
Language use in the social media: A tool for integrating national security issues

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The social network with its rapid popularity, constitutes one platform of expression through the use of language. It has helped in bridging the gaps of communication especially where television, radio, media print etc. could not scale through. The intermediary of major bargain in social network is the extent of the language involved, and manipulation of language use seems to be sometimes scary, destructive, deceptive, fanatical and bigotry. Ethnicity, religion and political terrains determine and endanger the factors that effect and affect the nation's security. This study examines language use through the windows of two selected social network sites – the Facebook and Short Simple Messages (SMS) which are among the fastest growing social networks in use in Nigerian context. Language use in these social network sites has become a social menace and a threat to the security of Nigeria. The research made use of raw data from individual texts gathered from SMS and Facebook, especially sentimental language. Findings reveal that the language used in the social media is complex, sensitive and sometimes threatening. These findings pose challenges that need to be confronted in order to promote national security.

Introduction

Language has been the major source of intermediary between people of like manner, from the creation God patterned and formed the world with just word of his mouth *let there be this and it came to*

being. Block and Trager write that language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates (5). The above insight proves that power in language is a veritable tool and its usage is a powerful weapon especially among the social groups who understand themselves and one another in form of sign and articulated vocal symbols. If language must be effective there must be the user, the uses and the receiver.

Nigerian security has been endangered more especially because of its multiplicity of ethnic and linguistic variations and this has helped in setting various (if not all) regions into different parts. Wherever three or more people gather and two or three understand each other's language, there is a likelihood that they will decide to switch over to their own language for discussion and the rest will always feel excluded and uncomfortable. Even if their discussion has nothing against the other, the rest usually feel that something is wrong. One might ask why should they switch over to their local (regional) tongue in order to exclude the other discussant in their midst?

Social media in Nigeria

Social media in Nigeria emerged at the late end of the twentieth century till date through e-mail and some other online networking. The emergence of global mobile communication helped in fast-tracking the uses in Nigeria via Short Simple Messages (SMS) and other online chats such as Yahoo Chat, Instant Messenger, Twitter, 2go, Facebook and other ones. Gradol ascertains in his words that the computer technology age is not only encouraging the use of English, but also transforming it (51). English language has been the foundational language as the trends in social media emerge as the major means of communication. It can come in various varieties such as Nigerian English, Pidgin and other sources of language

varieties in Nigeria dialectology and regional variation through code-switching as O’Grady, Archbald and Katamba opine that code-switching is a common phenomenon when people who share more than one language get together and use two (or more!) languages (or ‘codes’) to communicate (501). Nigeria social media communication is usually busy. This can be seen from a mere virtual study of the youth, and even elders that handle wireless sophisticated gadgets such as phones – like blackberry, i-pad, i-phone, tablet and those that visit the cyber café. So, social media has helped a lot in Nigeria for fast and easy delivery of information both wrong, fake and right information.

Nigeria and security issues

Nigeria is confronted by security problems, threats and challenges. These are evidenced by the President’s Democracy Day broadcast of 2012 “... I wish to reassure every Nigerian that we will confront this threat against our collective peace and security, and bring the perpetrators to justice. We will confront the few misguided persons who falsely believe, that through violence, they can impose their agenda of hate and division of nation of good people. We must confront all those who think they can derail us by engaging in indiscriminate violence and mass murder, perpetrated in place of worship, in markets and public places, against the media, and security personnel. Nigeria is a nation of resilient people. We will never yield to the forces of darkness. Nigeria will never, ever, disintegrate...” Nigeria moving towards the eve of her hundred years of birth and unification is still posed with the greatest challenge of insecurity from home to the government, porous borders, kidnapping and robbery in the Southern part and killings and bombings in the Northern part. There is also insecurity, especially before, during and after elections. Insecurity emanates

from students leading to temporal closure of some institutions, even from security officials that are known to maintain peace and harmony in the society, and some other situations where insecurity has emanated to debase the action in question. For all these traits, analyses show that crisis and insecurity usually arise by misunderstanding and misuse of certain language use from the warring parties.

The other side of the coin is isolation or exclusion which has to do with the linguistic contact of speakers of the other varieties or of other languages. An example is the burning issue on Buhari's comment after 2011 general elections in the interview he granted to the Hausa BBC in Hausa language which was interpreted thus:

Except there is justice in the conduct of the elections, blood will flow because there will be bloodshed between the dogs and the baboons.

He was also reported to have stated, among others that, there is a storm of awareness and God willing by 2015, something will happen. They either conduct free and fair elections or they go a very disgraceful way. (culled from ekekeee.com/buharis-2015-comments-of-bloodshed-dogs-andbaboons-by-efe-wanogho/)

Review of literature

Language use, both for effect and affect has triumphed especially in the modern day with various varieties in the social media. Hudson has the notion that

Variety includes examples of what would normally be called languages, dialects and registers (a term meaning roughly 'style'). The advantage of having a general term to cover all these concepts is that it allows us to ask what basis there is

for the distinctions among them – for instance, why do we call some varieties different languages and others different dialects of the same language?... This leaves us only with the general term ‘variety’ for referring to things which in non-technical terms we call ‘languages’, ‘dialects’ or ‘styles’.
(23)

Use of the English language in social networks has helped also in facilitating quick and easy communication as Holmes asserts that:

Once a standard dialect develops or is developed, it generally provides a very useful means of communication across areas of dialect diversity, not only within Britain but also in countries where the Britain have had a colonial influence. Local varieties of English, with distinctive linguistic features have developed in many multilingual countries, where English has served as a valuable language of wider communication in a multilingual context. (78)

Nigeria as a speech community is also inclusive in their use of language both in the Standard English language and regional variety of local languages. Lyon explains that in a speech community – all the people use a given language (or dialect) (326). Issues of speech community was extensively discussed by some consulted linguistic work from Bloomfield (1993), Hockett (1958), Gumperz (1968), Wardhaugh (2010), etc.

Social media has also created greater impact on the modern technology uses among Nigerians as a veritable tool for communicating and interrogating the security stability in Nigeria such as Text Message (SMS), Facebook, Twitter, 2go, Whatsapp, BBM, and this paper used especially the source from the first two. Elvis corroborates that

New inventions bring with them new vocabularies, expressions, and attitudes. With the development of New

Information and Communication Technology (NICT) and especially with the advent of the cell phone and its services, new words, expressions and syntactic structures have infiltrated into the linguistic continuum of ... Nigerian texters. (25)

Taiwo maintains that,

This form of communication is radically different from the conventional forms used in conversation and writing. Technology variables, such as synchronicity (two or more connected events happening at the same time or place), granularity (how short or long a text may be), multimodality (whether or not graphics, audio and videos are included) affect language use in electronic or digital discourse. CMC includes: e-mails, text messaging, online chats, list servers, bulletin boards, web page, audio and video conferencing, and so forth. (971)

Hutchby and Tanna view that the centrality of this most basic aspect of texting raises the question of the degree of *interactivity* found in this form of mediated communication (144). Labov considers that language change can be readily observed today: In spite of the expansion and homogenization of the mass media, linguistic change is proceeding at a rapid rate (xii). Social media changes exacerbate usually sometimes in Nigeria environs with its linguistic features geared towards endangering the little atmosphere of peace in her.

Scope and methodology

The paper seeks to study how social media and language used in it has become a social menace and threat to the security of Nigeria and among Nigerians. It further collected data text both from SMS and Face book especially the use of sentimental language in appealing for support during certain situations like election, against security

officials, on food, calls and some other means with the intention of the recipient forwarding the message his loved ones.

Data collection and analysis

Taiwo writes that

The Nigerian public domain is susceptible to rumour. Even in the pre-GSM days, rumours spread very fast in the country. Now in the era of modern technology, it takes very little time for rumours to spread through text messages and the Internet. There have been all sorts of news in the country, which later turned out to be hoax. These rumours range from the ordinary to the bizarre. Some of these rumours include:

- HIV-AIDS through Proctor and Gamble's sanitary pad (2003)
- Death through eating Indomie Noodles (2005)
- Disappearance of people who put on safety helmets offered by commercial motorcycles rider (2008)
- The purported death of Obasanjo, the former president of Nigeria (2010)
- The Acid Rain (2010)
- The Killer bean (2011)
- Abuja Bomb Scare (2011)
- Lagos Third Mainland Bridge Bomb Scare (2011), and so forth. (115)

Also some other warning rumour alerts came through some of these areas

- The Killer numbers of (2011)
- Purported bombing of some NYSC camps in 2011 and 2012
- River Niger Bridge Bomb Warning (2012)
- Death of the Immediate Former and Present Governors of Enugu State in the foreign Hospitals (2012)

- Purported current First lady's death in a German Hospital (2012)
- Electioneering opposition smear campaign through social networks
- Fake available job opportunities especially to the youths through texts
- Several texts to stop eating certain fruits/food like apple, carrot, suya etc.

Some of the raw data collected were mostly scary language and move towards becoming a threat to the receiver while some usually delete the message once the sender forwards it to their box especially in the text messages while in the status update of Face book, some seem to ignore the message by not commenting, sometimes a tirade of verbal words among the commentators ensue. The data text collected should be represented with “Dt”

Death of Enugu state governor

The following conversation ensued between two friends on Facebook's inbox

- Dt1: *Nwokem o di ka I bu onye ohi or better still a charlatan or shenanigan. Your casnova Governor has gone to great beyond. de there de deceive urself. (26 December 2012)*
- Dt2: *governor gin a nnam oche ha no na obodo afudebe! Yan a umu ogbanje umu agbogho ndi mmuo o na eri oringo (7 January)*
- Dt3: *You heard the news of Chime's return in Enugu? (8 February)*
- Dt4: *Onu gi one thousand naira. Nnam oche ha mere ya ebere nye ya second chance. Ha ha ha ha. (9 February)*

The killer numbers saga

It was huge pandemonium around year 2011 when texts were circulated concerning certain phone numbers that are capable of killing people once they receive the call. Throughout that period nobody came out to ascertain that any person was a victim of the generated number, prompt intervention of security check helped the insecurity to die down through counter text sent to the public, and examples are

Dt5: *Pls don't pick no dat start wt 09141. Send dis 2 any ppl u no*

Dt6: *If you love your life beware of this number, cos you'll die instantly if u ansa any call from these fone numbers that ended with 9999 send this to all your contacts on ur fone, spread dis info.*

Taiwo had its own version of one of them

Dt7: *Beware! You'll die if you take a call from any of these phone numbers: 08023111999 or 08022225999. These numbers come in red colours. U may get brain hemorrhage due to high frequency. 27 persons died just receiving the calls watch the DD news to confirm. Please inform all your relatives and friends soon it's urgent.*

Election threat texts

Here the campaigner try to smear and dent their opposition with various text messages, at this juncture threat messages were being sent out to the supporters of the opposition party for them to steer clear from voting or to the electorate being in jeopardy and fear, so they should not think of coming out to vote. It usually emerges once any election is coming up whether minor or major. Even among the academia threats occur. The recent 2013 April 15 election in Nnamdi Azikiwe University is a clear example and some of the texts sent via bulk SMS are as follows:

- Dt8: *NOT AGAIN In 2009 (name withheld) contested Convoctn Rep in Council...He sold people's support 4 Dep Director of SIWES. Such a trader for council? Never!*
- Dt9: *NEWS FLASH! (name withheld) wz both university nd ASUU PRO wen ASUU wz banned by _____ regime Wat did he do? He SOLD ASUU 4 PRO Post He'll sell ASUU again Vote Wisely*
- Dt10: *Under _____ as PRO, Academic and NONAcademic Staff were sacked without due process. MR BOLD, what did U do to stop him? Shine Ur Eyes and Vote wisely*
- Dt11: *Those dat crawl 2 VC's house at 9te 2 apologise 4 their mischief now claim dey can "talk boldly to power" Wat else is doubt standards? Shine ur eye Vote Wisely*

Staple eatery alert

Usually, security consciousness is more among easterners of Nigeria who normally consume such food and fruit which are usually from northern part of Nigeria like beans, carrot, water melon, suya (dry/roast roadside meat), sugarcane etc.

- Dt12: *Please be aware that the BOKO men have instructed their fellow abokis in the east to poison suya down hia, stop eatn all manner of suya prepared by any mallam. Send 2 ur lovd le!!!!!!!!!!!!*
- Dt13: *Operation reduce the IGBOS, send ASAP-water melon, carrots from d north are bein injected wit KILLING substance shine yur EYES and stop eatin dem & also circulate 2 all your FAMILY and FRIENDS if yu still loved them.*
- Dt14: *Do not eat beans 4 now, a message was recorded now dat poisoned beans by BOKO HARAMS had been sent to South, Pls Broadcast*

Weather forecast fake alert text

Some of the recipients do receive warning texts to desist from exposing themselves in certain time, hour, and day of the year. To avoid being threatened by un-conducive weather such as ray movement, acidic rain, etc. like this –

Dt15: *BBC weda forecast warns dt dia wl b a hvy rainfall in Nig on 22/23, Aug 2012 @ midnight & wl flwed by a powerful atomic THUNDER which is cap of destroying d whi area it affects. Ds hpn in every 100yrs; it hpn in Vietnam in aug 1712: Syria in Aug 1812 & puaoto Rico in Aug 1912 Pls, mk sure u dnt slp in house wtout THUNDER PROTECTOR & switch of all electronic gadgets arnd u & also ur phone this night. Take not. Pls send this to anybody u know pls.*

The following data were collected from Facebook walls one on issue of Illumnati, which adequate information was not dully exemplify but the follow up comment/reply to the post show how fearful people are on the said page and update.

The issue of Aluu 4 was on all media in October 2012 when four students of University of Port Harcourt were murdered and hacked to death by the community, Facebook and other social media were flooded with the act especially against any living thing in that community over the death of the four students. The said town was placed on security breaches, the second data was more of lexicon and language formulated and invented then.

The third data was as a result of imaginable insecurity in national youth Service Corps (NYSC) camp and how people viewed it although the commentator later shifted and diverted the attention of

the originality of the post which was a paradox of suffering for the youth in the scheme.

The three data were selected from a page and two Face book's friend walls.

Dt16: Jokes-mannia (MR Akpors goes to school Monday 29April 2013 via Mobile

****NEWS JUST COMING** ILLUMINATI Claim they Control the World!! Lets show them that it is only God who Controls Us!!!! Click LIKE and write "I AM 4 GOD" if you are controlled by God. Ignore if you are controlled by Illuminati!!! PLS SHARE TO SPREAD**

'Brain Udeme Grammarian

Me and my family are all for
JEHOVAH LORD GOD
ALMIGHTY THE CREATOR OF
THE UNIVERSE WHO SENT
HIS SON JESUS TO DIE FOR OUR SINS

Like . Reply . 33 . Monday at 23:27 via Mobile

Grace Yimi Dyeris

My parents, Uncles, Aunties, Granies, my brothers, sisters, inlaws, cousins, Nephews, Nieces, pastor, church members, Nebors, my children 2 b, my husband 2 b, my Grand children 2 b, my Grand children 2 b etc are full time 4 God. Hmmmmmm! Dia can nva b comparism cuz only God has d power nd authority over us including d so-called illuminati.

Like . Reply . 21 . Yesterday at 00:14 via Mobile

□ Camille John *Am for God and God alone...*

Like . Reply . 3 . Monday at 23:44 via mobile

□ Dinah Diana *Iam 4 God*

Like . Reply . 3 . Yesterday at 03:53 via Mobile

- Namutebi Diana *Gd controlz mi*
Like . Reply . 1 . 21 hours ago via Mobile
- Thandyca Pied-piper Chirwa *I am 4 God n o ma family n friends 2!*
Like . Reply . 2 . Yesterday at 07:53 via Mobile
- Rosette Sherrie *4 GOD ALL WAY THRU.*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 09:55 via Mobile
- Joy Mercedez *i am for God*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 09:55 via Mobile
- Jumah Ibrahim Olalekan *I & MY FAMILY ARE 4 GOD*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 09:00 via Mobile
- Allan Kuria *I am for God*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 07:18 via Mobile
- Mphatso Antonia Chaula *am 4 God*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 06:13 via Mobile
- Chiekwugo Cynthia Ndubisi *I am for God*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 01:23 via Mobile
- HC Ramzy Happy Chanda *Nathn day cn do day ar jst usless God is great!*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 00:57 via Mobile
- Michael Birdboy ArchbishopGunner *I am for God*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 00:31 via Mobile
- Emmanule Abiodun *I am 4 GOD&4GOD only*
Like . Reply . Monday at 23:33 via Mobile
- Nolie Mlotshwa *Am 4 God*
Like . Reply . 3 hours ago via Mobile
- Katana james *Elshadai*
Like . Reply . 4 hours ago at 00:31 via Mobile
- Onofua Joy Susan *iam 4 God*
Like . Reply . 4 hours ago via Mobile

- Cohen Gault *iam 4 God !*
Like . Reply . 18 hours ago via Mobile
- Nephthi Yobe *I'm for God !*
Like . Reply . 21 hours ago via Mobile
- Rhetoric Faith *mih n my family 4 God*
kabisa!!
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 11:44 via Mobile
- Boniface Murangiri *I am 4 God..*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 11:23 via Mobile
- Fred Kosgey *I AM 4 GOD*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 10:21 via Mobile
- Benjamin de Muendoz *Am 4 God*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 08:08 via Mobile
- Emem Ukpong *All i see is my God*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 07:41 via Mobile
- Patience Chilufya Nsofwa *Am 4 God&jesus Christ our*
savior.
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 07:28 via Mobile
- Mduduzi Ozioma philip *I am for God*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 05:47 via Mobile
- Hellen Chebwogen *am 4God*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 05:07 via Mobile
- Trevor Mugabi *I am 4 Jesus*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 04:49 via Mobile
- Judy Kæy DA Wī ldæl *I am 4 god*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 04:04 via Mobile
- DeKnow Cierbah *I am 4 God*
Like . Reply . Yesterday at 02:19 via Mobile
- Simba Kim Makurumidze Makoni *im 4 God!!.*
Like . Reply . Monday at 23:24 via Mobile
- Naava Julie Valellio *I am for God only*

Like . Reply . Monday at 23:24 via Mobile

□ Olanrewaju Damilola Elizabeth *am 4 God*

Like . Reply . Monday at 23:19 via Mobile

□ Nelson Vusi

I am 4 God nd my family

nd friend nd the iz nt

other God but Lord

Jesus iz the one

Like . Reply . 1 . 5 hours ago via Mobile

□ Beverlyn Khalenya

Anything the devil does isn't original

he copied 4rom God,so God is the

controller of everything, even you

illumnatis, one day, we shall see.

if Jesus did not conquer? Sun we shall see.

Like . Reply . 5 hours ago via Mobile

□ Fezile Feizel Zincume

Is it a must that we like and type

"I Am 4 GOD"? A.a stop it with blackmails

Like . Reply . 6 hours ago via Mobile

□ Ani Chiamaka

i'm 4 God

Like . Reply . 7 hours ago via Mobile

□ Sexy B Bery

Even d devil hmslf is created by god,

hs brthng an air dat hs gvn by god,

so y serv sm 1 lyk dat? Jehova is ma

god n in Jesus nym nbdy

*n nthng cn sepyrt m 4rm hm,
iam hu iam 2da n whr iam bcos
of hm,he's a plc of safty 4m,n
il neva eva bow down 2 any god ecpt Jehova*

Like . Reply . 1 . 8 hours ago via Mobile

□ Tobeka Baduza *I am for God alone alone now
and forever*

Like . Reply . 1 . 9 hours ago via Mobile

□ Caroline Miti *Am 4 God*

Like . Reply . 1 . 10 hours ago via Mobile

Dt17: Kelgrin Omo-ugun Otoide 11 October 2012 via
mobile

*A set of new words have been officially added to the English
Dictionary, here they are:*

1. *ALUU- A cursed, devilish, barbaric village hidden at a remote part of
a country few kilometers from any university.*
2. *ALUUIITE- A barbaric indigene of Aluu.*
3. *ALUUEE- A victim of Aluu.*
4. *ALUUTI- A person living/residing in Aluu.*
5. *ALUULOGY- The study of barbaric way of treating the human race
without trail,evidence and mercy.*
6. *ALUUCRACY- Government of barbarians, by the barbarians and for
the barbarians.*
7. *ALUUIISM- The political nature and devilish ideology of barbaric
practise.*
8. *ALUUIISH- Having the appearance of Aluu.*

May the souls of the four ALUUEE res in peace!!

□ Kingsley Ubong Jacobs *Smart one*
10 October 2012 at 20:59 via Mobile . Like

□ Bamgbose Eman Temytope *Word!*
10 October 2012 at 21:46 via Mobile . Like

□ highly Intoxicatingspiritual Michel

Wow Kelly, this is realy nice men.

.You're the bomb..

I wished i could share it...

Keep it up.

Aluuist.

11 October 2012 at 00:23 via Mobile . Like

□ Kelgrin Omo-ugun Otoide

Lolzz!ALUUPHOBIA

11 October 2012 at 07:57 via Mobile . Like . 1

□ Christopher Chinyere

Dat is gud oo.

11 October 2012 at 13:32 via Mobile . Like

Dt17: Chuksphil Iheabunike Paparaxi 15 November 2011 via
Mobile

N-Now

Y-Your

S-Success

C-Commence

*...big shout out 2all ma peeps hittin different orientation camps
across d nation-Boko Haram n its terrors wil neva b ur portion, ... u
go, ...u c and u wil conquer. AMEN*

□ Chuksphil Iheabunike Paparaxi

hahaha@Bode,

we r patnas in crime,

if i goes down,

u mst definitely go down LOLZ!

15 November 2011 at 09:39 . Like

□ Onwuka Bode David

hahahaha

haaaaaaaa,

am looking for a short xcape route. Lololz

15 November 2011 at 09:45 . Like

□ Emmanuel Chukwudi Ugwu

@bode i had a splendid days in unizik, stressfree.

16 November 2011 at 07:38 . Like

□ Onwuka Bode David

@Ugwu, wake up!

16 November 2011 at 10:56 . Like

□ Emmanuel Chukwudi Ugwu

@bode ask ken nwankwo

he will tel u.

I wz haili conektd an favod,

no be toko

16 November 2011 at 14:11 . Like . 1

Conclusion

Generally, the whole data were presented as raw as they were sent. No editing and correction of the texts and the posts with date, time and person that engaged in the discussion. The issue of language of the social media on Nigeria situation is a worrisome one, government must sit up in collaboration with network service providers in the country, especially in monitoring activities with their server in terms of flooding threat text messages to certain recipients. These fake texts usually circulate easily during the SMS free promo to the users, so at such period people manipulate texts to

make sure that the free things were properly utilized. These promo need to be curtailed and banned.

The digging dip of where such texts emanate from should be the ultimate source of concern to the authorities, as Taiwo concludes that;

One of the most scary rumours to many Nigerians in recent times is the circulation of several text messages about plans by the *Boko Haram* (a dreaded violent Islamic group in the country) to attack specific targets in the country. One of such text messages has been used to cause apprehension and panic among the residents of the FCT and its environs. The message alleged plans by the *Boko Haram* to attack the Presidential Villa and the National Assembly on October 28, 2011. Some of the effects of such rumours include disruption of public peace, stagnation in business and social activities, creation of fear and so forth. Much later, the State Security Services (SSS) tracked down two secondary school students in Niger State, as sources of some of the text messages. (116)

Finally, some of the registered companies should try and counter such texts to their customers like banking sectors, service providers and other concerned agencies because they are virtually with the access and contact of those who patronize them.

The Secret State Services should rise to their responsibilities with the solid, back up from those in authority and concerned citizens. Recently, it has become a major concern on the media concerning the recent bombing in Boston America and unraveling of the culprit as the new adage goes “kill an American citizen and one million policemen will be sent after the one, but kill one million Nigerians

and one will be invited for amnesty. The ongoing amnesty for the Islamic sect *Boko Haram* is destroying the image of Nigeria, those that are fighting for it should be regarded as the enemies of the nation” and until prosecutors of these sensitive texts are arrested, tried and brought to book as a deterrent to others, the issue of the threat will continue to constitute a great havoc to our national security.

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