LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SECURITY DEBATE IN FACEBOOK CONVERSATION

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Abstract
The work is aimed at examining some of the common linguistic forms used in the cyberspace communication, especially on security debate in facebook conversation. The qualitative descriptive research design was adopted for the work. Data for the work were taken from two security debates from an asynchronous discussion forum "Facebook" where Nigerians congregate to interact on several social issues that is not controlled or conditioned by rules and regulations. The work adopted Halliday`s (1998) Systemic Functional Grammar as its theoretic anchorage. The work equally adopted descriptive and interpretative tools as means for data analysis. After the analysis, the work revealed more than 8 linguistic typologies/features that characterize the two selected security debates on Facebook Conversation. The work concludes that the "Cyberspeak" which includes all the orthographic, graphic and grammatical forms in online communication has emerged with the distinct variety which enables users of the major (English) language of computing to cope with linguistics constraints of this new technology.

Keywords: Linguistic Typologies, Systemic Functional Grammar, Security Debate, Facebook conversation and Cyberspeak

Introduction
Language has been an integral part of communication and human beings being compulsive communicators continue to find new ways of communication in an attempt to bridge the distance between individuals. Internet technology has greatly influenced human life especially in the area of communication. Following the wave of the technology, there is an overwhelming access to different forms of media with an increase in inter-connectedness of peoples, races and genes around the entire world and transmitting information. Increasing numbers of people are communicating with each other through various technologies such as Short Message Services (SMS), Internet Based Instant Message, Synchronous Chat, Asynchronous Forms, E-mail, Twitter, Skype, Facebook and WhatsApp. Many of these communications are interactive, much like a conversation, but conducted at a distance (often both in time and space) and as in written form. Facebook, as a speech community is one of the top social networking websites with its own identifying styles, codes and shibboleths extending from single sentence greetings to informative, requestive, and directive texts such as reports,

newsletters and announcements with multi-faceted layers of interpretability, which contrasts face-to-face communication. Conventional communication according to Croates, is usually done face to face between two or more people. However, internet has provided a bridge for everyone around the world to communicate. The online communication, which one of them is Facebook, facilitates her users to have instant messaging or so-called online chatting, like a real face to face communication (13).

In communication, Croates (19), following Labov, asserts that language change occurs "when a new linguistic form, used by some sub-group within a speech community is adopted by other members of that community and accepted as the norm". This is where the internet takes an important role as a media liaison for its users who are facilitated to communicate with people from all over the world in making a new linguistic form. When a means of communication is established between two people, particularly via online conversation, a certain result is produced, which is a discourse that has various topics whenever a communication is begun in another time or even in the same time, similar stages of how to open a communication, to sustain the communication, and also to close the communication. In addition, it can be found that this discourse has many unique features of language. One of the reasons is because online conversation is basically in the form of written text, but seen through the language used, it appears to be a type of spoken discourse.

Systemic functional grammar is a language view credited to M.A.K Halliday. His work is based on the view that language is not just a formal activity, neither is it just a cognitive phenomenon of the Chomskyan's generativism, but a means through which its users perform actions and fulfill their social purposes and obligations. Its major concerns, as noted by Berry (1), are perhaps behavior, function and situation. Systemic functional grammar considers language as a form of behavior which is functional, as something that we do with a purpose or more. This implies that language use is goal directed. Systemic functional grammar is also interested in language as social semiotics – how people use language with each other in accomplishing everyday social life (Eggins, 24). This interest, as noted by Eggins, leads systemic linguists to advance four main theoretical claims about language. They are (I) language use is functional; (II) its function is to make meaning; (III) these meanings are influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which they are exchanged and (IV) the process of using language is a semiotic process, a process of making meaning by choosing. Eggins (27) has summarized these theoretical claims by describing Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as composed by several branches which have genre/genre analysis as one of the branches.

Theoretical Anchorage
The work adopts Systemic Functional Grammar as its linguistic anchorage. Put simply, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is grammar based on the view that language is a system for making meaning. System refers to the fact that when we use language, we make choices from sets of available options. This is contrary to the traditional view of grammar as sets of rules. Functional assumed that every time we make a choice from the available options, we are doing so in order to fulfill a communicative purpose. And grammar simply refers to the fact that there is an overall generalization to all of these possible options. According to Ezeifeka (201), this view of language is credited to

M.A.K. Halliday whose work was based on the view that language is not just a formal activity, neither is it a cognitive phenomenon of the Chomskyan generativism, but a means through which its users perform actions and fulfill their social purposes and obligations. They conceive language in terms of the "functions" it performs in social institutions.

Halliday (64) describes language as a "social semiotic" that is – that language is constructed out of a system of arbitrary signs and symbols which can be either spoken or written. Language is therefore viewed as a meaning making resource and involves exchange of meanings in interpersonal and social network. But it is not all just form and function to express meanings. Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) helps the teachers and learners work with whole stretches of language in order to develop their potential to communicate in the target language. This is made possible by the linguistic theory underpinning systemic functional Grammar (SFG), known as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). According to Mark (37), different cultural and social contexts lead speakers and writers to choose differently from the repertoire of language that they have at their disposal. Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is an extremely useful tool to help language teachers make sense of how language works in different social and cultural contexts, and thus be better equipped to help their learners understand these differences. This can refer to spoken or written texts and can range from every day casual talks, through to a formal interview, a short e-mail message, or an academic paper. In nutshell, SFG helps us describe how language is used between people, which contrast with traditional grammar that prescribes rules for using language.

Also, using Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as an approach to language studies, the researcher has a powerful tool with which to mediate his explanation of language, and thus mediate the learner's understandings of how to use language. This tool is the bridge between context and text – between the socio-cultural setting in which the speaker is conducting his activity and the language that is a part of that activity. The tool is called Register according to Chappell (11), and gives the researcher the ability to pick away at the context of language use and identity. It is clear from the review of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) that when a writer chooses a particular word or group of words for an expression to suit the need off a society activity, it is a matter of choice. This makes the theory a matter of utmost importance for this study because language users can only be found using the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) approach, particularly its meta-functions which are ideational meta-function, interpersonal meta-function and textual meta-function.

Speech and Language Technology
Speech can be considered as the most natural means of communication between humans. But the acoustical signals produced for this primary function also carry accompanying information about the speaker (gender, identification), his or her state of emotion, and the language spoken or written. It is therefore not surprising that speech technology embraces a wide range of applications on the social platforms. According to North Atlantic Treaty (205), the first speech transmission with electronic telecommunication means was realized in 1876 with the sole aim of enhancing

dialogue between two persons devoid of face contact. Language technology, sometimes also referred to as human language technology – comprises computational methods, computer programs and electronic devices that are specialized for analyzing, producing or modifying texts and speech. These systems according to Hans must be based on some knowledge of human language. Therefore, language technology is defined as the engineering branch of computational linguistics.

Language technology enables the people to freely communicate with themselves using any of the social websites. Some applications that aid effective transmission of thought among diverse people are robot control, database queries, information retrieval from texts and expert systems. Current advances in the recognition of spoken language improve the usability of many types of natural language systems.

Digital Discourse
Digital discourse offers a distinctly sociolinguistic perspective on the nature of language in digital technologies. It starts by simply bringing new media sociolinguistics up to date, addressing current technologies like instant messaging, text messaging, blogging, photo-sharing, mobile phones, gaming, social network sites, and video sharing. According to Pilar and Patricia, digital discourse lies at the intersection of non-language resources, society and technology (6). This helps digital researchers draw on a range of diverse socially – oriented language disciplines, whose methods and research tools may need to be critically assessed and reflectively adapted, and perhaps also expanded and even combined with others to suitably account for the communicative practices that occur in the digital world and embeddedness within the social world at large.

Discourse, in our view, is concerned with "social practice" (Fairclough, 28). Rather than language in use, as it was originally – and more narrowly – conceived, as it concerns itself with how multimodal, multisemiotic resources are employed to enact identities, activities and ideologies in the digital world, as part of a larger society world (Gee, 10). According to Thulow (3), a key objective of digital discourse is to show how its studies attend to both micro-level linguistic practices and more macro – level social processes; by the same token, scholars in the field are increasingly interested in understanding how language intersects with other modes of communication. Putting 'language' in its place – and following the lead of those scholars already mentioned – it is essential to recognise that discourse is interested in language only in so far as it illuminates social and cultural processes (Bucholtz and Hall, 28). In other words, the primary concern is not with the abstract, grammatical language of linguistics, but rather the everyday functions and uses of language.

It is for the above reasons that we tend to use the term discourse (Cuplan, 18). In linguistically – oriented discourse analysis there is typically a shared commitment to the following; the social functions of language, the interactional accomplishment of meaning, the significance of communicator intent, and the relevance of context.

Cyberspace Interaction

"Cyberspace interaction" in this research, the researcher decided to call it this way but it may be given different appellations depending on the perception and orientation of different scholars. Some of its synonyms are: "online communication, "cyber language", "virtual communication", "computer mediated communication". While some linguist may try to draw lines of distinctions, among these terms, essentially, they refer to the same issue. Cyberspace interaction according to Taiwo (34) is the virtual world, is the conceptual electronic space unbounded by distance or other physical limitations *(Webster's New World Telcom Dictionary online).* The term, coined by William Gibson in 1982 is a blend of the first morpheme is *cybernetic* (the scientific study of how information is communicated in machines and electronic devices) and space (a generic term to denote a platform or environment where people can interact). Technophobia.com defines cyberspace as:

> The virtual computer world and more specifically, is an electronic medium used to form a global computer network to facilitate online communication. It is a large computer network made up of many worldwide networks that employ TCP (transmission control protocol) to aid in communication and data exchange activities. Cyberspace allows users to share information, interact, swap ideas, play games, engage in discussion or social forum, conduct business and create intuitive media among many other activities.
> http://www.techopedia.com/defination/2493/cyberspace.

To underscore to the centrality of cyberspace to our life in modern times, Bakis and Roche (19) offered a crucial and useful perspective of cyberspace which describes it as the "nervous system" of emerging societies. Just as the people with common interest, location, lifestyle or background form communities, people congregates in cyberspace to interact on range of topics through electronic mails WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, discussion board, chat groups, and text messaging. Such interaction may be synchronous, meaning they occur when all parties involved are online at the same time and are synchronized with a signal that is encrypted into the data flow. Examples of asynchronous interaction are: email, discussion board, and text messaging through cell phones.

Through an intangible virtual-reality domain, cyberspace has to be accessed through device such as mobile phones and computers. Without this access device, there will be no distinction between cyberspace and communication in the real world. Whatever tools people use defines the nature of the experience in cyberspace. For instance, the limitation of mobile devices and computer affect the linguistic forms, the style and the behavior of the user. As an ethnographic researcher of online interactional behavior, I deal with interactants in the virtual world who negotiate meaning with the specific linguistic behavior constrained by the device that mediates the communication. My study on research on cyberspace interaction have focused specifically on some asynchronous discussion forums, such as *Facebook, Nairaland, Nigerian Village Square, Naijabookofjokes, Naijahotjobs, Sahara Reporters, and text messaging*.

Taiwo (2018) stated that the reality of the digital age is that almost everything people do is technologically mediated: relationships, education, career, health, financial

management, information discrimination, governance, and so forth. Much typical daily behavior patterns are essentially being reinvented as cyberbehaviour, thus giving us expressions such as: cyberdating, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, cyberbegging, cyberrape, cybersex, cyberthreat, cybersecurity, cyberattack, cybershopping, cyberpolicing, cyberspeak, cyberscam, cyberactivism and cyberjournalism. We can hardly define cyberspace without considering the linguistic behavior of participants, which is regulated by hardware, software tools, and interfaces. Therefore, the more we understand the relationship between language and cyberspace, the more we are able to deal with issues that arise from the emerging culture.

Varieties of Language Use in Communication
Rapid evolution of communication technologies has changed language use, enabling new forms of discourse, new forms of authorship, and new ways to create and participate in speech communities. In the last few years, information and communication technologies have created new forms of literacy. As a result, new online genres have emerged in academic genres and discourses. The new linguistic forms, coinages and spelling innovations on Facebook and Whatsapp have emerged as a variety of English that is situationally distinctive and context sensitive - a style that is dependent on the speech event and as discourse because it is based on a particular linguistic domain and at the same time explicates different relationships between interlocutors. According to Brown and Yule (201), discourse is language in use, functioning in social contexts and performing definite functions in human situations. Because it occurs naturally and spontaneously, it may be rendered in oral or written mode. What matters is not that it conforms to grammatical rules, but the fact that it communicates and it is recognized by its receivers as coherent. The term e-discourse is defined by Davis and Brewer (12) as one form of interactive electronic communication in which a person using a keyboard writes a language. It concentrates on how individuals use language to share and exchange ideas and views rather than on the medium or means by which they convey and deliver their communication. It refers to written talk, writing that stands in place of voices. That is, e-discourse reads as if it were being spoken or as if the sender were writing and talking at the same time. It is different from verbal discourse in its written script, which relies greatly on reading and writing skills, but similar to face-to-face communication in terms of interactivity. Therefore, users may require more time to comprehend input and output. Crystal (13) states that 'electronic discourse as a way of information exchange is "unusual, compared to face-to-face interaction but they are conversations". The above definitions describe electronic discourse based on the medium of communication and how language is used in electronic media. E-discourse is not just only a new tool for communication, but also a new way to communication which enables individuals and organizations to interact with their various constituents differently and or influence each other via separate computers through the internet or a network connection using software. Such constituents include friends, partners, employees, customers and so on, depending on the nature of the message, the goals you are trying to achieve and the strengths and weaknesses of the available media.

Methodology

With the aid of (Andriod) Infinix Hot6, the researcher collected a combination of written materials from an asynchronous forum "Facebook" which were not relatively controlled or conditioned but reflected the natural repertoire of how participants of the various security debates applied linguistic topologies in their deliberate contributions to the debate proceedings. Based on the data collected, the researcher made use of the descriptive and interpretative technique to analyze the data. The data were analyzed to show how the various debate participants applied available linguistic typologies during their Facebook conversation.

Data Presentation and Analysis
Debate 1
Boko Haram Attacks and the Presidential Visit
12th February, 2020

> It was reported that the president who just returned from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia was in Maiduguri following the recent tragic incident in the State when Book Haram terrorists killed many stranded travelers. A tweet by Garba Shehu, Buhari's Senior Special Adviser on media and publicity revealed that the president landed at 12:45pm. The visit of the president was to pay a sympathy visit to the government and people of Borno following the recent horrific incident in which Boko Haram terrorists killed several stranded travelers at about 9:34pm.

Source: Facebook (http://www.facebook.com)

> *Ajibade Stephen Adegbite*
>> *I 8 Buhari and his political and social thinking, It's not enough to visit and shake hands with dignitaries, but to make it an occasion to work out a new strategy to rejig the fight against terror. This is a time to redouble the effort, bring in fresh ideas and new hands.*
>
> *Dere Cheke*
>> *4 me, sometimes I wonder whether this government is promoting insecurity in the country because it battles me that with the number of innocent people killed on a daily basis by Boko Haram and Herdsmen, the government acts as if all is well in the country. Buhari has failed the people lol.*
>
> *Nonso Ogbonna*
>> *1 of these days, he will surely come to ur house Femi to sympathize with u and ur family just as has is doing in Borno today… I wanna beg u. Ttyl!*
>
> *Suleiman Abdulmalik*
>> *Try and gave the family some money, let them use it, not just sympathy visit… we were out of patience… stop blaming the clueless. Save our state.*

Igiriogu Elvis Johnpaul

> *Unfortunately his mood seems unsympathetic. Since we were mourning, he should have imbibed the spirit of empathy and not smiling while on a condolence visit. God bless Nigeria.*

Eneheri Jacob

> *Igiriogu Jacob Johnpaul,idk why you are like this, always looking for faults. Igiriogu Elvis Johnpaul*
> *Eneberi Jacob, 2 see clearly, tries opening your mind bout national issues.*

Daniel Fedelis

> *Avoid late night journeys to prevent ugly experience of men of the underworld.*

Engr. Adam Mustapha Kolo

> *The chilling president meets the stressed Governor. Buhari, looking younger than Zulu here. We were honored as this is the first visit by the president to solely sympathize with the people. I hope the right steps wound be taken to curb the killings.*

Debate 2
Security Event: Kaduna I6
11th February, 2020

Suspected bandits have killed a family of 16 members during an attack on a village in Kaduna state. The incident occurred Tuesday 11th February, 2020 in Bakali village of Fatika district in Giva Local Government area of the state. The bandits were said to have invaded the predominantly Hausa community at about 4pm and started shooting sporadically. While the villagers scampered to safety the assailants set fire on houses, vehicles, motorcycles and farm products in the village. The story added that many of the villagers have fled their homes for fear of repeated attacks. The attacks attracted the attention of the social media particularly the facebook users and the participants conversed immensely.

Source: Facebook (http://www.facebook.com)

Johnbul Fact

> *Buhari, we decided to wait till 2023. Brb*

Biafra Christian Iheme Atu

> *IMHO, Nigerians we must exercise patience kwa*

Lake Mona

> *OMG, D bandits kill anyone on sight. Nigeria! Oluwa help us*

Danjuma Ali

> *Neither aid nor abet criminal activities. Assist the police in efforts to make society habitable for the law abiding people.*

Ephraim Aniakor

> *Wonder shall never end!! C, Everyday bad news in Northern part while Nigerian Army and Police were busy blocking*

>*roads in South East collecting their money… that is ait cus it is gud 4 them.*

Wilfred Amadi Omoaka
>*Even the usual Middle East countries known for their incessant terrorism and bombing were now a hundred mile away behind Nigeria in terms of human casualties… U need to know that there is not any day that goes by without one kidnap or one killing in this country since Buhari and APC came to power. **Chizoba Jacobs***
>*I luv Channel because it doesn't want to b left behind. They now report killings under Buhari. Hitherto they rather pretend not to know or underestimate the killings. It will get to you all, the evil done; the lie told to bring in this calamity will be shared equal among the conspirators.*

Sunday Nnatuanya
>*Nigerian army kul down. Our army and police were at Afaraukwa in large number in show of force to peaceful funeral, while the Boko Haram is having a field day in the North. Baba is working…*

The Most Linguistic Features Used during the Debate are:
Typology 1: Use of Language Mixing
Contact linguists over the years have made a very strong claim that languages do not exist in isolation. A reduction in the space between two languages often results in language contact, which may yield several outcomes such as, borrowing, shift, interference, and code switching (Taiwo,). What the researcher called language mixing is popularly referred to as code switching (CS) and sometimes code mixing has become a prominent feature of facebook interaction. This linguistic feature according Taiwo (18) is the alteration of two or more linguistic varieties in an instance of communication.

>D (2)… *Aba gboi de*: Buhari, we decided to wait till 2023.
>D (3)… *Nwa chineke, Unfortunately his mood seems unsympathetic. Since we were mourning, he should have imbibed the spirit of empathy and not smiling while on a condolence visit. God bless Nigeria.*
>D (4)… *always looking for faults, oluwa ma chanuwa.*

Despite that English is the predominant language on Facebook communication in Nigeria, often times, participants flavor their interaction and communication with switches to some of the indigenous languages as it is evident in the examples above. These switches are deliberate and conscious choices that are geared towards reflecting their desire for identity, address specifications, reiterations, indicating emotions, and quotations. Code switching appears to be a way debate participants in Facebook conversation establish their identities as an integral part of the cyberspace they belong.

Typology 2: Use of Linguistic Impoliteness
In spite of the numerous advantages of the facebook platform such as the unlimited potentials in informing, engaging, debating, and empowering participants in security

discourse in Nigeria, participants are more likely to use comparative impolite expression. According to Taiwo (2018), there are rules for acceptable online behavior which reminds participants that facebook is not some new world in which anything goes, but rather a new dimension or extension of our existing society. Such rules are referred to as "netiquette".

Debate 1 *Sometimes I wonder whether this zoo is promoting insecurity in the country because it battles me that with the number of innocent people killed on a daily basis by Boko Haram and Herdsmen, the government acts as if all is well in the country. Buhari has failed the people. Daura Dullard and clueless.*

It is common for topics on Facebook to derail as a result of abusive exchanges, usually among young Nigerians full of fresh blood but callow in thinking. The expression

Typology 4: Homophonic Single/Grapheme Abbreviation	Debate 1	4 - for 8
	Debate 1	– hate
	Debate 1	2 - two
	Debate 1	1 - one

"*Daura Dullard*" is usually used among Facebook users to refer to Mr. President – President Muhammadu Buhari, *"Zoo"* is used by Nnamdi Kanu to refer to Nigerian as a country and "*clueless"* is used by APC members to refer to the former president Goodluck Jonathan.

These expressions are impolite and are meant to create, maintain, accentuate and stigmatize some real or imagined differences among the groups. These constructions of otherness are as the result of the power relations that exist among the group.

Typology 3: Use of Present Tense
While other tenses are also used in facebook conversation on security challenges, present tense is mostly used. In grammar, tense is used to refer to any of the forms of a verb that may be used to indicate the time of the action or state expressed by the verb (Eyisi, 84). Present tense which was the most used tense in the conversation is a tense that indicates an action going on at the time of speaking or a state that exists; that is, it indicates the time now.

Debate 2

It is no longer news that the bandits kill anyone on sight. Nigeria! Oluwa help us This hardly happens in a civilized society Wonder shall never end!! Everyday bad news in Northern part while Nigerian Army and Police were busy blocking roads in South East collecting their money…

From the above extracts, it is clear that present tense is the most frequently and regularly used in security conversation among different social groups sampled. Obviously, it is a verb used to show repetition, habit or generalization. Less commonly, the present tense can be used to talk about scheduled action in the near future and, in some case actions happening now.

Table 1

Typology 4: Homophonic Single/Grapheme Abbreviation	Debate 1	4 - for
	Debate 1	8 - hate
	Debate 1	2 - two
	Debate 1	1 – one

Table 2

Typology 5: Number of Homophones	Debate 2	B - be
	Debate 2	C - see
	Debate 2	D - the
	Debate 2	U – you

Table 3

Typology 6: Acronyms		
	Debate 1	Lol – laughing out loud
	Debate 1	Ttyl – talk to you later
	Debate 1	Idk – I don't know
	Debate 2	Brb – be right back
	Debate 2	OMG – oh my God, oh my goodness
	Debate 2	IMHO – in my humble opinion

Table 4

Typology 7: Non-conventional spellings		
	Debate 2	Luv – love
	Debate 2	Gud – good
	Debate2	Kul – cool
	Debate 2	Ait – aright

Table 5

Typology 8: Americanized forms		
	Debate 1	Wanna – want to
	Debate 2	Cus/coz – because
	Debate 1	Bout – about

From the above samples, it is obvious that participants of the security debate were very active in the use of Typologies of Facebook conversation. It should be noted here that many of the online abbreviations and acronyms are now formally part of the English language and thus could be found in most contemporary English Dictionaries for example, *the Oxford English Dictionary* already has OMG (oh my God, oh my goodness) IHMO (in my humble opinion) and many other abbreviated phrases in it. This new way of communicating in Facebook has become a subject of enquiry not only

to information and computer scientist, but also scholars of humanistic disciplines such as psychological, sociological and linguistics.

Conclusion
Much, if not all, of what is covered by the researcher in this work is contextual and falls within the scope of Linguistic typologies of definable notion of the domain of Systemic Functional Grammar. The research is believed to have partly broadened the scope of systemic functional linguistics. From the analysis above, is it evident that Facebook conversation is a socio-cultural practice that can enhance the teaching and learning of English as it has placed new demands on English language teachers to see ways of harnessing the potential of the practice and the tools-mobile phones and computers-which have become accessories for modern socialization.

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