

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected *Radio Biafra's* Hate Speeches on Facebook

Abiodun A. JOMBADI, PhD
Department of English & Linguistics
Kwara State University, Malete
Nigeria.
abiodun.jombadi@kwasu.edu.ng
+2348069835486

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15453356>

Abstract

Literature on online hate speech have conceptually analysed the term, critically evaluated arguments for or against it and diagnosed it as a legal concept. As such, the impact of hate speech on micro and macro-level relations and relational power, especially in developing countries, remains speculative. Being mindful of how discursive issues and discursive constructions inform the depiction of social power, this study analysed selected posts and comments from Radio Biafra London's Facebook platform. The posts and comments were examined to explore the group's perception of the Nigerian nation against the background of its clamour for secession. The study adopted Fairclough's socio-semiotic approach to the analysis of data. Eight lead posts and fifteen feedback comments on each post were randomly selected, presented and analysed. Random selection was based on the group's perception of national issues in relation to its secessionist ideology. The lead posts comprise both video uploads and written texts. Findings reveal six discursive issues, namely *mudslinging*, *ethnic jingoism*, *marked aggression*, *imprecation*, *awful anticipation* and *retaliatory remark*. Mudslinging dominates the discursive type. Discursive and morphological strategies deployed include *metaphor*, *neologism* and *blending*. In conclusion, the paper argues that the discursive practices of the Radio Biafra group are techniques for reproducing power abuse and domination, including resistance or counter-power expressed to engage perceived political dominance.

Keywords: hate speech, critical discourse, relational power, discursive constructions, Radio Biafra London

Introduction

The internet has not only enhanced the system of information transmission by the mass media, it has also democratised online communication enough to allow for citizens' wide participation in many forms including the dissemination of hate speeches, which has proven to be the black sheep of this useful social dynamics. Initial research interests on online hate speech had focused on the growth of hateful websites. With the discoveries of more innovative tools such as social media platforms, however, new challenges and concerns in regard to online hate emerged (Galiardone, Gal, Alves, & Martinez, 2015; Keipi, Nasi, Oksanen, & Rasanen, 2016; Silva, Mondal, Correa, Benevenuto, & Weber, 2016).

Current research in Facebook discourse generally have focused on such issues as the role of Facebook exchanges on language learning, and deconstructing academic relations and associated learner challenges on Facebook. In addition, studies have explored how social process on digital media can lead towards either collaboration or confrontation, and ethnographic approaches to exploring how new media help to strengthen racist discourse in everyday interaction (see Sen, 2016; Tate, 2017; Rambe, 2012; Brown, 2017; & Assimakopoulos, 2017). More specifically, research areas in hate speech on Facebook include the exploration of the way people elaborate and share resentment against immigrants and refugees on Facebook. Critical and analytical assessment of texts implying religious intolerance on Facebook as well as comparative assessments of rousing comments of Facebook users as reported in Facebook accounts of selected media organisations are equally some recent research interests (see Kareem al-utbi, 2018; Craftci, Gashi, Hoffman, Bahr, Ilhan, & Kiewicz, 2017; Aslan, 2017 & Auwal, 2018).

Current works on the Biafran secessionist discourses in Nigeria also abound. For instance, Oladapo (2015) used thematic analysis to explore identity crisis in tweets with pro-Biafra agitation. Chiluwa (2018) analysed the discourse structures of the online discourses of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) that apparently or implicitly capture the notion of conflict, war, tribalism and hate speech. Furthermore, Ajiboye (2019) examined polarisation in citizens' online discourses about Biafra agitation in Nigeria using Biafra-related posts sampled from Nigerian digital communities. Alabi and Ayeloja (2019) pragmatically analysed the utterances of Nnamdi Kanu to determine whether they constitute hate speech. The study found that Nnamdi Kanu's utterances were full of inflammatory rhetoric and verbal attacks, which classify them as hate speech.

Despite these efforts, an approach is needed to contextualize the online discourse of the Biafran agitators further as a social conflict discourse with a specific focus on its exploitative social relations at the ideological level, as this work attempts to do. To bridge this gap, this study explores the socio-semiotic resources of language deployed by the group to analyse discursive practices and broader social context in which the interaction of the agitators is situated as it unfolds the negotiation and hidden manifestation of power.

Social Networks, Facebook and Hate Speech

The term "hate speech" or cyber hate (when it occurs on the web) has no widely accepted definition. Scholars and institutions conceptualise it based on their orientations and interests. According to the British Institute of Human Rights (2012, cited in Auwal, 2018, p.57), hate speech covers "all forms of expression that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed as aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin". Pankowski, (2007, p.2) describes hate speech as "the discourses that intend to insult, to intimidate and to provoke violence or prejudice against an individual or a group because of the said individual's or group's race, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation,

sexual identity, disability, moral or political views, socioeconomic class, profession or looks (such as height, weight or hair colour), mental capacity and any other similar characteristic”.

Social networks are software that allow for communication between individuals and groups through applications that enable information exchange on web (Aslan, 2017, p.8). Communicating via social network platforms offers a rich avenue for democratising the dissemination of various opinions and perceptions of people. A striking attribute of social network sites is that they guarantee individuals or groups the opportunity to communicate freely. Social networking sites have, for years, pushed the frontier of freedom of expression, an inalienable right of every individual or group. In this sense, online interlocutors can control communication either to support good relations with others, or for the expression of hate against others. Given the ease, unlimited access and freedom with which individuals approach social network sites, abuses happen resulting in unwholesome phenomena such as gathering “self-favoured views and beliefs and creating a front war against ‘others’ who do not share these same views and interests” (Kareem, Al-utbi, 2018, p.1).

As it exists, the internet has become a site for open engagement; a place for discussing and reflecting upon social problems. In Nigeria, evidences attest to the usefulness of social media for addressing socio-political issues. Ajiboye and Abioye (2019, p.119) identify the value of social media in fostering social activism and awareness creation such as the *#BringBackOurGirls* movement on Twitter in 2009, *#OccupyNigeria* in 2012, voters mobilization, election monitoring and political campaigns in the build up to the 2011 and 2015 elections, and protest against controversial social media censorship law in 2015. All these instances accentuate the significance of online sites as platforms for fostering individual and collective participation and communal belonging.

The social networks have been used and are still being used to propel socioeconomic and political transformations in Nigeria. Current realities have revealed that “many Nigerians employ the use of hate comments, threats, abusive language and assassination of character on the social media to vent anger, frustration and register their dissatisfaction about political, economic, religious, security and social issues in the society” (Ende & Dzukogi, 2012 cited in Auwal, 2018, p.2). The lax nature of the social media platform has made it a perfect place for everyone to create and share ideas, information, images, videos, art and music. This accounts for why it has become populated with sites that are committed to inciting hatred against particular ethnic, religious and racial groups or sexual orientations. This development has obvious implications for the peaceful co-existence and social cohesion of the nation. Auwal (2018, p.2) observes that “users-generated content through comments on social media accounts of individuals, groups and media organisations on national issues have exhibited various positions and division, in some instances hate-related on issues of national importance”.

As a response to civil society concerns, governmental injunctions, and international conventions on hate speech, online fora and social networking sites have developed their own terms of service to detect, regulate, and prohibit hate speech. One example is Facebook, which includes the following:

...content that attacks people based on their actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or disease is not allowed. We do, however, allow clear attempts at humour or satire that might otherwise be considered to be a possible threat or attack. This includes content that many people may find to be in bad taste (ex: jokes, stand-up comedy, popular song lyrics, etc.). (Facebook, 2017)

Despite this caveat, evidences show that more instances of online hate speech occur on social media (Hawdon, Oksanen & Rasanen, 2014; Keipi et al., 2016; Mondal, Silva & Benevenuto, 2017 cited in Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018, p.9). This has not only driven the interest in exploring online hate

on specific social media platforms, it has also incited the need by major social media platforms to use computational methodologies to detect, remove, and understand the dynamics of hateful content distributed through these tools. The effort to detect and remove hate contents on Facebook and Twitter has prompted interlocutors to circumvent social media rules by using slang, irony, and pseudo-scientific references as disguise.

Profiling the Biafran Campaign Group and its Facebook Activities

The activities of the Radio Biafra London group on Facebook appear on the Facebook page 'Radio Biafra London'. Postings on the page are meant to ventilate and strengthen the Biafran agitation aimed at secession. Biafra was a secessionist, unrecognised state in Nigeria, which existed between May 1967 and January 1970 under the leadership of Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu. The then Federal Government of Nigeria quashed it under the leadership of General Yakubu Gowon in a civil war, which lasted for almost three years. During the war, almost two million Biafran civilians and forces died from starvation caused by the total blockade of the region by the then military government, and Biafra was reintegrated into Nigeria (Barnaby, 2000; Omoigui, 2018 cited in Auwal, 2018, p.56).

The agitation for the emergence of the Sovereign State of Biafra resurfaced in 1999 with the formation of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), a movement spearheaded by its national leader, Ralph Uwazuruike. Alleged state repression and disagreement within the group weakened it, paving the way for the rise of Benjamin Igwe Onwuka's Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM), which rose to the spotlight in 2012. The arrest and trials of many leaders of BZM reduced its activities and consequently lessened its prominence. These pro-Biafran groups conflated and gave rise to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which would continue the agitation for the creation of the state of Biafra.

Nnamdi Kanu, who has nationality in Britain and Nigeria, leads the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The group emerged in 2012 with the aim of creating an independent state for the people of the old eastern region. Perceived marginalisation of the ethnic groups in the region instigated the movement. The group's objective, therefore, is to redress the perception of marginalisation of the region as well as address the imbalance of resource allocation and control by "serving as a pressure group to influence the structure of power" (Auwal, 2017).

The activities of IPOB have, on various occasions brought her members into clashes with Nigerian military forces, leading to the proscription and labelling of the group as a "terrorist organisation" on September 18, 2017 by the Federal High Court in Abuja. The group has fruitlessly fought against this proscription but they continue to be declared as terrorists under the Nigeria's Terrorism Act. Nevertheless, the group has continued to vent its grievances through Radio Biafra, which was established in 2009 by Nnamdi Kanu. Mr. Kanu came into the limelight through regular broadcasts on the Radio. Radio Biafra London (RBL) Facebook page is the social media ancillary of this broadcast station. Postings on RBL Facebook page represent the shared agitation of the IPOB and pro-Biafran individuals, who utilise the social media space to make comments expressing hatred, mockery, insults, diatribes, and "even incitement to violence against the ethnic, political, regional and religious backgrounds of the diverse population of the country" (Auwal, p.57).

Theoretical Framework

This paper is informed by Fairclough's (1995, 1989) socio-semiotic approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Fairclough (1989), in his book *Language and Power* refers to his approach to language and discourse as "critical language study" (p.5), exploring the connections between language use and unequal relations of power. His aspiration for such a study is that it should contribute to "the general raising of consciousness of exploitative social relations" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 4). This

aim has triggered an approach that is probably the single most influential one within CDA (Fairclough 1992a, 1995a, 1995b, 2000b, 2000c, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2004; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999).

Fairclough developed a three-dimensional framework for studying discourse, where the aim is to map three separate forms of analysis onto one another. These are analysis of (spoken or written) texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption, i.e. how texts have been produced and how this affects interpretation) and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice (i.e. factors in society that led to the production of texts and how these factors affect interpretation). These closely resemble van Dijk's three dimensions of ideology analysis: *discourse*, *socio-cognition* and *social analysis* (analysis of social structure), respectively. Fairclough (1989 cited in Rambe, 2012, p.299) prescribes three stages of CDA thus:

- Description is concerned with the formal properties of text.
- Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction – emphasises conception of text as an outcome of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation.
- Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context – foregrounds the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects.

It is inferred that the context of interaction structures the flow of interaction and simultaneously, the interaction itself affords understanding of the context in which social interaction occurred (Rambe, 2012, p.299). There is, therefore, a recursive, mutually reciprocal exchange between the broader social context of text production and textual properties. Overall, description is about the analysis of formal properties of text; interpretation is about examination of discursive practices and how they affect the interpretation of text; while explanation underlines broader social factors that led to the production of text and their implications for interpretation. These intertwining dimensions are combined particularly as micro, meso and macro levels of interpretation. At the micro level, the analyst considers the text's syntax, metaphoric structure and certain rhetorical devices. The meso level involves studying the text's production and consumption, focusing on how power relations are enacted. At the macro level, the analyst is concerned with inter-textual understanding; trying to explain the broad, societal currents that are affecting the text being studied. An examination of Radio Biafra's Facebook interactions provides understanding of textual and discursive practices, broader social contexts in which the practices unfold and the negotiation and hidden manifestation of power.

Methodology

The work adopts a qualitative approach to the analysis of data. The choice of qualitative analytical method for this work is to facilitate the classification of basic issues in data for text analysis into categories that make for easy analysis. The qualitative analytical approach was further designed to facilitate the investigation of both the text as well as the wider social, cultural and political context within which the hate speeches are constructed. Analysis follows Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for studying discourse, where the aim is to map three separate forms of analysis onto one another. That is, analysis of (spoken or written) texts, analysis of discourse practice and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice (i.e. factors in society that led to the production of texts and how these factors affect interpretation).

Data for the study constitute selected posts and comments on Radio Biafra London's Facebook platform covering a period between January and June 2019. Eight lead posts and fifteen feedback comments following the posts were randomly selected, presented and analysed. Random selection was based on the group's perception of national issues in relation to its secessionist ideology. The lead posts comprise both video uploads and written texts.

Analysis of Radio Biafra London's Facebook Posts

Textual analysis of data covers six discursive issues and three discursive and morphological strategies. The discursive issues, which are referred to as Hate Speech Types (HST) for the purpose of this data, include *mudslinging*, *ethnic jingoism*, *marked aggression*, *imprecation*, *awful anticipation* and *retaliatory remark*. The discursive and morphological strategies, referred to as Hate Speech Strategies (HSS) for the purpose of this study are *metaphor*, *neologism* and *blending*. Mudslinging was the dominant discursive issue. Significantly, these issues, relating to the group's perceptions of and opinions on non-Biafrans and the Nigerian nation and the exercise of relational power, is what constitutes the thrust of this paper.

HST 1: Textual Analysis of Mudslinging as a Hate Speech Type

Mudslinging is an attempt at damaging people's reputation by saying bad things about them. It is the dominant discursive type noticed in the posts. It is exemplified in some of the speeches as direct insults hurled at other members on the platform, on political leaders (both national and international), and on the nation Nigeria. This Hate Speech Type is illustrated with comments made by some IPOB members while responding to a post by another member.

Text 1

Thank God you are a woman. But I don't think your parent raised you well, that you have the gut to ask a whole Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka Ogu why. Oh, God, this is very expensive.

Text 2

Your father's sperm that produced you is a wasted one.

Text 1 was made in response to an IPOB member's post, which derided a Catholic priest, Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka Ogu. The post had blamed the revered Rev. Father for getting himself involved in the politics of the Nigerian state - a polity that an average Biafran secessionist abhors. The text's description evokes a hate propelled by absolute loyalty. Hate is conveyed in the speech as an insult aimed at the commentator, because of his perceived disregard of Rev. Mbaka.

The utterance can be construed as a demonstration of legitimacy, a circumstance where the text producer conferred a right on himself to instil a lesson on cultural and religious values. The social context of the speech attests to the fact that allegiance is a major feature of religion. The religious ideology of the respondent is definitely stronger than the political ideology jointly shared by the agitators.

A further implication of this explanation is the connection between cultural imperative and religious belief as the respondent claims: "But I don't think your parent raised you well, that you have the gut to ask a whole Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka Ogu why". The respondent seems to imply that if the commentator were culture sensitive, he would jettison the idea of holding a priest accountable. In the same light, addressivity, by title, is honorific. This highlights the strong placement of loyalty and prestige in the cognition of the respondent.

Aside tarnishing the reputation of fellow Biafrans, secessionists also sometimes target for mudslinging any non-Biafran who comes on the platform. It is in this regard that a Hausa participant on the platform was insulted based on his political views (Text 2). As an open platform, there are 'visitors' who sometimes fraternise with members of the group. Those outgroup members do not necessarily share in the secessionist ideology of Biafrans, but are on the platform to air their views on various issues raised. An example of such outgroup members is a Hausa man who denigrated the supposed sanctity of the Biafran dream by tagging the agitators non-patriotic for their pursuit of the Biafran dream instead of concentrating on fixing Nigeria. This is the background that saw the man being referred to as a no-do-good: "your father's sperm that produced you is a wasted one". Hate is

expressed in this speech to negatively depict the commentator as irresponsible and a charlatan. His biological root is described as inglorious. The social context of this condemnation is that there is a standard of behaviour expected of individuals - people are sometimes judged based on certain expectations as it is the case with the Biafran group.

Verbal insults and abuse from the group also target political leaders. Hate is processed in this dimension to incite racial hatred based on perception of leadership inadequacies. For instance, in one of the responses of an IPOB member to a post referring to President Muhammadu Buhari, the hatred of the Biafran agitators for the Nigerian state is not only indicated, the response also referenced a perceived mental and moral incompetence of the Nigerian leader.

Text 3

He's a wicked man; Lucifer in human form. It's only God that will judge him blue black.

Text 4

That's the most gullible President I know in the world.

Text 5

Idiot. Orji Uzor, you are so stupid. Nonsense!

The act of mudslinging in Text 3 involves a metaphoric attribution of evil to the Nigerian President. The imprecation embedded in the attribution pinpoints a negative attribute for the President and predicts the inevitability of divine judgement on him. The text is construed as an expression of condemnation to the effect that certain actions are ignoble and deserving of a proportional ruinous consequence, which is to be meted out by God. The assertion: "It's only God that will judge him..." presupposes dominance – the fact that some individuals are too powerful to be checkmated by their fellow men. The social context of this information is that actions are deserving of appropriate consequences.

In addition to this, Text 4 – another response to the same post on the President – demonstrates anger towards the leadership style of the President unlike the previous text that condemns his person. The hate in the speech is tailored to depict the President negatively based on the perceived leadership incompetence. The social context of this information suggests that followers have specific expectations of leadership and when those expectations fail, followers are disappointed.

This same perception-driven anger against leadership is demonstrated in Text 5 regarding the verbal insult hurled at Senator Uzor Kalu: "Orji Uzor, you are so stupid". The speech is a response to a post reporting that Senator Orji Uzor Kalu backed up the decision by the Federal Government to set-up cattle ranches in the Eastern part of Nigeria.

Senator Orji Kalu is a Nigerian politician who served as the Governor of Abia State, Nigeria from May 29, 1999 to May 29, 2007. Uzor Kalu, who now serves as a Senator in the Buhari government, is known for publicly affirming his loyalty to the unity of Nigeria, on the one hand and his affection for Nigeria's citizens of Northern extraction, on the other. This position, coupled with his infamous record as a two-term governor of one of the Eastern states, makes him unpopular among the pro-Biafran agitators. This informs this insult which was triggered by Orji Uzor Kalu's political view. Addressivity serves as the strategy for the direct verbal attack hurled at Kalu.

Aside individuals and political leaders, hate is also processed in the speeches of Biafran agitators against the nation Nigeria. As illustrated in the samples below, hate is expressed through a direct insult on the nation based on a subjective perception of the country's leadership style or recourse to history.

Text 6

Nigeria is a complete zoo country.

Text 7

When a country is ruled by mad cows, what do you expect?

Text 8

I blame the useless English government for lumping us together as a country.

Text 9

If you are proud to be a Nigerian, I have no respect for you. It's either your brain is not functioning properly or you are very stupid.

Text 6 is a post by a Biafran on the platform seeking to register his perception of the Nigerian nation. The post is a metaphoric description of Nigeria as a jungle where, according to Nnamdi Kanu, violence reigns unchecked. Here, the commentator reiterates Nnamdi Kanu's hate speech as a form of negative depiction, based on the bias-motivated perception of injustice in the country. Biafrans are actually known for castigating Nigeria through various means, though often due to the factual economic condition of the people and not just of the Igbos.

The social context of this text shows that knowledge construction can be a reflection of personal observation of happenings within the polity. Such observation can also include attention placed on standard of leadership available. Text 7, for instance, is a response to a post that condemned the Nigerian government's plan to establish cattle ranches in the South Eastern part of the country, which is arguably the epicentre of the Biafran nation. The response buttresses the submission of the commentator by verbally attacking the country's leadership for their insensitivity to the security implication of this type of project.

It is significant to mention that most instances of metaphoric conjectures by Biafran agitators usually allude to the metaphoric dimension of comparing persons in leadership or their leadership styles to the behaviour of cattle. This is because rearing of cattle is the main occupation of the people of Northern Nigeria, especially the Hausa-Fulani stock. To demonstrate their acute hatred for this ethnic nationality, pro-Biafran agitators often use such metaphor that is associated with their main occupation in order to scorn and deride them. This form of hate expression elevates racial discrimination and demonstrates acute intolerance. For instance, Text 8 is a response from a Biafran following an observation raised by another Biafran on the plight of citizens of Nigeria. The commentator had condemned the Nigerian leadership for the perpetual suffering of citizens. The respondent added his voice to the discontent by reverting to his long-term memory (van Dijk, 2006) to draw a lesson from history to explain the happenings in his short-term memory. His comment implies that the plight of the nation is traceable to the amalgamation of Nigeria's Southern and Northern protectorates by the former Governor-General, Sir Frederick Lugard during the colonial invasion in 1914. The utterance thus avers hate by making a damaging portrayal of the British government represented Frederick Lugard.

The interpretation of the text is a critical review of Nigeria's political history to imply that the country's political system is incongruous and inappropriate, which has been the main argument of the Biafran secessionist ideology. Given the perceived incongruity that trailed the amalgamation of the various ethnic nationalities that make up the country, the group sees no reason "to be proud to be a Nigerian". This is why Text 9 (a post that targets non-Biafrans who have no sympathy for the Biafran struggle) describes anyone who is proud of being a Nigerian as mentally unsound. Within the cognitive space of the commentator therefore, logic is conjectured in terms of being politically well informed. Mudslinging, a hate speech type, is then expressed as a prejudice based on the political view of the agitators. The interpretation of this production is that the commentator assumes authority to define proper procedure for psychological soundness. The social context of the post and indeed all the posts under this Hate Speech Type validates the need to secede from Nigeria.

HST 2: Textual Analysis of Ethnic Jingoism as a Hate Speech Type

Jingoism depicts the extreme and unreasonable belief that one's own country is best. This belief is usually demonstrated through an aggressive attitude towards other countries. IPOB's insistence on seceding from Nigeria is predicated on the belief that the emergence of Biafra will signal a better lease of life for its citizens. This fact informs its discursive practices on Facebook most of which portray Nigeria as a cesspool of corruption, social injustice and infrastructural decay. This is done with the belief that Biafra will be a better alternative as Nigeria is further portrayed in the samples below as a nation not fit for human beings.

Text 10

True talk but the cowards in the evil forest call zoo will never learn. Give anyone little change; he will sell his entire community.

Text 11

Nigeria should be deleted from the list of existing countries of the world – very barbaric. See the zombie.

Text 12

Biafrans hate Nigeria with all their beings. We are not pretending about it because Nigeria is a satanic creation.

Text 13

There is nothing like a nation called Nigeria. It is an evil abomination under the sun that should never have happened. I blame Zik for most of this mess!

Texts 10-13, are affirmative perceptions about social engagements in the Nigerian state. Against the backdrop of the secession dream of the agitators, one cannot but feel the overbearing weight of prejudicial metaphors across the texts against the Nigerian nation in such a way that hurls insult at Nigerians while implicitly celebrating the Biafran dream. Text 10 is a solidarity response to a post that decried the pitiable conditions of hapless Nigerians who appear helpless in the face of bad governance. The respondent latched on to this position, claiming that Nigerians are not only docile but also unpatriotic – “Give anyone little change; he will sell his entire community”. The process of hate is nurtured by propagating a negative perception of the country. The social context of this ideology reflects the pervasive influence of greed on the Nigerian masses.

This is further corroborated by the outburst that followed from another respondent to the post (see Text 11). This sample is a provocative outburst with a malicious intention aimed at a nation in deterioration. The formal properties of the text relate to strong persuasion – an inducement calling for specific action. The respondent seems to suggest to other countries of the world that grave injustice and acute leadership challenge in Nigeria is endemic; and indirectly calls for sanctions against the country, and if possible, ostracizes the country from the comity of nations.

Text 12 lays bare the racial hatred of Biafrans for Nigeria. In this instance, the text expresses the exclusivist dimension of the secessionist ideology of pro-Biafran agitators. The group consistently remembers and blames the amalgamation of the Northern and the Southern protectorates of Nigeria for the marginalization of Biafrans. Current prevailing situations such as marginalisation, unfairness and injustice, poverty and joblessness, keep the memory of the amalgamation dark and repulsive. Thus, the commentator, being part of the struggle assumes the legitimacy to speak for the agitators. The socio-political implication of this kind of comment is that there is lack of social cohesion in Nigeria.

The aversion to the unholy union occasioned by amalgamation, which led to the formation of Nigeria, is further echoed by a response that follows from another member (see Text 13). In the sample, the racial hatred is further amplified by alluding to the mistake made by an Igbo leader – Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who should have defended the sovereignty of the old Eastern region. Dr. Azikiwe (popularly

called “Zik”), a Nigerian political leader of Igbo extraction was the first President of Nigeria from 1963 to 1966. He was one of the major pillars behind Nigeria’s independence. That is why the respondent asserted, “Blame Zik for most of this mess!”

In the context of this comment, addressivity is negative because the respondent believes that the pact reached by Zik in forging the union of the entire country was a mistake. The respondent assumes the authority of an expert, who is capable of diagnosing political malady and knowing the accurate prescription that will guarantee its cure. The social context of the text implies that the prevailing reality of a nation cannot be separated from her history.

HST 3: Textual Analysis of Marked Aggression as a Hate Speech Type

The easy access of social network sites as well as their democratized nature has given individuals opportunity to vent their grievances with limited checks so long as such actions have not breached any aspect of the law of a nation such as defamation. To IPOB, therefore, Facebook serves as a respite channel to emit their anger and shed their frustration against the backdrop of their constant confrontation with the Nigeria’s security forces. This vituperation is sometimes couched in expressed aggression:

Text 14

Too much talk is not good. Kill and explain later.

The above text illustrates the kind of verbal aggression and confrontation typical of the Biafran group. It is a response from a Biafran on the platform following a post demanding for the best approach to dealing with security forces who constantly harass their members. The imperative nature of the text manifests as hate in the sense that the respondent was seeking to incite mayhem based on intolerance expressed as aggressive nationalism and hostility. The writer of this post is perhaps more impatient than anybody on the platform. His/her aggressive language illustrates a height of frustration that pushes for violent action. The writer perhaps, succeeded in instigating more persons to subscribe to this aggressive recommendation. More examples of marked aggression are illustrated in Texts 15-17.

Text 15

We have only one option left – it’s either we pull down Nigeria or it will pull us down forever.

Text 16

We must pull down the evil forest for the good of humanity.

Text 17

Whatever will make the whole zoo to burn down, that is what I want. They want to Islamize their father.

The above responses are aggressive reflections of hate. Text 15 calls for a direct physical attack on Nigeria. It is on record that the pro-Biafra agitators have physically confronted Nigeria’s security forces several times (Chiluwa, 2018; Alabi & Ayeloja, 2019). Such confrontations have seen its members hounded and arrested. Weakened by this constant ‘defeat’, they resort to verbal attacks. The comments above illustrate such verbal virulence expressed to project bottled anger. The social context of the discourse reveals the construction of rupture and alienation, which further re-echoes in a similar imperative response in Text 16. The expression here is an aggressive command though couched as benevolence – “...for the good of humanity”. The description of the text is same as in Text 15 but with a different outcome. For this one, the recommended violence is necessary to enthrone peace for humanity.

Text 17 introduces a religious dimension to the aggressive response: “They want to Islamize their father”. The respondent references a religious agenda to incite a collective action knowing how

sensitive religious sentiments can be in Nigeria. The text indicates a sectarian drive incited by an unconfirmed belief that the sitting Muslim President is wielding political influence in favour of his religion. Pro-Biafran agitators latch on this reality to advance their aspiration of a weak Nigeria in favour of an emerging Biafra. Thus, the post introduces a religious dimension to the attack on Nigeria. The social context idea of this text is that reactionary responses may be pointers to certain beliefs.

HST 4: Textual Analysis of Imprecation as a Hate Speech Type

The aggressive construct of some of the IPOB's postings is sometimes construed as a reckless imprecation especially on non-Biafrans whose comments vary with the interest and the belief held by Biafrans. This outlandish reflection of ethnic bigotry does not spare any leader regardless of his/her ethnic background. Some of these imprecations are rendered either as a threat or a curse.

Text 18

No one that comes against IPOB that will remain the same. Your entire body will be filled with troubles.

Text 19

Buratai, may God curse and destroy your generation.

Text 20

Thunder fire you, smelling pig Hausa Fulani bloody terrorist...Evil bloody Hausa Fulani terrorist telling me to pray. Prayer kill your mama, papa, then reverse kill you and your families.

The information need of the post flagged by a Biafran (Text 18) is shared as a threat. The malicious speech is framed as an attempt to intimidate based on perceived hostility. The formal properties of text are oriented towards an attempt to muzzle opponents psychologically into believing that the secessionists are formidable and impenetrable. The socio-semiotic value of text, as interpreted, thus points to the assertion of dominance by the group. In addition, the poise in the message is interpreted around the readiness of the group to challenge anyone. In this context, an identity is constructed around the agitators as an imposing group with no interest in concession and diplomacy. Aside threat, Text 19 is oriented towards a curse. It is another post by a Biafran addressing the Chief of Army Staff, General Tukur Yusuf Buratai.

This post emerged as a response to an attack launched by the Nigerian Army on some members of the group who were seen in public protesting the policy of government on opening cattle ranches in the Eastern part of the country. That confrontation saw most of the pro-Biafran agitators hounded and arrested by Nigerian security forces led by the military. In reaction, other members took to the group's platform to express their rage. The attribute of the social media as an avenue for democratising the dissemination of various opinions and perceptions of people have been documented in the literature. This freedom is demonstrated in this imprecation through addressivity. This addressivity, in the context of the discourse, is negative with an outcome that expresses the disgruntlement of a group with the institution of the Nigerian Army.

In another development, a curse is muttered as a response to a post by a non-Biafran (a Hausa man) who came to the platform asking everyone to pray for Nigeria (see Text 20). The respondent lashed out at the commenter cursing and raging. The information need is expressed as fury. Hate, in this speech, is processed as racial hatred based on intolerance expressed as discrimination and hostility. There is acute defamation captured in the text in which the respondent hurls a direct insult at the Hausa commentator to demonstrate his hatred for Nigeria. The social context of the response therefore evokes the idea that secessionist ideology drives divisive tendency.

HST 5: Textual Analysis of Awful Anticipation as a Hate Speech Type

Some posts reflect various contemplations by Biafrans, all with a single dream to see Nigeria fail. It is the anticipation of IPOB to see fulfilled the dream of a rising Biafra succeeding a moribund Nigeria. This is what I term as awful. This is illustrated in the following texts:

Text 21

I await the collapse of this misplaced element called Nigeria. I hope to see that day soon.

Text 22

The country shall be named "cowgeria", their coat of arm shall consist of two horns + herdsmen portrait.

Text 21 is an anticipation of the collapse of the Nigerian state. Given the disappointing and painful experience of pro-Biafran agitators in their numerous attempts at breaking away from Nigeria, they have reached the conclusion that the dream of a Biafran nation seems unrealizable without a backlash. They thus hope for a window that will make the dream of a fragmented Nigeria a reality. The hate embedded in this anticipation indicates a malicious desire aimed at Nigeria because of Biafrans' hostility. The prediction in the message is constructed around the downfall of the political structure of Nigeria, a panacea the agitators believe can happen. The social context of the text reflects an idea that the current political structure is hostile to the ideology of the secessionists.

Text 22 infers a reality around the political structure of Nigeria by offering her another name and another coat of arms different from the one she currently has. The proposed coat of arms is to be embossed with two horns and a herdsmen portrait. This semiotic framing alludes to the prevailing dominance of the Fulani ethnic nationality over other ethnic groups especially the Igbo. The main occupation of the Fulani people is cattle rearing; hence, the proposal to give the country a new name that is cattle-related: "cowgeria" and to design a new coat of arms to be adorned with a portrait of "two horns + herdsmen".

The reality surrounding the structure of politics in Nigeria currently is that the Igbo feel marginalised by the ruling Fulani hegemony as personified by President Muhammadu Buhari, the Nigerian leader of the Fulani descent. The social context of the post therefore reflects defamation being construed as a radical reaction to dominance, oppression and marginalisation. Since the commentator is best adjudged to occupy the lower rung of the power ladder, one may argue that the sense of authority contained in the naming strategy is only ironic as the prevailing political reality denies the commentator of any felicity.

HST 6: Textual Analysis of Retaliatory Remark as a Hate Speech Type

IPOB's confrontation with Nigeria's security forces usually leads to several arrests of its members - some getting injured or dead in the process. As a response to this sordid development, group members often take advantage of the liberal and the democratised avenue of the social media to protest and instigate reprisal. The post below illustrates this.

Text 23

They must pay for Biafrans being killed by zoo foolish soldiers.

This post was flagged by a Biafran as a response to the killing of some pro-Biafran demonstrators. The information need of the text is expressed as retaliation. The malicious speech was expressed as an incitement to harm based on the attacks unleashed on Biafrans by the Nigerian army. The outcome of production indicates confidence on the part of the commentator. The poise in the message is created around the capacity of Biafrans to retaliate the killing of its members.

Discursive and Morphological Strategies in Radio Biafra London's Facebook Posts

Elements of the discursive and morphological strategies in the data, also referred to as Hate Speech Strategies (HSS), in Radio Biafra London's posts on its platform are *metaphor*, *neologism* and *blending*. Metaphorisation as a discursive strategy is deployed to represent Nigeria and her leadership as a cow, a zoo and an evil forest. Those direct attributive comparisons reveal the perception and assessment of Biafrans about Nigeria and her leadership nature and style.

It is to be noted that the idea of calling Nigeria a zoo originated from Nnamdi Kanu. Kanu's idea of a zoo in relation to Nigeria has however been extended by his followers to mean different things. For instance, a post opines, "Nigeria is a complete zoo country", meaning that happenings in Nigeria is comparable to life in the jungle where life is without value and existence is marred by unchecked violence, complication and threat to life. The leadership is represented as a cow and the nation an evil forest. The metaphor of cow reflects a bestial arrogance that is rigid and destructive. The indifference of the Nigerian government to the notion of secession must have earned her this attribute. Indeed, several administrations have insisted on keeping Nigeria as one and this perpetual stringency has irked pro-Biafran agitators enough to call the leadership cows.

Neologism is a process of inventing new words in a language. The word "Nigerzooria" is coined in one of the posts to synchronise happenings within the country further with the cruel and ruthless nature of the jungle: "Zoo Nigerzooria is not working and it can never work..." This post describes the country as a contraption that leaves little to be proud of. Whereas neologism or coinage reflects the ignoble system at work in the country, blending orientates towards the style of leadership being practised: "The country shall be named 'cowgeria'..." This word is a blend of the monosyllable 'cow' and the last two syllables of the word 'Nigeria'. The blend represents the country and the manner in which it is being governed. In the perception of the Biafrans, the country is bereft of sound leadership.

Discussion

The textual constructions above on processes of hate speech demonstrate the tolerance and the liberality of social media, and indeed Facebook, being a channel where groups can vent their grievances in a way that would have otherwise proven difficult offline. *Radio Biafra*'s postings so far analysed exhibit group members' absolute hijack of virtual power to express genuine abhorrence for Nigeria's political system, political players and other citizens who downplay their quest for secession. This process is made most tangible by deployment of insults, curses, imprecations and spiteful predictions. These activities have been subsumed under six discursive types. The table below provides an analysis of each discursive type in terms of their frequency of occurrence.

Table 1

Frequency and Proportion of Hate Speech Types

	Mudslinging	Ethnic Jingoism	Marked Aggression	Imprecation	Awful Contemplation	Retaliatory Remarks
Number	9	4	4	3	2	1
Percentage	36%	16%	16%	12%	8%	4%

Table 1 presents a total of 6 Hate Speech Types and 23 textual resources. There are nine textual resources describing mudslinging type, accounting for 36% of the data – the largest proportion. There are four textual resources describing ethnic jingoism type, accounting for the proportion of 16%. Four textual resources describe marked aggression type, accounting for the proportion of 16%. Three textual resources describe imprecation type, accounting for the proportion of 12%. There are two textual resources describing awful contemplation type, accounting for the proportion of 8% and one textual resource describes retaliatory remark type, accounting for the least proportion of 4%.

The dominant discursive type is mudslinging. The group is unequivocal in hurling verbal attacks at the country, national and international leaders, non-Biafrans as well as fellow Biafrans. Given the perceived poor decision of leadership to introduce grazing across the country, members of the Facebook group compare the country to the animal kingdom while tracing the genesis of her woes to the 1914 amalgamation effected by Sir Frederick Lugard.

In the analysis, negative addressivity reflects a deep resentment for select political leaders. It is observed that secessionist ideology shared by members is not as strong as the extent of allegiance individual members express to religious figures as members attack one another in defence of their favourite individuals. The implication of this revelation is that perhaps the shared secessionist ideology can be conjectured in terms of what group members intend to benefit individually if the secessionist agenda should materialise. Given this background, it behoves future research to deconstruct the nature of the brand of secession that Biafran agitators seek.

Analysis also unravels various discursive and morphological strategies deployed by the group to make an impact on the emotional-associative mentality of people in order to gain subtle inclusion. The strategies include *metaphor*, *neologism* and *blending*. Metaphor accounts for the largest proportion of the discursive strategies deployed in the data. The preponderance of metaphor is expected to stir emotions and paralyse logic. This is because they touch latent cognitive structures. Metaphor simplifies difficult issues, making it easy to relate with them. It is used by Biafrans to impress the seriousness of the agitation in the minds of the public.

Ostensibly, metaphor here is influenced by ideological factor. That is why, being cognitive, metaphor is also a textual and social phenomenon (Deignan, 2005, p.124). When a metaphor is used in a particular context, a speaker is aware that an audience might be in sympathy with such argument (Mio, 1997, p.123), and as a result, it makes a speaker closer to an audience (Ananko, 2017, p.135). Biafran agitators use metaphor derogatorily to link the animal culture to the Nigerian polity. Metaphor serves as a direct comparison of the style of leadership in the country with that of animals where proper governance structure is non-existent. The strategies of neologism and blending are deployed in the texts to further portray and compactly express the group's subjective perception of the country as a jungle.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that Radio Biafra's posts on Facebook are buried in power-managed sequence where deep abhorrence is freely expressed for Nigeria's political system, political players and other citizens who downplay the Biafrans' quest for secession. This process is made most tangible by deployment of insults, curses, imprecations and spiteful predictions. These activity types have been subsumed under six discursive types, which constitute the Hate Speech Types.

With a theoretic tool designed to investigate discursive practices in order to understand how language raises consciousness of exploitative social relations, the paper demonstrated how social processes of interactions reveal the 'unfettered' liberty that social media make available to people to counter perceived dominance and suppression while advancing personal prejudice, preconceived grievances and innate acrimony. Within the affordances of Fairclough's (1995) socio-semiotic approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, therefore, analysis of texts have been construed to cover the formal properties of text, examination of discursive practices and its implication on the interpretation of text, as well as the broader social factors that led to the production of text and their implications for interpretation.

Analysis has shown that the right to free speech is inalienable and in situations where it is threatened, it results in virulence. Such strong hostility instigates verbal attacks in the form of Radio Biafra posts mainly orchestrated as counter-attacks to a perceived right to self-determination. This

understanding implies two-prone sequence of power relations. First, the bitter agitation reflects dominance and suppression on the part of the Nigerian state. Second, arguments and counter-arguments among Biafrans demonstrate commitment to individual interests being placed above the shared secessionist agenda. This dimension of individual interests clashing with the group's agenda calls for a further research to investigate the nature of the secessionist ideology of Biafran agitators.

References

- Alabi, T. & Ayeloja, A. (2019). 'Hate speech and security challenges: a pragmatic study of Nnamdi Kanu's speeches in the south-eastern Nigeria, *International Journal of English Research*, 5(4), 1
- Ajiboye, E. & Abioye, T. (2019). 'When citizens talk: stance and representation in online discourse on Biafra agitations', *Discourse & Society*, 30(2), 119.
- Ananko, T. (2017). 'The Category of Evaluation in Political Discourse'. *Advanced Education*, 8,135. Retrieved June 6, 2020 from <https://doi:10.20535/2410-8286.108550>.
- Aslan, A. (2017). 'Online hate discourse: a study on hatred speech directed against Syrian refugees on YouTube,' *Journal of Media Critiques*, 3 (12), 5.
- Auwal, A. (2018). *Social media and hate speech: analysis of comments on Biafra agitations, Arewa Youths' ultimatum and their implications on peaceful co-existence in Nigeria*. Retrieved 6th August, 2019 from www.scholar.google.com/citations
- Awan, I. (2016) 'Islamophobia on social media: a qualitative analysis of the Facebook's walls of hate,' *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, Vol. (10), Issue 1, 1-20.
- Chouliaraki, L. & N. Fairclough. (1999). *Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Chiluwa, I. (2018). 'A nation divided against itself: Biafra and the conflicting online protest discourses', *Discourse & Communication*. Retrieved 23rd July, 2020 from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323758639>.
- Chiluwa, I., Taiwo, R. & Ajiboye, E. (2020). 'Hate speech and political media discourse in Nigeria: The case of the Indigenous People of Biafra', *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 16 (2), 202.
- Cifti, T., et. al. (2017). 'Hate speech on Facebook', in Skarzauskiene, A. & Gudeliene, N (Eds). *Proceedings of the 4th European Conference on Social Media*. Lithuania: Mykolas Romeris University, 3rd – 4th July.
- Deignan, A. (2005). *Metaphor and Corpus Linguistics*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Facebook. (2017). *Terms of Agreement*. Retrieved 6th August, 2019 from <https://www.facebook.com/help>
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. New York: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1992a). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Fairclough, N. (1995a). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman
- Fairclough, N. (1995b). *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). *Language and Power* (2nd Ed.). New York: Longman.
- Garcia, A., & J. Jacobs (1999). 'The eyes of the beholder: understanding the turn-taking system in quasi-synchronous computer-mediated communication,' *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, 32, 337-367.
- Herring, S. (1999). 'Interactional coherence in CMC,' *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 4 (4).

- Jiang, C., N. Bazarova, & J. Hancock. (2011). From perception to behavior: disclosure reciprocity and the intensification of intimacy in computer-mediated communication, *Communication Research*, 40, 125-143.
- Kareem al-utbi, M. (2018). *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Hate Speech*. Retrieved 6th August, 2019 from www.researchgate.net/publication/32580
- Lee, E & Youn Oh, S. (2017). *Computer-Mediated Communication*. Retrieved June 5, 2019 from www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document.
- Markman, K. M. (2006). 'Computer-mediated conversation: the organisation of talk in chat-based virtual team meetings,' *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 67 (12A), 4388.
- Mio, J.S. (1997). 'Metaphor and Politics', *Metaphor and Symbol*, 12(2), 123. Retrieved June 6, 2020 from https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms1202_2
- Pacheco, E. & N. Melhuish. (2018). *Online Hate Speech*. Retrieved 31st July, 2019 from www.netsafe.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/11
- Pankowski, R. (2007). 'How to understand and confront hate speech,' *Journal of Media Critiques*, Vol. 3(12)
- Rambe, P. (2012). 'Critical Discourse Analysis of collaborative engagement in Facebook Postings,' *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 28(2).
- Sen, N. (2016). *The Discourse Analysis of Facebook and its Impact on Language Learning: A Study*. Retrieved 6th August, 2019 from www.semanticscholar.org/paper
- Skovholt, K., A. Gronning & A. Kankaanranta. (2014). The communicative functions of emoticons in workplace e-mails,' *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19, pp. 780-797.
- Tate, P. (2017). *A Discourse Analysis of a Facebook Conversation*. Retrieved 31st July, 2019 from www.brainytrainingsolutions.com
- UNESCO. (2015). *Countering Online Hate Speech*. Retrieved July 31, 2019 from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002332/233231e.pdf>.
- Van Dijk, T.A. (2006). Ideology and discourse analysis. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11(2), 120-121.
- Walther, J.B. (1996). 'Computer-mediated communication: impersonal, interpersonal, and hyperpersonal interaction', *Communication research*, 23, 3.