



A Linguistic Overview of the Novel Nature of Hate Speech in Pre- and Post-Nigeria's 2023 General Election's Political Discourse

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Abstract

Hate speech is a derogatory language usage that is capable of causing social disharmony and is used against a group or an individual based on their class, such as gender, religion, or race. If unchecked, it may plunge the country into chaos and violence and truncate the peace and unity of a country. In Nigeria, acidic hate speech always manifests during electioneering periods. Scholarly attention has not been given to the new nature and trends in hate speech. This research, therefore, investigated the new nature of hate speech in the country using a random sampling of online (Facebook and Twitter-X) recorded hate speech before, during, and after the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Relevance Theory and Ethnography of Communication Theory were adopted for the analysis, focusing on the novelty of the expressions and their sociolinguistic backgrounds. The analysis was both descriptive and qualitative in nature. The research found that analogies, neologisms, coinages, blending, ironies, rewordings, allusions, epithets, slogans, and metaphors were the methods Nigerians used to create new words that connote hate speech. Such expressions as *zombidients*, *obidiots*, *yes daddy*, *certificate forger*, *drug baron*, *Atiefku*, and a host of others were created and used before and after the election with the aim of denigrating or derogating and making the targeted subjects of the expressions unpopular. The research recommended that the government and other relevant agencies should curb the perpetration of hate speeches in the country.

Keywords: Hate Speech, Politics and Electioneering, Political Discourse and Nigerian Politics, 2023 Nigerian General Election, Relevance Theory, Ethnography of Communication

Introduction

Hate speech is provocative and abusive language used against someone or a group of people based on ethnic, religious, social, or political affiliation. It is verbal or written communication that abuses an ethnic, racial, political group, gender, sexual orientation, or disability to stir up the emotions of the target group and belittle them. Hate speech, characterised by its incendiary and divisive language targeting specific groups or individuals, has emerged as a concerning phenomenon within the political landscape of numerous nations.

Hate speech is a complicated phenomenon that combines political processes, societal conflicts, and language expressions. According to Wodak and Forchtner (2013), hate speech can take on diverse forms, including written, spoken, or symbolic expressions that incite animosity, hatred, and prejudice towards specific groups on the basis of their ethnicity, religion, political affiliations, or other distinguishing traits. Its power comes from its ability to provoke and maintain social differences, undermining social cohesiveness and creating conflict, in addition to its overtly provocative content (Wodak & Forchtner, 2013).

The pervasive use of hate speech within political discourse remains a critical concern, significantly impacting social cohesion, political stability, and democratic processes worldwide. The use of language as a tool for political communication is an established phenomenon, shaping public opinion and policy. As Lederer and Delgado (1995) posited, hate speech often employs linguistic strategies rooted in stereotypes, prejudice, and incendiary rhetoric, targeting specific social or ethnic groups to evoke hostility and exacerbate societal divisions.

Moreover, in the wake of technological advancements and the proliferation of social media platforms, the dissemination of hate speech has expanded its reach and immediacy, posing significant challenges for regulating and mitigating its detrimental effects on social harmony and political stability. The evolution of linguistic strategies within the digital sphere, characterised by anonymity and virality, has further complicated the identification and containment of hate speech (Lederer & Delgado, 1995).

In the context of Nigeria, a country characterised by its diverse cultural diversity, the 2023 general elections marked a crucial period marred by a novel proliferation of hate speech. The unprecedented proliferation of hate speech witnessed during Nigeria's 2023 elections calls for an in-depth examination of the linguistic mechanisms and novel manifestations employed within the political sphere. The implications of hate speech in Nigeria's political discourse extend beyond mere linguistic analysis. Its far-reaching consequences encompass social polarisation, violence, and the erosion of democratic values, posing significant challenges to national unity, peaceful coexistence, and the consolidation of democratic governance. Therefore, this research holds the potential to offer critical insights into the multifaceted dimensions of hate speech, guiding policymakers, civil society actors, and stakeholders in devising effective strategies to mitigate its detrimental effects on societal harmony and democratic stability.

This research seeks to bridge the gap in existing scholarly literature by employing a linguistic lens to elucidate the distinct linguistic markers, discourse strategies, and socio-political contexts that delineate and borne novelty in hate speech in the pre- and post-2023 General Elections era in Nigeria. Through a qualitative analysis of political speeches, social media discourse, and public communication, this study aims to uncover

the linguistic nuances and rhetorical devices utilised in coining new hate speech utterances, shedding light on their multifaceted nature and impact on societal cohesion.

Literature review

Understanding the Concept of Hate Speech

A speech that is offensive on the basis of race, religion, social class, tribe, or ethnicity could be classified as hate speech. It can also indicate any discourse that certifies and authorises the repression of a group or individuals in a dehumanising manner. Any speech that marginalises, subjugates, or damages members of an oppressed group is considered hate speech (Schwartzman 2002:421). This marginalised community faces political, social, religious, and economic injustices. Among other things, religion, colour, ethnicity, politics, gender, and homophobia serve as incentives and amusement for those who orchestrate and promote hate speech (Nielsen 2002:265). When these driving forces – also referred to as causative factors – are managed, hate speech declines in frequency. According to Lederer and Delgado (1995:5), hate speech typically consists of verbal, physical, symbolic, and other behaviours that create an environment of intimidation, fear, harassment, low self-esteem, and prejudice.

According to Matsuda (1989), hate speech is defined as the use of written, spoken, or symbolic language that deteriorates, threatens, or marginalises an individual or group of people because of their ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities, religions, or other attributes. This definition is widely accepted. This definition highlights the discriminatory and dehumanising aspects of hate speech and its detrimental effects on specific individuals or communities.

However, Nielsen, (2002) objects that insensitive language does not usually convey offensive intuition. The severity of what is said, the degree of the harm promoted, the subject matter of the communication, and the general public nature of the speech are indicators of hate speech.

Political Discourse and Nigerian Politics

Nigeria has about 250 ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, as well as 36 states (provinces). According to the United Nations (2024), Nigeria is populated with about 227 million people who speak over 500 different languages. Because there are so many electorates in Nigeria, one is forced to presume that people with eloquence must be involved in politics. Stated differently, in order to win over voters, politicians need to employ a range of persuasive linguistic strategies, especially in the universal language of English. This suggests that individuals with more effective discursive techniques might be at an advantage in the political sphere. Owing to these diverse linguistic strategies, politicians frequently employ language to sway public opinion by creating an appealing image of themselves.

Politicians in Nigeria mostly use language from carefully chosen written and digital sources, including pamphlets, speeches, billboards, posters, and websites. According to Oparinde (2018), politicians in Nigeria use language to promote themselves in an effort to change people's perceptions and win over votes. Connotative language, topicalisation, passivation, persuasion and promises, euphemism and repetition,

propaganda (Sharndama, 2016), metaphors, hyperboles, idiomatic expressions, parallelisms and songs, positive self-representation, and negative other representation are all prevalent in Nigerian political discourse and are used as ideological tools of persuasion (Abdullahi-Idiagbon, 2010). Political campaigns also use photos, images, and symbols in the language sphere as visual aids. Examples of these are personalised vests, caps, and Ankara cloth (Ademilokun & Olateju, 2015).

Hate Speech in Nigerian Political Context

In most nations, hate speech has resulted in the destruction of property and the deaths of defenceless civilians. It has a wide range of repercussions, including social, political, and economic ones (Uroko & Obiorah, 2021). Hate speech is fuelling tensions across sociocultural, religious, and racial lines in Nigeria. Nigeria is home to a diverse range of religious, ethnic, tribal, political, and sociocultural groups. Any communication that encourages, glorifies, or supports hate crimes, including terrorism, the murder and maiming of defenceless people, and the destruction of lives and property, is considered hate speech in Nigeria. An individual or organisation needs to make threats of violence, say it is on a violent mission, or do violent acts themselves (Lederer & Delgado 1995).

Hate speech has been a persistent feature in Nigerian politics, especially during election cycles. Inflaming statements, disparaging language, and the purposeful escalation of racial and religious tensions are common forms of hate speech in the political environment of Nigeria. As to Akhigbe and Omoera (2019), these utterances are intended to divide the population by mobilising support along ethnic or religious lines and delegitimizing political opponents.

Most ethno-religious crises in Nigeria are the offshoot of hate speech. This is because these speeches were based on tribal- and -religious sentiments. Some of them include the Ilorin religious conflict of 1986, the Bauchi crises of 1992, the Kaduna crises of 2000, the Jos crises of 2001, and the Benue crises of 2018. The lives that have been lost because of this wanton destruction are innumerable (Uroko & Obiorah, 2001). The properties that have been lost are worth trillions of naira. Life is considered a fathom that can be taken at will. Unfortunately, people use this type of deep-seated animosity in their speech precisely because of the culture of impunity that reigns in Nigeria. When these conflicts break out, people are slaughtered, and no one is punished (Uroko & Obiorah, 2021). In the south-eastern parts of the country, a series of hate speeches has given ultimate power to IPOB/ESN, through which they take lives and destroy properties at will, even today. The 2023 general elections in Nigeria were marred by instances of hate speech, with politicians exploiting ethnic and religious fault lines to gain political advantage. This trend has continued in subsequent electoral cycles, fostering a culture of intolerance and animosity within the Nigerian polity.

Social peace, democratic stability, and national unity are seriously threatened by the prevalence of hate speech in Nigerian politics. By means of a sophisticated comprehension of its language constituents and sociological ramifications, interested parties might formulate focused approaches to tackle this problem. Establishing a political climate that values inclusivity, respect, and productive discourse is crucial for policymakers, civil society, and the media to work together in order to build a more cohesive and resilient Nigeria.

Nigerian 2023 General Elections

The 2023 general elections in Nigeria, conducted between February and March, emerged as a significant milestone, showcasing the resilience of Nigerian democracy alongside the persistent obstacles challenging its advancement. These elections marked the seventh consecutive instance of democratic polls in Nigeria, signifying the longest uninterrupted democratic period in the nation's history. This prolonged streak underscores a growing dedication to democratic principles and the peaceful transfer of power, affirming the maturity of Nigeria's democratic ethos.

The presidential race, a highly contested affair, featured three major candidates – Bola Ahmed Tinubu (APC), Atiku Abubakar (PDP), and Peter Obi (LP) – each representing diverse ideologies and regional bases. This intense competition reflected a political landscape in the process of maturation. Notably, there was a remarkable surge in youth voter registration and engagement, signalling a noteworthy shift. Disillusioned with past administrations, young Nigerians actively sought change, injecting fresh vigour into the political discourse. A significant portion of these energetic youths aligned themselves with Peter of LP, aiming to elect a younger candidate and challenging the traditional pattern of electing older individuals to the presidential seat. This movement was coined the 'Obidient Movement.'

In an effort to enhance transparency and reduce electoral malpractices, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) implemented the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) for voter verification. Despite the challenges that arose, this initiative represented a step towards incorporating technological innovation into the electoral process. However, persistent reports of electoral malpractices, including vote-buying, ballot snatching, and intimidation, in certain areas questioned the overall credibility of the elections.

Widespread insecurity posed a significant challenge, with violent attacks, kidnappings, and threats in various regions undermining the democratic process and impeding free and fair participation, particularly in the volatile northern states. Divisive campaign rhetoric and appeals to ethno-religious sentiments deepened existing social divides, prompting concerns about national unity and exacerbating identity politics.

The legacy of the 2023 elections is mixed. While they affirmed Nigeria's dedication to democracy, they also brought to light persistent vulnerabilities. The elections offer a nuanced perspective – both sobering and hopeful. Despite imperfections in the electoral process, they underscored the enduring desire for democracy among Nigerians. Looking ahead, addressing the underlying challenges necessitates vigilance, proactive reforms, and a collective commitment to fortify the democratic project. Only through such efforts can Nigeria fully realise the promise of becoming a stronger, more inclusive, and genuinely democratic nation.

During the electioneering process, there was a paradigm shift in hate speech. With the surge in youth involvement, there was a new form of hate speech in the country spreading to the nooks and crannies of the country through social media, especially Facebook and Twitter (X). Starting from the campaigning periods to the voting periods, a series of news words and expressions of hate speech continued to floor the media.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical background on which this work hinges includes relevance theory and the ethnography of communication. The selection of the theories is necessary for their captivating coverage of the speech event including, context participants, implicatures, and relevance effects of the newly coined words and/or expressions of hate speech during the pre- and post-election periods in 2023.

Relevance theory

Relevance theory is a cognitive-pragmatics theory of human communication that was developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1986) in their book *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. This theory was covered in their earlier publications as well, where they specifically compared it to Grice's cooperative principle. Since then, it has developed into one of the most significant theories in modern pragmatics, influencing a wide range of pragmatics research domains and discourse kinds. Cognition, communication, Grice and the role of intention, coding/infering, mutuality, the difference between semantics and pragmatics, relevance as a cost-benefit analysis, the explicit and implicit distinction in utterance interpretation, relevance and grammar, and social aspects of communication are all covered in this theory.

Relevance theory assumes that human communication is intentional and creates an expectation that helps an audience or an addressee decide what message the communicator wishes to put across. Two principles of relevance theory include a **cognitive principle**, which says that human cognition is geared to the maximisation of relevance through which inferential communication takes place (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), and a **communicative principle**, which asserts that utterances create expectations of optimal relevance. This principle may be merged to assert that each utterance relates to or communicates a presumption of its optimal relevance. Relevance theory is built on the principle that the human communication process includes, among others, the encoding, transfer, and decoding of messages, as well as, more importantly, reference and context (Bagayang, 2002).

In Grice's approach to pragmatics, the role of context in communication and understanding was neglected. Relevance theory emphasises the role of context in communication and understanding by raising such questions as: How is the right context chosen? How is it that, from the several assumptions available at the time of utterance, an audience or addressees restrict themselves to the intended ones? (Sperber & Wilson 1995).

Ethnography of communication

The ethnography of communication was founded by Dell Hymes. In 1962, he published a paper that called for a new area of study, a kind of linguistics that explored language not just as a formal system of grammar but as something culturally shaped in the contexts of social life. At the same time, he called for a kind of anthropology that took *SPEAKING*, and communication broadly as its focal subject matter (Carbaugh, 2007). Hymes introduced several concepts as basic units for the ethnographic study of communication. Chief among these are communication events, communication acts, communication situations, and speech communities (Carbaugh, 2007). A communication event is understood to be, from the point of view of participants, an

integral, patterned part of social life. Like gossip sessions, talk shows, and political meetings, communication events typically involve a sequential structuring of acts, can be understood by formulating norms or rules about them, and involve culturally bounded aspects of social life that have a beginning and ending (Carbaugh, 2007).

Once ethnographers of communication have identified a specific event, act, situation, or community for study, a subsequent move is the analysis of that selected practice as a multi-faceted phenomenon. These analyses are conducted systematically through a range of components. These components were originally formulated by Hymes and involve explorations of the variety of dimensions of each such communication practice.

The components were summarised by Hymes using the mnemonic device *SPEAKING*, which will be used here for their brief discussion:

S: Setting and Scene: This component explores two aspects of context: the physical setting in which it takes place and the scene, i.e., the participants' sense of what is going on when this practice is active.

P: Participants: A significant shift is marked here in conceptualising communication as an event in which people participate, and thus the key concept is "participant" (in the event).

E: Ends: This asks about two ends: the goals participants may have in doing the practice and the outcomes actually achieved.

A: Acts: The practice is part of social interaction. When does it arise, and as part of what sequence? And further, what is the content of the practice and its form?

K: Keys: What is the emotional pitch, feeling, or spirit of the communication practice? Regarding funerals, most are described as reverent and serious.

I: Instruments: What is the *instrument* or channel being used? The oral mode may be necessary, or it could be prohibited in favour of a specific gesture or bodily movement.

N: Norms: What *norms* are active when communication is practiced? This component distinguishes the two senses of norms that may be relevant to a communication practice.

G: Genre: This might involve identifying the practice as a type of formal genre such as verbal duelling, a riddle, or a narrative.

Methodology

In gathering data for this study, the researcher has been observant of social media during the 2023 electioneering period. During this process, the researcher was scouting social media, both Facebook and Twitter (X), gathering hate speech utterances, especially the novel expressions that had just been introduced into the political discourse in the last election. The period covered several months, which covered the campaign periods and aftermath of the election to the period of legal tussles among the presidential candidates. The data were randomly but purposively selected to suit the focus of this research, and descriptive and qualitative methods were used to carry out the linguistic analysis of the expressions.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Novel forms of hate speech during the pre- and post-2023 Nigerian General elections

The communicative context of all the new words and expressions of hate speech evolved around the Nigerian last general elections held in 2023. The electioneering period witnessed a widespread use of hate speech, and the expressions cognitively sent derogatory messages to the target audience of the hate speech. The utterances sent cognitive signals to their target audience as they were being insulted, mocked, or bullied, and as a result, through the inference of hatred, they assumed their images were dented. Each speech or utterance was also intentionally made by the speaker to attack the targeted audience. Till this moment, new forms of speech still exist in Nigerian political discourse.

The novel words/expressions include:

Agbado (maize/corn)

One of the earliest hate speeches during the 2023 electioneering period is ‘agbado’ meaning ‘maize’ or ‘corn’ and has its origins in the Yoruba language. The subject of the expression is Bola Ahmed Tinubu. In a video that surfaces online during the campaign period, Tinubu is seen delivering a speech during his 69th birthday colloquium held on March 29th in Kano State, where he is quoted to have erroneously uttered the statement: *Recruit 50 million youths into the army, what they will eat, agbado, cassava, corn,...in the morning and evening...you create demand and consumption...we grow it here.* Having faced a lot of backlash for making such a statement about the Nigerian Army, a group of the Nigerian populace, especially the youths who are not supporting him, coin a name for him from that expression. Calling a presidential candidate ‘agbado’ has the negative cognitive effect of sending a derogatory signal to him and his supporters that he does not have anything to offer Nigerians, especially the Nigerian youths, whom he wants 50 million to be recruited into the army, feeding them with raw maize and cassava. The entire expression has become an epithet to which the president is called or referred. Other expressions related to it include: ***agbado master*** (still used to refer to Tinubu), ***agbadoist*** (used as a modifier to refer to anything related to Tinubu, such as ideologies or views on any national issues). Most of the peddlers in this expression are supporters of Peter Obi and Abubakar Atiku, aiming to discredit Bola Tinubu.

Amoda Ogunlere

This is another form of hate speech accorded to the president during the electioneering process. As the presidential candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Tinubu is said to have no origin in Lagos State, the state he claims to emanate from and supposedly build. According to the rumours, he originates from Osun State, where his real name is Amoda Ogunlere. It is said that Tinubu has no identity, and in fact, his name, Bola, is a female name that he clones from Tinubu’s family. Coming from supporters of Peter Obi, this is a coinage coined for Tinubu to remind him that he does not have the identity to rule Nigeria.

Bala blue, blu bala, bula ba

Tinubu, in a response to why he refuses to attend town hall meetings organised for presidential aspirants on November 21, 2022, lets out a gaffe: “You don’t expect me to go and start answering questions with you people here. There are people here who cannot vote. This is not a town hall meeting. A town hall meeting different from balablu, blu bala, bula ba.” The meaning of the expression remains unclear, and Tinubu has come under political criticism and mockery of his health status. His supporters defend him for the mistake, while others mock him for it. This is another epithet made by Tinubu and then used against him.

O lule (he failed) and Emi lo kan (it is my turn)

During his pre campaign tour in Abeokuta on June 3, 2022, Tinubu cites reference to Buhari (the sitting president at the time), saying Buhari has failed in his mission to become president three times using the phrase ‘o lule’. At the same time, he declares his intention to run for the presidency with the expression, ‘emilokan’ to inform Nigerians that it is his turn to become president. His supporters commend him for digging out the truth, others criticise him for making such utterances as if he has the superpower to install someone or himself as president. Meanwhile, it is also a hate speech by the presidential aspirant to poke such an utterance at the sitting president to the extent that he states, “...he even cried on the television.” Thereafter, the supporters of Peter Obi and Atiku have always used the expression against him that despite his boldness and preparedness for ‘emilokan’, Nigeria is still battling with inflation and economic crises. This is another epithet made by Tinubu and used against him.

Batidiots

This expression is a blend of *batists* and *idiots*. Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his supporters own BAT as an acronym of his name and even coin Batists from it. Therefore, a Tinubu supporter is proud to call himself ‘Batist’. However, Peter Obi supporters use the avenue to bully Tinubu’s supporters as idiots, and therefore the blend and coinage ‘Batidiots’ emerges.

Thiefnubu

This neologism/coinage emanates from the name of the president, Tinubu added ‘thief’ as a prefix, indicating the idea that the bearer of the name is kleptomaniac in nature. It comes up through a blending process of ‘Thief’ and ‘Tinubu’ Only Tinubu is regarded by this name, to the exclusion of his supporters. As usual, the name is coined by Peter Obi supporters. It is a blend of ‘thief’ and ‘Tinubu’.

Drug dealer / drug baron

Another name called Tinubu during the electioneering period is *Drug Dealer*. In the past, Tinubu is indicted for drug pushing in Chicago, and with this, he forfeits some money in his account in lieu of his conviction. Although, there are counterfactuals about this issue, people still believe that Tinubu is actually involved in the drug case in the United States. In the same way Nigerians quickly jump to conclusions and judgements, they give Tinubu these beautiful names. They use these names to portray Tinubu in a derogatory manner and to make his supporters change their minds about voting for him. The phrases are formed as analogies.

Maradona / Pablo Escobar

Citing allusions to Diego Maradona (Argentina) and Pablo Emilio Escobar (Colombian), Tinubu is named after these people. Maradona was an Argentine footballer and was known for playing football with hard drugs (doping), while Escobar was known as a drug lord who owned a drug cartel. Hinging on his previous cases of drug pushing in the United States, Tinubu is named after those two great drug lords. In fact, many call out the Nigerian government and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to disqualify Tinubu on this drug case. These are formed as allusions to Maradona and Escobar.

Agbero

During the electioneering period, Tinubu and his supporters are given the coinage 'agbero', a word of Yoruba origin that means 'bus conductor'. This is borne out of the assumption that if Tinubu wins the election, he will appoint the likes of MC Musiliu (Oluomo) into key positions at the federal level. Musiliu is one of the leaders of transport workers in Lagos, and he is said to be working for Tinubu's presidency. If Tinubu wins, therefore, Nigeria will be controlled by transport workers like MC Musiliu. Thus, such an assumption gives birth to the name.

Yoruba ro'nu (Think, Yoruba people)

During the electioneering period, some Yoruba indigenous groups stand up to canvass their support for Tinubu, calling out all the Yoruba indigenes to support their own kinsman to clinch the presidential seat. They caution Yoruba people not to vote for a man whose supporters do not like the Yoruba ethnicity. They therefore coin the phrase 'Yoruba ro'nu' which means "Think, Yoruba people". As time goes by, the Peter Obi supporters start using the phrase as an irony against the Yorubas who coin it. If a supporter of Peter Obi mentions the phrase, the aim is to mock the Yorubas. It is an epithet and an irony. This phrase is also a rejoinder to the Yoruba folk against those who say, "Lagos is a no man's land"

Certificate forger / Bobo Chicago

Throughout the electioneering period, Tinubu is nicknamed with these coined compound words. Tinubu allegedly forges the undergraduate certificate he earns from Chicago State University, and some even believe that he did not attend CSU. Atiku takes the case to a US court with the allegations. Until CSU comes out to clear Tinubu of his innocence, Nigerians, especially Peter Obi supporters, still call Tinubu a certificate forger who is not even eligible to have contested for the highest seat in the country. The utterances emanate as neologisms.

Renewed Shege (continued) 1`1 suffering

Tinubu comes with the mantra, 'Renewed Hope' to instill the ideology of optimism in the minds of Nigerians. Having declared his mantra, one thing leads to another, things do not work out as Nigerians have assumed. For instance, the removal of fuel subsidy has brought untold hardships to Nigerians. Nigerians, especially, the Peter Obi supporters, through the process of rewording, change the mantra from 'Renewed Hope' to 'Renewed Shege', which literally means 'continuous sufferings', to dent the image of Tinubu that what he promises Nigeria during his campaigns is not what Nigerians are experiencing under his leadership.

E go favour me and my family.

When Tinubu's supporters are told that Nigerians may become worse if Tinubu emerges as president, they always respond with the expression above as a prayer that no matter how bad Nigeria goes, it will always favour them and their families. However, as the removal of subsidy brings untold hardship to Nigerians, Peter Obi supporters start using the expression to mock Tinubu's supporters, who are now also complaining about the bad economy of the country. The expression is now used as an irony to mock those who coin it.

Other expressions of hate speech used against President Tinubu include, *fake bishops*, *let the poor breadth*, and so on.

Zombidient

During the electioneering process, Peter Obi supporters have been active in making hate speech utterances against the personalities of Tinubu and his supporters. Alas, the media of residents of Tinubu are not sleeping too. They also ditch some hate speech utterances against the personalities of Peter Obi and his supporters. One of them is the coinage of the word 'zombidients' from a blend of zombies and obidients. A zombie is someone who is in a state of extreme mental exhaustion. The supporters of Obi are called zombies because they allegedly believe whatever Obi says out of their gullibility. In the same vein, the expression, 'Obidiots', is also coined as a compound word from Obi and idiots. In this case, they are referred to as idiots who are fed with lies from Peter Obi. The two phrases are coined as blends.

Chinese President / Chinese Economy / Obi China

During the campaigning period, Peter Obi frequently cites reference to China and the Chinese economy in comparison to the Nigerian economy. He always quotes facts and figures from the country to justify what is happening in Nigeria. While his supporters welcome this idea and commend him, the supporters of his opponents often criticise his comparison of Nigeria to China. In light of this, they often refer to him as above. They coin the epithets to ironically dent the sense of reasoning of Peter Obi. These phrases are coined as neologisms.

Him TuLie / Gbajue

The phrase 'Him Tu Lie' literally means 'He lies too much' originating from Nigerian Pidgin with similarity to a Chinese name. Peter Obi is referred to with this expression in a bit to call him a liar, and it is related to a Chinese name because of his fondness for always citing the Chinese economy in his presentations. 'Gbajue', on the other hand, means a 'cheat' or 'conman' originating from the Yoruba language. They use both expressions to portray Obi as a chorionic liar. For instance, he once says that the Eastern Security Network (ESN) is founded by the southeast governors, whereas it is founded by Nnamdi Kanu in December 2020. Anytime Obi makes a presentation and mentions some facts and figures, he will ask his followers to 'go and verify', an expression that later becomes an epithet. This directive is also adopted as hate speech by followers of Tinubu and Atiku to mock Obi and dent his image that he lies and still asks people to verify the lies. The expressions emanate as neologisms.

Yes daddy

This is one of the statements of Obi that get leaked in a phone call audio recording made to Bishop Oyedepo, and it is, probably, the most popular phrase accorded to him during the electioneering period. The call is recorded while he speaks with the General Overseer of the Living Faith Church of God (Winners Chapel). In the leaked audio, Obi is heard chorusing 'Yes, Daddy' to almost all the utterances the pastor makes. He informs the pastor that the election has turned into a 'religious war'. Since that incidence, his opponents have been using the phrase sarcastically to portray how naive and cowardice Obi is to have involved the pastor in the national discourse. It has become an epithet.

Athiefku

As the politics gets heated, the supporters of Tinubu consider Abubakar Atiku, the Nigerian vice president between 1999 and 2007, the strongest opponent of their master, given that he has been running for the presidency for a record fourth time. To remind Atiku of his past of allegedly embezzling the country's wealth, Tinubu's supporters coin the name for him from a blend of 'thief' and 'Atiku'. It is a new form of hate speech to call Atiku a thief.

A ti ku (we are dead)

Again, the phrase is coined by supporters of Tinubu, especially the Yoruba ones, as neologism. The phrase is coined by stressing out Atiku's names and pronouncing it as a sentence in Yoruba language through a transfer of meaning process. The meaning of the phrase sends a waning tone to Nigerians that if Atiku emerges as president, that will be a grave danger because it is assumed that Atiku will privatise or sell all of Nigeria's national property, such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Commission (NNPC) and so on, and this is due to the fact that he makes the promise during his 2019 presidential election campaign. It aims to dent the image of Atiku.

Atikulooted /Atikulooters

During the campaigns, Atiku names himself 'Atikulated', a bastardised form of 'articulated'. The supporters of Tinubu then reject the name and change it to 'Atikulooted', a compound word from 'Atiku' and 'looted'. At the same time, his supporters are nicknamed 'atikulooters', those who encourage looting. The words are formed through a blending process. These words are targeted at Atiku to show Nigerians his shady past and the danger that awaits the country if he emerges as president.

Bin Dubai (son of Dubai)

The phrase originates from the Arabic language, meaning 'son of Dubai'. Nigerians have observed that after each presidential election in which Atiku contests and loses, he always takes comfort in Dubai, where he has residence and business. Because of his incessant tours to Dubai, United Arab Emirate, Atiku is then nicknamed 'Bin Dubai'. The creators of the phrase assume that a Nigerian presidential candidate should be able to domicile in the country in order to know the situation of the country. The phrase emanates as a neologism.

All eyes on the judiciary

After the election and the subsequent declaration of Tinubu as the winner, other presidential candidates, including Atiku and Peter Obi, head to the election tribunal, where judgement would be held. When the tribunal upholds Tinubu's victory, Atiku and Peter Obi appeal the judgement, hinging on Tinubu's certificate saga this time around. During this time, the phrase 'all eyes on the judiciary' is coined and propagated on social media. The aim of this is not only to charge the judiciary to do what was right, the main aim of the slogan was to cyberbully the judiciary and force the judges to declare Obi, who emerges distant third, the winner of the election, bypassing Atiku, who comes in second and who has gone far to American court to obtain first-hand information about Tinubu's CSU certificate scandal. Obi's supporters mount numerous pressures on the judges, call them various names, and even raise the alarm that Raji Fasola (a former minister of the federation and former governor of Lagos State) has written the proposed judgement in a document and sent it to the judges for presentation just as he does the writing of the presidential election result. It is as a result of this disinformation that a huge number of Obi's supporters coin the slogan and use it as a watchstick against the judiciary. Even at a point, the judiciary has to come out and clarify some issues and state that there is no amount of cyberbullying that can force them to dance to the tunes of Obi's supporters, rather, they would judge based on the evidence presented before them by the parties involved in the case. This slogan is formed as a metaphor.

Conclusion

One of the factors that sowed disunity in the Nigerian political sphere and general peace and harmony was hate speech. Hate speech is an insulting usage of language that is capable of causing social unrest and is used against a group or an individual based on their class, such as gender, religion, or race. It is capable of leading the country into chaos and violence and truncating the peace and unity of the country. It manifested greatly during electioneering periods, with the aim of denting the images of political opponents or their supporters. During the 2023 general election period, a series of novel forms of hate speeches emerged, and they were propagated through social media. The research found that analogies, neologisms, coinages, blending, ironies, rewordings, allusions, epithets, slogans, and metaphors were the newly developed methods of creating hate speech, especially during the Nigerian 2023 general elections. The research recommends that the government and other relevant agencies curb the perpetration of hate speech in the country. In addition, it recommends that future researchers carry out studies on the effects of hate speeches on our national unity and harmony, and a sociolinguistic analysis of hate speeches used during the 2023 Nigerian general elections.

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