

HATE SPEECH IN NIGERIAN LITERATURE: A DISCOURSE-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPRARY TRENDS

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Abstract

This study undertakes a critical analysis of the linguistic and literary devices employed to convey hate speech in Nigerian literature. Through a qualitative analysis of selected texts, including novel, poetry and drama, the research reveals the complex and nuanced ways in which hate speech is constructed and represented. The study employs a discourse-stylistic approach, examining the use dialogue, narrative description, poetic language, imagery, and stage direction to convey hate speech. The findings highlight the ways in which language is used to create a tense atmosphere, emotional impact, and social exclusion and how these devices contributes to the perpetuation of hate speech. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of language in shaping social relationships and promoting social justice, and implications for the development of strategies to address hate speech in Nigeria society.

Keywords: Hate speech, Nigerian literature, Discourse Analysis, Stylistics literary devices, critical Discourse Analysis, Language and social justice.

Introduction

Nigerian literature is the body of written works authored by Nigerians or works that highlight Nigeria culture, history and experiences. Urujzian has said that, V. E. It consists of various genres, such as novella, short story, poetry, drama, and novels and may represent a variety of cultural backgrounds and a complicated history of the country (2023). Orality is the fundamental component of Nigerian literature as “speech is not only a medium to which literature is delivered; it is also the structure of literature itself which mirrors the society (Urujzian, 2023) and (Akpan, 2024a).

Nigeria's literature has been very prominent internationally for its approach to topics like colonialism, identity, culture and social justice. Some of the great writers of Nigeria include Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Festus Iyayi and others. Nigerian literature discusses issues pertaining to culture and tradition, social justice and human rights, politics and governance, among others. According to Enang,

Urujzian and Udoka, (2013), the Nigerian writers tend to use the language in a peculiar manner to express their burdens in this manner, many of the Nigerian writers use hate speeches willingly or unwittingly.

Urujzian (2023), had observed that hate speech has become a widespread matter that has significant consequences on individuals, communities and nations. Recent scholars such as Enang, Urujzian, and Udoka (2013) noted that the rampant growth of hate speech has been associated with many social issues such as violence, discrimination, and marginalization (Mihyeon, 2020). The theme of hate speech has been a constant in public discourse in Nigeria and many Nigerians have raised concerns about its influence on social cohesion and national development (Olukotun, 2017), (Urujzian, 2023). Under the international convention on civil and political rights (ICCPR), '*hate speech*' is defined as any 'advocacy of national, racial or religion hatred which constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law' (ICCPR, Article 20(2), 1966).

Another development is that the European court of Human Right (ECHR) defines hate speech as that converging all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobic, anti-semitism or other forms of hatred on intolerance, (ECHR, 2018(2)). The United Nations is more expressive on hate speech is defined as any communication, whether spoken, written or conveyed through behaviour, which attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group of persons on the basis of who they are, namely their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor' (UN, 2019)(1 (Urujzian, and Etuk, 2019).

These are all common in Nigerian literature, and they are perceived as factors that hinder the development of the nation, as experienced in Nigeria, particularly in the event of ethnic crises (Akpan, 2024b) and (Enang, Urujzian, Udoka, 2013). The present study of hate speech in Nigerian literature is not a new research field as a lot of scholars has been investigating the portrayal of hate speech in different literary works. The overall purpose of this study in this regard is to contribute to this body of literature by investigating the linguistic and literary tools employed in the expression of hate speech in some Nigerian literary works.

In the field of literary analysis, the theory of discourse-stylistics is presented. The theory of discourse-stylistics is introduced in the field of literary analysis. Urujzian, (2023) "Discourse-stylistics" said that Discourse- stylistic approach is the approach which is a combination of linguistic literary study and discourse analysis to analyze the language and style of the text. The approach emphasizes the way language is used to convey meaning, themes, and reader interpretations. The name Discourse-stylistics is a discourse-oriented stylistics (Brown and Yule, 1983), referenced in Urujzian, V. E. While Opera (2005) claims that discourse stylistics is an approach to textual analysis that is discourse oriented, (2018) consider it as an eclectic term that combines discourse and stylistics that has much to do with the ethnographic approach to the study of discourse.

As per the statement of Olukutun (2017) and Urujzian, V. E. Discourse-stylistics (2023) is an alternative method of text processing to the discourse analysis and the stylistics studied with different features, which is oriented towards an approach of relating the functions of the linguistic structure to some context. Commenting on discourse analysis, Schmitt (2002) cited in Enang, Urujzian, and Udoka, (2013), describe it as the analysis of language in its social context, Akpan (2013) and Urujzian, V. E. Both discourse and stylistics focus on the "how" and the "what" taking place within language; the linguistic associations that the style of language brings to light and the associations between forms and effect within a specific variety of language.

This paper would try to analyse how discourse stylistics are used in the chosen texts. Primarily, the paper will examine language and style of the authors, their discourse structure as well the cultural and social context. By using discourse stylistics in literary analysis, it is believed that it will be possible to gain insight into how words and stylistic means contribute to the meaning and interpretation of the text analyzed.

Biographies of the authors and summaries of the texts selected:

- i. Ayobami Adebayo-Stay with me (2017): Adebayo is a Nigerian writer and creative writer. She was a fellow at several honorable organizations, and had previously received praise for her remarkable storytelling skills. Stay with me is her debut novel, a domestic fiction with themes of love, betrayal and family, in particular a Nigerian couple, Yejide and Akin, dealing with the problem of infertility.
- ii. Zaynab Alkali (No August in A.B.U (2012): Zaynab Alkali is a Nigerian author and academic, who has also written works in Hausa and Nigerian literature. Born in 1950 to the people of Kano State, Nigeria. The novel No August in A.B.U is a coming-of-age story about the lives of students of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria Nigeria. The themes explored in the story are identity, culture and social change.
- iii. Written by ADESINA Gbenga, A Tributary in servitude (2015): Is a novel. Adesina is a Nigerian poet, renowned for his evocative and powerful writing style. His creations frequently focus on issues of identity, truth and the struggles of a generation deprived of voice by societal expectations. Overall, A Tributary in Servitude is an intriguing series that addresses the intricacies of identity, society and culture (Urujzian, and Etuk, 2019).

Methodology

Qualitative method of analysis is used in this study. The qualitative method is a critical discourse analysis of the literary works selected. This is a suitable design for investigation of the language, themes and stylistic features of literary text. The data collection techniques used in the study were content analysis and reading. The data was analyzed using two approaches, first stylistics analysis and second, discourse analysis (Enang, Urujzian, and Udoka, 2013),

Significance of the Study

This research helps to expand the understanding of the multifaceted relationship among language, literature and society for the purpose of fostering a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity, and shows the role of critical literacy and responsible communication practices in this. It also illuminates on how hate speech can be twisted and passed across in literature of Nigeria and recommendations towards building a culture of peace and respect for human right.

Research Questions

- I. How do Nigerian literary texts construct and perpetuate hate speech through linguistic and literary devices?
- II. What role do power dynamics, social norms and contextualization play in shaping the construction and interpretation of hate speech in Nigerian literature?
- III. What are the dominant stylistics features employed by the Nigerian literary writers in

perpetuating hate speech?

IV. How do those writers use discourse features in their works to portray hate speech?

In order to analyze the stylistics features and discourse features of hate speech in Nigerian literature of the three selected writers it is pertinent to justify the choice of the writers. The research used a purposive sampling technique to find Nigerian literature known to discuss issues of hate speech, identity and social justice. Also, the texts chosen are from a variety of literary forms such as novel, poetry and drama. This will enable us to make a comparison between the constructions and representations of hate speech in different literary genres. Thus, Urujzian, and Etuk, (2019) asserts that “the study identified instances of dialogue, narration description, poetic language, imagery and stage direction for hate speech in the novels Stay with me (2017), by Ayobami Adebayo, August in A.B.U (2012), play by Zanab Alkali and A Tributary in servitude (2015), poetry by Gbenga Adesina.

Dialogue: Examples from the texts

S/N	Hate speech	Source
1.	“You are a witch, a barren woman”	Adebayo, (2017, p. 123)
2.	“You are not one of us, you are an outsider”	Adebayo, (2017, p. 200)
3.	“You are a liar, a deceiver of your people”	Adebayo, (2017, p.250)
4.	“You are foolish woman, you don’t know what is good for you”	Alkali, (2012, p. 56)
5.	“You are a traitor, a betrayer of our trust”	Alkali, (2012, p.100)

Narrative description from the texts

S/N	Narratives	Source
1.	“The words cut through her like a knife, leaving her feelings raw and exposed”	Adebayo, (2017, p.150)
2.	“The atmosphere was tense, the air thick with hostility”	Adebayo, (2017, p.175)
3.	“The silence as expressive, the weight of unspoken words hanging heavy”	Adebayo, (2017, p.222)
4.	“The character of Dr. Dabo raised his voice, his face red with anger”	Alkali, (2012, p. 60)
5.	“The crowd jeered and mocked, their words piercing like daggers”	Alkali, (2012, p 120)

Poetic language from the text

S/N	Poetic language	Source
1.	“The tongue that lash, the word that scar”	Adesina, (2015,p.34)
2.	“The memories of hate, etched on the walls of my mind”	Adesina, (2015,p.40)
3.	“The fire of anger , burning bright and true”	Adesina, (2015,p.50)
4.	“The weight of words, crushing me beneath their might”	Adesina, (2015,p.60)
5.	“the silence of shame, echoing through the night”	Adesina, (2015,p.70)

The use of imagery the text

S/N	Imagery	Source
1.	“The memories of hate, etched on the walls of my mind”	Adesina, (2015 p.40)
2.	“The fire of anger, burning brighter and true”	Adesina, (2015,p.50)
3.	“The weight of words, crushing beneath their might”	Adesina, (2015,p.60)
4.	“The silence of shame, echoing through the night”	Adesina, (2015,p.70)
5.	“The darkness of despair, looming large”	Adesina, (2015,p.80)

Stage Direction

- i. The character of Dr Dabo raises his voice his face red with anger, Alkali, (2012, p.60).
- ii. The mobs laugh and sneer at us, their words like darts, (Alkali, 2012, p.120).
- iii. The character of Yejide was of a defiant nature, and her eyes glistened with defiance, (Adebayo, 2017, p.200).
- iv. There is a sense of unease: Air is thick with hostility, (Adebayo, 2017, p.175).
- v. The silence is oppressive, the weight the weight of unspoken words hanging heavily, Adebayo, (2017, p.220), Urujian, 2023, p.34).

The study examines the nature of hate speech in Nigerian Literature with a particular reference to its linguistic and literary devices. The analysis identifies the tactics that authors employ to communicate hate speech and the impact that this has on individuals and communities, particularly in creating a tense atmosphere. The dialogue examples illustrate how characters in the text use language to express hate or hostility towards others. The following quotations illustrate how damaging words can be to the exclusion, mockery and belittlement of others. The story description example, on the other hand, demonstrates the use of descriptive language to establish atmosphere of tension, hostility, or oppression. These descriptions can assist in understanding the emotional effects of hate speech on people and communities (Urujian, 2023).

Poetic Language examples illustrate the ways in which a writer employs poetic devices like metaphor, imagery and symbolism to express the emotional and physiological effects of hate speech. The imagery examples also help to show the authors how they describe things visually, audibly and emotionally to create images in the reader's mind. These can help to communicate the level and complexity of hate speech. Finally, examples of stage directions demonstrate authors' use of descriptive language to build drama and tension in a text. These directions facilitate the conveying of emotional intensity of hate speech and its effect on individual(s) and communities.

Stylistic features of Hate Speech in Nigerian literature

The table below outlines a framework for analysing hate speech in Nigerian literature by examining some of the stylistic devices associated with hate speech including imagery, metaphor, irony and symbolism etc. to explore how hate speech is created and sustained in literary texts.

Stylistic features	Description	Example from texts
Imagery	Vivid description of hate speech	"The tongues that lash, the word that scar" Adesina, (2015, p.34)
Metaphor	Comparisons of hate speech to other concepts	"Hate speech is a disease that infects the mind" Adesina, (2015, p.34)
Irony	Instances of irony in the portrayal of hate speech	"The character of Dr. Dabo claims to promote unity while using hate speech" Alkali, (2012, p.60)
Allusion	References to historical events or cultural practices	"The poem alludes to Nigerian civil war," Adesina, (2015, p.60)
Symbolism	Symbols used to represent hate speech or its consequences	"The colour red is used to symbolize the violence of hate speech" Adebayo, (2017, p.200)
Tone	The tone used to convey hate speech	"The tone of the poem is one of anger and Frustration, Adesina, (2015, p.50)

Pragmatics	The context of communication and its influence on hate speech	“The power of dynamics between speakers affect the interpretation of hate speech, Adebayo, (2017, p.250)
Syntax and semantics	The sentence and used to convey hate speech	“The use of passive voice avoids accountability of hate speech, Akali, (2017 p.100)
Discourse analysis	The broader social and cultural context of hate speech	“The societal norms that perpetuate hate speech are examined, Adesina, (2015, p. 60)

Discourse features of hate speech in Nigerian literature

The discourse features of hate speech in Nigeria literature are crucial in understanding how language is used to perpetuate hate and tolerance. The following table lists some of the salient aspects of hate speech identified in the discourse, such as power relations, social norms, contextualization, intertextuality, implicatures, and presupposition and hedging. The features of the words are as follows in Enang's words. The book by (2017) can assist in recognizing and analysing hate speech within literary texts and foster awareness of how language can be used to form attitude and beliefs.

Discourse feature	Description	Example forms text
Power dynamics	How power relationships between speakers influences hate speech	“The character of Dr. Dabo uses hate speech to assert him authority” Alkali, (2012,p.60)
Social norms	How societal norms and expectations perpetuate hate speech	“The poem critiques the societal norms that condone hate speech” Adesina, (2015, p. 40)
Contextualization	How the context of communication influence the interpretation of hate speech	“The character of Yejide’s words are interpreted differently depending on the context, Adebayo, (2017, p.200)
Intertextuality	How hate speech is referenced or alluded to in other text	“The poem alluded in Nigerian civil war and its legacy of hate speech Adesina, (2015, p.50)
Implicatures	How hate speech is implied without been explicitly stated	“The character of Dr. Dabo implies that certain groups are inferior through his language” Akali, (2012, p. 100)
Presupposition	How hate speech relies on underlying assumption	“The poem presupposes that certain groups are superior to others” Adesina, (2015,p.60)
Hedging	How hate speech is migrated through language	“The character of Yejide uses hedging language to avoid directly confronting hate speech” Adebayo, (2017, p. 250)

Discussion of findings

The study of the analysis of Hate Speech in Nigerian literature has brought out various findings which can be summarised as follows: First of all, imagery, metaphor and symbolism in literary texts mean to continue the hate speech and strengthen the malicious stereotype. Secondly, the speaker-power of the speaker-social norms that permit hate speech are involved in proliferation (Enang 2017).

Contextualization is also revealed as an important aspect in comprehending hate speech, according to the findings. The impact and meaning of hate speech depends on its context. Also, intertextuality and implicatures are important in sustaining hate speech, which is often implicit or suggested, but not explicit. It is also worth noting that the use of hedging language, i.e. to transition and/or weaken hate speech, is used. There is a sense in which the tactics are a way of evading responsibility and/or confrontation. It can also, however, help to maintain hate speech in more palatable and acceptable terms.

The results indicate that hate speech in Nigeria literature is complex and multifaceted phenomenon and that more nuanced understanding of language, power relations and social norms is needed to understand

it. Enang says that, according to him, (2017) and Urujzian, V. E. Thus, tackling hate speech in literature demands an all-encompassing strategy, which includes critical analysis, education and awareness. Lastly, the findings, which corroborate Enang, Nyarks, Utin, Udoka and Udom (2014), indicates that literary text is very effective in inducing social change and combating hate speech. The study and critique of hate speech in literature can help to foster an environment of inclusivity and tolerance.

Conclusion

The analysis has shown that hate speech is a problem rife in Nigerian Literature and this is being sustained by a host of linguistic and literary devices which are currently in use by the perpetrators of hate speech in the literature. Their study findings underscore the need for critical awareness and education in combating hate speech in Nigerian literature. By recognizing and challenging hate speech, we can work towards promoting tolerance, inclusively and justice (Urujzian, 2018).

Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of literary analysis in understanding the complex issues of hate speech and its implications for society. The study also highlights the role of literature in bringing about social changes and inculcating good values. Finally, this study adds to an ongoing debate on the issue of hate speech in Nigerian literature and underscores the importance of continued critical analysis and education. By working together we can promote a more inclusive and tolerant society, and challenge the harmful effect of hate speech.

Recommendations

The study has revealed the following recommendations:

- I. Critical literacy education should be the priority for educators and literary critics to prepare readers to identify and defy hate speech in literature.
- II. Awareness and advocacy of the detrimental impact of Hate speech in Nigerian Literature and society as a whole is needed.
- III. Writers, publishers and literary critics should encourage literature about inclusion, which helps combat hate speech and foster tolerance and social justice.

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