



LANGUAGE AND IDEOLOGY IN LECTURE/SEMINAR INTERACTION IN THE NIGERIAN ARMY

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Abstract

Lecture/Seminar Interaction in the Nigerian Army is often being organised for soldiers, both Officers and Men, to upgrade their knowledge in the act of security and defense, locally and internationally. Despite the numerous of studies on army discourses, those that directly address lecture/seminar interactions and their associated hidden ideologies cum linguistic forms that index them are scanty, thus, preventing access to full information and understanding of ideological leaning of the Army. This, therefore, constitutes the gap that the present study attempts to fill. The Theoretical Frameworks adopted for the study are Van Dijk's (1998) Social Cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Grammar of M.A.K Halliday (1961, 1994). The data, which were collected through Audio Tape Recorder and Video Clips, comprise oral communication of soldiers of the Nigerian Army during lecture/seminar interaction, held at the Central Auditorium of 2 Division Nigerian Army, Ibadan. The data, which were subjected to descriptive/qualitative analytical method, reveal one main ideology; professional ideology, which has two categories: leadership and regimentation driven professional ideology. These are indexed with linguistic forms such as transitivity (material, mental and relational types) and some antonymous words. Thus, there is a nexus between the ideologies revealed in the lecture/seminar interaction and the linguistic forms that characterise them, the attendant consequence of which could promote effective dissemination and comprehension of commands/orders by officers and men of the Nigerian Army, respectively, necessary to enhance their effectiveness on duty, locally and globally.

Keywords: Language, Ideology, Nigerian Army, Lecture/Seminar, Interaction

1.0 Introduction

Lecture/seminar interactions in the Nigerian Army are activities designed to improve soldiers' professional callings. These cut across, but not limited to (i) GOC Address (ii) Leadership and Effects on Army Personnel (iii) Regimentation as the bedrock of the military professionalism (iv)

Discussion session on professionalism and ethics in the Army (v) Unique attributes and roles of army officers within the context of the Army, its heritage, customs and ethics

It is worthy of note that studies on Army discourse are numerous. However, those directly related to the lecture/seminar interactions of Nigerian Army, officers and



men from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis are scanty, if they exist at all. This, therefore, neglects the interrogation and examination of ideology necessary for the basis of production and comprehension of commands and orders among officers and men, respectively.

Some of these studies are Ogundele's (2020) Discourse Issues and Contextual Constraints in the Workshop Interaction Among The Nigerian Military Officers, Ogundele and Akinwotu's (2020) Morphological Examination of the Nigerian Army Talks, Okpeadua and Ogundele (2018) that examines the Lexico-Semantic Study of Interactions Among Nigerian Army Officers and Men, Ogundele's (2016) language and style in the Nigerian Army parade interaction, Ogundele (2016) that interrogates the context of Nigerian Military parade interaction, Ogundele (2015) which investigates the context and intention in the Nigerian Army parade interaction,, Ogundele and Amusan' (2024) Discursive Production of Identities in *Tombola* Night Interactions in the Nigerian Army

Others are Elena (2011) that study Military Language from the perspective of discourse analysis, Woodward (2004) examination of the Discourses of Gender that Circulate within Debates about the inclusion of Women in the British Ministry of Defence, Army, and Parliament, Hawry's (2010) Review of the Red Army and Soviet Army Discourse, using sociolinguistics tools;, Amafah's (1990) examination of the English Language Used in the Nigerian Army..

Although, all these works are generally relevant to this research, importantly because they examine actual linguistic behaviours of soldiers from the socio-cultural context, yet, this work is significantly different because it explores profoundly the pragmatism of ideologies as

could be gleaned from the lecture/seminar interactions and the linguistic forms that project them. This study, therefore, identifies the ideologies and linguistic forms with a view to establishing the implications to military practise, locally and globally, using Van Dijk's (1998, 2001) socio-cognitive approach model of Critical discourse Analysis.

1. Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study examines the context-driven discursive negotiation of language and ideology in the Nigerian Army. This is with a view to:

- iidentifying and discussing the type of ideologies in the discourse;
- iidescribing the linguistic forms that index the ideologies in the discourse;
- iiiexamining the implications of these ideologies to military practise, locally and globally.

2. Theoretical Framework

Van Dijk's (1998, 2001) Socio-Cognitive Approach and M.A.K Halliday Systemic Functional Grammar are the theories utilised in this study. While the former accounts for ideologies that characterise the discourse, the latter is deployed to the analysis of the linguistic forms that indexed the ideologies. These are discussed in turns.

3.1 Van Dijk's (1998, 2001) Socio-Cognitive Approach

Ideology has always been conceived as implicit assumptions held in interaction (Fairclough 2001; Wodak 1996). As such, ideologies become shared and, according to van Dijk (2001:12) ideologies are conceived as:

A special form of social cognition shared by social groups. Ideologies thus form the basis of the social group members, including their discourse, which at the same



time serves as the means of ideological production, reproduction and challenge.

Harmonising the above with others, van Dijk contends that ideology is mental framework of beliefs about society and the cognitive and social functions of such a framework for groups that serve to regulate social practices, which are constructed, used and changed by social actors as group members in specific, often discursive, social practices, as is the case of Nigerian soldiers during lecture/seminar interactions. He maintains that, they are not individual, idealistic constructs, but the social constructs shared by a group (group of soldiers). As such, whatever else ideologies are, they have always been associated with socially shared *ideas* (in our case here, professional ideas).

Ideology, the soul of critical discourse analysis, has been associated with four approaches. These are Wodak's (2001) discourse-historical approach, Van Dijk's (1998, 2001) socio-cognitive approach and Fairclough's (1989, 1992, 1995, 2003) socio-semiotic approach, and Gee's (2004) socio-literary approach. Given that the present study is an investigation in the cognitive domain, Van Dijk's model of ideology is deployed in respect of number 1 objective set for the study.

For van Dijk, therefore, ideologies are shared social beliefs that manifest at the level of the group; (eg, Nigerian Army) they are structured, non-negative in concepts, knowledge-based and attitude-constrained. In most (but not all) cases, ideologies are self-serving and a function of the material and symbolic interests of the group. Among these interests, power over other groups (or resistance against the domination by other groups) may have a central role and hence

function as a major condition and purpose for the development of ideologies.

Of relevance to this study is Van Dijk's mental models which cause ideologies, knowledge and attitudes to impact directly on "concrete discourse and social practices" (van Dijk 2001:16). These models serve as individuals' mental stores of events among Nigerian soldiers, and are therefore associated with their individual experiences. They represent (ideologies) each soldier's views, which may or may not be biased and which may or may not be shared by other members of the group. Consequently, mental models constitute a major factor in Nigerian soldiers' comprehension and interpretation of lecture/seminar discourses, as they may see the world differently based on their individual experiences. Ideologies, shaped by mental models, therefore, constrain soldiers' preference for words indicating orders and commands and their comprehension interpretations by troops/soldiers.

3.2 Systemic Functional Grammar

This approach is deployed to the analysis of linguistic form/resources that characterize the Nigerian soldiers' interactions during lectures/seminars. This approach sees language study as a system of meaning. As such, its basis is semantic and not syntactic (Bloor and Bloor, 1995; Halliday and Hassan, 1991; Morley, 1985; Halliday, 1985). This is typical of language in action such as the speeches among the soldiers at both formal and informal contexts. Thus, when people use language, as is the case in the present study, their language acts are the expression of meaning (Bloor and Bloor 1995), as grounded in ideology (as is the case in the present study). Thus, the grammar becomes a study of how meanings are built up through the use of words and other linguistic forms such as *tone* and



emphasis that indexed the language of soldiers during their interactions at lecture/seminars. In this regard, Halliday and Hassan (1991) assert that SFG is a semantically driven grammar that seeks to consider and identify the role of various linguistic items in any text in terms of their function in building meaning. And it is for this reason that its practices for interpreting and labeling various linguistic items and groupings are functionally based and not syntactically based. In other words, there is no dissociation of grammar from semantics or meaning (Halliday, 1994).

Halliday's systemic grammar is not only semantically oriented because it is concerned with meaning, but also functional because it takes as paramount the diverse ways in which language is used. Intrinsically, SFG operates on the analysis of naturally occurring discourse (written or spoken), otherwise known as text (as is the case in soldiers' interactions) and it is on the basis of the foregoing that the theory is adopted to analyse the linguistic forms that drive the ideology in the interaction.

4. Methodology

The data for the study comprise oral communication of Nigerian soldiers during lecture/seminar activities held at the Central Auditorium of 2 Headquarters Division of Nigerian Army, Ibadan. The data, which were purposively sampled through audio recordings and video clips, consist of lecture/seminar/interactions, which focus: (i) GOC Address (ii) Leadership and Effects on Army Personnel (iii) Regimentation as the bedrock of the military professionalism (iv) Discussion Session on Professionalism and Ethics in the Army (v) Unique Attributes and Roles of Army Officers within the Context of the Army, its Heritage, Customs and Ethics

These were transcribed with the assistance of some soldiers in the rank of Sergeant which were ultimately utilised as data for the study, with all features of ideologies and linguistic features characterising them noted for analysis. Further, we were able to conduct some participant observations on the activities of some soldiers during the interactions. These enabled us to examine soldiers in their natural settings, a situation that greatly assisted in the analyses of the data, as we were able to effectively deploy the experience gained to adeptly interpret the data.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The data reveal one main ideology- *Professional Ideology*- among soldiers in the Nigerian Army lecture/seminar interactions held at Headquarters 2 Division Nigerian Army, Ibadan. This is the ideology that directly affects army officers in terms of professional responsibilities assigned to them in line with the service rules. This ideology serves as the basis for their onerous guide and, therefore, constraints and shapes their reaction and perceptions towards any of their activities in line with their professional callings (Van Dikje (1998). the data reveal two categories of soldiers' professional calling; these are *leadership* and regimentation related professional ideology. These are discussed below:

5.1 Professional Ideology Related to Leadership

Leadership is the ability to assume the responsibility of controlling, directing and managing the affairs of people. The issue of leadership is very central to the officers' cadre of the Nigerian Army, starting from 2nd Lieutenant to the Rank of General in the Army. In line with the ideology in the Army, the designated leaders are entrusted with the management of the resources,



which must be efficiently deployed in readiness and preparation for battle and consequent vanquishment of the opponents. Intrinsically, the primary duty of a commissioned officer, a leader, is to lead his troop to battle and win, given the efficient deployment of resources at his disposal. An officer who cannot lead his troop to war and attain success, given the sufficient resources at his disposal, is not worth to be an officer. This can only be accomplished if an officer has good leadership qualities. Let us consider the examples below:

Excerpt 1:

Guest Lecturer: I told you that the autocratic is the one suited for the military and I cited some personal experience. The two of them, the democratic and autocratic leadership styles... is how you develop your own technic... and when you look at the lecture democratic leadership is not what we are talking in the military. They appoint you a task; people have to know that if there is failure you are the one that fails; if there is success, you are the one that succeeds... There are different leadership styles, but I picked the three to show; and I say it is a continuum of either an autocratic, democratic or laissez-faire.

Excerpt 2:

Guest Lecturer: If you look at the ten attributes that I gave at the end, I mentioned it. First is the communication. If you can't communicate properly with your man, give him the order what to do; the resources the resources and how he should do it in the final he will not be able to do it well. (Appendix: 8)

Excerpt 3:

But the fundamental thing is a leader must train his personnel to be proficient in what they ought to do. If your people are proficient, you give them the order they would always carry it out but if you don't train them, you cannot be tasking them... I think it is a blend of these types of leadership... There are times you bring in democratic aspect of it, but it is not that type of sitting together and decide em you will be tasked to attack this objective, you now call your troops: Can we can we attack?

The above-mentioned excerpts, 1-3, centre on professional ideology related to leadership in the Army. In excerpt 1, the utterance of the Guest Lecturer "I say it is a continuum of an autocratic, democratic or laissez-faire" shows the three main leadership professional ideological types that are prominent. From these three types, as shown in the data, autocratic leadership is the one considered to be the most suitable that will guarantee the success of an army officer in the discharge of his onerous responsibilities. In line with Van Dijk (1998) this assumption constitute an intrinsic belief in the Army, with soldiers being guided by it in the discharge of their security related responsibilities. In this respect, the GOC says ... and when you look at the lecture, democratic leadership is not what we are talking in the military. By implication, according to Van Dijk, this serves as the basis of soldiers world view, which ultimately constrains them in their action or inaction. "failure" and "success" in excerpt 1 are antonymous words, indicating the outcomes of this type of leadership, success is mostly attached to the autocratic type, while failure is likely to tailgate the democratic style. While autocratic style



guarantees a successful execution of the officer's primary responsibility, because it attracts speedy execution of commands; on the other hand, democratic one might handicap his duties; hence, the lecturer's instruction, that autocratic leadership style should be adopted, professionally. However, the employment of any of these leadership styles depends on the circumstances prevailing as shown in the speech of the GOC in excerpt 3 when he says, deploying mental process (Transitivity), "I think it is a blend of these types of leadership... There are times you bring in democratic aspect of it" (Attributive Process) {in line with professionalism in the Arm}.

Excerpt 2 points to the leadership qualities that any army officer must have in order to function effectively. One of these attributes is effective communication; its importance is stressed by the Guest Lecturer in excerpt 2. He says, using material process, "If you can't communicate properly with your man, give him the order what to do; the resources the resources and how he should do it in the final go he will not be able to do it well. Thus, for an officer to be able to dole out responsibilities that must not only be effectual but also timely to his subordinates, he must be good in the art of communication. Accordingly, it is evident that the assignment of responsibilities by an officer (to his subordinates) is intricately tied to effective communication as observed in the data; this aids him in the deployment and mobilisation of human and material resources under his command. Thus, the ability of an army officer to effectively train his subordinates is another attribute connected to leadership oriented professional ideology as observed in the data. Foregrounding this is the Guest Lecturer's speech "...a leader must train his personnel to be proficient in what they ought

to do" The identifier in excerpt 3 ... the fundamental thing indicates the critical position occupied by the training of army personnel, that is, if the subordinates are properly trained, they would be effective; consequently, it would be very easy for an officer to task them than when they are not trained or properly trained. The use of the modal "must" indicates that this responsibility is not negotiable in the Nigerian Army as this will greatly improve the proficiency of soldiers.

Other instances of professional ideology associated with leadership are found in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 4:

GOC:Command is the highest responsibility that can be entrusted to an officer.

Commanders are responsible for everything they do or fail to do. The relationship between commanders and their soldiers is a unique one with many mutual and complementary responsibilities. Although, the requirements are many and serious, the experience is the most rewarding one of most officers servin.

Excerpt 5:

GOC:All officers that are assigned to units need an understanding of army command policy and they need to know and apply sound method of management. The corps and service rules provide excellent instruction in the subject an officer requires with unit of his/her call of service. But there is a distinct difference between knowing about in the academic sense and knowing how which is gained by on the job experience.

Excerpt 6:



GOC: This presentation will identify the unique attributes and role of Army officers within the context of the Army, its heritage, its custom or ethics... It is a kind of officer who wins a war. (Appendix: 11)

Excerpt 7:

GOC: Honour is the hallmark of officers who like honour. It is the outgrowth of character. An honourable person has the knowledge to determine right from wrong and the courage to adhere to the right. It means that an officer's written or spoken words, is accepted without questions. False will be identified as false and opinion for what they are... Actions will be based on consideration of the good of the unit, the army and the nation

Excerpt 4 above shows that the highest responsibility that can be entrusted to an army officer is "command", (where officers indicate leaders and commanders in the Army). Thus, commanders are responsible for everything they do or fail to do. Excerpt 5 provides the condition associated with the fulfillment of this responsibility, and this is marked by an understanding of army command policy. This means that all officers (leaders) that are assigned to units must have an understanding of army command policy to be able to direct their subordinates to execute some tasks in line with the ideology of the profession. The expression they need to know and apply sound method of management (Compound sentence) in excerpt 5 implies that, an army officer must have an in-depth managerial skill, and know how to apply them so as to lead his troop to war and win, and as shown in excerpt 9, the addressor is referring to a competent officer who wins a war. Thus, the

highest expectation placed on any army officer is to be able to harness the resources given to him with the ultimate aim of winning a war. As revealed in the data, to lead a troop to success, a professional officer must be dexterous in the management of resources entrusted to him. Thus, grounded with this ideology will make him to achieve maximum success in the area of defense and security, which is the ultimate constitutional responsibility of any professional army officer, as shown in the data.

Excerpt 7 foregrounds another important attribute of an army officer, as indexed with the nominal "honour". As shown in the data, this trait enables an officer to determine the right from wrong, and the courage to adhere to the right. It is this ideological disposition that is held by the society that makes the officers' written or spoken words accepted without questions. In this respect, an honourable officer must be guided by the consideration of the good of the unit, the army and the nation in all his dealings. This indicates that, an honourable army officer should not be sentimental; he should be above board in the discharge of his constitutional responsibilities to the unit he is commanding; the Army, his profession; and the nation, his country, as stipulated in the service rules that guide members through out the years of serving their country.

The foregoing discusses the ideologies permeating the lecture activities in the Army and their linguistic reflection.

5.2 Professional ideology Associated with Regimentation

This is intricately tied to the tradition, custom and ethic of the Army, and serves as the tripod on which the army profession is hinged. Regimentation forms a good starting point to understanding the core value in the Army. It covers professionalism, parade, and



mascot that indicate some of the traditions of the Army. The following excerpts buttress this better:

Excerpt 8:

Guest Lecturer: There are many attributes that contribute to being a professional

These include responsibility, accountability, leadership, honour, integrity, respect, compassion and communication. ...While other professional bodies are answerable mostly to their professional bodies, the professional officer is answerable to state through his service chief... Therefore, apart from the basic code of conduct for officer, the military officer is governed by complex mass of regulation, customs and tradition that guide his day today activities.

Excerpt 9:

Guest Lecturer: salute is an expression of reciprocal loyalty between a superior and subordinate. Most commonly experienced by hands, salute can also be rendered by gun, sword, band, or music...

Excerpt 10:

Guest Lecturer: The mascot is the animal/person that is chosen as the

symbol of the regiment and assumes to bring good luck. The affinity between soldiers and animal

particularly, dog is as old as the profession. The general believe is that the spirit lodged in the mascot procures good luck to the unit. The belief is now popularly accepted, and contributes in no small measure to the morale and psychological spirit of the troop. Mascot, especially, ancient animal may be brought to the parade ground during ceremonial parade involving the regiment.

Excerpt 8 focuses on the issue of regimentation in the Army and the critical position it occupies in the life of soldiers, as it constitutes one of the cores value that are constraining soldiers in their actions during any security engagement.. Responsibility, accountability, leadership, honour, integrity, respect, compassion and communication index the attributes of a professional army officer. These constitute some ethical practices in the Army that must be imbibed, upheld and practiced from the time an Army officer is commissioned to the time he retires, and even beyond.

As obtains in excerpt 8, excerpt 9 centres on regimentation, an ideology constrained by salute which is an expression of a reciprocal loyalty in the Army. The words in the italics: hands, gun, sword, band, or music indexed some forms of salute in the Army. Amidst all these types of salute, hands salute (expressed with the right hand) is the most common form (as there is no time limit for it) with which all officers and men, serving and retired, pay the normal compliment to their superiors in the Army who have the right to receive such



compliment. It is initiated by the subordinates to their superiors during any official or non official engagement. Meanwhile, gun salute is the type used to pay the last respect to the fallen heroes, and the dead officers and soldiers. The one for the fallen heroes is shot during the Armed Forces Remembrance Day, while the one for the dead officers and soldiers is conducted at the grave side of the soldiers with the three final rite shots by the burial parties.

The addressor in excerpt 10 makes reference to the importance of mascot to the Army. The mascot can either be an animal (e.g dog) or a person, and it serves as a symbol of a regiment that brings fortune: This is the belief in the Army. This is indexed with the material process the spirit lodged in the mascot procures good luck to the unit. Mascot, especially, ancient animal serves as morale boosting of a troop, and can be brought to the parade ground during a ceremonial parade involving the regiment. This aligns with the view of van Dijk when he says that ideology is mental framework of beliefs... and the cognitive and social functions of such a framework for groups, that serve to regulate social practices, which are constructed, used and changed by social actors as group members in specific, often discursive, social practices,

8. Conclusion

This study has been able to examine the language and ideology among the personnel of the Nigerian Army. Through a copious analysis of data drawn from lecture/seminar interactions, taking place at the Central Auditorium at Headquarters 2 Division Nigerian Army, Ibadan, one of the foremost and largest Division in Nigeria, the study has been able to demonstrate that, ideology, especially, the professional ideology, holds a critical position in strengthening the gallantry of the Nigerian Army personnel in both the internal and external callings. To be able to discharge their duties effectively,

therefore, the Nigerian Army personnel should be portrayed as having the image of those that adhere strictly to this ideology. By implications, they would be respected both locally and globally if they allow this ideology to guide them in all areas of their callings.

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