A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Moral-Boosting Songs and Chants of Soldiers in 14 Brigade Barracks, Ohafia, Abia State of Nigeria

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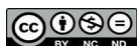
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the nature of the morale-boosting songs and chant of soldiers of the 14 Brigade Army Barracks in Ohafia, Abia State, Nigeria. The data used for the analysis of this study are drawn from the songs and chants from fatigue exercises of officers and soldiers in 14 Brigade Barracks. Using Fairclough's model of discourse analysis, this research argues that the language register among men of the Nigerian Army in the aforesaid barracks is derived from a triadic component arising from: the corrupting of certain language words and subjects, intrusion of indigenous verbs and adverbs; and economy of words to boost or heighten the spirits of soldiers. The article contends that the lyrics of the songs and chants, beyond entertaining to officers and soldiers of the Nigerian Army, displays soldiers' assumed power over fear, death, fear of death and death by fear. The conclusion reached is that the songs and chants of soldiers during fatigue exercises is goal oriented and subtly defy rank especially during military gyrations.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Songs and Chants, Soldiers, 14 Brigade Army Barracks.

Introduction

Whether primitive or modern, armies around the world needed to be trained in order to fight well and win wars. Whether in battle or training, the use of songs to encourage troops individually and collectively is as old as human civilization (Ajanaku, 2011:19). Songs, chants and shouts have been used to motivate troops to do exploit far beyond the limit of Morale-boosting songs and chants have been used by ancient civilizations like the Assyrian, Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Spartan, Carthaginian and Roman armies. Medieval British, French and Spanish armies went into battle with their drums rolling. Ancient African armies were not left out in the use of songs, chants and shouts before, during and after battles. The Zulu of South Africa, the Yoruba, Bachama, Tiv, Angas, Igbo and Zuru peoples of Nigeria, the Tuaregs of Northern Africa have been known to have adopted some forms of songs and chants to boost the morale of their fighting men during battles. In most cases, the songs and chants are learnt by rote and handed down through oral traditions. This is the way troops still learn morale-boosting songs in the Nigerian Army (Ajanaku, 2011). Most officers and soldiers pass through years of training, exercises and operations singing these songs and chants to display the spirit of the corps, power and bravery. The arrangement of the songs and chants are sometimes lyrical or sensitive and effectively commandeers and adapts the rhythm and rhyme schemes of poetry. The shortness and repetitiveness of the songs lend themselves to easy learning and adaptation. Subjecting the lyrics to critical discourse analysis shows that the songs and chants convey power; or, a kind of believe that soldiers have power over death.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that uses language as a form of social practice. It focuses on the ways social and political domination are produced in text or interpersonal conversation. According to van Dijk (1998:1), CDA is "a type of discourse in analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, produced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context". According to him, with this dissident premise, a critical discourse analyst takes explicit position and tends to comprehend, expose and principally reject social and political inequality in a speech community. CDA as a linguistic field does not confine itself only to method, but also to the overriding assumption shared by CDA practitioners that language and power are linked. The call and response songs of the men of the Nigerian military offer an insight into which the linkages between language and power can be understood.

2. 14 Brigade Barracks, Ohafia

The 14 Brigade Barrack is located in Abia State, Eastern Nigeria. The barracks houses 3,000 men of the Nigerian army 14 Brigade and hosts the 145 Battalion office complexes. Inaugurated in 2011, the barracks was established to lead in sustaining peace and security in Abia State as well as spur the growth of the local economy of the host community (www.army.mil.ng 2017). The 14 Brigade Barracks also accommodates sub-units in Akwa Ibom State, Ebonyi, Imo and Rivers states. The garrison has several Mammy markets, Mess Halls for senior and junior officers.

According to Davis (2011), the barracks is cosmopolitan. It is a community-within-community comprising officers and soldiers across the divergent ethnics, tribes and languages. The social behaviour of men within the barracks is highly regimental during work hours but casual or civic during evenings. On weekends, Officers and soldiers of the 14 Brigade visit the Mammy market or Officers' Mess to socialize. During football match hours or days, both senior and junior officers converge to watch the English Premier League or any other league they support. More often, several troops carry out fatigue exercises within the barracks during which they chant and sing songs to assert their commitment, bravery and/or mock weakness. In most cases, certain idiolects, words with divergent tribal roots, songs or adjectives are inverted to create another meaning within the military context or speech situation. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers this research a theoretical bastion to examine the songs and chants of soldiers of 14 Brigade Barracks, Ohafia.

3. Conceptual Explanations

There are several approaches to understanding Critical Discourse Analysis with social cognitive model, social and historical model and discourse as social practice model leading the plethora of models. This study adopts discourse as social practice model in understanding the songs and chants of soldiers in 14 Brigade. According to Wodak (1996), CDA is one of the most significant analytical tools for interpreting and/or explaining text were notions of ideology, power, hierarchy and gender varies. CDA actually sees language as social practice and considers the context of language use to be crucial. It sees discourse as language use in speech and writing as a form of social practice. Wodak (1996: 7-8) says:

Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectal relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them

She contends that reference to the contribution of Critical Theory to understanding CDA and the notions of "critical and "ideology" are of great importance. This arguably explains why Thompson (1999) discusses the concepts of ideology and culture in relation to some aspects of Mass Communication. He points out that ideology refers to social forms and processes within which symbolic form circulates in the social world. Meanwhile, for CDA, ideology is seen as an important means of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations. CDA takes a particular interest in the ways in which language mediates ideology in a variety of social institutions. Thompson (1999) sees the study of ideology as the study of "the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds".

In furtherance of her argument, Wodak points out that for CDA, language is not powerful on its own and that it only gains power by the way the powerful people make use of it. This explains why CDA chooses the perspective of those who suffer and critically analyses the language use of those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who also have the means and the opportunity to improve conditions (Olagunju 2012:16). She concludes that:

The defining features of CDA are to be seen in its concern with power as a central condition in social life, and in its efforts to develop a theory of language which incorporates this as a major premise. Not only the notion of struggles for power and control, but also the intertextualization of competing discourses in various public spaces and genres.

From Wodak's assertion, it could be argued that the principal objective of CDA is to ascertain the relationship between language, power and control. In other words, how power, through language, could be used as means of social control. If power is about relations of difference in social structures, then the all-time unity of language and other social matters ensures that language is interlaced in social power in some ways such as: language indexes power and expresses power; it is involved where there is contention over power and where power is challenged. In agreement with van Dijk's (1998) definition, Wodak fundamentally defines it as interested not only in analyzing opaque but also transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. It aims at investigating critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted and legitimized by language use in discourse. This arguably explains the claim of Habermas (1967:259) that, "language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power."

To this end, this study sees the songs and chants of soldiers as language for exhibiting power.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study deploys Fairclough's (1989) theorization of CDA as its theoretical base. Fairclough's (1989) idea of CDA asks questions about the way specific discourse structures are deployed in the reproduction of social dominance, whether they are part of a conversation or a news report or other genres and contexts.

In Fairclough's (1995) approach to CDA, there are three analytical focuses in analyzing any communicative event (interaction). They are text (e.g. a news report), discourse practice (e.g. the process of production and consumption), and sociocultural practice (e.g. social and cultural structures which give rise to the communicative event). These closely resemble van Dijk's three dimensions of ideology analysis: discourse, sociocognition, and social analysis respectively. What seems to be the difference between Fairclough's and van Dijk's approach is the second dimension, which mediates between the other two. Whereas van Dijk perceives social cognition and mental models as mediating between discourse and the social, Fairclough believes that this task is assumed by discourse practices—text production and consumption (Fairclough 1995:59). In this case, these two approaches of CDA are "similar in conception".

Fairclough's (1995) framework for analyzing communicative event is text, discourse practice and socio-cultural practice. The first analytical focus of Fairclough's three-part model is text. Analysis of text involves linguistic analysis in terms of vocabulary, grammar, semantics, the sound system, and cohesion-organization above the sentence level (Fairclough, 1995:57). Linguistic analysis is applied to text's lexical-grammatical and semantic properties, two aspects that have mutual impact on each other (Fairclough 1995:57-58).

Fairclough (1995) states that Discourse Practice has two facets: institutional process (e.g. editorial procedures), and discourse processes (changes the text go through in production and consumption). For Fairclough (1995:60), "discourse practice straddles the division between society and culture on the one hand, and discourse, language and text on the other".

For Fairclough (1995:62), analysis in Socio-cultural practice pertains to three aspects of the sociocultural context of a communicative event: economic (i.e. economy of the media), political (i.e. power and ideology of the media), and cultural (i.e. issues of values). According to him, one does not have to carry out analysis at all levels but any level that might "be relevant to understanding the particular event". Fairclough (1995:36) posits that "an account of communication in the mass media must consider the economics and politics of the mass media: the nature of the market which the mass media are operating within, and their relationship to the state, and so forth".

Fairclough's (1989) Discourse as a Social Practice Model of CDA is employed in the analysis. The model gives the general picture of the place of language in society. The general picture is elaborated on the relationship between language and power and the relationship between language and ideology (Olagunju 2011:40). Fairclough believes that language is centrally involved in power struggles and struggles for power and that it is so involved through its ideological properties. Fairclough's rationalization holds sway in the formal and informal conversations within the military domain. This study validates this claim by critically examining the morale-boosting songs and chants of soldiers in 14 Brigade Barracks Ohafia, Abia State Nigeria.

5. Methodological Insight

This study deploys the qualitative research instrumentation. It used observational and documentary instrumentations to generate data for this research. The primary data for the study were recorded covertly using mobile phone recording application. The conversations were later transcribed for qualitative analysis. For secondary data, the study used sources from the internet and bibliotheca from university repositories and libraries.

The method of data analysis is textual. The researcher considers three aspects of the data: namely, the analysis of the rhetorical context, the analysis of the textual features and the contextual analysis of the text. Rhetorical context involves analyzing who the speaker is, his role or position and the intended audience. The second aspect analyses textual features, such as the issues being addressed and the main claim of the speaker. The last aspect is placing the text within social context. In order to achieve the three aspects of the textual analysis mentioned earlier, the three stages of analytical procedure proposed by Fairclough (1989) are used. The

three components of the analytical procedure are: description (formal properties of the text); Interpretation (the relationship between text and interaction by seeing the text as the product of the process of production and as a resource in the process of interpretation); and explanation (the relationship between interaction and social context, with the social determination of the process of production and interpretation, and their effects).

The Songs and Chants are presented as "Song and Chant" along with other units such as domain (the physical context or situation in which a communication exchange takes place), interlocutor, speech situation, role relation and topic of discourse.

6. Songs and Chants of Soldiers in 14 Brigade Barracks, Ohafia

Three different data have been selected and hereby presented for analysis. Each data is tagged Song and Chant (SaC) for proper identification. Three of these exchanges are presented for ease of analysis and comprehension.

SONGS AND CHANTS A (Parade ground/Road walk)
Domain: Military
Interlocutor: Commander and Soldiers
Speech situation: Military fatigue
Role relation: Officer/Instructor – Soldiers
Topic of discourse: Morale-boosting Songs.
Call and Response

a. Instructor/Soldiers: Jejejeje we deh go o…
    Soldiers: Jeje we deh go o jeje (We are going peacefully) repeatedly
    b.   Instructor/Soldiers: This is the way I wanted to be o
    Soldiers: This is the way I wanted to be
    All: Eeeeh! I want to be a soldier 2x
    All: Eh eh eh I want to be a soldier this is the way I wanted to be
    c.Instructor: Oh chobeh (Apes obey)
    All: Eh!
    Instructor: Morale
    All: High!

A call and response song and chant sung by a military instructor and soldiers during a fatigue exercise in 14 Brigade Barracks in Ohafia before deployment to Umuahia to quell the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

SONGS AND CHANTS B (Road Walk)
Domain: Military
Interlocutor: Commander and Soldiers
Speech situation: Military fatigue
Role relation: Officer/Instructor – Soldiers
Topic of discourse: Morale-boosting Songs.
    a) **Instructor/Soldiers:** Today today tomorrow no more, if I die today I will die no more
    b) **Instructor/Soldiers:** Dem go born better, dem go born better, if soldier marry soldier dem go born better
    c) **Instructor/Soldiers:** Dem go born mumu, dem go born mumu, if civilian marry civilian dem go born mumu

As soldiers set out for early morning jogging, each platoon is being led by a soldier/instructor who leads the military chants/songs and the soldiers are made to respond accordingly. The context within which they sing these songs is to assert their conceived power over death.

SONGS AND CHANTS C (Mammy Market's Convergence)
Domain: Military
Interlocutor: Soldiers and Civilians
Speech situation: Rumming (as in, rum)
Role relation: Soldiers – Soldiers
Topic of discourse: Gallantry and Weakling.

Call and Response
a) **Caller:** Wetin dem sey go spoil our barrack jaburata?
   Soldiers: Mai lemu go spoil our barrack jaburata
b) **Soldiers:** Police o, na one cloth u dey wia eh /2x
Everyday na one beret na one cloth you dey wear eh
c) **Soldiers:** Every Junction polici dey; eh eh polici dey, Oga oga driver…

This song was sung with much revelry in the Mammy market. The song suggests the bravery of men of the Nigerian Army while suggesting that the influx of women would weaken men in the barracks. They also mock the police force for having no bravery likening their uniform to weakness.

Word Level of the Songs and Chants
At the word level in the morale-boosting songs and chants of soldiers in 14 Brigade Barracks, there is a massive deployment of irony and pluralized pronoun to refer to their activities and themselves. This plays out in Songs and Chants A (a) thus:

Jeje we dey go o
Jeje we dey go o jeje /2x

The word, "jeje" is Yoruba. It is tightly translated to means "patience", "softly" or "gently". The literal meaning of these words does not symbolize the training of the soldiers; and most especially the mission for which they have been assigned—the Egwe Eke II (Python Dance II). The soldiers are being ironical here. "Jeje Jeje" for them implies "eagerly and hastily" we are going. The use of "We" to refer to the platoon shows the intention of the entire force. This is also evident in Songs and Chants B (b and c) where the soldiers refer to everyone outside of the military regiment as "dem" and "mumu". For soldiers, the outside world is disorderly and the only way order can be restored is to deploy a regimental discipline in the family life. The irony of the song "dem go born better 2x…" does not lie in the actual marriage between soldiers but in the institution of discipline, resoluteness and everything that the soldiers represent in the family life. Again, the song deploys plural pronoun, "dem" in SaC (a) to refer to everyone and likens a lady to mai lemu.
Mai lemu in Hausa language means 'orange seller'. Nevertheless, within the context of the song, 'mai lemu' means 'the owner or seller of breast' for financial gains. The soldiers perceive most women as one of the subjects that can weaken their regimental organization due to women's nature; which they think is opposite to the life of a soldier.

Grammar
English of the military are mostly in the active voice since commands have the premise to do so. It is a general belief that soldiers do not speak Standard English during fatigue exercises. Consequently, most of the soldiers' grammatical expressions do not follow syntactic rules. In some cases their expressions do not have subject and predicate. In some others, they use one word to represent a whole sentence, especially when they give orders. The following extracts precede some of the morale boosting songs during fatigue exercises in 14 Brigade:
Exchange A
a. Soldier: On a single file for checking! From my left to right
Here, the expression should have grammatically read "you should all be on a single file for checking". On the other hand, one could conclude that soldiers employed economy of efforts in simply removing the subject and verb in the above expression. This is made manifest in the words in SaC A, "Morale!" "High!" Grammatically, the song should have read, "My morale! Is High" or "Your Morale" while the soldiers would chant "High"

Style
In the area of style, one discovers certain peculiarities which condition the manner of rendition in relation to the contextual variables of a military setting. The style is characterized by a language with short phrases performing sentential functions; and which are normally accompanied with unusual noise and assertive tone but with a directive illocutionary force as identified by Searle (1969). Words or expressions are corrupted to alter meaning. For example, this is evident in SaC A and C above:

iii. Instructor: Ochobe! Eh! (Apes obey)
iv. All: Mai Lemu spoil our barracks jaburata (For ladies breasts weaken gallantry)

The word, "Jaburata" is Yoruba. It is used in the song as an adverb to show the degree to which soldiers have remained gallant in spite of the number of women living in the barracks. Again, the use of wind instruments like

whistle and beagle in the songs and chants help in the formation of beats. Most times, they control the tempo of the songs or even introduce chants.

Register

It is no gain saying that every profession, person, society and human endeavour has its language or to put it technically, register. In this, nonetheless, the military as an entity is not an exception. It is understood that 'register' is a manifestation of variety associated with a particular context or discourse type. In the military text, certain operational terms which are colloquial in nature are common. Ajuwaya for 'as you were' is an example of such where a phrase or group of words is compressed into a word. The use of mumu for 'civilian' is also common. Other peculiar military jargons are clipped English words like mon for 'morning' in salutation – 'mon sir'; The lyric of the song in SaC A below:

Today today
Tomorrow no more
If ah die today
I will die no more

The above song shows that the register in the morale boosting songs of soldiers are mostly repetitive, they are rhythmic and that they break grammatical rules. "ah" is used in the place of "I"; "today today" or "tomorrow no more" is to emphasize their determination to overcome all circumstance, even death. The succeeding line says "If ah die today I will die no more". Grammatically, "tomorrow no more" would be incorrect. It would be correctly put as "there is no tomorrow" at the matter at hand. Nevertheless, in the context of the song, there is a display of power. The soldier reminds the world that death or the fear of it, has no power over them because they cannot die twice. For them, the first death is fear. They have overcome the fear of death and as a result can confront anything, even death.

The song reminds them of their lives, what a man is and what a man should be. The song in SaC A (b) is a testament of the desire of soldiers, confronting death. It says: "This is the way I wanted to be o…" For them, any life outside that of a soldier or military is one filled with mumu or, what they technically refer to as "bloody civilian".

7. Conclusion

The nature of the morale-boosting songs and chant of soldiers of the 14 Brigade Army Barracks in Ohafia, Abia State is highly repetitive, ungrammatical and thrived on corrupted languages which form the register of their songs. Fairclough's model of discourse analysis is used to argue that the language register among men of the Nigerian Army in the aforesaid barracks is derived from a triadic component arising from: the corrupting of certain language words and subjects, intrusion of indigenous verbs and adverbs; and economy of words to boost or heighten the spirits of soldiers.

Soldiers assert their power over people of other avowals and remind them that they have conquered the awe of death. Thus, the songs are used to boost their morale reminisce of their gallantry, the gallantry of those before them and their community life. Songs and Chants are part of the vital drivers of soldiering. For the men of the 14 Brigade Barracks, Ohafia, it drives and motivates action or combat defiance of obstacles. The songs point to only one thing for them, the mission or operation at hand.

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