, and substantial injury” (Lawrence, 1993, 57), such as “immediate mental or emotional distress” (Delgado, 1993, 93-94). In this approach, the most evident harms of hate speech are psychological. Matsuda (1993) has observed that victims of hate speech may first experience “psychological symptoms and emotional distress” like heightened stress and fear in the immediate aftermath of assaultive hate speech, but they may also experience far-ranging consequences if they

modify their behaviours and demeanour to avoid receiving further hate messages, limiting their ability to participate fully in society. In this way, hate speech is both an immediate attack on one's health and dignity, along with a threat to their community's position in society. The cumulative effect of hate speech events, therefore, is a collection of harms located both in individuals and communities, which blurs the distinction between assaultive and propagandistic hate speech events.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical Framework deployed to the analysis in this study is Locher and Watts's (2005) Relational Theory and Mey's (2001) Pragmatics Act.

Locher and Watts's (2005) Relational Theory

This theory redresses the inadequacies in Brown and Levinson's facework theory that deals only with the mitigation of face-threatening acts, and fails to account for those situations in which face-threat mitigation is not a priority, e.g., aggressive, abusive or rude behaviour as is the case in the present study where the Facebook respondents are brazenly demonstrating their displeasure, anger, protests at their leaders through acerbic verbal utterances for failing to improve their living conditions contrary to their expectations.

Consequently, Watts (1992, 2003) and Locher (2004) propose the notion of relational work as a process of defining relationships in interaction. Locher and Watts (2005) posit that the term relational work is preferred to facework because it foregrounds the fact that discourse participants "invest work" in interaction. They also argue that the term highlights the relations that interlocutors share with each other, and this is not limited to politeness, but covers the entire spectrum of interpersonal communication. Relational work captures the role and essence of context in the negotiation of (im)politeness

rather than the inherent investiture of (im)politeness on some linguistic items or expressions, unlike the narrow perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) facework. It relates to the interpersonal level of communication rather than the ideational level of communication (Locher 2006: 251). This implies that it deals with language not only as a means of communication, but also as an instrument in shaping relationships since human beings rely on one another for the realisation of their goals and aspirations in socio-discursive encounters. This accounts for why relational work has been described as the "work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others" (Locher and Watts 2005: 10).

The negotiation of these relationships reflects in the confirmation or rejection of "power differences, closeness and distance, or attributes of a particular face that the interactants present" (Locher, 2006: 258) in different communicative encounters. Locher and Watts (2008: 96) also refer to relational work as "all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice."

It is pertinent to add here that the underlying theoretical concept upon which relational work is built is face (Locher 2006); but unlike Brown and Levinson, the relational work theorists combine both the cognitive and social aspects of face. They hold that face is inherent in all social interactions, and it is discursively negotiated in situated interactions.

According to Locher and Watts (2008), Relational work is based on three main idealizations: polite, impolite and politic behaviours. These, in the framework of relational work, depend largely on the norms (experiential or social) and expectations of interactants in a speech event. These norms and expectations are acquired over a period of time, and are constantly in a flux, as they are not static; hence, the

discursive negotiation of (im) politeness (Watts 2003; Locher and Watts 2005, 2008) .

Polite (face-enhancing) behaviour could roughly be described as the salient behaviour that is positively evaluated by interactants in an ongoing social interaction which is behaviour in excess of politic behaviour. It is that linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour that is positively considered by discourse participants to be beyond what is appropriate, and which is discursively negotiated in a particular interaction.

Impolite (face-damaging or face-challenging) behaviour is the salient form of social behaviour that is negatively evaluated to be against the canons of acceptable and appropriate behaviour operative for the ongoing social interaction (Watts 2003). In other words, it relates to the behaviour “that is perceived by participants to be inappropriate behaviour.

The concept of politic refers to the type of relational work that accounts for an utterance that is neither polite nor impolite; it “is that behaviour, linguistic and non-linguistic, which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction. The construction may have been made prior to entering the interaction, but it is always negotiable during the interaction, despite the expectations that participants might bring to it” (Watts 2003: 20).

As will be revealed in the data used, all the interlocutors on Facebook share relations with one another. For example, they are all Nigerians; they are feeling the agony of the hardship of bad governance unleashed on them by their elected representatives owing to bad leadership styles for which they react caustically. These make them to be discursively contemptuous and impolite in their speeches in the context of obnoxious policies of their leaders, known as the Public Officers in this study. Hence, the adoption of impoliteness in Locher and Watts’s (2005, 2008) relational theory in this paper. This model

provides us with a robust theoretical construct to interrogate hate speeches in the discursive social context of the Nigeria's Facebook users and their Public Officers, perceived as being insensitive to their plight.

4.2 Mey's (2001) Pragmatics Act.

The theory of *pragmeme* is a socio-cognitive approach to the study of human communication which views communication as a dynamic process in which an individual is not only constrained by societal conditions but is also shaped by them at the same time. *Pragmeme* explores the background of what a social behaviour represents. Mey (2001: 219) argues that:

The theory of pragmatic acts does not try to explain language use from the inside out, from words having their origin in a sovereign speaker and going out to an equally sovereign hearer [...]. Rather, its explanatory movement is from the outside in: the focus is on the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said on the situation, as well as on what is actually being said.

This perspective is captured as 'pragmeme', or 'pract' a generalised pragmatic act which is regarded as the only force associated with making utterances.

According to Mey (2001), no two practs are ever the same, especially with regard to the actual situation under which they are realised (every situation being different from the other). Every pract is at the same time an *allopract* which serves as a concrete and different realisation of a particular instantiation of a particular *pragmeme* (Mey, 2001: 221). In Mey's opinion, human activity is not the privilege of the individual; rather the individual is situated in a social context, which means that s/he is empowered, as well as limited by the conditions of his/her social life. In other words, human activity is not controlled by

individuals in the society; rather, members of the organised society are subject to the social conditions dictated or controlled by the society. These social conditions, which are common knowledge, make participants produce and comprehend one another in a communicative process, as is the case in the discursive negotiation of impoliteness between Nigerian Facebook users and Nigerian Public officers; hence, the adoption of the theory in this work..

Mey (2001) explains the concept of a pragmeme with the model below:

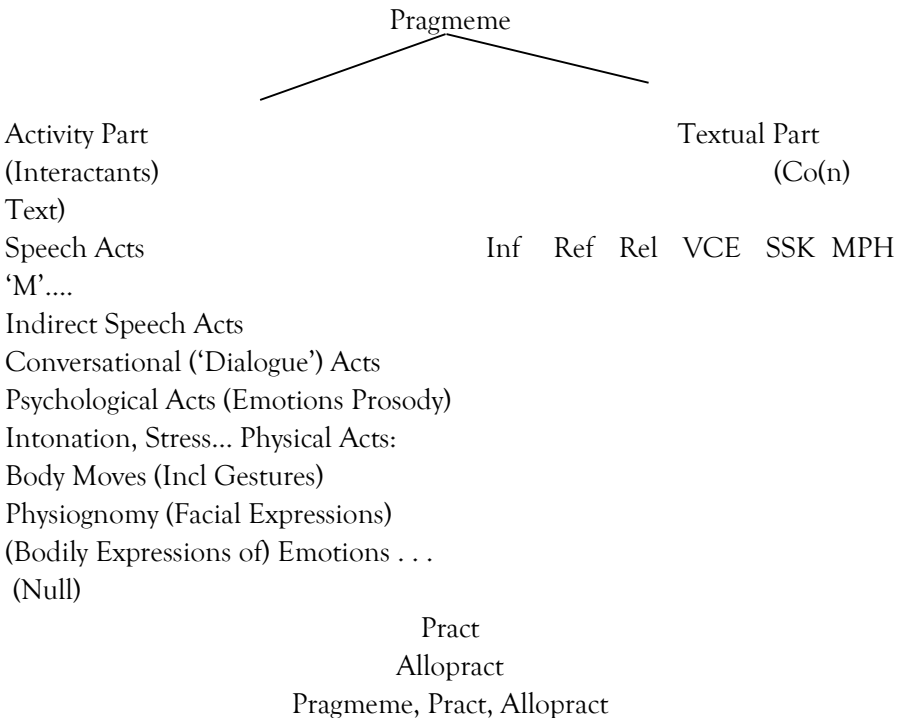


Fig 1: A Model of Pragmeme Adapted from Mey (2001: 222).

Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Four categories of hate speeches characterise the speeches of Nigerian Facebook users against their public officers. These categories

are instantiated by the factors that trigger the speeches, and which are all potential factors of provoking violence in Nigeria. These are Hate Speeches Associated with:

- (a) Devilish Acts;
- (b) Deficient Infrastructural Facilities;
- (c) Inordinate Wealth Accumulation and
- (d) An Unclassified/General Category.

Hate Speeches Related to Devilish Acts

This type of hate speeches relate to situations whereby Nigerian citizens perceive their public figures as being devilish, which ultimately triggers their verbal onslaughts in form of hate speeches. These devilish acts cover all forms of perceived inhuman and insensitive acts to the plight of Nigerian citizens by Nigeria's Public Officers. The following excerpts illustrate this better:

Excerpt 1

Nigerians politicians have made Nigerian citizens insensitive towards them because they despise the common citizens of Nigeria. And if you don't care about us we will hate you to death (Facebook, 2020).

Excerpt 2

The past and present politicians, religious leaders, GOs, traditional/kings you all have time to change your devilish way and let Nigeria be habitable for the poor people. Otherwise, God shall wipe you out from generation to generation. Awon agbaya gbogbo (Facebook, 2020).

The Excerpts above portray Nigerian politicians as not being humane in their dealings with the citizens. This, therefore, is a clear demonstration of insensitivity to their plight. Marking this is the statement: *they despise the common citizens of Nigeria* (Excerpt 1) which is an inhumane act portraying public officers as being insensitive. The

predicator, *despise*, in the clause means *to look down upon, scorn* etc. and is a negative attitudinal marker, capable of triggering depression that could lead to a violent reaction by citizens against their leaders. The alpha clause, *we will hate you to death*, in the sentence *And if you don't care about us we will hate you to death* is a hate speech, which can be triggered by lack of care for the common man on the part of the Public Officers as marked by the beta/bound clause...*if you don't care about us with care* depicting *having consideration for others* in the Excerpt, which is a humane act. As widely acknowledged, to hate a person to death is an extreme form of dislike which can only be emitted when people have been extremely frustrated by someone.

In Excerpt 2 above, *the past and present politicians, religious leaders, GOs, traditional/kings*, otherwise referred to as public figures in this paper, are being enjoined to change their life pattern. This life pattern, as revealed in the data, is a *devilish* one, as revealed by the alpha clause *you all have time to change your devilish way*. As shown in the data, it is this devilish way that is making the Nigerian masses to be suffering from having habitable life. Pointing to this is the statement: *and let Nigeria be habitable for the poor people*. This act (devilish), as shown in the Excerpt, has made life difficult to the lives of common people in Nigeria. From this, we can infer that Nigerians, especially the poor, are not enjoying good life as a result of insensitivity of the public figures to their plight, and this is considered as a devilish act which motivates the hate speech in the Excerpt. Thus: *God shall wipe you out from generation to generation* (if this devilish act is not changed) which is a curse is a hate speech characterized by impoliteness. A Yoruba aphorism *Awon agbaya gbogbo* (meaning all these mere old people), which is an abuse, is another form of hate speech characterized by impoliteness. All these, undoubtedly, combine a curse and an abuse reined on Nigerian public figures by the masses. Thus, the masses seek the intervention of the Supreme Being to deal ruthlessly with the political class as they (the Poor) are powerless

to change the course of event. This is evident in the choice of the linguistic item *wipe* which means ‘to clear off’ or ‘exterminate’ completely. The choice of *from generation to generation* indicates the coverage of the ‘extermination’, which is ‘the entire span’ of the Public Figures that have turned devilish as a result of which they are insensitive to the plight of the Masses.

Hate Speech Associated with Deficient Infrastructural Facilities

This type of hate speech is triggered by the dearth of social amenities in the country, arising from the insensitivity of the Public Officers. The Excerpts below illustrate this clearly:

Excerpt 3:

Vanity upon vanity, all is vanity. When you have the opportunity to serve, do it to God and man. Boris Johnson was never flown abroad. He got cure in his country because he worked for it. Most of our leaders are falling to Covid-19 like park of cards (Facebook, 2020).

Excerpt 4:

If this virus didn’t start from countries abroad, this man wouldn’t have died now; but because there was no country to run to, he had to resort to fatherland and manage with the neglected underdeveloped health sector....and the man died! (Facebook, 2020).

The popular proverb: *Vanity upon vanity, all is vanity*, in Excerpt 3 above is borrowed from the Holy Bible. This is a sermon and admonition to people to steer clear of covetousness and greed. This is because nothing is brought to life; neither would anything be taken back to heaven upon death. This relates to the situation of death of a public officer, despite unprecedented wealth accumulated by him. The sentence *When you have the opportunity to serve, do it to God and man*, indicates that the public officer, despite having the opportunity to make

people happy, was insensitive to the Poor when alive. This is an indication of indirect condemnation of the deceased which is a hate speech. The reference to Boris Johnson is an example of a good public leader in Britain, who never sought medication abroad during illness. This accounts for the excellent infrastructural facilities provided in that country for the people to access. *because he worked for it* indicates that he prioritizes the provision of social amenities for his people, the opposite of which obtains among the Nigerian Public Officers. This nonchalant attitude, arising from non-provision of infrastructural facilities, motivates the impolite statement: *Most of our leaders are falling to Covid-19 like park of cards* which is a hate speech, mocking and happy with the death of some public officers as a result of the Corona Virus, which could have been averted had they provided effective medical infrastructures in Nigeria.

Related to this is what obtains in Excerpt 4, where we have a reported case of the death of a public officer arising from Covid-19 that would have been cured if adequate infrastructural facilities had been put in place. *the neglected underdeveloped health sector* in the Excerpt indicates that health sector in Nigeria has been neglected, besides being underdeveloped. This is, no doubt, a mark of insensitivity by Nigeria's Public Officers; and this motivates the hate speech: *and the man died* which is an indirect way of mocking the dead public officer.

Hate Speech Connected with Inordinate Wealth Accumulation

This type of hate motivated speech is connected with accumulation of excessive wealth, through dubious means by some highly placed public officers in Nigeria at the expense of the general masses, which is a mark of insensitivity. The following Excerpts illustrate this better:

Excerpt 5

RIP to Buruju Kashamu... A beg, remember to install Air-Conditioner to his grave oooo! Baba no like heat ooo! A big lesson to us all, and especially our bad politicians and leaders (Facebook, 2020)..

Excerpt 6

RIP. Spend Nigeria money in heaven (Facebook, 2020).

Excerpt 7

Vanity upon vanity, all is vanity. Death do (sic) not need your hard currencies. Ohoooo! What a faithful messenger! Rest on Kasamu (Facebook, 2020).

Excerpt 8

The last mansion for all human beings....Super poor or Super Rich (Facebook, 2020).

In excerpt 5, *remember to install Air-Conditioner to his grave oooo!* is deployed to mock the dead person; hence, a hate speech. This testifies to the inordinate ambition of Nigerian Public Officers to wealth accumulation. Undoubtedly, access to Air-Conditioning is a mark of affluence, with Nigerian Public Officers as the chief beneficiaries at the detriment of the general masses. *A big lesson to us all* in the Excerpt is a caution to all Nigerians against amassing unnecessary wealth at the expense of the masses. That the target of the hate speech is Nigerian public office holders is evident in the use of *and especially our bad politicians and leaders* (who always have penchant for amassing wealth). This is evident in the hate speech *RIP. Spend Nigeria money in heaven* in Excerpt 6. This is strengthened in Excerpt 7 with a sermonic utterance against unnecessary wealth accumulation *Vanity upon vanity, all is vanity*, indicating that no matter one's affluence on earth, death is the end and does not know affluence. This is evident in the utterance *Death do not need your hard currencies* in excerpt 7. Possession of hard currency, which can be in form of Dollars or Pound Starlings, is associated with those

that are extremely rich in Nigeria setting. As such, it symbolizes inordinate accumulation of wealth by the Nigerian Public Officers, all of which amount to nothingness at the end of the day as indicated by the biblical aphorism *Vanity upon vanity (all is vanity)*, which amount to hate speech in the context of mourning the diseased politician who was believed to dispose to having penchant for accumulation of wealth through siphoning of public funds for his personal use, which betrays a sense of insensitivity to the plight of the Poor in Nigeria. This insensitivity further prompts the hate speech in Excerpt 8 with the statement *The last mansion for all human beings... Super poor or Super Rich*.

In the Excerpt, *The last mansion* means the grave; and, as we all know, this is associated with death that knows no rich or poor as marked by *Super poor or Super Rich* in the Excerpt, which, undoubtedly, portrays the act of mocking the dead one, an extreme form of hate speech.

Unclassified/General Category of Hate Speech

Apart from the above distinct classifications, the data reveals general category of hate motivated speeches arising from Nigerian Public Officers insensitivity to the general well beings of the populace. The Excerpts below suffice:

Excerpt 9

It is not proper to mock the dead, so I pray that his soul find (sic) rest but whatever a man sows, so shall he reap (Facebook, 2020).

Excerpt 10

Na so all of them go dey die one by one. Amen (Facebook, 2020).

Excerpt 11

Corona Virus is very respectful. The only disease that came into the country and went to greet the leaders first (Facebook, 2020).

From Text 9-11 above, we can see instances of hate speeches, arising from the ill-feelings the general populace have on their leaders, which cannot be unconnected with the poor ways the leaders to whom they have entrusted their destinies are handling the affairs of the country. In Text 9, it is glaring that a particular politician who is very important died as a result of Covid-19 to which the hate speech is directed. The speaker uses indirectness to actually mock the deceased, as marked by *It is not proper to mock the dead*, when he is actually mocking the deceased public officer. To douse the tension, he then pragmatically resorts to mitigate the feelings of people by praying for the repose of the deceased when he says *I pray that his soul find (sic) rest*. That the speaker does not have good feelings for the dead is evident in his choice of the conjunction *but* which is a marker of contrast when he says *but whatever a man sows, so shall he reap* which is a metaphoric expression utilized by the speaker to indicate that the deceased was insensitive to the plight of the people when he was alive, and has, therefore, been duly rewarded, through death.

The speaker in Excerpt 10 is very blunt about the mock and ill-feeling directed at the deceased, and, therefore, very glad to receive the death-news of the Public Officer. This is evident in his speech (with the deployment of Pidgin) when he says *Na so all of them go dey die one by one*. It is worthy of note that, to wish a person dead is an extreme form of hatred. This implies that the deceased must have been an inconsiderate man when he was alive. This extremity is further reinforced by the choice of an item: *Ameen* (meaning God will seal it). This shows the degree of anger and hatred that the speaker bears to the deceased as a result of the bad deeds of the deceased when on earth.

In Excerpt 11, we can see another instance of mocking Nigerian Public Officers through indirectness. Thus, when the speaker says *Corona Virus is very respectful. The only disease that came into the country and went to greet the leaders first*, he is indirectly glad because public officers are the worst hit by the Virus. We can see the choice of personification marked by *respectful and went to greet* as the linguistic device utilized to express the hatred shrouded by indirectness, which itself portrays a manifestation of impoliteness. Other Excerpts under the general category are:

Excerpt 12

One funny thing about this Corona is that it knows those who allowed its entry, now it is visiting them one by one. I dey my farm (Facebook, 2020).

Excerpt 13

Our senators and MHR have paid their prices for COVID 19. A round of applause. I learnt someone is coughing and sneezing persistently at Oyo Government house!!! Me...A dey watch (Facebook, 2020).

In Excerpt 12, the choice of the deictic markers *those* and *them* refer to Nigerian Public Officers. As such, the speaker is indirectly mocking Nigerian Public Officers who are considered as the architects of the Corona Virus, as they are the ones that brought it as pointed out by the choice of *those who allowed its entry*. The speaker, by saying this, is indirectly saying that the virus belongs to the Diaspora; and since it is only the privileged ones (Nigerian Public Officers) who do travel around the world, it is therefore safe to say that they are the ones that brought the virus into the country. By saying this, the speaker is indirectly identifying with the poor that have being insensitively traumatized by public officers. As such, the pidgin expression *I dey my farm*, indicates that the speaker belongs to the less privileged class that

has not gone beyond Nigerian shores, therefore, could not have been among those that brought Covid-19 into Nigeria.

Then, in Text 13, the items *Our senators and MHR* shows that Nigerian Public Officers are at the centre stage of humiliation. MHR means Members the House of Representatives. This is one of the two Nigerian Legislative Houses (National Assembly) in Abuja. They are saddled with the responsibility of making laws for the well being of the Nigerian populace. That they are insensitive to this but enriching their pockets makes them to attract castigation by the general public; thereby, wishing them dead. This is evident in the choice of the metaphor *paid their prices*. To pay prices as used here means to see the consequences of one's bad action, which is a hate speech. That the speaker is happy about the evil befalling the officers by Covid-19 is marked by the expression *A round of applause*, which is, undoubtedly, a hate speech, triggered by the insensitivity of Nigerian public officers to the plight of the masses in all areas of their lives.

Conclusion

Drawing data through purposive sampling of selected Nigerian Facebook users, using an Android Phone; and utilising the impoliteness aspect of Locher and Watts's (2005) Relational Theory and Mey's (2001) Pragmatics Acts, this paper has examined hate speeches and their potential strength in triggering violence against Nigerian Public Officers. The data reveal four categories of hate speeches, triggered by the insensitivity of the Public Officers to the plight of the masses. These are hate speeches associated with devilish acts, those associated with infrastructural neglect act, those relating to inordinate wealth accumulation acts and the unclassified category. Thus, these categories of hate speeches constitute a potential stimulant of violence in Nigeria, the avoidance of which has the potential of keeping Nigeria stable;

thereby, promoting the economic, social, and political stability of the country and capable of adding more value to the well-being of Nigerians

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