

# “We will not atikuloot our future!”

## Nigerianness as stance-taking in online political discussion forums

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### Abstract

This study argues that stance-taking, a discourse strategy in linguistics, serves the purpose of giving citizens voices to engage politicians on different social media platforms and taking them to task on their political agendas during electioneering campaigns. It aims to evince the extent to which Nigerians utilise **Nigerianness** – the domestication and acculturation of English language, to express their stances about the various socio-political realities in Nigeria. It deploys online comments generated from 20 posts in *Nairaland* and *Sahara Reporters* about the Nigerian 2019 general elections, and applies Martin/White’s (2005) Appraisal Theory to address Nigerians’ functional use of Nigerianness to embody their perceptions of the Nigerian socio-political dynamics.

The study evinces that online forums are public spaces that enable Nigerians to follow up on and participate in debates on political events in the country, and the use of Nigerianness gives insight into the expectations of Nigerians from their political leaders.

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### 1 Introduction

Language is a viable tool in political communication. The business of politics is conducted via language; language is used to mobilise, influence and solicit political support. Language is used by politicians to make themselves relevant to the people as well as exercise power. Hence, it is used strategically in politics; it is only in politics that language can be used as a weapon of construction or destruction (cf. Opeibi 2009: 13). This study considers political language as the weapon of not only politicians, but also that of the electorates. It argues that language avails the Nigerian electorates the opportunity to assess their political leaders before and during electioneering campaigns in order to determine whether the leaders are worth being voted for.

The language of politics is transmitted via the media (cf. Conboy 2010); the media shapes and structures political communication, guides people towards political decision and participation, and has been noted to be the most reliable intermediary between political leaders/aspirants and the masses/electorates. Thus, the media affects the electorates’ perception of political parties, political leaders and political aspirants before, during and after elections (cf. Hopmann et al. 2010; Nwofe 2016).

The New Media, a new form of communication facilitated by the Internet, is a platform for the exchange of information using computer (and any other similar device) and the Internet. It has been noted to be an instrument of political cohesion that is most viable during elections, especially to frustrate criminal attempts to disrupt election. It makes an average Nigerian interested in politics to be an active web content generator and contributor on political matters. This study maintains that the new media facilitates political communication by giving the electorates a voice to assess, evaluate and share their opinion about their political leaders during elections without any fear of physical recrimination, being reprimanded or being arrested. It is in New Media Communication that the attitude of Nigerians towards political aspirants can be clearly ascertained.

The Nigerian 2019 general elections represented a watershed in the annals of the nation's political history. Apart from being phenomenal in terms of what is represented towards the deepening of democratic culture and party politics, the exploitation of online resources also contributed immensely to its outcome. The attitude portrayed by the electorates towards their political leaders and political aspirants is known as "stance-taking". Stance is a linguistic phenomenon that is socially and culturally bound, investigative and used to show opinion and authority. Stance is "a writer's attitude towards what they are talking about" (cf. Huston/Thompson 2000; Chandrasegaran/Kong 2006); it is similar to evaluation in that it interprets a phenomenon in a particular way by exercising a form of judgement (cf. Martin 2000). Martin's (2000) view of evaluation is embodied in appraisal which offers a classification of evaluative resources available in English (cf. Hyland 2005: 174). Appraisal, according to Martin, largely concerns the speaker's attitudinal positions: affect, judgement and appreciation; and the way they are graded for intensity. Martin/White's (2005) Appraisal Theory is thoroughly explicated in the theoretical framework section of this research, since it is the framework that is considered most appropriate for analysing the data used for this research. Studies on stance are quite new and they have revealed that stance-taking offer writers more freedom to position themselves interpersonally in different social settings. The study investigates expressions of Nigerianness in the comment sections of political news in *Nairaland* and *Premium Times* in order to evince how the Nigerianness indicates the stance of the participant.

Nigerianness within the purview of this study is the domestication and acculturation of English language in Nigeria to express various socio-political realities. This is usually done through the use of indigenous languages, code mixing, Nigerian pidgin, Nigerian English, coinages, etc. Hence, it can be perceived to be similar to the concept of Nigerianism. This study investigates the readers' comment section of the political news section of two Nigerian online forums: *Sahara Reporters* and *Nairaland* in order to provide narratives in the distinct expressions of the participants' (who are mainly Nigerians) that portray their attitude towards Nigerian political leaders. *Sahara Reporters* and *Nairaland* are popular Nigerian online platforms where news is uploaded and readers express their opinions about the news. They enjoy wide readership by Nigerians and Nigerians in the Diaspora, so the comments are generated from different perspectives. This study argues that the expressions of the participants, though attitudinal, also portray linguistic and ideological features that are peculiar to Nigerians. This study investigates the fundamental features of Nigerianness in the forums that are used to express attitude toward Nigerian politicians, Nigerian political system and other participants in the forum.

## 2 Nigerianism/Nigerianness

Studies on Nigerianism have depicted it as language use in social context (cf. Akindele 2015) necessitated by the cultural background of the speakers. Studies on Nigerianism have argued that it is a form of error or language variation in use. But this study argues that Nigerianness is a form of stance-taking.

Kaan/Amase/Tsavmbu (2013) submit that English language in Nigeria has been cultivated and domesticated as well as indigenised to accommodate the culture and traditions of Nigerians. This has contributed to the fact that English language in Nigeria has acquired colour, which is reflected in the semantics of the language. Aremu (2015) also reiterates that the use of Nigerianism is attributable to the socio-cultural knowledge of the language users. Nigerianism implies the use of nativisation, indigenisation and domestication of English language in Nigeria so that English language could fit into the indigenous norms and socio-cultural beliefs peculiar to Nigeria. Sonde (2016) opines that Nigerianism (Nigerianness) is a characteristic of Nigerian indigenous languages in English language. His study on the aspects of Nigerianism in the news reports reveals that Nigerians are well disposed to the English language because it makes its users powerful.

Acheoah's (2013) examination of the pragmatic motivation for the use of Nigerianism in text messages by Nigerians reveals that in producing utterances, Nigerians may violate the norms of English language that native speakers of English would not understand their communicative strategies. Through Nigerianness, Nigerians reinvent the English language to fit into the Nigerian socio-cultural and socio-political situations. This present study differs from Acheoah's in the sense that it investigates the peculiar linguistic expressions used by Nigerian online participants to appraise the Nigerian socio-political situation before the Nigerian 2019 general elections.

## 3 Stance-taking and Political Discourse

Studies on stance and evaluation are new and cut across mass audience texts such as journalism, media discourse and politics. Earlier studies on stance have focused on academic context though in recent times, studies on stance-taking in online political contexts have been carried out. Tanner (2001) claims that the online forum is a public space. This claim is supported by a research on the textual analysis of readers' comments on *La Tercera Internet*, a Chilean online news forum. The data which consisted of 1,670 letters containing the opinions of Chileans on the October 1998 arrest of ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet in London, reveal that the use of online forum by Chileans suggest that online public spaces not only create public opinion, but are also places for forming popular or collective memories.

The appraisal theory investigates how language users express opinions, compliment, criticise and evaluate using language. It also considers how language users use language to persuade their listeners to believe their comments (cf. Paronen 2011: 5). Al-Shunnag (2014) explores the reproduction in stance in the translations of opinionated political newspapers by accounting for how stance is conveyed in them. The data for his study comprised originally published articles in English *Washington Post* and *New York Times* reconveyed in full translations for Arabic *Al-Ghad* and *Al-Ittihad*. Findings from the study reveal that significant shifts in stance occurred in

the Arabic translations produced by *Al-Ghad* and *Al-Ittihad*, which results in the weakening of accentuation and entire loss of original stance.

Arrese (2011) opines that stance serves the strategic function of legitimisation, and the use of stance contributes to ideological positioning which is reflected in the expressions of politicians. Her study examined the use of linguistic resources in political speeches and parliamentary statements in English and Spanish in order to reveal the characterising interpersonal features of the speeches in relation to the domains of stance and intersubjectivity, and the intercultural differences in political discourse practices. The study reveals that political discourse in English appears to be characterised by extensive use of markers of epistemic stance, while Spanish favours the use of affective stance markers. Also, all of the politicians favour the use of expressions that denote subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

Readers' comments in the opinion of Hille/Bakke (2014: 564), are interesting subjects for investigation in the context of audience participation in journalism. Da Silva (2015: 2) maintains that readers' comments can be understood as civic forums where citizens exchange ideas and where civic talk takes place. They, according to Singer/Ashman (2009: 13), can be seen as a desirable contribution to journalism and to a healthy democratization of discourse. In the opinions of Patrut/Cmeciuc (2012: 424), online forums do not pose restrictions; they allow all potential readers to take part in vivid debates about a particular issue. The anonymity and openness of these forums are two characteristics which encourage users to freely express their point of view. They provide a virtual space where physically absent participants try to validate their personal opinions about a particular issue and also allow for uncensored interactive communication amongst participants (cf. Schultz 1999, cited in Patrut/Cmeciuc 2012).

Muxel (2014) submits that the new media has changed the framework for political and civic engagement in that it has given people the leverage to denounce or castigate politicians and political actors, and it has fostered collective mobilisation and a critical stance towards politicians. However, Owen (1999) opines that the New Media sometimes undermine citizens' faith in politicians and government, and also makes people less satisfied with political institutions because of its tendency to disseminate negative news about politicians and government in order to criticise their actions (cf. Haas 2004 as cited in Xia/Shen 2018). Thus, the new media could induce in the citizens a low level of political satisfaction. This is in consonance with Muxel's (2014) views that the new media has made people more demanding of political leaders; they expect more from them and their expectations have increased the interest of the youths in representative politics. Even when they do not vote, they partake in activities of political parties and trade unions online by protesting and volunteering. This assertion is evident in Unuabonah/Oyebode's (2021) examination of internet memes circulated during the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria; the study demonstrates that memes are used to protest corruption, perceived government deceit, inadequate health and social amenities, etc. It is for this reason that Dalton (2016) submits that the Internet has created new ways to be politically engaged, and Sey/Castells (2005) opine that the Internet is the "ultimate technology of freedom and is a potential saviour of political ills of representation and participation". In order to clarify the relationship between the Internet and political participation, Stanley/Weare (2004) investigate an online discussion forum during an agency's strategic planning exercise. Findings from the study portray that extending opportunities for participation can attract new voices, thereby

changing decision makers' information environment. In order to defend a similar position as Dalton above, McAllister (2016) examines the role of the internet in shaping political knowledge among youths and its effect on their political participation. The data for the study which comprise a large national election survey of the Australian 2013 election show that the use of the internet during election campaign significantly increases political knowledge among youths which in turn increases their chances of voting. Hsieh/Li (2013) likewise investigate the data from the Taiwan 2008 social change survey to examine the relationship between the internet and online political participation by looking at online media use for social interaction and engagement in civic talk online. The study suggests that interpersonal factors such as online civic talk and media multiplexity are positively associated with online political participation. This, in their opinion, goes on to prove that people who discuss politics online and those who use the New Media for social interaction are likely to articulate for political thoughts in online public spaces and also likely to contact legislators or political officials directly.

Based on the arguments presented in the section, this present study further argues that the new media in Nigeria is beyond a space for political interactions – it is a space for political articulation that demonstrates Nigerians' unique communicative prowess.

#### 4 Methods

The data for this descriptive and qualitative study comprise 20 online posts about the Nigerian 2019 general elections and one hundred comments on each of the posts gathered from *Nairaland* and *Sahara Reporters* before the 2019 elections.

The data were read and features of Nigerianness in them were identified and categorised based on the stances embedded in them. The stances were coded "RC" and numbered accordingly. Martin/White's (2005) "Appraisal Theory" was used to address the functional use of Nigerianness as stance taking to embody the online participants' perception of Nigerian politics, the Nigerian socio-political system and Nigerian political leaders.

Appraisal theory studies the realisation of the opinion and attitude of language users in different contexts of human communication. It evolved within the framework of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL). It relies on Halliday's (1994/2004) and Halliday/Matthiessen's (1995) framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics for its grammatical perspective and Martin/Rose's (2003) framework of discourse analysis; thus, it can be assumed that it is a merge of discourse analysis and grammar.

The Appraisal Theory has three interacting domains: Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. Attitude pertains to feelings, emotional reaction, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things. Engagement is concerned with detecting attitudes and Graduation attends to grading of phenomena (cf. Martin/White 2005: 35). This study is interested in how Attitude is embedded in distinct Nigerian expressions to portray dissent against Nigerian politicians and the Nigerian political system.

Attitude accounts for the expressions of meanings that can be graded, intensified and compared. These meanings include feelings, emotional reaction and perceptions of people's behaviour. Attitudinal meanings are grammatically realised through adjectives and they can be inscribed or invoked. They are inscribed when their meanings are explicitly expressed in the literal mean-

ing of the words, that is, in explicit lexical items; they are invoked when their meanings can only be implied from the context in which they are used. Attitude is sub-categorised into: Affect, Judgement and Appreciation.

Affect deals with the realisation of human emotions and feelings, whether positive or negative. Judgement refers to perceptions of people's behaviour and character either in positive or negative terms. It is sub-categorised into "Judgement of Social Sanction" and "Judgement of Social Esteem". Judgement of social esteem deals with normality (how unusual someone is), capacity (how capable they are, and tenacity (how resolute they are). It is enshrined, in oral culture (Eggins/Slade 1997 cited in Martin/White 2005).

Judgement of sanction on the other hand, entails veracity (how truthful someone is) and propriety (how ethical someone is). It is coded in writings like decrees, edicts, rules, etc. about how to behave and the consequences for misbehaving. Appreciation concerns meanings that pertain to the evaluation of things we make and performances we give, as well as natural phenomena. It is sub-divided into Reaction (whether they catch our attention or please us), Composition (balance and complexity) and Valuation (how authentic and timely they are). Appreciation can also be evaluated positively or negatively.

## 5 Analysis and Discussions

This section identifies features of Ngerianness in the opinion of the participants of the forums used for this study, the evaluative features encoded in their use of Ngerianness and the implications of these on the Nigerian political system before the Nigerian 2019 general election. The analysis of the appraisal resources used by the participants explicates their opinion-related meanings in their use of Ngerianness; thus, the analysis encompasses the participants' perception of Nigerian political parties, politicians, political aspirants and other participants in the forum.

### 5.1 Identity and Ethnicity as Stance

Ngerianness in the data reflects the mentality and identity of Nigerians. Identity is the sense of belonging that an individual feels towards a group; it is one's commitment to a group and the practices of that group. Through Ngerianness, the participants align with a particular political or ethnic group by displaying solidarity towards the group. Hence, Ngerianness as stance-taking indicates support for a particular political or ethnic group. Most of the participants identify with one political party or the other for various reasons.

**RC 10:** It's a INEC, Buhari and Cabal Combo!! If una like una postpone! If Ina no Like Una go on with Elections! Wetin Sure now na Buhari is Gone!! Law also Daura is Gone! Isa Funta is Gone! Abba Kyari is Gone! Never Again will the Federal Republic of Nigeria get such Incompet "Cabaled" Leadership! Never Again

In the extract above, though there is no clear indication of the political identity of the commenter, it is obvious that he/she does not in any way identify with the All Progressives Congress (APC). The extract indicates that the participant is impatient to see President Buhari (The APC presidential candidate) lose the election. The assertion in the extract is interlaced with different categories of negative attitude: disinclination, negative propriety and negative capacity used to express eagerness to see the APC's presidential candidate lose the election.

The commenter's stance indicates that the INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) is working together with President Buhari to ensure that he wins the election at all cost. The Pidgin expression: *If una like una postpone! If Ina no Like Una go on with Elections! Wetin Sure now na Buhari is Gone!!* as a distinct form of Nigerianness shows the commenter's resolve to vote out President Buhari no matter the cost. "Cabal" in Nigerian English connotes a group whose members are exclusive, rich and powerful. *Combo* is a slang for 'combination'. This stance suggest President Buhari only won the election of his first term by the effort of the powerful political group he belongs to and his actions had been dictated by this group, hence the use of *cabaled*. The stance as well contains negative capacity since it suggests President Buhari is a weak leader who dances to the tune of his political godfathers, which makes him weak and an unreliable presidential candidate. The stance expressed through the use of nigerianness in the extract draws attention to the nature of politics in Nigeria where it appears only a selected few have access to political power based on their financial capacities, political connection and how much they are able to sacrifice and offer to a close-knitted and powerful group of political godfathers in order to win the election. Election in Nigeria appears to be a form of selection where the outcome is already determined long before the election is run and results are published.

The insinuation that INEC is working to favour President Buhari is also embedded in the extract below:

**RC 8:** Election that already has been held and results already prepared... 16th Febuary na just formality!

It can be seen from the extract above that the participant does not identify with the APC or Buhari. He/she regards the election as a farce since the INEC would ensure that President Buhari won the election at all cost. The assertion which contains negative veracity "na just formality" suggests that Nigerian elections lack credibility as the INEC and powerful Nigerian politicians have already decided who would win the election long before it is conducted. The use of Nigerianness in the extract gives a vote of no confidence in the Nigerian electoral process.

But in the extract below, the commenter clearly identifies with President and the APC.

**RC 15:** Sai baba maigaskiya

The commenter in the extract above creates a base of support for President Buhari. *Maigaskiya*, a Hausa expression, means a 'truthful and righteous person'. Through this explicit expression of Nigerianness, the commenter endorses President Buhari and clearly identifies with him. The expression which contains positive propriety and veracity, indicates that President Buhari is an honest political leader that can be trusted to herald development in the country. *Sai baba* means 'no one but Buhari'. It is used to indicate unwavering loyalty to Buhari. As at the time of the electoral process, the expression had come to mean a lot of things in Nigerian politics: renewed hope for Nigerians, an end to corruption, a better economy, etc. As much as the expression is an endorsement of President Buhari's candidacy, it also reflects the ethno-religious divide in Nigeria where many Nigerians endorse political candidate not because they are deemed credible, but because they are from the same ethnic groups or share the same religious beliefs.

Ethnicity as a form of Nigerianness also features in the data used for the study. Given the multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria, ethnicity is a socio-cultural phenomenon that besets the growth, development and peace of the country. Azeez (2009) notes that ethnicity is one major cause of social crisis and political instability in Nigeria. It is a social phenomenon associated with competition among members of different ethnic groups. Consider the extracts below.

- RC 99:** So had it been he choose a Yoruba man as VP then he will be seen as to have acted sensibly. Lol you people and tribalism sef.
- RC 20:** We already know where our problems came from... You hate for the Igbos will lead you to early grave. guy hunger doesn't know ethnicity theres hunger every where sharing garri and groundnut to Nigerians will make Buhari win abi funny you
- RC 18:** Lol... at least pretend to see that part where the op said that Yoruba don't vote based on religion and ethnicity... and act accordingly naa.

The extracts above portray the participants' stances towards the problem of ethnicity in Nigeria. The participant in RC 20 regards it a big problem in Nigeria which can "lead people to early grave". The negative normality expressed in the assertion connotes that ethnicity is an anomaly that needs to be totally eradicated in Nigeria; Nigerians are one and what affects one tribe affects the other. The commenter in RC 99 also uses negative normality "you people and tribalism sef" to adjudge the problem of ethnicity wrong. By using the expression *you people* is a Nigerian expression for 'you all', the commenter distances him/herself from other Nigerians that are "tribalistic". In RC 18, sarcasm is used to draw attention to the fact that most Nigerians practice tribalism; they only vote for people from their own ethnic group. The negative propriety embedded in the extract as well as the Pidgin expression *naa* combines to explicate that only blind Nigerians think people vote without ethnic sentiments. Hence, Nigerianness in online communication is enshrouded in comments about ethnicity, shaped by the participants' individual experiences and realities. The stance on ethnicity is also reflected in RC 20 that draws attention to the money politics practiced in Nigeria. Most political candidates in Nigeria are known for sharing staple food items during electioneering campaigns to encourage people to vote for them.

## 5.2 Nigerian Politics and Corruption

With expressions that portray Nigerianness, the participants in the forum share their concerns about the Nigerian political system.

- RC 8:** APC the satanic party will surely get it hot from Nigerians, let zombies keep quoting each other back and forth till ejaculation, it won't change the mind of the masses. Buhari is a goner.
- RC 44:** why we they do ourself man way don old na him we one still vote for check oba of Ife how young his an not sure %fit for another 4 years run o je g
- RC 14:** Only a nation and people that is permanently cursed with failure will contemplate returning a terrible calamity like buhari to power after him and his lazy chameleon offsprings crooks have silently pillaged our dear nation to coma while shouting quaruption quaruption quaruption.may God never allow Nigeria to ever witness such a punishment called buhari presidency again forever.

In RC 44 above, the participant uses Pidgin to express concern over the age of President Buhari and to insinuate that Nigerians are their own problem. The concern expressed in the comment connotes that Buhari is old, thus, he is unfit to be Nigeria's next president.



By referring to the APC as “satanic party”, the commenter in RC 8 insinuates that the APC does not have any good intentions towards Nigeria since nothing good comes from the devil. The affective and judgemental stance embedded in the comment connotes that only Nigerians who are foolish and do not know what they are doing (“zombies” (negative normality)) would vote for the APC; majority of the masses are rooting for Buhari to lose the election.

In RC14, the commenter use of *quarruption* not only lampoons a typical Hausa person’s pronunciation of “corruption”, but the entire extract draws attention to the double standard displayed by President Buhari. The commenter insinuates that President Buhari claims to be fighting corruption when his “offspring” loot the country’s reserve.

### 5.3 Coinages as Stance

Through this distinct coinages that portray Nigerianness, the participants share their opinions about corruption in the Nigerian political system.

- RC 17:** Its the day that we all come out in our numbers to vote the greatest President of Nigeria, we will not atikuloot our future
- RC 22:** An average south easterner will not leave his shop to vote.unless Atiku is ready to exchange his dollars for their votes,that way they will come out enmass to vote.my point is NO DOLLARIZATION NO ATIKULATION
- RC 31:** Election that already has been held and results already prepared... 16th Febuary na just formality! **By the way, these are predictions of what to expect during and after the 2019 elections as a Nigerian!**
- RC 48:** Keep deceiving urself. U talking as if only u will give Atifku 10million votes. Let’s see who will be disgraced. The election is just few weeks away
- RC 27:** he came in and the price of rice buhariced, Garri's price Bugarrized, my people what of fuel? fuel bufuelized. yet we still want to busufferized another 4yrs ahaaa if he couldn’t fulfill his promises for 4yrs as promised then we Nigerians have grown to realize that If a government fails at first 4yrs then no second term. very simple, how can u be so wicked to call the hardworking Nigerian youths lazy and election is here, u want their votes, if only we have stupid youths in this country then they will vote him again

Extract 22 also portrays the problem of ethnicity and how it contributes to corruption. Through the use of coinages “dollarization” and “No Artikulation”, once again draws attention to the money politics practised in Nigeria; the participants utilise a stance of negative propriety to indicate that the Igbo sell their vote; they only make use of their franchise after they have been paid to do so. The use of the coinages also adjudge Atiku a corrupt politician who is ready to pay for votes in dollars. The stance embedded in RC 17 “atikuloot” also insinuates that voting for Atiku is endorsing a political leader that would “loot” the country’s treasury. The negative veracity in the comment is an indication that Atiku is corrupt and only out to make himself richer by embezzling funds. This stance is also contained in RC 48 where the coinage “atifku” insinuates that Atiku is a “thief” and Nigerians who root for Atiku to win the election are waiting to be disgraced and disappointed.

Pidginisation in RC 31 contains negative propriety to insinuate that there is no actual election in Nigeria because the results of the election have already been decided by the powerful political leaders in the country. This also insinuates that the vote of an average Nigerian does not count; the powerful politicians in the country manipulate elections to suit their corruptive tendencies.

In RC 27, the participant uses coinages as forms of negative veracity and propriety to encode the state of affairs in the country during President Buhari's first administration as President of Nigeria. The use of the coinages "buhariced", "Bugarrized", "bufuelized" and "busufferized" indicates the commenter's disappointment at President Buhari's performance. These expressions not only express negative valence, they also qualify the experience of Nigerians during his first administration.

#### **5.4 Recourse to Prayer**

Nigeria has been noted to be one of the most religious countries of the world (Chiluwa/Odebunmi 2016). Through prayer-like assertions, the participants portray their stance about the Nigerian socio-political system. Ugah (2019) notes that the previous failures of Nigerian politicians have provoked the pragmatic act of praying for divine intervention.

**RC 34:** I dey shame for u. So the above u quoted are now the norms for APC winning elections in Nigeria. I shake head for you. God's plan will prevail in this election. The rigging plan has been cancelled. What a shame.

**RC 59:** Back to sender Atiku! I say back to sender Atiku!!! Back to sender Atiku! I say back to sender with your evil plans Atiku!!! Back to sender Atiku! Your plans to reverse Nigeria's economic growth shall not see the light of the day Atiku!!! Your plans to impoverish Nigerians again will turn you and your band of thieves into beggars in the name of Jesus! Back to sender in the name of Jesus!! We bind you and your fellow thieves!!! Atiku back to sender in Jesus name!!!

The extracts above are prayers to God and prophecies that are expected to bring the commenters' wishes to pass. The prayers are patterned after the aggressive kind of prayers used to destroy the "works of enemies" in some Nigerian churches. This study contends that recourse to prayer is a form of Nigerianness. Instead of Nigerians to do the needful by voting for their preferred candidate during elections, they rather resort to prayer to choose their political leaders. It is thus an avenue for them to neglect their civic duties when they can do something to alleviate their sufferings. The recourse to prayer as a form of nigerianness seems to suggest that the Nigerian socio-political situation is beyond human intervention as Nigerian political leaders have proven to be unreliable and ineffective – only prayer can be relied upon for the best presidential candidate to emerge.

#### **5.5 Intervention of the Supernatural**

This theme, though similar to recourse to prayer, portrays the desperation of Nigerians for divine intervention in the political matters of the country; an assertion of faith in God to make things right in the country. It is also a fall-out of leadership failures and recurrent hostilities at the election polls.

**RC 55:** God has said yes to the expectations of Nigerians. APC is too small to cancel God's plans. The hrigging plan will fail. There Will be confusion in APC camp that day. They will not cooperate. Watch out

**RC 89:** There are people whom God will not allow affliction (PMB) to rise in their lives a second time

The extracts about are prophecies of faith regarding the outcome of the election and they represent positive affirmations of the participants' expectations. Through these assertions, the commenters maintain that the future of Nigeria has been pre-determined by God, hence, only His plans would work if Nigerians keep on making positive declarations.

## 5.6 Flaming as Stance

Ugah (2019) opines that the use of flaming, which is a confrontational hostile language, is also an indicator of an online participants' stance as it embodies their attitude towards the topic of discussion. In the data used for this study, Nigerianness, embedded in flame, is used by the participants to qualify their perception of Nigerian political leaders as well as the stance of other participants in the forum. Consider the extracts below:

**RC 05:** Dindin rin... resign koo reappointment nni. Better go and face ur US criminal issues... oleee!

The comment in the extract above is directed at Atiku, the PDP presidential candidate for suggesting that President Buhari should resign from running for presidency since he failed Nigeria during his first tenure as a democratic president. It is clear from the use of the Yoruba word *dindin rin* which means 'an imbecile' and contains negative normality, that the participant finds Atiku's suggestion offensive. By referring to him as "Olee", the commenter insinuates that Atiku is a thief who has been declared persona non grata in the US. This assertion connotes that a corrupt and mentally incapacitated person like Atiku should have no business delving in the politics of Nigeria.

**RC 50:** You will never get tired of telling yourself lies. Your job is now to give excuses and say it is because he travelled. Was he fighting inside the aircraft? He was probably sleeping. Just sharaap ya dirty big lips if you have nothing to say. ok?

The flame in the extract above is directed at a participant for defending Vice President Osinbajo's performance during the Vice-Presidential debate even though he just returned from a trip and was tired. It is clear from the expression "Just sharaap ya dirty big lips" that the commenter in the extract above does not find Osinbajo's performance dexterous and rather insults the previous commenter for supporting him.

The use of flaming as stance in the data used for this study connote a distinct form of Nigerianness, as flaming is done using distinct Nigerian expression intended as insults.

## 6 Conclusion

This study has portrayed that Nigerianness in online political forum is a form of stance taking. Online participants do not only express their opinions about Nigerian politics and Nigerian political leaders through the use of English expressions, but they also reflect distinct Nigerian expressions in their evaluation of Nigerian politics.

Nigerianness as stance taking in the online forums used for this study reflects the use of coinages, flaming with the use of distinct Nigerian expressions, pidgin, etc. to evaluate the socio-political situation in Nigeria. The use of these distinct expressions gives credence to the expectations of Nigerians from their political leaders.

This section identifies features of Ngerianness in the opinion of the participants of the forums used for this study, the evaluative features encoded in their use of Ngerianness and the implications of these on the Nigerian political system before the Nigerian 2019 general election. The analysis of the appraisal resources used by the participants explicates their opinion-related meanings in their use of Ngerianness; thus, the analysis encompasses the participants' perception of Nigerian political parties, politicians, political aspirants and

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