



HATE SPEECH AND VIOLENCE: INVESTIGATING THE PERLOCUTIONARY THRUSTS OF SELECTED UTTERANCES ON RUGA SETTLEMENT INITIATIVE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The paper investigates the perlocutionary thrusts of utterances made by some Nigerians on the planned establishment of Ruga settlements across the country by the federal government with the aim of establishing whether the utterances constitute hate speech capable of inciting violence within the country. As a study in pragmatics, the Speech Act theory (SAT) by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) serve as our theoretical anchorage. The data analysed were comments of Nigerians reported in selected online news publications. They were purposively selected between January 2018 and August 2019. The findings reveal a preponderant use of assertives, verdictives, commissives, expressives and directives. The utterances were full of inflammatory rhetoric and verbal attacks, serving as weapons of threat, intimidation and blackmail. These characterise them as hate speech, capable of inciting hatred, fear and violence within the polity; and as such, constitute threats to Nigeria's peaceful co-existence, national cohesion and development.*

KEYWORDS: Perlocutionary Act, Ruga Settlements, Speech act theory (SAT), Hate Speech

INTRODUCTION

Ruga Settlement is a federal government initiative aimed at settling the herders and their cattle in designated permanent locations across the Nigeria. "Ruga" in Hausa means "cow settlement". The "Ruga Settlement" project was approved by the National Economic Council (NEC) under the National Livestock Transformation Plan (2018-2027) with the main objective of curbing open grazing of animals in the country and stop roaming of cattle herders which has often resulted to clashes with farmers across the nation. The clashes have become more rampant and deadlier, leading to increased bloodbaths and deaths. In December 2018, the Amnesty International recorded 3,641 deaths as a result of clashes between farmers and semi-nomadic herders in Nigeria. These clashes have not stopped till date necessitating the need for the federal government to come out with the Ruga settlement plan.

In the words of Garba Shehu, the Presidential spokesperson, "Ruga settlement seeks to settle migrant pastoral families in an organized place where animal farmers, not just cattle herders, would be provided with necessary and adequate basic amenities such as schools, hospitals, road networks, vet clinics, markets and manufacturing entities that will process and add value to meats and animal products". He further claimed that the overall benefits of Ruga to the nation are enormous and they include a drastic reduction in conflicts between herders and farmers, a boost in animal protection, coupled with a value chain that will increase the quality



and hygiene of livestock in terms of beef and milk production, increased quality of feeding and access to animal care, and private sector participation in commercial pasture production by way of investments. Other gains are job creation, access to credit facilities, security for pastoral families and curtailment of cattle rustling.

Despite the lofty ideals of the programme, it was met with cynicism and total rejection from other ethnic groups in the country, especially those in the Southern part and the Middle belt who considered the proposal as repugnant, repulsive and provocative, and an attempt to colonise the rest of the country for the Fulanis under the guise of promoting cattle rearing by acquiring large portions of land from non-Fulani communities to settle the Fulani herders across the nation. There was the allegation that herdsmen now move about with sophisticated weapons which put the lives of members of host communities in danger. They condemned the policy which acquires other people's lands across the country to settle a particular ethnic group (the Fulani herders) as discriminatory and offends both the Constitution and the Land Use Act of 1978 citing section 42(1) of the Constitution which states that a citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person:-

- (a) Be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religious or political opinions are not made subject; or
- (b) Be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religion or political opinions.

The phobia for Ruga settlement during this period by many non-Fulani commentators did not only lie in the sole allegation of killing of farmers by the herdsmen, it was also grossly heightened by the flourishing kidnapping that ravaged some parts of the country allegedly traced to the herders as well. These allegations were, however, refuted by the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders' Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), a Fulani interest group responsible for the activities and wellbeing of Fulani herders in the country. The group claimed that herdsmen were being unjustly persecuted because of unsubstantiated and frivolous accusations in a bid to infringe on their fundamental human right of freedom of movement in the country as they engage in their legal nomadic businesses.

Language, which is considered as the key to the heart of the people (Sapir, 1921), was deployed by various commentators to influence government and the general public. This validates the position of Ogunsiji (2013) that "language exercises certain influence on its users and this influence can be social, psychological, cultural, educational and so on". The practice of language construction gives meaning to specific events, circumstances, things, or people (Wodak and Meyer, 2009) while its dynamism affords people the opportunity to use it in different ways for numerous activities (Yule, 1996). The functions of language are so numerous in the society that it is called to duty in nearly all human activities. That is why Obuh and Omenogor (2012) opine that "language as an instrument of communication may be used to influence personality, to declare war, to oppose ideas, intentions and actions; to



scatter, to condemn and generate violence. It could also be used to entertain, inspire, educate, establish cordial relationship, settle disputes and make peace with people or communities”.

However, of importance to this study is to examine whether the language employed by different commentators on Ruga settlement proposal constitute hate speech which is capable of inciting hatred and violence among the people within the polity. This is premised on the view that discourse during this period of was characterized by certain linguistic expressions; what we hear people say are not just utterances but statements often loaded with various kinds of information about feelings, perception, beliefs, power, and ideological viewpoint.

Hate Speech

The term “hate speech” has acquired diverse viewpoints depending on the field, perception and intention of the user. Neisser (1994:337) defines hate speech as “all communications (whether verbal, written, symbolic) that insults a racial, ethnic and political group, whether by suggesting that they are inferior in some respect or by indicating that they are despised or not welcome for any other reasons”. Neisser argued that apart from causing danger of physical assault, hate speech risks violent reaction. Moreover, hate speech covers all forms of expression that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin (British Institute of Human Rights, 2012).

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2013:4) notes that hate speech includes: (a) all dissemination of ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, by whatever means; (b) incitement to hatred, contempt or discrimination against members of a group on grounds of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin; (c) threats or incitement to violence against persons or groups on the grounds in (b) above; (d) expression of insults, ridicule or slander of persons or groups or justification of hatred, contempt or discrimination on the grounds in (b) above, when it clearly amounts to incitement to hatred or discrimination; (e) participation in organizations and activities which promote and incite racial discrimination. If allowed unabated, hate speech may trigger violence, leading to loss of lives and destruction of property.

Theoretical Framework

As specified, this study draws on the theory of pragmatics. A pragmatic theory in the words of Blakemore (1992) is a theory of meaning, the mental structure underlying the ability to interpret utterances in context. It is concerned with how interlocutors (speakers and listeners) understand one another in spite of possibly saying what they do not mean or meaning what they do not say (Lawal, 1997:52). According to Mey (2001) “Pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of the society”. With this definition, Mey draws our attention to the fact that meaning within pragmatic terms relies much on extralinguistic factors which are more often subsumed within the society. As every speaker of an utterance does not speak from a mind, the influence of the society on meaning explication is incontrovertible.

The pragmatic theory adopted in this study is the Speech Act theory (SAT) enunciated by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969). The speech act theory shows how speakers (and writers) “do things with words”. Austin and Searle recognised that language is



a tool for performing actions and that the “meaning” we associate with an utterance is the user’s intention, and not the meaning of words in the utterance. In other words, communication is successful not when hearers recognize the linguistic meaning of the utterance, but when they infer the speaker's "meaning" from it (Sperber and Wilson, 1986:23). This intentional character of speech acts is among their most distinctive classificatory features (Mey, 2001). When we study the user’s intention, we are studying what he does with words, either in speech or writing. According to Lawal (1997):

Speech act theory and indeed the whole of pragmatic theory is essentially concerned with how interlocutors (speakers and listeners) understand one another. In spite of the possibility of their saying what they do not mean and meaning what they do not say, it is this possibility of indirectness and implicitness of meaning which recommended pragmatics as a useful analytical tool in literary criticism *and other fields of human communication requiring language use and meaning explication* (italics mine) (p, 132)

The speech act theory identifies three fundamental acts that are performed by speakers in communication namely *locutionary act* – uttering a sentence with no ambiguous meaning, through the grammar, phonology and semantic of a language; *illocutionary act* – performing an act by uttering a sentence, where the real intention of the speaker is encoded either to promise, condemn, invite, christen or sentence to prison; *Perlocutionary act* – is the effect the utterance might have. The pragmatic content of any utterance is captured in the illocutionary act because that is where the intention of the speaker is demonstrated.

The theory is systematically classified into types of speech acts and the ways in which they can succeed or fail. Austin (1962) classifies speech acts into five categories of: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behavitives and expositives. Searle’s (1969) classification may be regarded as extension of Austin’s illocutionary acts. He proposes five acts namely: representative, declarative, directive, expressive and commissive.

- (a) **Representatives or Assertives:** speech acts that commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, e.g. reciting, asserting, claiming, describing, concluding, reporting, suggesting, predicting, stating, etc.
- (b) **Directives:** speech acts that are to cause the hearer to take a particular action, e.g. requesting, commanding, advising, questioning, pleading, inviting, warning, etc.
- (c) **Commissives:** speech acts that commit a speaker to some future action, e.g. promising, threatening, offering, guaranteeing, vowing, betting, challenging, etc.
- (d) **Expressives:** speech acts that express the speaker's attitudes and emotions towards the proposition, e.g. congratulating, thanking, apologising, appreciating, complaining, condoling, greeting, scolding, etc.
- (e) **Declaratives:** speech acts that change the reality in accordance with the proposition of the declaration, e.g. baptising, pronouncing someone guilty or pronouncing someone husband and wife, arresting, etc.



The Indirect Speech Act is another manifestation of a speaker's illocution introduced by Searle. It is regarded as indirect 'illocutionary' act. Searle (1969) describes indirect speech acts as a situation where the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer." Yule (2006) opines that direct speech acts are straightforward and, in most cases, performative verbs are used while the indirect speech acts require inferences on the part of the hearer or reader. With his doctrine of indirect 'illocutionary' act, Searle attempts to explain how it is possible that a speaker can say something and mean it and additionally mean something else. That is why Mey (2001:194) claims pragmatics is 'the science of the unsaid'. According to Mey (ibid), indirect speech acts derive their force not just from their lexico-semantic build-up, but from the situation in which they are appropriately uttered (p. 219). An account of such act will require such things as an analysis of mutually shared background information about the conversation, as well as of rationality and linguistic conventions.

Several works have been carried out on Fulani herdsmen and Ruga settlements from different perspectives e.g. historical (i.e Abbass 2014), social science (i.e. Ofuoku and Isife, 2009; Abdulbaqi and Ariemu, 2017; Ningxin Li, 2018; Egbuta, 2018) and socio-economic (i.e. Abbass, 2010; Chijoke, Ikechukwu and Aduma, 2019) and many others. This is a study in linguistics, from a purely pragmatic perspective using the speech act theory as our analytical tool.

Data Analysis

The data for this work were comments made by Nigerians on the Fulani herdsmen's activities and the proposed Ruga settlements as reported in the online publications of Sahara Reporters, Vanguard, Daily Post, PM News and Punch newspapers published between January 2018 and August 2019. The selected utterances were analysed using the linguistic framework of Speech Act theory by Austin (1962), Searle (1969). A total number of 20 (twenty) utterances were purposively selected and subjected to illocutionary act analysis (direct and indirect) which brings the total number of speech acts performed to 40 (forty). The perlocutionary effects of the locutions on the hearer (s) were also measured from the illocutionary force of each utterance and on the mutual contextual beliefs shared by the interlocutors. Efforts were made to calculate the percentage of each speech act type based on its frequency so as to make the interpretation of the table clear and empirical. Thus, we have:

$$\frac{\text{Frequency of a speech act}}{\text{Total number of speech acts}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Analysis of Selected Utterances

Perlocutionary act according to Levinson (1980) is the intended or unintended consequence of the speaker's utterance. They are responses by listeners to locutions facilitated by the contextual beliefs, that is, salient information shared by the speaker and the listener from the communicative context. In other words, an act is communicated successfully as soon as the speaker's intention is recognized by the hearer. Therefore "the intended effect of an act of communication is not just any effect produced by means of the recognition of the intention to produce a certain effect, it is the recognition of the effect." From this perspective,



"perlocutionary acts are limited to the "intentional production of effects on (or in) the hearer" (Bach and Harnish, 1979: 15). However, to examine the perlocution of each utterance will entail understanding its illocutionary act (direct and indirect).

The utterances for analysis are numbered 1 to 20. The personalities to whom the utterances are credited had certain intentions within Nigeria's contending ethno-political affiliations and religious context. This also goes for the listeners as well. The perlocutionary thrust of each utterance is thus measured from two major perspectives: the herders and their supporters as against the farmers and every other person opposed to herdsmen's activities in Nigeria. The two groups share the same context but different ideological beliefs, occupational differences, religious and ethnic allegiance, which informed their utterances and affected the reactions from listeners. We shall now examine the twenty utterances one after the other:

- 1: If any ethnic militia, by any name, attacks our members, they should defend themselves in a manner that nobody would try such again. *Sahara Reporters, July 20, 2019.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
 - ii. Indirect: directive (ordering)
- 2: Anybody that thinks he can wake up and take on the Fulani pastoralist is making a grievous mistake; we are well prepared to defend our fundamental human rights of movement in this country". *Daily Post July 28, 2018.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
 - ii. Indirect: commissive (threatening)
- 3: Those so-called northern youths called a coalition of northern groups should note that if because of their action any herder is killed, we will first look for them before we go after our enemies. *Daily Post July 28, 2018.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
 - ii. Indirect: commissive (threatening)
- 4: We are Nigerians and we are not going anywhere....if anybody is thinking that because he has cultivated the land in a particular place for long and he has rights there more than us, then we would ask where is the grazing area that the colonial masters created for us - *Daily Post July 28, 2018.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (asserting)
- ii. Indirect: commissive (warning)



- 5: We attacked Benue community because they attacked and stole our cows- *Daily post Jan.1, 2018.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: expressive (accepting responsibility)

- 6: No Miyetti Allah member would honour any invitation from the police in respect of any killings. *Daily Post July 28, 2018.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: expressive (vowing)

- 7: They (herdsmen) are Nigerians, so they are entitled to stay where they are, they should remain where they are and defend themselves against ethnic militia and assert their citizenship in this country. *Sahara Reporters, July 20, 2019.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: directive (ordering)

Utterances 1 to 7 above are made by members of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), a Fulani interest group with the sole interest of protecting Fulani herders and their family. Each locution is made with particular intention and garnished with much intentional venom. Therefore, the expected perlocutions to utterances 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7, would be *incitements* on both sides of the divide. The herders would not also be exited and emboldened to further extend their activities to the nooks and crannies of the nation but also confront anyone who impedes their incursion to his farmland. On the other hand, those utterances would generate opposite reactions from farmers and their sympathizers who would feel bitter, angered, and become more vigilant to ward off any invasion of their farmlands by the herdsmen. To them, the utterances constitute a face-threatening act which Brown and Levinson (1987) define as “an act which challenges the face wants of an interlocutor. In this case, the positive face of farmers and their cohort has been threatened. To Brown and Levinson (ibid), Positive face of the listener is threatened if the speaker makes:

- (i) expressions negatively evaluating the hearer’s positive face, e.g. disapproval, criticism, complaints, accusations, contradictions, disagreements etc., as well as
- (ii) expressions which show that the speaker does not care about hearer’s positive face, e.g. expressions of violent emotions, taboo topics, bad news, emotional topics

Such expressions could result to hatred and violence between herders and farmers.



Utterances 5 and 6, also made by members of MACBAN would generate conflicting perlocutions as well. Utterance 5, which is an obvious confession to a crime, would generate a sense of vengeful fulfillment and jubilation from the herders and their supporters while it will make the opposition sad, terrorised, and annoyed. The tone of utterance 6 is strict, depicting the rigid stand of herders to disobey the law of the country by refusing police invitation. The herders will be happy and jubilant for refusing to be held accountable for alleged crime committed. On the contrary, it will lead to anger and despondent reactions from opponents of herders in the society. It may also lead to confrontation between the herders and the law enforcement agents.

The intentions of the speakers in the remaining set of utterances are conspicuously against the establishment of Ruga settlements and the activities of herdsmen in the country. They are statements credited to speakers from the South East, South West and the Middle Belt regions of Nigeria.

- 8: MASSOB vehemently reject the attempt by a terrorist group in disguise called Myetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) to establish a Fulani vigilante group in Biafra land, it is provocative and an insult to Ndigbo....”

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: expressive (complaining)

Utterance 8 is credited to a member of MASSOB (Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra), a socio-political group based in the South-East Nigeria who expressed the group’s opposition to Fulani herdsmen’s activities in the Eastern part of the country. The expected perlocutions to the utterance are incitements and hatred on both sides. The Easterners who are dominantly farmers and Christians will be happy while the herders will be angered, even more by labeling them a terrorist group.

- 9: The Root Cause of Fulani Herdsmen Killings is Gen. Buhari” – *Sahara Reporters, July 02, 2019.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (judging)

- 10: RUGA Initiative is Islamisation and Fulanisation of Nigeria. *Sahara Reporters, July 02, 2019.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (asserting)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (judging)

- 11: It is really very myopic for anyone in this age and era to think a particular tribe can dominate. Nigeria. *PM News, August 30, 2019*



Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (assessing)

12: Buhari seeking to colonize Nigeria through establishment of Ruga settlement. *Sahara Reporters, June 30, 2019*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (judging)

13: Ruga settlement, an attempt to fulanise Nigeria. *PM News August 30, 2019.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (judging)

Utterances 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 are assertions and direct indictment of President Muhammadu Buhari led federal government as being partial and insensitive to the killings across the country allegedly carried out by the Fulani herdsmen. Lexical expressions such as “colonise”, “fulanise”, “islamise” and “dominate” as used in the sentences connote negativity as they evoke ethnic and religious imposition, and ethnic dominance and subjugation. The utterances will generate hatred, anger and incitement on both sides of the divide. It will pitch the predominantly Muslims Fulani herders against the farmers and other Christians in Nigeria.

14: Ruga initiative must be rejected because the government’s ultimate plan is to take over ancestral land from indigenous owners and give it to a particular people”. *PM News August 30, 2019.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (predicting)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (judging)

Utterance 14 above is similar to 1-13 only uttered as a stern warning to those whose lands may be taken by the federal government for the planned Ruga settlement. The expected perlocutions will include vigilance, anger and incitement. Perlocutions may also include protest against the federal government’s planned settlement for herders and their families. These same reactions will likely occur for utterance 15 below:

15: If the herdsmen as wanderers had perpetrated untold crimes against indigenous people on a scale that is nothing but genocidal, it is left to the imagination what they would do when the Federal Government of Nigeria now forces them on these communities as landlords. *Sahara Reporters, June 30, 2019.*



Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (assessing)

The above is a conditional statement intended to incite listeners. It is an indirect prediction of doom for the proposed host communities. There is a meeting point between utterance 15 and 1 as both are conditional statements, that is 'if p then q' and thus contain conversational implicatures. As Cruse (2006) educates us, "implicatures are parts of the meaning of utterances which although intended, are not strictly part of 'what is said' in an utterance and neither do they follow logically from what is said". There are two basic sorts of implicatures namely Conventional and Conversational implicatures. Utterances 1 and 15 present a case of Conversational implicatures in which meaning is inferred and for which contextual information is crucial (85). Furthermore, the utterances qualify to be categorized as conversational implicature given the circumstances that their call for violence could be deduced.

16: Over 150 innocent men, women and children were hacked to pieces in cold blood because of cows? Are we really one country?" *Daily Post January 7, 2018.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: expressive (condemning)

Utterance 16 above is a rhetorical question aimed at lampooning the system and the perpetrators of the expressed dastardly act. The utterance will no doubt generate mixed reactions from members of the society. It will generate anger, hatred and zeal for revenge on the part of non-herders who lost their loved ones while the opposition will demonstrate a sense of joy and fulfillment.

Utterances 17, 18, 19 and 20 below are assertive with laid claims to certain propositions.

17: The Buhari administration's failure to declare the killer Fulani herdsmen as terrorists and prosecute the Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore Fulani Socio-Cultural Association that has allegedly incited genocide and ethnic cleansing of Benue people, particularly the Tiv race, has given us cause for concern." *Vanguard June 3, 2018.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (judging)

18: This is because of the fact that they (Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria) had invited all herdsmen from around West and Central Africa to converge on Benue State and vowed to use all means available to visit mayhem on Benue people". *Vanguard June 3, 2018.*



Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (judging)

19: We challenge the Federal Government to tell us any court in the country where any herdsman is being tried today for all the killings, kidnappings, raping of women and destruction of farmland they have carried out against innocent citizens. *Sahara Reporters, June 30, 2019.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: commissive (challenging)

20 We must not forget nor shy away from expressing our fears about the impression being created, latent or apparent, that the Miyetti Allah has become the mouth piece of the Federal Government. *Vanguard June 3, 2018.*

Illocutionary act

- i. Direct: assertive (stating)
- ii. Indirect: verdictive (judging)

Utterances 17 and 19 and 20 are directed at the federal government and presuppose that members of the Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore Fulani Socio-Cultural Association are unduly favoured by the FG. Grundy (2000) regards presupposition as “the existing knowledge common to speaker and hearer that the speaker does not therefore need to assert. This presupposed knowledge is then taken together with the propositions asserted in the utterance and the addressee’s knowledge of the world as the basis on which an inference is drawn as to the implied meaning, or implicature, that the utterance conveys”. In essence, this undue favour inferred from the utterances incapacitates the federal government from taking a decisive action against members of MACBAN and are, therefore, direct indictment of the referents- the federal government. Utterance 18 also portrayed the federal government as covertly supporting the herder’s activities against other ethnic groups and occupations in the country. The expected perlocutions of the utterances will be hatred and anger between the herders and non-herders in the society, and also against the federal government for failure to act decisively against the herdsman. They will also generate lack of trust in the federal government.



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of our data and the frequency distribution of speech act types as revealed on the table below

Table 1: Frequency of Illocutionary Acts

Number	Acts	Frequencies	Percentage
1.	Assertives	20	50%
2.	Commissives	04	10%
3.	Directives	02	5%
4.	Verdictives	10	25%
5.	Expressives	04	10%
Total	-	40	100%

The illocutionary acts of the utterances have both direct and indirect intentions. Out of the forty speech acts performed, twenty of them are under the category of assertive. In other words, the percentage of assertive acts stands at 50%. Verdictive takes 25% with a total of ten performed. Commissive and expressive acts are 10% each with four occurrences, while the lowest is the directive act which is 5% from the two performed. The utterances analysed perform both direct and indirect acts. This reveals that most of the expressions exhibit powerful illocutionary force by revealing the actual intention of the speaker at the indirect level. The perlocutions are as a result of the force exhibited by the indirect illocutions.

From the foregoing, the paper probes into the pragmatic conditions that made the speeches qualify as abuses or inflammatory ones within Nigeria's context. The overriding tone in most of the comments examined is offensive and abusive. They are mostly attacks tilted towards regional, ethnic, occupational and religious affiliation of a particular group of people. In view of the diverse nature of the Nigeria's population, it is evident that the analysed comments are provocative. The provocative outbursts from members of the society with extreme vituperations compounded the extant trepidations indexical of imminent calamities that such allegations and counter allegations could trigger. This volatile situation was more often instigated by the use of very obnoxious, untrammled and flagrant use of objectionable expressions as reported in the media.

The speeches pitch Nigerians against one another, echoing the impending danger of violence, war and secession that threatened the nation. In other words, they are considered as hate speech. Perhaps, it is in sensing the looming danger that the federal government suspended the Ruga settlement initiative. Thus, the conclusion in this paper will be that, there would have been a general consensus on the establishment of Ruga settlements across the country without affecting the peaceful co-existence of people if social commentators, members of professional associations, ethnic and religious leaders had minded their language, if their language of expressions had depicted dialogue rather than incitement for confrontation and violence.



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