

A LEXICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PRESS RELEASES OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF BIAFRA (IPOB)

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ABSTRACT The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a new separatist movement in Eastern Nigeria, has been labelled a terrorist group by the Nigerian government against its stated goals. This study aims to investigate the language used in the IPOB's press releases to identify the specific stylistic choices that contributed to its designation as a terrorist organisation. Four speeches from three prominent leaders of IPOB were purposively selected from the online spaces for the study; two from Mazi Uchenna Asiegbu and one each from Mazi Chika Edoziem and Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, respectively. Using Halliday's theoretical framework of the Systemic Functional Grammar through a qualitative analysis, the selected speeches were first closely read; thereafter, the prominent lexico-semantic features that characterise the speeches were identified, categorised, and discussed. Findings revealed that the press releases were replete with the deployment of three lexico-semantic features, such as collocation, lexical relations, and figurative language, which were stylistically used to convey speakers' intentions of grieving, protesting, self-defending, and calling for international aid. It further revealed that the manner of agitation, particularly brutality, informed their choice of negative words. The study concluded that the aggressive language patterns of the IPOB writers and their propaganda became the critical rhetorical techniques through which they were being labelled. This research will help to give insight into the specific lexical items chosen by the IPOB to construct identity, resistance, ideologies, emotions, and political positions.

Keywords: Biafra, indigenous people, lexico-semantic analysis, press releases, stylistic analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Biafra was a secessionist entity in southeastern Nigeria, predominantly comprising of Igbo ethnic group. The quest for Igbo independence and self-determination culminated in the Nigerian civil war, which lasted from May 30, 1967, to January 1970. This drive for independence was led by Lieutenant Colonel Odimegwu Ojukwu alongside other Igbo leaders, who contended that the prevailing military regime in Nigeria was repressive and posed a threat to the socio-political and economic development, as well as the survival, of the Igbo people. In response to these perceived injustices, Ojukwu declared Biafran independence. The conflict on January 11, 1970, following the capture of the Biafran capital, Owerri, by the federal forces. Subsequently, Ojukwu fled into exile to the Ivory Coast, and Biafra surrendered. Despite the military defeat, the aspiration for Biafran Independence did not dissipate. Instead, it persisted as a latent but potent force, periodically reemerging through various sociopolitical movements. Notably, even after Ojukwu's death, the demand for secession remained alive, gaining renewed momentum with the movements of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in 2014 under the leadership of Nnamdi Kanu. IPOB has since become the most prominent organization championing the cause of Biafran Independence. Its activities include the dissemination of protest speeches and press releases during meetings, conventions, rallies, and press conferences both locally and internationally. Nevertheless, unlike conventional political speeches or press releases, protest speeches and press releases are typically articulated within emotionally charged and politically volatile environments. These communicative acts are strategically designed to inspire, mobilise, educate, and engage the target audience. They often serve as platforms for instigation, agitation, and provocation, encouraging collective action and soliciting support for the overarching goal of independence.

Language, in a political context such as that of IPOB, functions as a strategic instrument for constructing and influencing the perception of reality. Altun (2023) has seen language as

an interesting phenomenon used for other purposes apart from communication. Its intrinsic ability to mold views, beliefs, and interpersonal interactions cannot be overemphasized. With language, ideas and feelings can be shared, and the understanding of the world view can be built. Rahman & Saeed (2024) note that language serves as a prevailing instrument in political discourse, playing a crucial role in persuasion and the political manipulation of public opinion within a political context. Language is, therefore, usually employed by the politicians and agitators to keep their political subjects informed and influenced. Usually, language use in political agitations has certain characteristics that make it different from other varieties of language use. It is on this proposition that this study would leverage to carry out a lexico-semantic analysis of four (4) purposively selected press releases of IPOB delivered between 2015 and 2017. This is in order to ascertain different lexical choices, lexical collocation, and lexical relations which subtly help to depict their intention, attitude, and emphasis in the speeches. The study also aims to examine the deployment of pronouns and figurative expressions in the exemplification of meaning and perception in the speeches.

Scholars such as Sani (2022), Hammangabdo (2022), Sayyora (2022), Adegbenro (2023), and Abdulla (2024) have examined the style of language in different addresses of political actors, focusing on linguistic elements, rhetoric, lexical semantics, and so on. Nevertheless, in literature, adequate attention has not been given to the research on the agitation speeches or press releases of the IPOB or similar militant groups concerning the lexico-semantic choices that contributed to their designation as terrorist organisations. This is because when one uses language, it has the power to shape and influence someone else's judgment of a subject. This area has created a gap which this study aims to fill. And it is hoped that the study will be of tremendous benefit to the government, politicians, political agitators, individuals, and specifically the Igbo people in their secessionist bid. It is also believed that the investigation will show how effective the choice of linguistic elements in IPOB's press releases is in achieving the desired communicative intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Style and Stylistics

The difference between style and stylistics is a matter of morphological relationship. The two concepts are so mutually knitted that it may be difficult to separate one from the other. According to Imran et al (2021: 228), Style is how something is written or said. The words 'written' and 'said' in that definition of style suggest that style has to do with the way language is used, either in written form or spoken form. Alisoy (2023: 11) describes it as "the unique signature of an author or speaker, reflected in their choice of words, sentence structure, use of figurative language, rhythm, and even punctuation". These unique signatures or linguistic idiosyncrasies are made clear by Batool et al (2024) when they explain that style is actually the working of the vocabulary, figure of speech, sentence structure, and many other elements. It is these linguistic characteristics that distinguish a writer from others. Ama (2022), commenting on styles through an online source, states that writers have their own unique ways of expressing their ideas to their readers; hence, this proves that style is an individual or a person.

However, stylistics is a word that is derived from style. Arslan et al (2021) describe stylistics as the study of the style of the writer. They argue further that this style distinguishes a writer from others. It simply means the study or analysis of style in a text or literary work. Tade (2024) argues that "stylistic analysis is, therefore, the process of identifying how different patterns are used in speech and written work". Alisoy (2023: 18) posits that "stylistics, in its exhaustive analysis of language and style, incorporates multiple aspects of linguistics." He explains further that those aspects include the lexical, morphological, syntactical, phonetic, functional, and graphical. Giovanelli & Harrison (2022) also suggest that stylistics is the study of language patterns in texts and the meaningful relationship between linguistic choice and

literary interpretation. All the definitions given above have something in common: analyzing style to create an understanding of words in a text and to determine the feeling the text creates, and how the reader responds to them (Tade, 2024).

Stylistics is concerned with making the meaning of a text more explicit through a critical analysis of the language employed. It aims to clarify how understanding is derived from a text by examining focal points such as its linguistic structure, the organization of its content, and how a reader or listener engages with the text to interpret meaning. Broadly, stylistics can be categorized into two main branches: literary stylistics and linguistic stylistics. The discipline relies on various stylistic devices or features to realize specific styles and enhance the interpretive depth of a text. These features contribute to the enrichment, emphasis, and vitality of textual meaning. Key stylistic elements include grammatical categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions; figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, hyperboles, euphemisms, and personifications; syntactic structures including simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences; and parenthetical expressions, which are inserted within or at the end of sentences. Other significant features involve lexical relations like synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, and collocations; diction, which may include repetition, archaic or foreign terms, acronyms, slang, jargon, and neologisms; as well as graphological elements, such as the use of italics, boldface, capitalization, and logos—all of which contribute to the visual and interpretive dimensions of a text.

Stylistics can be summed up as the prevalent language habits of a speaker or writer. Language itself has been described by Robin and Crystal (2021) as a means of a conventional communication system which can be verbal (spoken), manual (signed), or written (graphic) through which humans socialize and practice their culture. It therefore means that for any group of individuals to function and relate effectively, the importance of language cannot be overemphasized. Every group has its unique language used within the group. The same thing goes with politics; hence, political language. There is, therefore, a strong connection between politics and language. Chahbane et al. (2023: 115) say “politics can be construed as either a quest to sustain authority or as a framework of societal institutions aimed at conflict resolution and prevention”. The language of politics involves using language for influencing, scheming, and manoeuvring people’s actions and policies within a group in order to keep or gain power in a government. The main objective of the language of politics is to influence the mind of the target audience. In view of this, Vasko & Aleksieievets (2021) commenting on political discourse observe that “its field of activity is predetermined by the sphere of politics, characterized by a specific set of communication situations, typical models of speech behaviour, certain topics, a set of intentions and speech strategies”. Therefore, the main components of political rhetoric usually center on problem of power, conflict, control and domination. And according to Taubaldiyev, et al. (2024) “political discourse does not just reflect the current state of affairs; it also plays a role in constructing national identity and shaping aspirations for the future”. Two rhetorical tactics become available for doing this: persuasion and agitation. Through these means, the mind of the listeners or target audience is swayed, bent, and tilted towards a particular opinion.

Propaganda

Valeria (2024) defines propaganda as the deliberate and systematic dissemination of information, ideas, or rumors to influence public opinion and shape beliefs”. Propaganda is a channel through which ideology is manifested and sold. Aziz, et al (2025: 1077) propose that “propaganda manipulatively makes use of irrational and emotional appeals to persuade a person ... to achieve target”. Although Jarlbrink & Norén (2022) have discovered that propaganda can be used for both positive and negative intentions, it can be argued that most of the time, propaganda is usually one-sided, deliberately presenting only the propagandists’ view of the argument. Propagandists use damage information to achieve their aim. Propaganda is

utilized to manipulate people's views or their behaviour through different strategies such as name-calling, band-wagoning, or rousing fear (Cuncic, 2023), rhetorical questions, vague and abusive utterances, attack or confrontational words (Richard et al, 1992).

In addition, Wilson & Wilson (2001:353) mention other techniques of propaganda such as name-calling, which is giving an idea or product a bad name; glittering generalities, which is giving praises to a product or person so people accept and approve it once again without examining the evidence; testimonials, using a celebrity or other respected person to recommend a product or using a hated person to tell people that a product is bad; bandwagon, a technique that gives an appeal to a group of people; plain folks, using an appeal common to value like family and patriotism to make a product appear better than it actually is. This is an offer done through an unfair comparison or by omitting important facts, and it often gives the best or worst possible case for an idea, program, or person. Other identified techniques are: Appeal to authority; Fear; Prejudice, Argumentum (tireless repetition), Black and White Fallacy (presenting only two choices with the propagated idea as the better choice), Common and Plan Talk; Demonising the enemy, Direct Order (going straight to the point), Flag Waving – instigating the feeling of patriotism, obtaining disapproval, quote out of context, red herring – using irrelevant claim to validate your argument, Slogan and so on. Propaganda is calculated to influence people, emotions, attitudes, and conduct by coating information in a prejudiced or one-sided way. Moreover, it may be positive or negative depending on the perspective of what is expected by the propagandist.

Rhetoric

“Rhetoric involves the art of a writer or speaker using language to persuade the readers or listeners to do or act in accordance with his or her communicative intention”, Adegbenro (2023: 36). Rhetoric, unlike propaganda that is manipulative, is persuasive in its method of influencing its target audience. In an endeavour to describe rhetoric, Condor et al (2013:4) say the term rhetoric “can pertain to vacuous insincere speech or political ‘spin’”. It can also be an “idea of empty declaration or dishonest artifice”. Nonetheless, the term rhetoric may also be used in a positive sense to refer to the practical and effective communication. Richard et al (1992:138) are of a different opinion that “rhetoric is the art or talent by which discourse is adapted to its ends. It is, therefore, the study of style through grammatical and lexical analysis”. However, just like propaganda, rhetoric can diversify into using different approaches such as psychology, classical, literary, and political. Condon et al (2013:8) describe political rhetoric as “the strategies used to construct persuasive arguments, informal public debates, and in everyday political disputes. Political rhetoric, therefore, touches the fundamental activities of democratic politics.

In influencing people's opinion by persuasion, a politician adopts rhetorical tools such as repetition, biblical citation, rhetorical question, colloquialism, promise, pidgin, word coinage, figurative expression, and idioms. Other techniques are: taking and avoiding sides, explicit appeals to common in-group membership, constituency aspirational identities, implicit display of rhetorical alignment – use of first-person plural pronoun- we, us, and possessive, use of vagueness and ambiguity. The politicians also use pronouns (who are us?) to display complex political allegiances, using the first-person pronoun to convey ideological messages. They also use confrontational language, such as name-calling, to give an impression of their target using jargon or technical vocabulary, using catchphrases or slogans, using figurative language, and so on. However, this study concentrates on the lexicosemantic devices used in the selected press releases of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

Theoretical Framework

This research is hinged on Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as its theoretical framework. The Systemic Functional Grammar sees language as a resource for

meaning-making and not just a matter of syntactic rules. That makes communication the primary aim of language. The framework also considers language from a sociological standpoint. It is regarded as a form of functional behaviour, manifesting through various communicative functions such as declaratives (statements), imperatives (commands), exclamatives (expressions of emotion), and interrogatives (questions). These functions are inherently linked to the social context or situational setting in which language is employed. Within the framework of Systemic Grammar, language is conceptualized as purposeful activity, where its functional categories (e.g., declarative, imperative, exclamatory, and interrogative) correspond to specific communicative intentions. Systemic Grammar emphasizes not only the external function of language in context but also the internal structural organization that enables such functional deployment. In essence, it seeks to explain how linguistic forms are systematically shaped by and responsive to the purposes and settings in which they occur. Banks (2024) says that SFG is based on observation of real language, and real language means texts, either written or spoken. The theoretical foundation of Systemic Functional Grammar can be attributed to M.A.K. Halliday (1961), particularly beginning with his 1961 work on *Scale and Category Grammar*. This framework represents an integration of both structuralist and functionalist approaches to linguistic analysis, combining attention to the formal organization of language with an emphasis on its communicative purposes within context.

RESEARCH METHODS

Four speeches of prominent leaders of IPOB were selected purposively in this study. Two were selected from those of Mazi Uchenna Asiegbu (1 and 3 in the data), while one each was taken from Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Mazi Chika Edoziem as texts 2 and 4, respectively. The speeches were selected based on the notable roles played or positions occupied by the IPOB leaders. Mazi Nnamdi Kanu was the head of IPOB, while Mazi Chika Edoziem and Mazi Uchenna Asiegbu were Heads of the Directorates of the group. The speeches were first downloaded from the online spaces. Subsequently, the texts of the speeches were closely read, while the lexico-semantic features that suited the purpose of the analysis in this research were identified. Five specific areas of analysis were considered. These are the lexical items for indicating mood or intension, lexical collocation, lexical relation, deployment of pronouns, and figurative expressions. The identified lexico-semantic features formed the data, which were categorized and then analysed using Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar theoretical framework. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis were employed in this research. While lexical relation was espoused through a quantitative analysis to determine the frequency of reiterations in the separatists' speeches, all other features were examined through a qualitative approach to unravel different stylistic meanings in their agitations. The analysis of each of the lexico-semantic features was followed by a discussion of the implications of such features in relation to the message.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Lexical Items Depicting the Mood/Intension of the IPOB

One of the findings of this research is that the press briefings of the IPOB are replete with lexical items which are deliberately used to accentuate the mood or intension of the group. Part of the aim reflected in the speeches of the IPOB's leaders includes showing their grudges and grievances for being labelled a terrorist group and ill-treated despite their peaceful protest. This made them express their innocence as well as calling the international community to come to their aid in the speeches. Examples of lexical items used in illustrating such actions and moods are foregrounded in the preceding extracts:

Table 1. Depictions of Attitude or Mood in the IPOB speeches

Text	Expression	Attitude/mood
I	The <i>massacre</i> , the <i>maiming</i> , and <i>forceful displacement</i> of unarmed peaceful people of Biafran on a day we remember the atrocious genocide of the same government is utterly unthinkable, <i>absurd</i> .	Protesting
	Without any shred of doubt whatsoever, Buhari's <i>order</i> ("the-order-from-the-above") was carried out to the later, and that was to <i>kill</i> unarmed Biafran.	Alleging
	They harassed and gruesomely <i>murdered innocent</i> citizens without sparing even the most vulnerable like the pregnant women.	Decrying of brutality
	No amount of <i>intimidation</i> will make us give up on this issue.	Determining
II	The world is hereby put on notice that Biafrans will henceforth exercise their fundamental human right to <i>self-defence</i> .	Self-defending
	Biafrans shall <i>defend</i> themselves in order to put a stop to further genocide and this should NEVER be construed as an act of terrorism but rather an act of self-defence.	Self-defending
III	The DOS wants to inform the world and Biafrans in particular that those <i>appointed</i> and <i>approved</i> by the office of the Deputy Leader and that of Directorate of State as IPOB spokespersons are: Barrister Emma Nmezu and Dr Clifford Iroanya.	Approving
	Any other person <i>parading</i> himself or herself as the spokesperson of IPOB is a <i>liar</i> from the pit of hell.	Disclaiming
IV	The international community is <i>put on notice</i> that former President Obasanjo is calling for the assassination of the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra Mazi Nnamdi Kanu.	Notifying
	It has come to the <i>attention</i> of the Directorate of State of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) that a new report which appeared on the daily news online of 4th July, 2017 written by one Chijioke Jannah call for the leader of the Indigeno IPOB Nnamdi Kanu to be <i>assassinated</i> .	Attention calling

The table above displays sampled expressions to show the IPOB's use of language to communicate different feelings ranging from protesting, alleging, decrying brutality, determining, self-defending, approving, disclaiming, informing, to attention seeking. This was made possible through the stylistic use of specific lexical items, as will be explained succinctly in the discussion section.

Lexical Collocation

Another thing that is discovered, which is of profound significance, is the use of lexical collocation in the speeches. Collocation simply refers to two or more words that are usually and closely used together. Words, mostly adjectives and adverbs, are carefully selected as collocates of other words in the speeches to juxtapose the Bafrians' and Nigerians' acts and identity. Consequently, two major types of collocation are noticed, adjective/noun collocation and adverb/verb collocation. This is illustrated in the subsequent Table 2 as follows:

Table 2. Lexical collocations in the IPOB speeches

Text	Adjective/noun	Adverb/verb
I	Forceful displacement	Gruesomely murdered
	Criminal... assault	Unlawfully killed
	Unarmed peaceful people	
II	Real terrorist	-
III	Peaceful protest	-
IV	Damnable contraption	-

From Table 2 above, it becomes obvious that the Separatist group leaders stylistically deployed two major lexical collocations: adjective/noun collocation and adverb/verb collocation. While the first is common to the four sampled speeches, the second is only found in the first text.

Lexical Relation

Furthermore, the IPOB's press briefings are stuffed with copious lexical repetitions. Sigar & Saeed (2024: 3446) define repetition as "the process of repeating a word stated earlier in the text either in the same form or with some modifications". Khalid (2023) explains that lexical relations are the relationships that exist between words or lexical items within a language. These relations help in the understanding of how words connect and provide insights into their meanings, usage, and associations. Lexical relation looks at the way words are linked together systematically and interdependently. This can be achieved through lexical reiteration and repetition. Lexical relation is used to form cohesion, which enhances meaning in a text. IPOB speakers deliberately deploy repetition as a stylistic device not only to achieve cohesion in their speeches but also for reiteration or emphasis and to arouse intended emotion in their fellow Biafrans. Examples are presented in Table 3 as follows:

Table 3. Frequencies of repetition of lexical items in the IPOB speeches

S/N	Repeated lexical items	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Total
1.	Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)	13	8	9	7	37
2.	Nigerian (government)	2	5	0	2	9
3.	General Buhari	8	0	0	0	8
4.	Office of The Directorate of State	3	2	2	3	10
5.	Kanu	1	1	1	4	7
6.	Genocide	4	0	0	0	4
7.	Killing	5	1	0	0	6
	Total	36	17	12	16	81

The table above illustrates certain lexical items repeated in the IPOB's speeches. Six out of seven words that were repeated in different structures are naming expressions, while only one is a verb. The name of the group 'Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)' was repeated 37 times, followed by 'Office of the Directorate of State' 10 times, 'Nigeria' 9 times, 'General Buhari' 8 times, 'Kanu' 7 times, 'Killing' 6 times and 'genocide' 4 times.

Deployment of Pronouns

In the press briefings of the IPOB, it becomes obvious that certain personal pronouns were consciously used to achieve rhetorical effects. These personal pronouns are 'we', 'our', and 'us'. The following examples from the texts will suffice for illustration:

Table 4. Personal pronouns in the IPOB speeches

S/N	Expressions with the Use of Personal Pronouns
1.	... that the acts so melted on <i>our</i> kith and kin... and killing of <i>our</i> people
2.	<i>We</i> are deeply pained by... killing... <i>our</i> members
3.	However, <i>our</i> resolve remains resolute.
4.	No amount of intimidation will make <i>us</i> give up.
5.	... <i>we</i> shall not... accept... campaign of labelling IPOB as a terrorist.
6.	<i>We</i> shall resist any attempt to tag <i>us</i> as terrorist just because <i>we</i> are merely defending <i>ourselves</i> and stopping the Nigerian government from exterminating <i>us</i> through their act of terrorism.

The pronouns are inclusively and expansively employed in the speeches to refer to the Biafrans as a whole. IPOB leaders used the first-person plural pronouns 'we', 'us', and 'our' to show rhetorical alignment, the collective destiny of Biafra, responsibility, and unity of purpose for the attainment of the Biafran mission.

Use of Figurative Expressions

Lastly, it is discovered in the selected texts that there are instances of figurative language. Pavlikova (2024) opines that figures of speech add vividness to a speech, help

structure the argument, and help introduce new ideas. Two figures of speech were predominantly used in the speeches, which should attract a stylistic analysis; these are metaphor and euphemism. Three major examples were drawn from the speeches for illustration and represented in Table 5.

Table 5. Figurative expressions in the IPOB speeches

S/N	Expression	Figure of speech
1.	General Buhari has indeed proven to be undemocratic <i>hiding under the cloak of democracy</i> to perpetuate ponderous evil deed on ordinary people.	Metaphor
2.	Of course, we trusted the words of the <i>Lion</i> .	Metaphor
3.	As a result, remembrance of <i>fallen heroes</i> is an acceptable rite in any civil and responsible society or country.	Euphemism

The IPOB spokesmen skilfully deployed some figurative expressions to depict meaning above the general concept in their addresses. This is in order to create a rhetorical and propaganda effect, which has to do with name-calling in their speeches. In the three excerpted expressions above, examples 1 and 2 are metaphors while example 3 is a euphemism.

Discussion

In Table 1, the expressions labeled 1, 2, 3 and 4, contain words such as ‘massacre’, ‘maiming’, ‘genocide’, ‘kill’, ‘murdered’ and ‘intimidation’, which were adopted by the Biafrans to point accusing fingers to the Nigerian government about their brutality and atrociousness towards Biafrans. However, lexical items like ‘self-defence’ and ‘defend’ as they appear in 5 and 6 were stylishly used by the IPOB to swiftly justify themselves that they were fighting a just cause. It was also a way to protest to disprove the wrong opinion held about them that ‘they are terrorists as well as stop genocide against them’. In examples 7 and 8, words like ‘put on notice’ and ‘attention’ are deployed by the Biafran leaders to deliberately attract the attention of the external authority to their plight. The expressions were used to draw the attention of the international community to the alleged plans of former president Obasanjo to assassinate Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, thereby subtly soliciting his security. It is discovered that the IPOB’s spokesmen carefully deploy the lexical items to justify their intention for the protest, which was hinged on the premise of their being labelled a ‘terrorist’ group and to stop ‘Nigerian brutality’ against Biafrans, as well as requesting international aid.

In addition, Table 2 highlights some examples of lexical collocations found in the IPOB’s speeches. The speeches featured lexical collocation to portray Biafran positively and represent Nigeria negatively. Adjective/noun collocations in the texts were deliberately used to achieve two aims; one is to present the Nigerian government and their actions against the IPOB in a bad light, which they termed as forceful and criminal, while the other is to present the Biafrans positively as harmless and vulnerable. Thus, ‘forceful displacement’, ‘real terrorist’, ‘criminal assault’, and ‘damnable contraption’ illustrate the first aim, while ‘unarmed peaceful people’ and ‘peaceful protest’ subtly illustrate the second. The first idea follows Wilson and Wilson (2001:353) which they identify as ‘demonising the enemy’, a technique of propaganda, while the second also aligns with their subsequent submission (Wilson and Wilson 2001) which they tag ‘glittering generality’ to indicate a situation in which a product or person is praised in order to be accepted and approved without considering the facts. The IPOB also used adverb/verb collocations as ‘gruesomely murdered’, ‘unlawfully killed’, as a technique to win the sympathy of the international community. This is a ploy to rope Nigeria in and absolve themselves of any crime. And by saying ‘real terrorist’, they name Nigeria as the actual terrorist whose actions are not only condemnable but ‘damnable’. All this was in the bid to contradict the Nigerian government, labelling the Biafrans as terrorists.

In the examples of lexical repetition shown in Table 3, the emphasis of the IPOB becomes obvious. The repetition of the group's name deliberately calls for special attention to the group, IPOB. It reiterates their singular aim and resolve to secede and force their recognition on the generality of the people. It is also to let the people know what they actually stand for, 'the independence of the people of Biafra', rather than for them to be seen as a terrorist group. The emphasis given to the 'Office of the Directorate of State' is to let the people know the significant role played by the Directorate in the helm of affairs of the IPOB, probably as the information and coordination centre. Another is to show the people that they were an organised, formal group which was traceable and legally domiciled. This was to further debunk the claim that they were a terrorist group. The word 'Nigeria' was repeated to indicate the consistent enemy of the group, while 'General Buhari' was repeatedly mentioned as the head of that 'enemy camp', Nigeria. 'Kanu' was repeated to focus attention on the leadership of the IPOB just as it was done to 'General Buhari' as the leader of Nigeria. Both 'killing' and 'genocide' were used repeatedly to show the terrible actions of the Nigerian government towards the group, and to draw the sympathy of the people to their struggle.

Thus, the various lexical reiterations deployed by the IPOB have not only served the purpose of establishing textual ties in the speeches, they have been used to depict the social roles of the different names and groups mentioned, and the attitude or behaviours expected from their target audience, which remains the Biafrans, the Nigerian government and the international community inclusive.

In the examples provided in Table 4, personal pronouns such as 'our', 'we', and 'us' are used by the Biafran spokesmen to conscript every Biafran into the struggle and to indicate collective suffering. The inclusive referencing implies that the killing of one is the pain of all. Moreover, it is to portray both the speakers (leaders) and the victims as one Biafran. The person deictic element 'our' and its variants were also employed to achieve unity of purpose and collective commitment. The unity of purpose of the Biafrans is to stop the genocide killing of their people, as well as disprove the allegation of being called terrorists. Therefore, the deployment of those person deixis points attention to a group speaking with one voice and resolute in their decision. And that, as far as they were concerned, for both the leaders and the entire Biafrans, no intimidation would suppress them. In the examples, 'we' and 'us' were rhetorically employed to show collective resistance against being labelled terrorists. It was also used to depict a collective responsibility for both the leaders and the community members to defend the Biafran community and its struggle.

Considering the examples drawn on the use of figurative expressions in Table 5, the idea being conveyed in the words 'hiding under the cloak of democracy' is metaphorically used to depict General Buhari as being pretentious and deceptive in his approach. It showed that despite the fact that the president is operating as a civilian, his military background has not changed his outlook simply because of his 'evil deeds' against the group. The word 'lion' in the second example was also being deployed to name the Police Commissioner of Anambra State, in whom the speaker was disappointed for betraying the trust of the Biafrans. The Commissioner was alleged by the spokesperson of the IPOB to be joining in the conspiracy to kill and assault the Biafrans. The word 'lion' draws attention to brutishness, ferociousness, fierceness, wickedness, and the beastly nature of the Police Commissioner in his treatment of the Biafrans. In example 3, the expression 'fallen heroes' was used as a euphemism to mildly present the Biafrans who died in the struggle as not dead but as heroes who fell. This is to mellow down the emotion and the fear that the word 'dead' can convey in the mind of ordinary Biafran civilians. It is also to instill some courage and confidence in the Biafrans so as to propel them to a perpetual life of struggle and agitation without discouragement or trepidation. These figures of speech were carefully deployed as stylistic devices to blackmail the Nigerian government, its agents, and all it stood for in the speeches.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the IPOB's use of language in their press releases is forceful. Their lexical choices have been stylistically deployed to absolve themselves of criminal tendencies, while derogatively engaging the same to convict the Nigerian government of brutality and genocidal activities towards them. Lexical repetitions were also utilised to place emphasis on their most important points of agitation, while inclusive personal pronouns were used to achieve collective destiny and purpose for all Biafrans. Although the spokesmen skilfully deployed figurative expressions to stir up international sympathy towards the group's plights, their use of negative metaphoric and euphemistic language somewhat belied their genuine intension. Therefore, the manner of agitation and violent language use of the IPOB contributed to their being labelled a terrorist group by the Nigerian government. It is therefore hoped that this study will contribute some insights for scholars, politicians, Biafran agitators, and others on the significance of language and lexical choices in presenting political speeches. However, one limitation of this study is that the language used in IPOB press releases may vary significantly depending on socio-political situations. Thus, a limited time frame and space for this kind of research may not capture the full range of lexico-semantic patterns, and this may lead to partial conclusions. Nevertheless, further studies may be carried out on a comparative analysis of the IPOB's speeches and Biafran speeches of the Ojukwu group of 1967 to investigate the differences and similarities in the style of their language.

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