_____

A STUDY OF PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES OF HATE SPEECH IN CHRISTIAN SERMONS IN NIGERIA

Abayomi Opeoluwa Ayansola

Abstract:

Ideology loaded language may be used as instrument of control and for the production of hate speech and may be linked to the intensity of sectarian violence in contemporary Nigeria. This paper, therefore, evaluates the strategies for hate speech production in Christian sermons using Mey's (1993) proposal on pragmatic acts, a modification of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) speech act theories. Data, with two sermons from two well-known clerics and obtained from YouTube, has revealed that hate speech were produced through the pragmatic acts of innuendos and name-calling while set-up and co-option methods were deployed for audience participation. Whereas innuendos were linguistically realised as pronouns, name-calling takes the form of adjectives but function as nouns. Set-up and co-option were indirect linguistic strategies meant to empathise and attend to hearers' face-needs. Pragmatic acts insulate preachers from backlash and highlight Nigeria's social-political undercurrents. The enactment of hate speech in sermons justifies government initiatives in regulating religious activities.

Keywords: pragmatic acts, religion, hate speech, sermons, speech acts, ideology.

1. Introduction

Language is a veritable instrument for the propagation of religious beliefs, practices and unsurprisingly, the ideology of the preacher which may be expressed through Christian sermons. Wertheimer et al (1986), cited in Okediadi (1980), postulate that through command, orders and request language may be used to control the behaviour of targets and co-opt them for hate speech. There are specific underlying pragmatic strategies through which Christian sermonisers often surreptitiously achieve these

objectives. The evaluation of such strategies which are often aided by the instrumentality of pragmatic acts is the basis for this study.

The study is motivated by the consideration that scholarship on hate speech (e.g. Rasaq et al, 2021; Shaw, 2012; St. Clare, 2018; and Ayantayo and Oamen, 2019) is focussed on linguistic activities outside the purview of religion. Moreover, research on the language of religion (e.g. Babatunde, 2007; Taiwo, 2007; Oreoluwa and Ibileye, 2016; and Awonuga and Chimuanya (2016:111) are mostly based on discourse analysis, stylistics, evaluation of tenor, and speech act analysis with the implication that a preponderance of underlying hate language and the pragmatic acts that encode them in sermons is by-passed. It should be noted that sermons are integral to religious activities and are largely conducted in monologue. This situation confers discourse advantage on preachers and social power that inform linguistic choices that aid the spread of hate and consequently set-up their members for the act of violence.

The damaging consequences of hate language in religious contexts inform Awonuga and Chimuanya's (2016:111) assertion that "nations have gone to war at the instance of religion". Taiwo (2007), in aligning with Awonuga and Chimuanya (2016) emphasises that the tenor of religious discourse and the ideational metafunction of language (c.f. Halliday, 1978) may be exploited in religious contexts to engender hatred. According to Akhimien and Farotimi (2018:1), "religious sermons are aimed at persuasion with the speaker's intention often to influence the audience to adopt, reinforce or modify certain beliefs". Akhimien and Farotimi (2018:1) are unequivocal about the disposition of preachers to ideology and its propagation, a position that re-echoes Fairclough's (2001:7) averment that "language textualize[s] the world in a particular way that leads the reader/listener to interpret it in the manner intended by the text producer". From Awonuga and Chimuanya's (2016:111) argument that "people can indirectly be made to act in a particular way by providing factual information or evaluation", this paper proposes that adherents of Christian religion may be surreptitiously co-opted into hate and violence through certain pragmatic strategies.

Taiwo (2007), Awonuga and Chimuanya (2016) and Akhimien and Farotimi (2018) fail to pinpoint the strategies through which ideology and hate language are produced in religious contexts and do not account for how clerics often use contextual clues in their sermons to set-up the audience for violence. The omission not only leaves a lacuna in scholarship but portends a socio-cultural threat to Nigeria's fluid federation and plural society where the ascendancy in the spread of hate and violence has assumed a frightening dimension, a situation that is often exacerbated by reckless

language use in religious contexts. The existing lacuna is filled by this study as well as constitutes a clarion call on the need for the authority to properly address the menace of inciting use of language particularly in religious circles in order to halt the prevalence of hate-motivated violence in Nigeria.

Media reportage of hate-induced violence and ethno-religious killings in contemporary Nigeria is mind-boggling. Clifford and Chukwumezie (2018) report that 1351 Nigerians were killed in 10 weeks in 2018 and in January of that year, "about 676 Nigerians were cut down through herdsmen and farmers clashes, sectarian crises, communal clashes, [and] Boko Haram insurgency. … The deaths are 176 more than the 500 recorded in January 2017". Considering that sermons are veritable sources for hate propagation and the knowledge that violence is often preceded by hate speech which is a linguistic behaviour that is symptomatic of ill-will, murder, genocide with the intention to intimidate or threaten the target(s) based on a trait or attribute such as sexual orientation, religion, race or gender, this paper evaluates the strategies through which hate speech and violence is propagated in Christian sermons.

2. Statement of Problem

Sermons are usually presented at the height of religious activities and often lend themselves as instrument for the propagation of ideology and hate speech. Structurally, sermon confers on preachers discourse advantage and social power relation which enable preachers with ideological leanings to propagate ideology without inhibitions. This situation portends a grave danger to Nigeria and has on many occasions pushed the country's worsening security situation to a tipping point. Preachers are influential and have their opinion well-respected with a capacity to surreptitiously produce hate speech as well as co-opt their members into the act through pragmatic strategies which are routed through the use of certain pragmatic acts. Since the evaluation of such strategies is the pre-occupation of this study, certain questions become germane: How is hate speech triggered in sermons and how is the audience invited to participate in it. What kinds of pragmatic acts are used to encode hate speech? Are there motivations for the production of hate speech in this context? These questions among others will help to unfold the pragmatic nuances behind the production of hate-laden sermons.

3. Pragmatic Acts in the Performance of Hate-Laden Sermons

_____

The theory of pragmatic acts, as proposed by Mey (1993) which is in response to the limitations of the speech acts theory (SAT) as originally conceptualised by Austin (1962), provides a theoretical basis for this study. SAT came to fore against the prevalence of currents in formal linguistics and the assumption "that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some facts', which it must do either truly or falsely" (Austin, 1962) and Mey's (1993) justification of the propriety of functional linguistics over the linguistics of truth-conditions.

Searle (1969:16), in defining speech acts as "the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication", argues that "the unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word or sentence, … but rather the production of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of speech acts". SAT as conceptualised by Austin (1962) has three distinctions: locutionary aspect, illocutionary force and the perlocutionary act. A locutionary act is the vocalisation of meaningful utterances. The locution is the utterance or the act of saying something, e.g.: I am bored. The illocutionary force of the utterance/locution (in form and intent) as in *I am bored* may be a statement or complaint.

A perlocutionary act is "that which is performed by means of saying something; persuading someone to believe that something is so" (Babatunde, 2007:52). It has to do with the effects of the utterance as may be discernable from the hearer's reaction. For instance, *I am bored* may provoke various response such as switching on the TV set, granting the speaker the permission to visit a nearby friend, or in the provision of alternative source of power supply, depending on what the hearer perceives to be the 'force' or 'intent' of the utterance.

In his modification of SAT, Mey (1993:93) contends that Speech acts are "produced not in the solitary philosopher's think-tank, but in actual situations of language use, by people having something 'in mind'". They are verbal action that "brings about a change in the existing state of affairs" (Mey, 1993:95) as may be intended and interpreted by the speaker and hearer, respectively. This is possible provided the conditions are felicitous or as Austin (1973:41) puts it, "the *circumstances* in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, *appropriate*, …". The meeting of minds or the discernment of the intention of the speaker by the hearer is *sine qua non* to a successful communication, thereby prompting Searle (1969:16) to assert that:

> When I take a noise or a mark on a piece of paper to be an instance of
> linguistic communication, as a message, one of the things I must

assume is that the noise or mark was produced by a being or beings
more or less like myself and produced with certain kinds of *intentions*.

In his argument in favour of a theory of pragmatics acts (TPA), Mey (1993:94),
concedes that the "intentional character of speech acts is among their most distinctive
classificatory features" with the argument that "intentionality is not just a matter of
intentions ascribable to a particular speaker" which is contrary to Searle's (1969)
grandstanding. Whereas Austin (1962) and Searle recognise the importance of
contextual clues in the identification of a speech act and its illocutionary force, Mey
(1993:94), contends that the analyst "must take the circumstances of the individual
utterance into account [as well as] cast [the] net wider, by incorporating the general
conditions which allow, and afford, a particular act of speaking".

Mey (1993:94), advances Levinson's (1979) submission that all speech, including the
Christian sermon, is situated speech; and that a speech act is never just an 'act of
speech', which should be considered in the total situation of activity of which it is a
part. He canvasses argument in support of a "*pragmatic act*, rather than a mere speech
act" with the averment that "pragmatics starts out from a conception of language as
being *actively* used" Mey (1993:208).

Mey (1993:202) avers that "pragmatics is where the action is" and that "pragmatic
acts do not necessarily include specific acts of speech". This position was illustrated
by Mey (1993:202-208), with the "Sweet Alice" example, where an act of invitation
to a cocktail was expressed "by innuendo …, a *pragmatic act* of inviting, rather than a
specific, codified language formula of the speech act type" to justify that action may
be expressed using a "roundabout technique". It follows also that the clergy may co-
opt the audience in propagating hate through similar pragmatic strategies which may
not feature specific speech acts.

Pragmatic acting is the product of participants' linguistic adaptation to the society
where human activity is co-constructed rather than being, as argued by Mey,
(1993:214), "the prerogative of the individual, setting 'goals' and devising
'strategies', or charting out courses of action like a captain on his ship". Mey
(1993:214) further avers that "the individual is situated in a social context, which
means that she or he is empowered, as well as limited, by the condition of his or her
life". The religious adherents for instance are constrained by the tenets of Christianity
to believe the "Minister of God" who is His acclaimed oracle.
In pragmatic acting, it is impossible to pinpoint a particular predetermined use of
canonical speech act. When people practice 'indirect denial' or 'co-opting', the

speech acts used are not commensurate with the pragmatic acts performed much as for the same reason, pragmatic acts cannot be considered to be the subtype of the indirect speech acts. While speech acts, when uttered in contexts, are pragmatic acts, pragmatic acts need not be speech acts (not even an indirect one).

Pragmatic acts are largely enacted through 'hints' and 'prompts' rather than naming a specific 'performatory' verbs. This assertion validates the argument in this paper that church audience are often surreptitiously co-opted for hate speech during sermons as is demonstrated in Mey's (1993) *can you pass me the salt?* example which may be adjudged as an indirect speech act equivalent of the bald-on-record, *pass the salt*. In comparison with *I would like some salt* or *isn't this soup rather bland?,* Mey (1993:216) argues that both "the latter utterances can be seen as efforts to have somebody pass the salt, yet neither of them 'counts as' a request; rather, they are pre-sequences to requests".

The proposal on TPA is useful for this study and provides the basis for sermonisers' goal of inciting messages. Preachers are humans and are vulnerable to the existential threat of death and violence that has currently put their careers on the line. The choice of language in this situation becomes constrained both by their status on the one hand and for self-preservation, on the other. However, church audience are usually drawn from diverse background with the requirement that the clergy would have to maintain a delicate balance staying aloof of perceived bias and political affiliation, making the masking of hate speech expedient. Pragmatic acts enable the sermoniser to easily achieve this objective.

4. Speech/Pragmatic Acts in Religious Discourse

As earlier observed, scholarship with varying analytical purposes and orientation abounds on religious discourse with focus on themes other than hate speech. Granted that Babatunde (2007), Odebunmi (2007), and Oreoluwa & Ibileye (2016), to mention but a few scholars highlight the performance of speech acts in religious activities, the studies did not address the phenomenon of hate speech neither did they specify how the resourcefulness of pragmatic acts enabled the realisation of their respective communicative goals particularly in situations where speakers necessarily have to be circumspect in passing certain messages.

Whereas Odebunmi (2007) identifies the Searlean (1969) class of speech acts: representatives, directives, expressives, commissives in his study of the electronic media religious advertisements in Nigeria, Babtunde (2007:80), in his argument that

"there is a directive force underlying religious speeches which serves as a binding wire to join all the individual speech acts together", adopts Adegbija's (1982) master speech acts and pragmasociolinguistic model in his investigation of Christian religious speeches.

With the revelation that constatives constitute "25% of the total speech acts in the analysed data", Babatunde (2007:80), concludes that "constatives are very important in religious communication". He quoted Adegbija (1982:126-127) in emphasising that constatives "provide felicity for the mapping of the sequences of speech acts …" and reveals that speakers in religious speeches equally perform performative and assertive acts in persuading the targets.

Oreoluwa & Ibileye (2016:138), in their analysis of speech acts with copious references from Christian religion and the Bible reveal that "locutionary acts of religious discourse have a higher expressive index" and that perlocutionary acts of religious discourse could be "the intended or the unintended" with a proviso that "religious and social undertones greatly impact on religious discourse".

Howard (2017) and Madrid (n.d.) question the propriety of freedom of expression and that of religion particularly in a multicultural environment. Howard (2017) sees Hate speech in the politicians' commentaries on Danish cartoons affair, the Charlie Hebdo murders and the terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris as anti-Islamic and an impediment to freedom of speech and expression. These events in the opinion of Howard (2017) further raise "questions about the limits to freedom of expression and whether this freedom can and should be restricted to protect the religious feelings of believers".

The Islamic religion and Sharia acknowledge freedom of expression as reiterated by Universal Islamic Declaration of the Rights of Man (UIDRM). UIDRM, as quoted by Madrid (n.d.), asserts that "no one is entitled to disseminate falsehood or to circulate reports which may outrage public decency, or to indulge in slander, innuendo or to cast defamatory aspersions on other persons." Madrid (n.d.) however avers that this principle was breached through the publication of the Muhammad cartoons in the Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005 which had huge repercussions in Europe led to a reflection on the close relationship between two fundamental freedoms that can either reinforce each other or clash head on: religious freedom, and freedom of expression. The writer observed a conflict between the two freedoms in the conviction of a Swedish priest, Ake Green, for "hate speech", after preaching a sermon which criticized homosexuality. Madrid (n.d.) recalls other incidence which

underscore a clash between religious freedom and freedom of expression as the 2003 exhibition entitled, "Caution: Religion!" at the *Andrei Sakharov Museum* in Moscow, which included satirical depictions of certain Christian figures as well as recent films which portrayed the Catholic Church and its institutions as criminal organizations.

Most of these studies not only glossed over the pragmatics acts in communicative situations but exemplify language use in sub-religious fields other than sermons. Considering, however, that sermons have inherent "power to arouse, evoke and influence emotions and attitudes" (Akhimien & Farotimi, 2018:1), these studies cannot suffice for the present paper in its objective of evaluating surreptitious hate speech in sermons. Howard (2017) and Madrid (n.d.) rarely topicalised hate speech and religion albeit with focus on the production of hate speech by politically motivated actors rather than by clergies. This paper becomes expedient, therefore, considering the centrality of sermons to religious activities and also conceding that the literature on religious discourse that fails to account for inherent pragmatic strategies in sermons as well as the pragmatic acts that are deployed by preachers as part of such strategies in persuading religious adherents to act in a pre-determined manner is simply inconceivable.

6. Data Collection and Methodology

Data for this study was drawn from purposively selected YouTube hosted sermons of Bishop David Oyedepo (https//www.youtube.com/watch?reload) and Apostle Johnson Suleiman (htpps://m.youtube.com/watch/html) of Living Faith Church and Omega Fire Ministry, respectively. While the Oyedepo sermon was produced in 2018, that of Suleiman was produced in 2017. The sermons were in audio-visual form but were transcribed for ease of analysis. YouTube provides ease of access to data with a further advantage that the analysis of verbal language is enriched by speakers' paralinguistic cues. The choice of clerics was motivated by their large followership as well as visibility on YouTube, thereby informing their ability to reach a large audience in Nigeria and across the globe. The qualitative analysis was based on 20 excerpts from the sermons which exemplify hate speech and underlying pragmatic strategies through which members were set-up for hate speech and violence. Hate speech in this context was in response to the spate of killings and sectarian violence, particularly, in Northern Nigeria. In the course of denouncing these acts, certain pragmatic acts were used to communicate hate as well as to co-opt the audience into it.

7. Pragmatic Strategies and Hate Speech in Christian Sermons

Hate speech in sermons were aided by pragmatic strategies of innuendos and name-calling while set-up and co-option strategies were simultaneously deployed for the enforcement of audience participation. These strategies which highlight Nigeria's social-political undertones and the persuasive goal of religious communication become effective through the instrumentation of pragmatic acts of name-calling, set-up, invitation, protestation, and other acts that communicate the dissatisfaction of the speaker with the current socio-political situation in Nigeria. The analysis that follows illustrates these strategies.

7.1 Pragmatic Strategies and Hate Speech of Innuendos

Innuendos are used in hate-laden sermons as a superordinate strategy in the form of pragmatic acts of hints, referencing and profiling. Innuendo is a strategy for emphasising meaning by the use of suggestive words, insinuation and for communicating implied meaning. It is a communicative strategy that gives speakers the advantage of opting-out and not being directly held accountable for the performance of an action. Examples 1 – 5 exemplify the use of innuendos and the effectiveness of the pragmatic acts of hints and profiling in this regard.

1. *Anyone* that won't let Nigeria rest God will lay them to rest. Anyone that won't let Nigeria live God will lay *them* to sleep (Oyedepo *YouTube*).
2. Therefore *every* killer of the innocent, every destroyer of the women, pregnant women, children, we decree divine judgement (Oyedepo *YouTube*).
3. … now they're shouting Biafra want to go, Biafra want to…….. , why won't they go when *you* think that the north own the own the country …(Suleiman, *YouTube*).
4. They got a Boko haram member, before we woke up they said he has escaped. Escaped! And Biafran agitators are still in prison till now, they've not escaped, but Boko Haram member has escaped (Suleiman, *YouTube*)!
5. I saw Nigeria wriggling under this in 2015. And some people still say carry on! They are all witches and thou shall not suffer a witch to live (Oyedepo *YouTube*).

The antecedents of the pronoun "anyone" and "them" in example 1 and "every" in example 2, are recoverable from the knowledge of persistent sectarian killings in the country. The pronouns were used in veiling the referents and the objects of the ensuing hate speech and curses in examples 1 and 2. In addition, the euphemism of "God will lay them to *rest*" in item 1 is also a case of hate speech which

communicates ill-will against the target. Euphemism in this context exemplifies veiled hate speech while the pronouns *them* (1) and *every* (2) profile specific targets in a case of pragmatic acting.

Based on the same strategy, the pronoun *they* in examples 3 and 4 are veiled references and pragmatic profiling of the predominantly Muslim Northern Nigeria and the government of the day, respectively. The government is led by Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim of Fulani extraction. This is equally the case with *you* (example 3), a pronoun that references a particular group of people based on the hearers' understanding of the separatist agenda by the Igbos who are presently clamouring for Biafra Republic.

> *... now they're shouting Biafra want to go, Biafra want to…...... , why won't they go when you think that the north own the own the country ...*

It is highly insinuated in Nigeria that the Northern Muslims usually lay claim to power as their birth right. There is a state in that part of the country which goes with the appellation: "Born to Rule". This claim is often resisted by other Nigerians, particularly, from the South and South-East agitators who are clamouring for the resuscitation of the defunct State of Biafra.

Example 5 in particular features a vague sentence consisting of a noun phrase *some people* and subject complement *carry on*, with the connotation that holds some individuals responsible for the election of the government in power. This is the antecedent for the pronoun, *they* in the declarative sentence that follows:

> *They are all witches and thou shall not suffer a witch to live.*

The pragmatic act of invitation "to kill" those that "foist" the government on Nigerians is subtle and indicative of a "roundabout technique" (Mey, 1993) in the persuasion of hearers to act in a particular direction. The pragmatic act which profiles a particular group of people in this context is effective for the naming of the referent of *witch*. This is obvious from the understanding of contextual clues which pre-date the text including the knowledge of the political intrigues that brought President Muhammadu Buhari to power in Nigeria.

6. No government has authority to collect any land from those who own it and transfer it to another person and on the other side it never happens (Oyedepo, *YouTube*).

_____

There are multiple uses of innuendos in Example 6 with the insinuation that the government is not only unjust but it indulges in nepotism and illegality by collecting land from legitimate owners to cronies and favoured groups. Granted that the audience can infer the particular government in question, *government* was used in the example only in its generic form. Furthermore, the pronouns *those* and *another* as used in Example 5 show the divides between the "oppressed" and the "oppressor", the legitimate owner of the land and the land grabbers, respectively. This being the case, there is no doubt that those *on the other side* are the object of the preacher's hate speech.

7. There is one short devil that calls himself Governor moving around (Suleiman, *YouTube*).

The referent of "short devil" is also not made succinct much as the hate speech of name-calling was metaphoric and an example of the pragmatic act of hint. The recovery of the referent of *short devil* though outside the immediate text is easy to pinpoint considering the forth and back battle involving the speaker and Governor Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna State. On one occasion, the clergy prophesied the death of the Governor within a time frame!

As shall be examined in the next section, the pragmatic acts of referencing, profiling, and hints which are used for innuendos and hate speech may also be employed in the performance of name-calling which also exemplifies the use of hurtful language.

7.2 Pragmatic Strategies and Hate Speech of Name-calling

Name is synonymous with the identity of a person or group and has either good or bad connotation. Names are given thoughtfully particularly in Nigeria and Africa and are believed to have spiritual influence on the bearers. Derogatory names that profile the referent for hate feature largely in sermons.
8. I saw Nigeria wriggling under this in 2015. And some people still say carry on! They are all witches and thou shall not suffer a witch to live (Oyedepo *YouTube*).
9. Because some devilish people say there should be no other religion. Am I communicating (Oyedepo *YouTube*)?

There is a common parlance in Nigeria that a dog is called a bad name in order to hang it. This played out in example 8 when "some people" were profiled as witch. It

smacks of hatred to liken the choice of a candidate for political office by "some people" to witchcraft. Political ideology is hardly a crime that could warrant the maximum punishment of death as suggested by the preacher. The underlying pragmatic act of naming is used metaphorically to define the wrongdoing of those who brought Muhammadu Buhari to power".

Names are categorised as nouns and structurally function in the subject/object slot. "Some people" and "some devilish people" in Examples 8 and 9 pass for a name-tag with its position in the subject slot. Beneath the derogatory name-tag are the actual referents of "some people" and worse still "some devilish people". What name could be more derogatory than the devil? Beyond the smoke screen of the pragmatic acts of naming are the targets of hate speech that were merely named "some people" so that the hearer would figure out the referents from the context, thereby lifting the pragmatic veil.

Sermons are ideologically loaded while the tone of hate speech is often set by the preacher who usually co-opts audience into participating in hate speech. The strategies for achieving this are examined below.

7.3 Pragmatic Strategies of Set-up for Hate Speech

Set-up, within the context of Mey's (1993:210) proposal on pragmatic acts, "is that of implied identification with the reader or viewer" and the listener in the course of the sermon. The speaker surreptitiously sets-up the audience for hate speech and violence by playing on their emotions and using language seemingly in the interest of the audience. As exemplified in 10-15, religionists may be set-up for hate using the pragmatic act of invitation.

10. How many here wants killings to continue, how many wants pastors in churches slaughtered? How many wants to see worshippers like we saw in Benue, 2 Priests 17 worshippers slaughtered (Suleiman, *YouTube*)?
11. Many people in Kaduna are now widows, many people are now fatherless, many are orphans because some people think they own power, am I talking to somebody here (Suleiman, *YouTube*)?

Examples 10 and 11 touch on the emotion of the listeners. Whereas death is terrifying, religious adherents are usually willing to defend their religion in the face of threat. Granted that 10 and 11 are interrogative in structure, they convey the pragmatic act of invitation for the audience to take a position against wanton killings in the land by perceived enemies of the church. Hence, the utterances may be categorised

_____

functionally as exemplifying the speech act of directives. A similar strategy is used in the next excerpts.

12. Look I didn't want to bother you with pictures, gruesome pictures. They are not things you like to see when I show them to you (Suleiman, *YouTube*).

In Example 12, the speaker, as a follow-up to 10 and 11, presents (without admitting it) the gory pictures of victims of violence, thereby setting them up emotionally against perceived perpetrators of the orgy acts.

13. If they're busy killing Christians and nothing is happening, we will kill them and nothing will happen (Suleiman, *YouTube*).
14. Are we Christians? Yes! Are we believers? Yes! We can't be widows. We can't be widowers. We can't be … Am I communicating (Suleiman, *YouTube*)?

In a case of a pragmatic act of indicting, Example 13 draws attention to the carefree posture of the government to the killings. This being the case, the speaker justifies the invitation of the audience to revenge the killings with the assurance that they would also go unpunished. They were further set-up for hate in 14 through thought provoking questions that presuppose that Christianity is not synonymous with cowardice that would make them widows/widowers. The sermoniser's preferred equation which was drummed loudly goes thus:

Christians/believer = cowards = widows/widowers (false).

15. I told you before you didn't want to believe, understand prophets are not pressure group leaders, prophets are the mouth piece of God. I saw Nigeria wriggling under this in 2015. And some people still say carry on (Oyedepo *YouTube*)!

The audience was blackmailed into buying the speaker's ideology in item 15. The speaker is insulated from politics and activism but is positioned as the "mouth piece" of God, thereby coercing the hearer to believe in God and in his prophet. Using the pragmatic act of indictment, the preacher references certain group of people who allegedly refused to believe the prophet and "still say carry on" when he (the prophet) "saw Nigeria wriggling under this in 2015".

From the illustration above, it is unarguable that the intention of the speaker is to initially prepare the audience psychologically for hate and violence by appearing to

protect their interest and/or coerce them by claiming to be speaking the mind of God. The strategy is to gear up the audience to spontaneously join the fray of hate speech. While language use in setting up the audience is indirect and motivational, the strategy for co-opting them is direct. This is illustrated in the next section.

7.4 Pragmatic Strategies of Co-opting Adherents for Hate Speech in Christian Sermons

This section brings to fore the underlying strategies for co-opting the audience into hate and violence. Co-option is a follow-up action on members who have been set-up for hate speech. In this regard, the pragmatic act of invitation is more succinct than the case is for set-up.

16. We must wake up and push this evil back. Please wake up. Don't be part of the deaf and the dumb in Isaiah 42 that did not know when war closed-in on them (Oyedepo, *YouTube*).
17. Even our Islamic friends in the north are calling for him to resign. There is nothing needy the most noble things to do is to resign. Are we going to look and allow   system to destroy the whole nation (Oyedepo *YouTube*)?

The utterance in Example 16 euphemises the call to violence against perceived enemy. The pronoun "we" and "our" (Examples 16 and 17) connote inclusiveness and used for positive politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Inclusiveness entails in-group membership and unity of purpose which makes referents duty-bound to join others in "push[ing] this evil back". The pragmatics of inclusiveness and face-recognition (Brown & Levinson, 1987) linguistically enacted in the data in the form of "our" as shown in example 17 is effectively used for inviting adherents of Islamic religion to participate in hate speech.

18. So join us in prayer. Mt.11:12 every after provisions of God in redemption would always be resisted by the devil. So you need to engage them violently. Thank you Jesus. Mathew 11:12 reads, *And from the days of John the Baptist unti now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent taketh it by force* (Oyedepo *YouTube*).

Whereas the pronoun "our" is the object form equivalent of "we" and "our" and often serves the same functional purposes, the pragmatics of the invitation to join the speaker in "prayers" is significant. Should the lexeme "prayer" be taken on its face value? The augmentative function of the co-ordinator, "so", modifies the context of performance, making Example 18 to pass for a call to violence. This conclusion is

reached not only by the preceding speech but also by the speaker's appeal and reference to the Gospel according to Saint Mathew. It reads:

> *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent taketh it by force.*

The speaker has shifted the performance of the act of hate and call to violence to the Bible. After the initial hesitation and hedge, "thank you Jesus", he became unequivocal while re-echoing Mathew 11:12, "so you need to engage them violently". In the next examples, the strategies for co-option are rhetoric that canvasses that the hearers should join their Christian colleagues in the crusade.

19. We are not the only church praying there are several vibrant congregations that are joining. Interestingly we are all praying the same thing. Enough is enough. What an apt subject for this month in our Sunday services (Oyedepo *YouTube*) .

20. We have lawyers here, and we have some lawyers in the crowd and there's a lawyer here too. 12 people in Kaduna are dead and nobody is prosecuted, nobody is prosecuted, not one. Rivers State election, few people died, now there is a Panel of Enquiry because it is South-south, in a nation, in a state where 50 people died, they declared a state of emergency, 202 people died, there is no emergency (Suleiman, *YouTube*).

Finally, the linguistic function of "we" is extended in examples 19 and 20 in co-opting members of other churches and lawyers. In co-opting them for the sinister agenda of hate, the churches are described as "vibrant congregations". The inclusion of lawyers in example 20 is to legitimise the speaker's hate speech based on the hearers' knowledge of law and to justify the alleged misdeed of the authority and its failure to prosecuting the killers of the citizens.

8. Conclusion

Pragmatic acts of naming, protesting, inviting, and indicting are presented in this study as core communicative tools for the enlistment of religious devotees for participation in the production of hate speech in Christian sermons. Pragmatic acts manifest as innuendos and name-calling and are surreptitiously used for set-up and co-option strategies by preachers for the enforcement of audience participation in hate agenda. While innuendos are linguistically realised as pronouns with their antecedents recoverable from the context, name-calling largely takes the form of adjectives that

function as nouns. Worshippers are set-up and, then, co-opted into hate agenda through varying linguistic strategies that reference and profile the target while simultaneously empathising and attending to the face needs of the audience. With the instrumentation of pragmatic acts, Christian sermons highlight preachers' ideologies and the nation's social-political undercurrents and the persuasive goal of religious communication.

References

Adegbija, Efurubisima. 1982. *A speech act analysis of consumer advertisements*. Unpublished Doctoral thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington.
Akhimien, Pius & Yetunde Farotimi. 2018. "A study of the conversational features and discourse strategies in select sermons of Pastor E. A. Adeboye." *American Journal of Linguistics*, 6(1): 1-8. doi: 10.5923/j.linguistics.20180601.01.
"Apostle Suleman. Sunday Service." 2017. *YouTube.* 15 Jan. 2017. https://m.youtube.com/watch/html
Austin, J.L. 1962. *How to do things with words*. Jo Urmson and Marina Shisa (Eds). London: London. 1962.
Ayantayo & Oamen Felicia. 2018. "A study of online hate speeches' legitimation process by Nigerian political actors." *ABUDofF Journal of Humanities.* 2(7): 183-206.
Awonuga, C & Chimuanya L. 2016. "An investigation of the syntactic devices in selected Nigerian preachers' Sermons." In *Journal of English Scholars Association of Nigeria.* 18(1): 110-125.

_____

Babatunde, S. Timothy. 2007. "A speech act analysis of christian religious speeches." In *Style in Religious Communication in Nigeria*, edited by A. Odebunmi and A. O. Babajide, 48-89.

Brown, Penelope & Levinson Stephen. 1987. P*oliteness. Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fairclough, Norman. 2001. "Methods in critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research." In *Methods in critical discourse 2001 analysis,* edited by R. Wodak & M. Meyer, 121-128. London: Sage.

Halliday, M.A.K. 1978. *Language as social semiotic: the social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Howard, Erica. 2017. "Freedom of Expression and Religious Hate Speech in Europe." DOI.10.4324/9781315277257

Levinson, Stephen. 1979. Activity types and language. *Linguistics.* 17: 365-399.

Madrid, Francesa Perez (n.d.). "Hate speech, religious beliefs, and the limits on freedom of expression." http://classic.iclrs.org>files

Mey, J.L. 1993. *Pragmatics: An introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Ndujihe, Clifford & Chukwumezie Udochukwu. 2018. Violent death: 1,351 killed in 10 weeks. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/violent-deaths-1351-killed-10-weeks/

Odebunmi, Akin. 2007. The stylistics of religious electronic media advertisements in Nigeria. In *Style in Religious Communication in Nigeria*, edited by A. Odebunmi & A. O. Babajide, 1-26.

Okediadi, N. 2008. "Language aesthetics of prayers in modern pentecostal christian religion." *African & Asia Studies*. Retrieved from www.ajol.info/index.php/jrhr/

Rasaq, Adisa., Patrick Udende, Abubakar Ibrahim and La'aro Oba. 1991. "Media, Politics and Hate Speech: A Critical Discourse Analysis." *E-Academia Journal.* http://journalacademiauitmt.uitmt.edu.my/v2/index.php/home.html 6(1): 240-252.

Searle, J. 1969. *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: University Press.

Shaw, Lashel. 2012. "Hate Speech in Cyberspace: Bitterness without Boundaries." *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics and Public Policy. 25*: 279-304.

Solomon, O.A. & Ibileye Gbenga 2016. "The speech acts of a classical religion and national transformation." *Journal of English Scholars Association of Nigeria.* 18(1): 138-150.

St. Clare, Kameron Johnston. 2018. "Linguistic Disarmament: On How Hate Speech Functions, the Way Hate Speech can be Reclaimed, and Why we

must Pursue their Reclamation." *Linguistic and Philosophical Investigations.* 17: 2018. 79-109.

Taiwo, Rotimi. 2007. "Tenor in electronic media christian discourse in Nigeria." In *Style in Religious Communication in Nigeria*, edited by A. Odebunmi & A. O. Babajide, 90-106.

Oyedepo, Bishop. 2018. Bishop Oyedepo tells Buhari to resign. *YouTube*. Retrieved from https//www.youtube.com/watch?reload.