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RE-INVESTIGATING AFRICAN TERRORISM THROUGH BOKO HARAM'S ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES: EVIDENTIAL AND ADDITIVE MARKERS AS PRACTICE OF MARTYRDOM

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ABSTRACT

As insecurity keeps deteriorating socioeconomic activities globally, attempts have as well been offered in proffering solution to it. Reference to Nigeria, area of interest in this study, many terrorist groups have surface in the recent years with Boko Haram (BH hence) placed as the deadliest by various indices including Global terrorism index. It is further evident that BH has in record forced millions of people into internal relocation within their own country in Africa. Others have left their settled homes for their respective actual countries, aside from others who have taken refuge in neighbouring countries (UNDP, 2021). The activities which attract scholars' attention across disciplines have largely been interrogated by linguists as well. Perspectives as literary critique, discourse and media representation of BH have significantly been explored. The present study recognises terrorists' engagement strategies being a means through which they radicalise members to sustain the group activities. Specifically, the study aims at unveiling how such meta-discourse elements as evidential and additive markers are manipulated in achieving martyrdom strategy by the BH as manifest in their discourses. The data comprises sermons, YouTube releases, public lectures, and Quranic tafsir of the BH. Descriptive inference is adopted with Hyland's (2005) Interpersonal model of meta-discourse and May's (2001) pragmatic act for the analysis. The study posits that understanding BH engagement strategies is a path towards ending the movement and timely action against their re-emergence or similar groups.

Keywords: Insecurity, Boko Haram, Martyrdom strategy, Meta-discourse, Pragmatic act.

INTRODUCTION

Despite Government and nongovernmental organisations' notable commitment towards ensuring safety and wellbeing of Africans, yet such insurgencies as those emanating from Extremists/Jihadists, Banditry, Herdsmen and Kidnapping keeps deteriorating socioeconomic activities of the continent especially, Nigerians. For instance, Boko Haram activities alone have forced no fewer than 2.8 million people into internal relocation within their own country, out of which over 2 million are Nigerians; those

who left their settled homes for their actual countries number up to 280,000, asides another 265,000 persons who have taken refuge in neighbouring countries that comprises Cameroon, Chad and Niger (UNDP, 2021). This pathetic situation of million Africans which constitute people of old age, women and children attracts the attention of scholars in proffering lasting solution which includes the field of linguistics. Language as generally conceived to be fundamental tool of communication, can be considered the most essential instrument through which messages are passed across audience. That implies people express their experiences the best through language, and linguist as professional can infer both the implied and explicit meanings embedded in the expressions.

In Nigeria, the area of interest in this research, terrorist groups have been surfacing and resurfacing in different names and approaches in the recent years, but Boko Haram is positioned the deadliest group by Global terrorism index (2021; 2022). While efforts are remarkably put by governments and concerned organisations to reinstate peace, rehabilitate insurgence actors, and reintegrate/resettle both the actors and the victims into larger society, yet such policies are proved futile. Invariably, this goal is realizable only when a flexible and all-encompassing promising policy is put in place. It is therefore the overall argument of the study that understanding the real-time words of the sect is instrumental in addressing their menace.

The existing literature on Africa's insecurity and/or peace reveals that scholars have largely studied the major insurgent activities (Kidnapping, Banditry, Boko Haram etc.). While some scholars focus on the insurgence operators, others concentrate on the victims. It is further evident that recommendations as well have been provided for the policy makers. Nonetheless, it is apparently noted that most of those studies are non-linguistic based, whose work is dominantly an observation and theoretical proposals of policies. Markedly also, even the linguistic studies are focused more on media responses on the insurgent activities rather than the words of the subjects who agitate the ideologies. The record shows that use of pragmatic and meta-discourse elements particularly, as rhetorical devices, being the focus of this proposal, has not been duly accommodated.

Typically, the concept of meta-discourse provides a means of understanding the ways people project themselves in talk to manage their communicative intentions. And these intentions are achieved through specific pragmatic strategies, which are conceived in terms of pragmatic acts used in different contexts. For the background stated above, this research aims at interrogating the Boko Haram discourses with the view to explore the use of Martyrdom as an engagement strategy. While the research finding is hoped to give better understanding of the sect's ideologies and discourse pattern, it will be useful for dissemination across concerned authorities/organizations for reproving

measures to help redefine Africa as conflict free society.

Literature Review

Scholars from humanities and social sciences have mainly focus on the history, effects of BH activities on innocent Africans and the role of social/print media in propagating extremists' ideologies among others (Sabo & Salisu, 2017; Ngige, Badekale & Hamman-Joda, 2016). In linguistics, critical/multimodal discourse analysis (CDA/MDA), speech/pragmatic acts studies have equally been examined. First, Odebunmi & Oloyede (2015) pragmatically analyse how media communicate their intentions and construct frames for BH and government categories. Equally, Chiluwa (2016b) that combined CDA and pragmatic tools to comparatively investigate BH, Alansaru, Al-Qaida and other terrors. Critical discourse analysts have always take cognisance of the terrorists' manipulative use of language in communication (Lentini, 2013; Ononye & Nwachukwu, 2019; Ononye & Osoba, 2020). Their argument anchors on the fact that such manipulative rhetoric exhibited in the terrors' speeches must be analysed linguistically being so significant instruments responsible for radicalizing members, else are likely to undergo a "future," more violent phase of confrontation that may trigger a full-blown war (Chiluwa & Chiluwa, 2022; Gray & Adeakin, 2019; Isa & Adam, 2017).

The closest to the present study are Wakili & Gebi, (2024); Ononye, Wakili, & Chukwuike, (2024). The former projects the linguistic metaphors and conceptual mappings present in specific BH pre-violence sermons. It aimed to understand how these metaphors, whether deliberately or unintentionally employed, convey the group's perspectives on violence. The motivation for the research stems from a noted imbalance in previous linguistic investigations on the communication surrounding BH. The former in the other hand explored some aspects of metadiscourse precisely, engagement elements in BH pre-violence texts. *Engagement markers,* having been largely identified and their operation in the paper, they further proved that metadiscourse devices are resourceful that enable speakers/writers to explicitly address and commit audience/readers into discourse. Not only that, they are proved to be useful features that enable speakers/writers to express their personal opinions and or points of emphasis and directions to be imposed in a discourse.

While all the reviewed researches above have largely interrogated the BH text especially Ononye, Wakili, & Chukwuike, (2024); and Wakili & Gebi, it has been observed that the scholars have only paid attention to the pre-violence texts. For this reason, the present study though also categorised the data into pre/post-violence, combined the both phases together under analysis.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey which provides that a researcher can obtain information from a selected sample that the findings can be used to represent the entire population for the purpose of generalisation (Ezoagulu, 2011).

The design is chosen here since the study seeks information on Boko Haram speech strategies from few speakers to make a general inference on the entire sect. Generally, the communication of Boko Haram is categorized into two main types in this study: pre-violence texts largely from the sermons and open preaching (Tafsir and organised lectures) made by the group before they engaged in violent confrontations, and post-violence texts made after they engaged in violent activities. However, the primary data for this study consists of 22 transcribed texts of pre-violence audio recordings of such preaching delivered by the sect's leaders Muhammad Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau and Abul Qaqa between 2008 and 2011. Of the total sample size of 67 texts for all the three speakers, simple fraction of 1/3 of each the purposively selected speakers have been drown. As stated from the background of this study, more data was generated online from the YouTube releases of the sect representing post-violence data. The data has been transposed into writing, translated, line-numbered in A4 Word document, and subjected to content analysis. The analytical as well as the theoretical framework will be discussed under the succeeding heading.

Theoretical and Analytical Framework

A robust linguistic analytical framework is formulated which brings insights from Mey's (2001) pragmatic act theory, and Hyland's (2005) interpersonal Metadiscourse model tools. The relevant categories of the pragmatic acts theory include INFERENCE (INF), Reference (REF), Relevance (REL), Voice (VCE) Shared situational knowledge (SSK) and metaphor (MPH) all belonging to the contextual part; Indirect speech act such as the psychological (emotional) and physical (gestures) belonging to the activity part.

The Hyland's interpersonal metadiscourse elements targets the organisation of discourse and how speaker interfere and comment in the actual message. These comprise any of the following resources: Transitions (might: perhaps…); Frame-markers (finally, my purpose is…); Endophoric markers (noted above, in section...); Evidential (according to... states); Code glosses (namely; e.g.) Hedges (amm..., might..., perhaps..., as in...); Boosters (in fact..., definitely..., ...it is clear that...); Attitude markers (unfortunately, surprisingly...); Self mentions (I..., we..., my...); Engagement markers (consider, you can see that...). These dimensions are defining characteristics of any communication, whether explicitly or implicitly expressed through a range of rhetorical features which themselves perform more specific functions. They provide the basis upon which the causal and inferential linkage arising among the various

subsidiary acts may be understood. It also provides guide on the realization, interpretation, and consequences of stance in group communication such as that of the Boko Haram sect.

Analysis of Martyrdom through evidential and additive Metadiscourse elements

The pract of martyrdom is operationalised in the BH context as a pract through which the group attempt to radicalise or influence their followers in committing themselves to religious activities for divine rewards. The strategy has largely been realised from both the pre/post-violence texts as a major technique used by the group to lure their innate members in the group's agitation for anticipation of reward hereafter. A more critical view of the strategy however reveals that the group largely draws inferences from religious source. Such instances have been realised in the study through evidential and additive markers as will be presented in the following extracts.

Evidential Markers as Practs of Martyrdom

These elements are used by the BH to refer audience to divine authorities in the discourse to perhaps persuade them in ending as martyrdom. To inform those expressions, the most commonly employed linguistic feature is 'indirect speech act, mostly used to quote divine injunctions. The instances have been demonstrated below.

Extract 1 (pre. v)

Allah stated in a verse that if you migrate for the sake of Allah you will be accommodated (Lines 9-10);

This opposition as we earlier stated, Allah (SWT) said is permanent and will never fade away because a Muslem believer will never abandon his faith and the infidel and hypocrites will never leave their atheism and act of hypocrisy (Lines nes 108-110).

Extract 2 (post. v)

He (Allah) said Himself that if you follow His way, He will give you the strength (Lines 552-553);

Allah in the Qur'an has forbidden killing the innocent except when they commit an offence liable of death sentence (Lines 890-892).

Extracts 1 and 2 above contain good examples of martyrdom act through evidential markers. Those elements identified across both the pre/post-violence texts of Boko Haram (indirect reporting devices) serve as referring devices to the divine proclamations on heaven rewards reservations in the discourse. This is practically demonstrated in the extracts 1 and 2 above, where all the available instances serve as references to Holy Quran provisions. It has also been observed that the group take advantage of the audience's shared religious knowledge to convince them submit themselves to the commands of God for heaven rewards. Hence enjoin

other non-compliant Muslims to also emulate them.

Additive Markers as Practs of Martyrdom

Additive elements have been employed in the Boko Haram texts to express priority of divinity in their arguments. The propositions that are given preference in the martyrdom acts normally precedes admonitions, most of which are religious quotes. Those instances are shown in the following extracts.

Extract 3 (pre. v)

When Allah gives a command, just obey <u>and he will ease things for you</u> but when He commands <u>and you begin to hesitate, you will be in dilemma</u>. First of all, you will never understand the wisdom behind the order<u>, and they will never enter your brain</u> again because you are disputing with God's perfect command (Lines 3-6). Glorify Allah much, recite Quran <u>and above all</u> we should be obedient (Line 288); they will be teaching you illicitness, <u>after which </u>you'll worship nation in the name of NYSC... (Lines 459-461).

The instances presented under extract 3 above have first, expose the Boko Haram's analogical presentation of their agitation over western policies. In the first line of the extract, the group admonishes the audience over glorifying God and reciting divine book, but the technical inference associated to that is call for obedience which has been introduced with the additive element 'above all'. The second instance is seen in the group's use of the additive element, 'after which' to discourage the audience in

believing western policies such as participating in National Youth Service (NYSC). It is further noted that the act of martyrdom has not been realised through attitude markers in the post-violence texts.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study has successfully explored the pract of martyrdom being manifest in the BH pre/post-violence texts under study. The strategy has been realised largely through Evidential Markers and Additive Markers from both the pre/post-violence texts. It is the conclusion of this study that the strategy is principally employed for two major objectives. First, to motivate the initiate members by ensuring them of heaven rewards as the resultant consequence of their actions. Beyond comforting the initiate members, it has been evident in the analysis that Martyrdom has been utilised by the group to target non-initiate members (non-compliant Muslims) to attract their sympathy. The least expected outcome this strategy might yield is, if not achieved in attracting more members lured into the group activities, to maintain the existing members through such future promises.

Generally, interdisciplinary studies between language and social science such as psychology, sociology and mass communication would yield a fruitful outcome to humanity. Even within the field of linguistics, more intra-linguistic studies such as Forensic linguistics is highly encouraged to spare endeavour in studying terrorists' discourses like Boko Haram. Therefore, any linguistically rich text such as

Boko Haram's, especially, the one with contrastive interest between pre/post-violence, should be subjected to a more professional interrogation, and interpretation for experimental account of their nuances.

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