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## **The Place of Pragmatics in Language: President Buhari's Speech on IPOB Paradigm**

**ABSTRACT.** The meaning of any sentence depends on many factors which include the situation and context. This is however the purview of pragmatics that was hitherto a subset of semantics until recently. With the introduction of pragmatics, utterances are no longer randomly made, because, it could be misunderstood, as they have more meanings than they appear to have on the surface. The proscribed indigenous people of Biafra have been one of the major concerns of the ruling class in Nigeria. Both the Nigerian president and some state governors have ceaselessly given the arm forces orders to clamp down on the members of the IPOB, wherever they are found. This research applies John Langshaw Austin's speech act theory, Grice's Maxims, Samuel Ichiye Hakawata's Snarl (angry) and Purr (gentle / kind) in its analysis. This paper analyses one of the speeches of the Nigerian President on the proscribed IPOB using the pragmatic features such as: componential analysis- analyzing the components of the sentence, the pronominal. This study applies qualitative method in the analysis of the pragmatic features in the President Buhari's speech on IPOB. This paper discovers that the statement of the president was characterised with more of angry words than snarl words. It therefore recommends that leaders of fragile democratic countries like Nigeria should apply more of the snarl words than purr, fuming and irritating words.

**KEYWORDS:** language, president, IPOB paradigm, words

### **Introduction**

Language is said to be the distinguishing factor between humans and other animals, as it is the means through which they communicate with one another. However, in language, there are situations in which utterances are made without recourse to the context of usage or the environment, leading to some form of misunderstanding. This is the reason for the introduction and study of pragmatics, said to be an aspect of linguistics which studies language use in context. Charles Morris defined pragmatics as the relation of signs to their users. Pragmatics is seen as a theory that is interested in the "conditions for the correct use of expressions and constructions of a given language" (Ken-Maduako, 2003).

According to Nwala (2015), the term pragmatics is of both the Greek and Latin origins, meaning the study of the practical aspect of meaning, fully equipped with the knowledge of the environment, the style of the individual, and the state of mind of the individual. It is seen as being interested in the ability of language users to pair up utterances with the context of usage in mind (Tamunobelema, 2018). Pragmatics as a field of study is more interested in the connotative meaning and correctness of an utterance than the denotative meaning and truthfulness of the utterance. This simply means that utterances make sense beyond what they say at the surface meaning. The speaker usually decides the tone to use with recourse to the attitude of his audience and the purpose of the speech is equally important as it determines the choice of words and synthetic patterns to adopt (Ken-Maduako, 2003).

### **Theoretical Framework: Speech Act Theory, Snarl and Purr Words**

The speech act theory which was propounded by Austin in the year 1975 talks about the power in every speech made by individuals. According to him, every speech performs a specific function and are divided into locution, illocution and perlocution, where locution is the spoken or written word, illocution seen as the intention of the writer and perlocution the future response expected from the receiver of the message as a result of what he or she has heard or read. Grice Maxims is essential to this work as it talks about the essence of communication which is meaning sharing. The maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner are essential in pragmatics analysis. Hakawata's snarl and purr words as propounded in 1991 is a theory in language analysis where the words are divided based on the individual words that make up the sentences. Snarl words are angry words while purr words are kind and gentle words.

### **Background to the Proscription of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)**

Almost fifty years after the Nigeria civil (BIAFRA) war that lasted for thirty months, the agitation seem never to end. The war that started in July, 1967 and ended in January, 1970 saw the death of so many people,

mostly women and children. The war stated as a result of the decision of the decision of some people from the Igbo part of Nigeria to secede from Nigeria. The trouble started when a then military officer by the name late Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, came on air to announce a separation of the then Eastern Region to form their own nation with the name Biafra Republic.

In recent times, there has been a renewed agitation for the Republic of Biafra by some aggrieved people of South East, led by Nnamdi Kalu. With the rate at which the group was growing in number and popularity, it became pertinent for the people at the helm of affairs to defend the Nigerian nation. This led to the proscription of the group as a terrorist organization on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017. President Buhari's Speech on the Indigenious People of Biafra (IPOB).

President Muhammadu Buhari who came back to Nigeria after a long medical treatment in Britain, gave his speech on Monday, August 21, 2017. President Mohammad Buhari spoke on the nonnegotiable unity of Nigeria. During a nationwide broadcast he said:

In 2003 after I joined partisan politics, the late Chief Emeka Ojukwu came and stayed as my guest in my hometown Daura. Over two days we discussed in great depth till late into the night and analyzed the problems of Nigeria. We both came to the conclusion that the country must remain one and united.

Nigeria's unity is settled and not negotiable. We shall not allow irresponsible elements to start trouble and when things get bad they run away and saddle others with the responsibility of bringing back order, if necessary with their blood.

Every Nigerian has the right to live and pursue his business anywhere in Nigeria without let or hindrance. I believe the very vast majority of Nigerians share this view.

This is not to deny that there are legitimate concerns. Every group has a grievance. But the beauty and attraction of a federation is that it allows different groups to air their grievances and work out a mode of co-existence.

The National Assembly and the National Council of State are the legitimate and appropriate bodies for national discourse.

The national consensus is that it is better to live together than to live apart. Furthermore, I am charging the Security Agencies not to let the successes achieved in the last 18 months be a sign to relax. Terrorists and criminals must be fought and destroyed relentlessly so that the majority of us can live in peace and safety.

## The Analysis

Since the Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) were proscribed as a terrorist group, war was declared on them by the federal government and the military. According to Ken-Maduako (2003), during wars, leaders speak comfort to their people, encourage their soldiers and abuse their enemies. President Buhari sees the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as an enemy of the Nigerian state. This was why he and the service chiefs declared war on them: Therefore, we are going to reinforce and reinvigorate the fight. We shall tackle them all.

In trying to buy the mind of some easterners and convince them to stop the sensation struggle, President Mohammed Buhari brought in the man the Easterners all respect, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. He tried to persuade the people to stop the agitation and that the problem of Nigeria had been solved through their discussions when he said that:

In 2003 after I joined partisan politics, the late Chief Emeka Ojukwu came and stayed as my guest in my hometown Daura. Over two days we discussed in great depth till late into the night and analyzed the problems of Nigeria. We both came to the conclusion that the country must remain one and united.

In the above statement, we find the use of the first person singular pronoun 'I', to indicate personal effort. We also have the first person singular pronoun 'we', to show communal effort and solidarity. He went further to deliberately employ 'verbal strategy' to show that he was talking with the consent of other peace-loving Nigerians:

The national consensus is that it is better to live together than to live apart.

Again, president Buhari tries to talk the people into sticking with Nigeria at all cost. There is also a case of 'settled' and 'not negotiable'. Remember that the IPOB is seeking for a negotiation in the form of a referendum to enable them get their own country called Biafra. This shows the president's stand on the issue and how passionate he is against the separation of the nation:

Nigeria's unity is settled and not negotiable.

Let us do a componential analysis of these words:

"Settled"	"not negotiable"
+ Agreement	- negotiation
+ concensus	- agreement
+ unity	- concensus
+ calm	- calm
+ Peace	+ force

Trying to be patriotic, he said:

We shall not allow irresponsible elements to start trouble and when things get bad they run away and saddle others with the responsibility of bringing back order, if necessary with their blood.

Again, he uses the first person plural pronoun 'we' to show solidarity and 'they' to show the other people as outsiders. He addresses the IPOB as 'irresponsible elements', and troublemakers, because he sees them as the enemy of the nation. Ken-Maduako (2003), during wars, leaders speak comfort to their people, encourage their soldiers and abuse their enemies. He used the word 'elements' to describe them. Remember that the IPOB are humans with the desire to have a better life in their own country. If we are to examine the term 'element' through the componential strategy, we will have:

"IPOB"	"elements"
+ human	- human
+ struggle	- struggle
+ agitation	- agitation

He also brought responsibility and irresponsibility together:

"responsibility"	"irresponsibility"
+ responsibility	- responsibility
+ accountability	- accountability

He performed a perlocutionary act when he persuaded the military to live up to their responsibility. He also used his utterance to perform an action of instruction.

I am charging the Security Agencies not to let the successes achieved in the last 18 months be a sign to relax.

President Buhari who was just returning from a long health vacation came with so much anger and hatred for the IPOB movement and just could not hold it back. In the words of Ken-Maduako (2003), language brings out our animal nature and habits. He used the words ‘terrorists’ and ‘criminals’ to refer to the agitators to show the level of hatred he has for them and to justify the proscription of the group.

Terrorists and criminals must be fought and destroyed relentlessly so that the majority of us can live in peace and safety.

Doing a componential analysis of the words ‘terrorist’ and ‘criminal’ is imperative in this case to show the case of redundancy:

“terrorist”	“criminal”
+ crime	+ crime
+ extremist	+ outlaw
+ violence	+ civil disobedience

This shows that he sees the IPOB as a threat to the nation and that is why he declared total war on them and this led to the killing of over fifty innocent citizens of Nigeria. President Buhari as a politician flaunted the Grice’s maxims of quality, quantity and manner. In the words of Firth (1964) in Ken-Maduako (2003), language is referred to as the operator, switch-board and wiring that controls our social current and power. This means that, we regulate what we say using language. In his speech, the president did not give detailed information on what he discussed with late Odumegwu Ojukwu, he only gave a summary:

In 2003 after I joined partisan politics, the late Chief Emeka Ojukwu came and stayed as my guest in my hometown Daura. Over two days we discussed in great depth till late into the night and analyzed the problems of Nigeria. We both came to the conclusion that the country must remain one and united.

We shall do an analysis on what Hayakawa (1964) in Ken-Maduako (2003) calls snarl words (angry) and purr words (gentle/kind) in President Buhari’s speech.

Snarl Words	Purr Words
-	terrorists
-	criminals
-	irresponsible
-	elements
-	trouble
-	destroy

The chat above clearly shows that President Buhari’s speech on IPOB was filled with anger, hate and violence:

We shall not allow irresponsible elements to start trouble and when things get bad they run away and saddle others with the responsibility of bringing back order, if necessary with their blood.

### Findings and Way Forward

This paper discovers that the statement of the president was characterised with more of angry words than snarl words which have never helped in solving Nigeria’s problem but have rather compounded them. In a way forward, it recommends that leaders of fragile democratic countries like Nigeria should apply more of the snarl words than purr, fuming and irritating words.

### Conclusion

Language is as powerful as the word ‘powerful’. It can be used to build as well as pull down. In the words of Ken-Maduako (2013) “people first make a mess of themselves then they make a hell of noise (p. 114)”. The agitation of the IPOB resurfaced as a result of the feeling of marginalisation and the rate of poverty and hunger in Nigeria, since the emergence of President Buhari. The best approach to the resolution of the agitation of the IPOB is a round table discussion that will see the people airing their grievances and making suggestions on the possible solution to their agitation. Like the saying goes, “kind words can be short and easy to speak but their echoes are really endless” (Mother Teresa).

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