



# RESEARCH IN PRAGMATICS

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of the  
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**SPECIAL ISSUE**

**THEME: POLITICAL MEMOIRS AS TOOLS OF NATIONAL  
INTEGRATION**

**Guest Editors:**

Afis Ayinde Oladosu: University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Aisha Garba Habib: Yusuf Maitama Sule University, Kano, Nigeria

Tunji Oyeshile: University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Adeyemi Adegaju: Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

## Editorial

This edition of *Research in Pragmatics*, which keys perfectly into reputable journals' tradition of periodically producing special issues that address themed scholarly inquiries into current, dominant or recurring issues in society, presents six articles which are products of the larger research project entitled "Using Memoirs as Antidotes to Nigeria's Political Quagmire and as Tools for National Integration" sponsored by the Nigerian Tertiary Education Trust Fund (2023-2024). Thus, this special edition of the journal aggregates articles which interrogate how memoirs written by some Nigerian foremost political figures could be read as historical artefacts towards addressing the enduring challenges of national integration and the attendant political quagmire Nigeria has been grappling with since her independence in 1960.

Given the authors' diverse research orientations, they have engaged relevant aspects of the general subject memoirism, politics and social integration from a multidisciplinary perspective. The cognate disciplines which have been mainly engaged in the articles are: pragmatics, critical discourse analysis, rhetoric and stylistics. In applying theories drawn from these disciplines, the authors have drawn insights extensively from theories such as social identity theory, social integration theory, transformational leadership theory, speech act theory, among others. All these theoretical underpinnings, together with the conceptual explorations of the six articles in this edition, have a place in the publication scope of *Research in Pragmatics* which serves as a useful outlet to share the research findings of this TETfund-sponsored project. This publication thus foregrounds the relevance of pragmatics as a genuine transdisciplinary hub for negotiating memory and identity in national historical contexts.

The first article by **Akin Odebunmi, Butari Nahum, Celestina Predia Kekai & Dubamo Tomere** is an engaging exploration of the contextual and pragmatic force underlying how Olusegun Obasanjo, Nasir El-Rufai and Goodluck Jonathan in their respective memoirs, *My Watch*, *The Accidental Public Servant* and *My Transition Hours*, dissect Nigeria's leadership challenge. It is interesting that the study identifies four major themes, namely national and strategic representation, national unification and national interest, electoral fairness, and broad-mindedness which are all captured within three broad contexts: cognitive, social and political. From the findings in the study, the authors show that political memoirs in Nigeria not only have the capacity to interrogate issues of national integration but also to proffer antidote to dealing with the palpable fears of disintegration hovering over the Nigerian political landscape over the decades.

**Chuka Ononye** in the second article explores how Bisi Akande, a prominent Nigerian politician, strategically employs address forms in his

memoir *My Participations* to negotiate identities for prominent Nigerian political figures across regional and party divide. Through representative excerpts from the memoir, the study analyses, with insights from critical stylistics and social integration theory, how the author deploys naming conventions, noun modifications, and depictions of actions and events to highlight the qualities, experiences, and relationships of the political actors portrayed in the memoir. By navigating identities and mapping roles in national development processes, Akande's memoir is presented as a vehicle for ideological negotiation, thus contributing to the ongoing discourse surrounding political actors and their contributions to addressing some of the vexed issues confronting the Nigerian society.

In another engaging article by Afis Ayinde Oladosu, Christopher Udomboso and Folakemi Oladoja, the authors attempt to investigate the conceptualisations of identity and leadership in Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Watch*. The study adopts the triangulation approach which incorporates Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory of intergroup behaviour, Fetzer's (2004) model of context, and Sbisa's (2006) version of speech act theory as analytical framework. Based on conceptualisations of leadership identity in the two volumes of Olusegun Obasanjo's memoir *My Watch Volume 2: Political and Public Affairs*, and *My Watch Volume 3: Now and Then*, the study reveals three identity types: fence-mender, game-player, and self-sacrificing, evidently grounded in the social, economic and historical contexts. It is intriguing that these identity types culminate in two pragmatic and discourse implications: negative representation of others' identities and gamification of leadership acts. The study submits that Obasanjo in these select volumes mirrors politicians' subjective constructions of ideological positive-self and negative-other conceptualisations.

**Olubukola Adesina, Chuka Ononye & Godwin J. Idiku** in the fourth article explore Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Command* by attempting an engaging textual analysis of the political memoir, using transformational leadership theory to unpack Obasanjo's leadership principles and dynamics towards achieving collaboration, trust, and shared vision as well as fostering strong political ties through empowerment and mutual respect, particularly during conflict. While the study elucidates the understanding of the concepts of power dynamics, war, and the importance of effective leadership in conflict situations, it also reveals how Obasanjo advocates unity as a *sine qua non* for national stability, progress and resilience. The study submits that memoirs significantly enhance the understanding of political education, by exploring the nation's political landscape and history, thereby emphasising the

importance of effective leadership and unity for the nation's progress and development.

In the fifth paper, **Celestina Predia Kekai** examines the rhetorical import of the pronouns employed in Goodluck Jonathan's memoir *My Transition Hours* with a view to analysing their pragma-semantic affordances for engendering peace and national integration. Adopting an eclectic approach, the paper reveals that Goodluck Jonathan strategically deploys certain pronominal elements to configure some political actors who, in crucial moments, took significant decisions that influenced the course of the country's political landscape. The study further shows that Goodluck Jonathan, drawing upon his experience while he held sway as the number one citizen of the country, tactically uses the pronouns to indicate inclusiveness and exclusiveness towards providing the template for achieving Nigeria's coveted national integration project amidst attaining some other socio-political goals.

**Aisha Garba Habib** in the sixth and last article delves into how memoirs serve as veritable mechanisms for constructing national integration. Using Shehu Shagari's *Beckoned to Serve* as a case study, the article interrogates the memoirist's experiential documentation and evocation of national integration in his narratives. The findings of the paper demonstrate that Shehu Shagari's experiential construction of national integration is anchored to fairness and justice, inclusive appointments, tolerance and peaceful co-existence, physical infrastructure, among others. The study concludes that all the pointers to the indices of fairness and justice which the memoirist projects in his accounts serve as useful guides to the desirable path of nationalistic spirit a leader should tread towards engendering national cohesion in a politically volatile country like Nigeria.

From the stimulating thematic foci and engaging multidisciplinary approach the authors have explored in their respective articles, this special edition of *Research in Pragmatics* has taken a giant leap in advancing the frontiers of research interests in pragmatics and related areas. The special edition is, indeed, a timely scholarly exploration by all the authors whose articles appear therein against the backdrop of the increasing apprehensions about the spate of ethnic rivalry, politics of bitterness, clannishness, allegations of favouritism and nepotism against the political class, seemingly ineffectual federal character scheme, among other drawbacks, which have vitiated Nigeria's national integration over the decades.

Scholars of political discourse and national history across different fields of study such as Linguistics, Political Science, History, Sociology, Philosophy and Discourse Studies, among others, as well as relevant

stakeholders in the Nigerian project would significantly find this special edition a reference point for its depth of knowledge production and construction which has further enriched the robust debates on the modus operandi of tackling the problems of nationhood in the pluri-ethnic Nigerian society.

**Guest Editors:** *Ajis Ayinde Oladosu, Aisha Garba Habib, Tunji Oyeshile, Adeyemi Adegaju*



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## **Pragmatic Affordances of the Theme of National Integration in Political Memoirs of Olusegun Obasanjo, Nasir El-Rufai and Goodluck Jonathan**

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### **Abstract**

*Scholarly interventions have largely neglected how political actors' actions reveal contextual properties of the events related to national integration reported in the memoirs written by Nigerian political leaders. As a response to this lacuna, this paper explores the themes, contexts and pragmatic force of the question of national integration in three purposively selected political actors' memoirs in Nigeria – Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Watch*, Nasir El-Rufai's *The Accidental Public Servant* and Goodluck Jonathan's *My Transition Hours*. The paper identifies four themes (national and strategic representation, national unification and national interest, electoral fairness, and broad-mindedness) which are wrapped within three broad contexts (cognitive, social and political) and which assign illocutionary force to the writers' construction of national integration at different levels of interactivity and governance. The paper concludes that the selected political memoirs chronicle Nigerian leaders' dispositions to the country's fragile democratic texture and produce pragmatically-driven models of national integration and effective governance.*

**Keywords:** Contextual affordances, national integration, national interest, Nigeria, political memoirs, pragmatic affordances

### **1. Introduction**

National integration, which captures the citizenry's consciousness of a unifying socio-geographic identity, and thus isomorphic to national cohesion, is a quest that lies at the heart of most societies that are multi-ethnic and, therefore, sometimes polarised along social and political lines. This situation holds true for Nigeria which is a multiculturally-diverse country confronted

## 2 Research in Pragmatics

with the crisis of national integration since it gained Independence from the colonial grips in 1960. Interestingly, since the 1960s, some Nigerian leaders have documented their political and leadership experiences in memoirs which reflect the intricacies of ethnicity, culture and politics in and beyond their terms of governance and which have shown their different approaches and attitudes to governance. Among other themes, these texts display contents of integration, and disintegration combined with societal positives and negatives capable of defining and finding borders for national cohesion or non-cohesion.

Although the memoirs are well known among several circles of Nigerians because their publications are often heralded with heavy political publicity, they have been largely unpopular as texts deserving rigorous academic attention given the socially-influenced and pre-theoretical perception associated with them more as documentaries of mere, sometimes ‘doctored’ political events, than as true and painstaking accounts of statesmanship. It is important, however, to note, contrary to this view, that our survey of the memoirs, particularly those selected for this study, indicates that they possess sufficient ideational and stylistic contents, reflective of national (dis)integration, for research. Yet, the selected texts, namely, *My Watch* by Former President Olusegun Obasanjo (henceforth Obasanjo), *My Transition Hour (MTH)* by Former President Goodluck Jonathan (henceforth Jonathan) and *The Accidental Public Servant (APS)* by Former Governor Nasir El-Rufai (henceforth El-Rufai) have received scant attention from scholars in spite of their huge thematic resources. With the exception of Odebunmi (2019) which focuses on the “bush” conceptualisation (Caffi 2002; Mey 2017) in Obasanjo’s *My Watch*, and Ugoala (2020), which addresses face mitigation strategies in Jonathan’s *MTH*, most other interventions on the texts are book reviews, newspaper commentaries and blurbs which appear too intellectually limited to provide critical access to the writers’ engagements with the important question of national integration and leadership.

What is available in the literature in some quantity are studies such as Opanachi (2009) and Ubong and Effiong (2012) which deal with the political speeches of some of these leaders, some of which are incorporated into the selected texts by the writers. Besides the unavailability of studies on the selected memoirs, the question of national integration has not equally enjoyed attention from the pragmatic perspective. Studies on the discourse of national integration in Nigeria bifurcate into those that are non-language-based (Egwu 2018; Ogbonnaya and Oshinfowokan 2015; Joshua 2019; Ubani 2014; Akinyetun 2020; Edosa 2014) and those that are language-based (Ralph,

Ongarora and Matu 2016; Baji 2019; Ajala 2017; Ezeobi, Mbachu, and Chukwuji 2019; Chattaraj 2021; Ojo and Taiye 2020; Ohia 2018). While the former cover history, politics, security and identity, the latter encompass other areas of language studies than pragmatics. Importantly, none of the dimensions considers a focus on memoirs. This means that the present research (and the larger project under which it is conducted as indicated in the introduction to the special issue) is more or less one of the most extensive studies on the texts, and naturally the first to establish a link between pragmatics and national integration. Consequently, this study bears the potential to provide material to occupy the vacuum in the scholarship on political memoirs in Nigeria and their ability not only to point to issues of national integration but also to explore some solution paths to dealing with the entrenched disintegration, and by fair implication, governance debacle, in large measure. To provide these interventions, the study addresses the following objectives:

- i. to account for thematic and social indications of national integration in the texts; and
- ii. to examine the contextual and pragmatic force affordances of the national integration resources in the texts.

In Section 2 below, we highlight the key features of a memoir in connection with the three texts being studied; in Section 3, we present the theoretical resources on which our analysis is built; in Section 4, we provide the methodology; in Section 5, we present the analysis and findings of the study; and in Section 6, we conclude the research.

## **2. The Memoir Genre and the Texts in Focus**

Memoirs are texts focused on the writer's personal experiences through a given period of time or a lifetime. They "create a unique self in discourse, exemplifying the human desire to connect, construct and share life experiences as data to support a claim" (Osisanwo and Adegbenro, 2021, p. 1072). They are always personal or private stories told from the point of view of the writer, and provide the writer's subjective accounts of their experiences and interactions with people. However, while it is often the case that memoir writers heighten certain favourable events and dim unfavourable ones, blatant mendacity is rare in most of the narratives, thus giving a level of credibility to the quintessentially subjective account. In addition, given that memoirs are products of amassed experiences garnered in active service or retirement, they are often stuffed with a hindsight, reflecting the writers' key activities and interventions while in responsible roles. They are, thus, sometimes used as repair, advisory and panacea mechanisms.

The above features of memoirs are captured fully or partially in all the texts studied for this research. Obasanjo's *My Watch* is a three-volume memoir on the writer's leadership experiences as the president of Nigeria. The first volume, *My Watch: Early Life and Military* focuses on his birth, childhood, early life, cultural roots, job as a soldier, and leadership experience as Head of State; the second, *My Watch: Political and Public Affairs* (henceforth *My Watch*) which has been selected for this research, places attention on his two terms as a civilian president in Nigeria; and the third, *My Watch: Now and then*, concentrates on aspects of his life reflective of a mixture of his pre-presidency, presidency and post-presidency times. The *Accidental Civil Servant* narrates Nasir El-Rufai's experiences as a public servant in his role as an adviser for the military government of Abdulsalam Abubakar in 1998, the Director General of the Bureau for Public Enterprises and later as the minister of the Federal Capital Territory under President Olusegun Obasanjo between 1999-2007, and a member of the elite corps of economic reformers between 2003 and 2007. It equally devotes attention to the writer's childhood and early schooling, including his tenacity and resilience in the face of adversities especially after the demise of his father prior to his enrolment in school. *My Transition Hours* focuses predominantly on the point of his leadership when he had to hand over power to General Muhammadu Buhari as his successor and return to Otueke, his hometown. However, a few flashes of events prior to or post-dating the moment are found inserted into the narrative to scaffold the main accounts.

### **3. Theoretical Resources**

The study benefits from aspects of three theories: socio-integration theory, contextual models, aspects of the socio-cognitive theory and Sbisa's model of speech acts. Each of the theoretical categories is briefly developed below.

The concept of "social integration", which was theorised by Durkheims in 1892, and which captures the principles that define the relationships between people and groups in larger societies and how they relate with one another, is popular in the fields of sociology, psychology, and cultural/ethnic studies, among others. According to Jeannotte (2008), social integration relates to policy development in contemporary society which is interested in achieving stability, equity, tolerance, equality and inclusivity. This range of coverage makes the conceptualisation of social integration suitable to explain the foci of the selected memoirs which document events centred on unification or disintegration of Nigeria among other concerns. Blau's (1960) further intervention which premises social integration on mutual attraction is

instructive for the understanding of the theory. This attraction was connected to the need for people to possess something of value to give to the larger people. In his conception, the dominant people must be impressed in order for the minority group to gain respect and membership. Blau (1960) identifies a combination of attractiveness and approachability as key concepts to achieving successful social integration. Complementarily, Jeannotte (2008) notes three principles that are necessarily invoked in the realisation of social integration: “social inclusion”, “social cohesion” and “social capital.

Contexts and/or contextual models have been conceptualised as macro (broad) or micro (narrow) pragmatic resources (Firth 1957; Hymes 1964, Lewis 1977; Ochis 1979; Halliday 1978; Auer 1995 Mey 2001; Fetzer 2002; Odebunmi 2016). The broad perspective is considered more relevant to the present study with its focus on the general communicative and narrative orientation the writers devote to the thematic concerns of the texts. It trifurcates into cognitive, social and linguistic types which respectively embody shared mental representations among interactants, the “constraints imposed on meaning and understanding of events by communicative encounters” (Odebunmi 2016, p. 9) and the influence exerted on lexical co-occurrences. Importantly, it is characterised by the participants, their physical and verbal acts, and the structural and lexical environments providing interpretative anchorages for discourses. Closely connected to the concept of context are some aspects of the Kecskesian socio-cognitive model which found equally instructive for the analysis of the memoirs. In the main, the concepts of apriori and emergent common grounds are considered useful in respectively orienting to the knowledge shared by interactive/communicating parties prior to actual encounters created and shared while the encounter is in progress.

Sbisa’s (2006) model of speech acts, which rests on and advances the foundation laid in Austin (1962) and Searle’s (1969) versions of speech act theory, makes up the third theoretical orientation of this research. The thrust of Sbisa’s argument is that the earlier models defined speech acts by the presence of a performative force marked by explicit verbs which constitute the illocutionary act, leaving unaccounted the force underlying illocutionary acts performed without explicit performative verbs. Three questions were, therefore, raised by her: “How do performative utterances really work? How is the illocutionary force of speech acts indicated, when no explicit performative formula is used? How are explicit and inexplicit ways of performing the same

illocutionary act related to each other?" (Sbisa, 2006, p.9). These questions led to her focus on illocutionary force-indicating devices (IFIDs) and non-illocutionary force-indicating devices (Non-IFIDs). IFIDs, connected to direct acts, are largely ascribed the constructional components of mood and modal verbs, intonation, adverbs, connectives, extra-linguistic gestures and contextual features while Non-IFIDs, considered co-terminus with indirect acts, are attributed the resource of inferences aided by the socio-cultural contexts (Sbisa, 2006).

#### **4. Methodology**

The three political memoirs selected for this research have purposive motivations. First off, they are eminently illustrative of the question of national integration and governance styles in Nigeria. Secondly, while only one text each has been published by both El-Rufai and Goodluck Jonathan, and each has been sampled, at least two have been published by Olusegun Obasanjo, namely, *My Command* and *My Watch*. Our choice of the second volume of *My Watch* is due to its huge information on Obasanjo's presidential experience and is, thus, the only one of the three books in the volume that provides comparable data to El-Rufai's *The Accident Public Servant (APS)* and Jonathan's *My Transition Hours (MTH)*. *My Command* documents Obasanjo's military career and military leadership experiences, and was, on the basis of this thematic scope, considered incomparable to *APS* and *MTH* and irrelevant when placed within the parameters of democratic governance focus taken as our selection preference. Thematic coding, which was instrumental to the top-down method used to analyse the excerpts taken purposively from all the texts, was employed to categorise the features of the data connected to the objectives. While the socio-integration theory is used to analyse the thematic aspects of the objectives, the models of context, Kecskes' soci-cognitive approach and Sbisa's model of speech acts are engaged in an interpenetrating manner, sometimes in complex concert with the socio-integration theory, to account for the objectives related to contextual and pragmatic force features. A few supplemental insights (explained at the point of use) are taken from Leech's (1983) politeness principles to support a section of the analysis.

#### **5. Analysis and Findings**

The analysis of the texts is conducted at three levels as per the objectives of the research. At each of these levels, analytical features are aggregated and disaggregated to show the convergences and divergences of the writer's

orientations to national integration and leadership. The objectives are topicalised in the sections below as compasses for the analysis.

### **5.1 National integration Themes and Contextual Affordances in *My Watch*, *APS* and *MTH***

Four themes related to national integration are found in the three texts:

- a. National and strategic representation
- b. Unification and national interest
- c. Electoral fairness
- d. Broad-mindedness

These themes, together with the contexts in which they occur, are developed in turns below.

#### **5.1.1 National and Strategic Representation**

The concept of national representation, which refers to the consideration of the coverage of the entirety of the national spread of Nigeria in political decisions, action and practice, is captured in OBJ's *My Watch* and El-Rufai's *APS*. It is not found in GEJ's *MTH* logically because it is largely an account of his final days in the presidential office.

National representation is operationally conceptualised in two ways in this paper:

- i. National leadership endorsement that cuts across key ethnic and geographical boundaries in Nigeria
- ii. Equitable distribution of political positions, including sometimes, national resources, sensitive to the ethnic and geographical diversity of Nigeria.

While both of these conceptualisations are found in both texts, they have differential representations; for example, there is more prominence of the former in *My Watch* than in *APS* and vice versa. Therefore, to save space, each is connected only to its thematic prominence below.

#### **5.1.2 Leadership Endorsement across Ethnic and Geographical Boundaries**

In *My Watch*, OBJ captures national representation as endorsement from key geographical and ethnic constituencies of Nigeria. This, for him, represents the quintessential protocol for a nationally acceptable president. We cite two instances from the text to illustrate this.



First, OBJ reports his reception of large contingents of visitors from key regions of Nigeria shortly after his release from prison by the Abdulsalami interim military government. These visitors are reported to share a common goal: while celebrating his release as victory for both him and the nation, they also appeal to him to contest the presidency in the democratic government (See pp. 8 and 9). These situations point to three contexts: cognitive, socio-cultural and political. The emotional support staged with the visits, demonstrating a combination of cognitive and socio-cultural contexts, indicates the visitors' connection with OBJ's escape from potential danger of death as experienced by political detainees such as MKO Abiola detained at the same time as him (See p. 4). The action equally qualifies as a cultural gesture demanded by the African collectivist socio-cultural dynamics which is, however, meshed with the expression of political intents shown in the visitors' venting of their proposals to OBJ to contest the national presidency.

In addition, in a strictly political context, OBJ visits and consults with key political personalities widely en route to securing their consent for the proposal received to contest the election. These actions are situated in the understanding of the socio-political dynamics and complexity of the Nigerian society which, of necessity, demands strategically locating and tracking down support from groups and individuals. The list in the account of Obasanjo includes traditional rulers (p. 21), religious leaders (p. 22), "leaders of thought" (p. 22), strategically-positioned politicians (pp. 23, 25, 26, etc) and ethnic and political leaders (p. 33).

### **5.1.3 Equitable Distribution of Political Positions, Including National Resources**

In *APS*, one of the ways through which El-Rufai presents the idea of national representation is by evoking power sharing through the zoning of political and bureaucratic posts. According to the writer,

As a legal requirement for a multi-ethnic base for political parties in Nigeria, zoning is a special programme designed to bring people together, and consequently raise national consciousness. (p.138).

While identifying with the adoption of zoning in the Nigerian political system as well as the federal character commission in the civil service, El Rufai expresses some reservations about its implementation which, over the years, has tended to negate the essence of fairness, equity and justice (p.138). His

illocutionary force here is a claim designed to repair a previous concept of zoning.

#### **5.1.4 National Unification/Interest**

National unification conceptualised in this research as the careful, deliberate and strategic stringing and maintenance of ethnic and cultural diversities of the country to ensure continuous bonding and co-existence, constitutes the hub of the question of national integration copiously captured by all the writers. It is, however, more prominent in *MTH*, which was designed strictly for that intervention, than in *My Watch* and *APS*, both of which are concerned with much broader national questions.

Four conceptualisations of national unification are manifest in the three texts:

- i. Cohesion as an orientation to objectivity and concessionary output
- ii. Positive and negative behavioural traits as national trans-ethnic qualities
- iii. Membership status and political service strictly as loyalty to national organicity
- iv. Defeat as a tool of national cohesion

Attention is given to each of these below.

##### **5.1.4.1 Conceptualisation of Cohesion as an Orientation to Objectivity and Concessionary Output**

This conceptualisation, found only in *My Watch*, considers national integration as the tendency to demonstrate objectivity or fairness and grant appropriate concessions in sensitivity to the national diversity and delicacy of the country. One interesting instance of objectivity or fairness is OBJ's vindication, and logical exoneration, of the Abdulsalami administration (the military government that was instituted following the death of General Sanni Abacha and the one that released OBJ from the imprisonment term he got from the Abacha government) in the death of MKO Abiola contrary to the insinuations among the Nigerian populace (p. 5). This action is contextualised in ethical judgment aligned to emotional balance contra the nature of politics in Nigeria with its jaundiced dimensions evident in the motivation for OBJ's vindication of Abdulsalami.

In terms of granting concessions, the reported readiness of the North to shift power to the South en route to preventing national disintegration (p. 8) is quite instructive. However, thematised in the text as well are OBJ's outright

disregard for certain (ethnic) groups (e.g. the Yoruba leaders), humongous de-profiling of his vice-president and other government functionaries such as El-Rufai, which might be indicative of dis-unification and thus contradictory to his claims to national integration in several aspects of the text.

GEJ perspectivises objectivity and concessions as a demonstration of empathy and sacrifice en route to achieving national cohesion. Two interconnected excerpts from *MTH* explain these points:

A:

I often wonder why my political philosophy which insists that ‘my political ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian’ was not attractive to many amongst our politicians. Threats of violence to ‘soak’ people in ‘blood’ were seen as warnings to scare voters away from the polling booth. It was one potent threat everyone knew would be carried out if it caught their fancy (p. 18)

B:

As I have always affirmed, nobody's ambition is worth the blood of any Nigerian. The unity, stability and progress of our dear country are more important than anything else. (p. 72)

In the first excerpt, GEJ orients to peace and objective judgment contrary to the position of many Nigerian politicians. In communicating this perspective, he licenses three speech act-inclined inferences:

- a. peace preference pitched against popular violence preference, constructed with the blood-scare entextualisation;
- b. a design of destructive and disruptive elections by GEJ’s opponents, constructed with blood metaphors;
- c. an account of foreshadowed violence, constructed with genericised conditionality.

In the second excerpt, GEJ, further perspectivising concessions, expresses his preference of peace and national integration by genericising political selflessness placed against achievement of ambition via bloody violence, and by prioritising national cohesion through preservation of oneness. By choosing the way of peace and averting disintegration, GEJ sacrifices his ambition for the organicity of the nation, thus granting concessions at his own expense. Metaphorical choices demonstrative of bloodlessness and emotive choices illustrative of endearment, combined with social integration lexemes such as

“unity”, “stability” and “progress” produce pragmatic emblems of empathetic leadership.

#### **5.1.4.2 Conceptualisation of Positive and Negative Behavioural Traits as National Trans-ethnic Qualities**

Only El-Rufai presents the conceptualisation that embodies a balanced outlook on behavioural traits of ethnic groups, a view that does not stereotype a group or locate the best qualities in any but rather sees positivity and negativity as a pan-human trait, beyond religion, characteristic of all Nigerian ethnic groups. This is aptly illustrated below:

By the time I came to the BPE, my thoughts and life experience had already aligned in one particular direction, which can be summarized in four points. The first was that although Nigeria had a population then of some 120 million people (now more than 160 million), over 500 languages and more than 300 ethnic groups, I had come to the conclusion through my experiences up to that point that there are simply two kinds of people in Nigeria. There were good people and there were bad people, period! Each can be found speaking every language, in every religion, every ethnic group, every village, every town, and every city. In my private sector career, I had been helped more by people from the south of Nigeria despite the fact that they knew me as a ‘northerner’, and I had more often than not been let down by fellow ‘northerners’ perhaps because I grew up knowing more of them. I therefore do not perceive my country and its population through tribal or ethnic lenses. (p. 95)

In this excerpt, the writer, in constructing evaluative speech acts in social contexts, presents himself as a de-tribalised Nigerian who recognises the existence of both good and bad people in every society. The expression, ... “There were good people and there were bad people, period!” presents an absolute tone deeply rooted in El-Rufai’s claimed robust interactions with people from the South and the North whose social qualities have been measured with three instruments: religion, ethnicity and geography. His

conclusion, fed by his experience of more support from the South than from the North where he belongs, by ethnic affiliation, although seems to slightly modify the social proportionality scale he earlier built, still somehow succeeds in conveying a universalist intention relating to de-ethnicisation, a quality he recommends for national integration in Nigeria.

#### **5.1.4.3 Conceptualisation of Membership Status and Political Service as Loyalty to National Organicity**

This conceptualisation, largely found only in *APS*, considers national integration as an achievement situated in the individual's affinity with the group and thus perceived as a collective attainment demanding positive inputs from all parties. In other words, national integration is considered achievable only when the national or Nigerian interest is placed above the individual interest. This is established only in the political context and manifest in El-Rufai's reported or claimed position in support of or against the action of some of his associates and bosses. His prime example is his stand against the touted third term agenda of Former President Olusegun Obasanjo which, to him, goes against his concept of national organicity. The extract below demonstrates the basis of his position:

Personally, I took an oath of office which required my loyalty to the federal republic of Nigeria, the Law and the Constitution. I think my loyalty ends where any assault on the national interest, our constitution and our laws begins. I can't out of loyalty to a friend or even to a mentor break the law or violate the Constitution or do something that in my assessment could be wrong, illegal and against Nigeria's overall interest. The third term project fell within that class of situations. (LVII)

Deploying non-IFIDs in large measure, El-Rufai in this excerpt, constructs the following speech acts which establish his membership of the Nigerian State and his political service to the oneness of Nigeria:

- a. Affirming loyalty based on legality: This means that his political actions are geared only towards all activities that can be found within the law of the nation: "I took an oath

of office which required my loyalty to the federal republic of Nigeria, the Law and the Constitution”

- b. Vowing to serve the national interest strictly: This speech act, framed agency-evasively given the non-specificity of anti-national interest actors with the use of a partitive pronominal phrase, “any assault on the national interest...”, indicates El-Rufai’s pledge to pursue interests which are nationalistic, constitutional and legal: “my loyalty ends where any assault on the national interest, our constitution and our laws begins”
- c. De-sentimentalising political relationship in the service of national organicity: Placing his preference of legality over social relationships, camaraderie and emotional ties, El-Rufai constructs objectivising political decisions only within the ambits of the law, thus gate-keeping whatever goes into political action, an example of which is his opposition to OBJ’s third term agenda: “The third term project fell within that class of situations”.

#### **5.1.4.4 Conceptualisation of Defeat as a Tool of National Cohesion**

This conceptualisation, shown only in *MTH*, describes the ability to concede defeat in the multi-ethnic setting as a key way to achieve national cohesion. It captures a rare commitment to relinquishing power in the African political context where removing a sitting president through fair or fraudulent elections is a herculean task. One illustration of the conceptualisation is provided below:

I reached for the telephone and placed a call. A peace I had not seen or felt since my political sojourn started, now descended upon me. It told me where I had been in the past six years and where I was then. I had been in a large golden cage. It was large, yes. It was golden, yes. But it was a cage all the same. A glorified prison of power. I thought the process could be made to make inmates feel better doing their time. I smiled at the thought. I waited calmly for the person at the end of my call to pick. “Hello...General Buhari here” “I'm calling to congratulate you” The line was seized by silence

for several seconds. Then we had a brief discussion. I could feel his concern too, which traveled on the line to me with some tenseness in his voice (p.69)

In this text, several speech acts demonstrative of five-phase concessionary considerations in the service of national cohesion are performed in the social, cognitive and political contexts:

Phase 1: Defeat concession completed with the intention to communicate felicitations

Phase 2: Reconciliation of defeat concession with the bliss of shed encumbrances

Phase 3: Expectation of an audience enroute to expression of defeat concession

Phase 4: Expression of defeat concession

Phase 5: Mutually satisfactory acceptance of defeat concession

While this excerpt is dominated by several non-IFID-based and one IFID-based speech acts of conceding defeat, each phase shows specific acts that further elucidate the overall speech act. For example, Phase 1 comes with the speech act of concluding which occurs in two specific intertwining contexts: psychological and physical. Reaching for the phone and placing a call to General Buhari is traceable to Jonathan's psychological settlement of the defeat question, implicating his conviction of the acceptance of his loss of the election. This speech act is endophorically and exophorically co-textualised. In Phase 2, Jonathan's narrative is predominantly contextualised in the cognitive frame which reveals his thoughts and their orientation to his decision and conclusion to accept defeat.

The controlling speech act, which is 'comparing', reflects an interface between the peace that attends his new decision which is accompanied by psycho-social extrication and the burdensomeness of the presidential office he has held for several years. In Phase 3, the speech act of longing is constructed as a cue for expected positive reciprocation of defeat-concession gestures from General Buhari. The intended perlocutionary effect could not guarantee positive perlocution, given the political context in which the whole scenario plays out; hence, Jonathan "waited calmly for the person at the other end of [his] call to pick". This phase foregrounds the obligation of defeat concession co-construction for the happiness of the speech act. Phase 4, with the IFID-based speech act of congratulating, verbalises Jonathan's actual concessionary intent, presupposed in the very cue of congratulation: "I'm

calling to congratulate you". This phase and the fifth phase orient to the realisation of Jonathan's intended perlocutionary effect. In Phase 4, he achieves his expectation of an audience from General Buhari and is able to express his defeat concession. In Phase 5, the utterance, "Hello... General Buhari here", performs the actual perlocution which brings aboard the audience sought by Jonathan and the engagement platform for the expression of defeat concession, overtly contextualised camaraderie and, implicatively, expression of goodwill.

### **5.1.5 Electoral Fairness**

The theme of political fairness, found only in *My Watch* and *MTH*, demonstrates the observer's or writer's perception of equitable conduct of election. This means that electoral fairness as conceived here may or may not necessarily glide along with the perspectives of Nigerians in general or the actual national concept of fairness.

Below, an example from *My Watch* is cited:

Those who had depended solely on their tribal bases in the past could not make it and with my victory and some significant section of the Yorubas not voting for me, a new phenomenon emerged that while the support of your tribe may be desirable, it is impossible for you to make it to the top once you can muster the majority of the constituency which is Nigeria. For me, it also vindicated my steadfast position of Nigeria first. (pp. 45-46)

Here, Obasanjo deploys two non-IFID-based speech acts to commentate on the fairness of elections ultimately hinged on national rather than regional acceptability:

- a. He condemns tribal sentiments as a basis for achieving electoral victory. This presupposes that given the bias that comes with tribal bandwagon support, it is flawed as a way of ensuring electoral fairness: "Those who had depended solely on their tribal bases in the past could not make it"
- b. He extols extra-ethnic, i.e. national, support as the best and most objective determinant of electoral success. This at once points to the national acceptability of the political candidate and indexes his/her unbiased popularity, and thus by implication, the higher possibility of gaining national cooperation in governance which is ultimately capable of fetching national cohesion.



One example is cited from *MTH* below:

This depicts the months and weeks leading to my unprecedented phone call to General Muhammadu Buhari on the 31 of March, 2015 to concede that he won the presidential election. It is also an effort to capture a certain return trip to my private life in the days which followed that very deliberate and well thought out concession call (p.xix)

Electoral fairness in this excerpt is resident in Jonathan's concession of defeat which gets materialised in his call made to General Buhari as the winner of the election in which he participated as a sitting president. Two speech-act-based inferences are important here. The first is the apriori decision to accept the outcome of the elections as representative of national and popular democratic decision. The second inference is the actual belief in the outcome of the elections and his acceptance of the electoral process and product as fair. Hence, he is prepared to vacate the presidential position without, by inference, not challenging the results of the elections. The mega narratorial speech act in which these inferences are licensed embodies convinced concluded strides in harmony which are intrinsically motivated by the urge for national cohesion.

#### **5.1.6 Broad-mindedness**

Broad-mindedness is thematised only in *MTH* as the moral quality and willpower to place individual gains above the interest either of the majority or the individual. While a few discourses exemplify this theme in all the selected texts, more prominent instances are found in *MTH*, a text differentiated by the writer's historically distinguished feat of not only conceding defeat but also the unprecedented willingness to hand-over power without further legal or arms battle and set a new record of power perspective in Africa.

The concept of broadmindedness in the text has three manifestations:

- i. Citizens' trauma conceptualised as a nightmare
- ii. De-personalised considerations
- iii. Saver decisions

We take them in quick turns below:

### **5.1.6.1 Citizens' Trauma Conceptualised as a Nightmare**

This captures passion and compassion deepened in the scare of the horrible effects of violence on the citizenry. The excerpt below illustrates the conceptualisation:

One of the most traumatising moments of my presidency was the cold-blooded murders of youth corpers [sic] in the north following our victory in 2011. I thought long and hard over the waste. It just did not make any sense. How does a parent lose everything like this? (p. 11)

In this excerpt, Jonathan constructs two non-IFID-based speech acts within the larger narrating discourse function:

- a. Recounting political horror: By saying, "One of the most traumatizing moments of my presidency was the cold-blooded murders of youth corpers [sic] in the north following our victory in 2011", Jonathan recalls a massacre of the youths connected to his political benefit. The word, "traumatizing" cognicises it as a personally-dispreferred turn of events to him and implicates an avoidance of a repeat of the same event. This cognitive context underlies the entire excerpt.
- b. Emotionalisation of political horror: As a build up to 'a', Jonathan inserts his emotions into the horror question and both implicitly and explicitly condemns it. First, he conceives of the horrible killing as a waste, itself a trauma dominating his psychic domain, licensing implicit condemnation. Second, he overtly condemns the massacre endophorically and exophorically by the referring act of picking out the horror object of the preceding bit of the text as a condemnable scenery with the choice of 'it', and by rationalising the massacre as a preventable hindsight-based occurrence: "It just did not make any sense". Finally, he sympathises with the parents of the massacred youths as a cognitive connection to their trauma ("How does a parent lose everything like this") and further proof of the worthlessness of contesting the outcome of a presidential election loss which, inferentially, could result in the same outcome and further weaken the country's grip on national integration.

### **5.1.6.2 De-personalised Considerations**

The conceptualisation here embodies stripping political decisions of political actors' personal gains particularly in the border between murderous violence and pursuit of political ambition.

Nothing I wanted was worth the blood of a human being, least of all the people I had the direct charge to protect. (p. 43)

In the excerpt above, Jonathan depersonalizes the issues of elections and politics strung around his necessary action of, say, refusing to relinquish power or challenging the results of the 2015 elections in a violence-attractive manner, by performing two illocutionary acts: humanising his political interest (“Nothing I wanted was worth the blood of a human being”) and prioritising the security of the citizenry over his political ambition. Ultimately, both acts fall on the receptacle of broadmindedness to demonstrate Jonathan’s desire of a united nation unravaged by his unbridled keenness to have a hold on presidential power.

### **5.1.6.3 Saver Decision**

Jonathan’s saver decision naturally connects to the two previously discussed conceptualisations of broad mindedness, namely, citizens’ trauma conceptualised as a nightmare and de-personalised consideration. It, thus, represents the cue and action to prevent large scale post-election violence.

I hung up the phone, confident that my decision was right for Nigeria and would have a great impact (probably) on Africa. Could this be the beginning of a fresh perspective on power? One which places personal preference at the base of the basket and raises up the wellbeing of women and children in their millions, who were always the ones who suffer most, when we make the wrong call. (p. 70)

Here, Jonathan narrates his saver action and evaluates it positively in the political, cognitive and social contexts. First, his “I hung the phone” entextualising his earlier defeat concession communication to General Buhari, precedes his self-commendation of his decision as contextually appropriate in the national and continental (African) political framework. Second, in a rhetorical question combined with a long assertive nominal phrase strategically inserted as a response to the rhetorical question, he implicitly recommends his action as a roadmap to political transitions in Africa which orients two Leechian politeness maxims: generosity (“Minimize the expression of beliefs that express or imply benefit to self; maximise the expression of beliefs that express or imply cost to self.”) and sympathy (“minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between the

self and other.") (Leech 1983, p. 64). For instance, Jonathan's narrative maximises the cost to himself and recommends the same to African leaders ("One which places personal preference at the base of the basket") by requesting the de-prioritisation of the quest for power. Still orienting to the generosity maxim, combined with the sympathy maxim, he minimises the cost to the other party and maximizes sympathy between him and the party by advocating the protection of the mass victims of wrong political decisions and actions.

## **6. Conclusions**

This paper has identified four themes related to national integration in Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Watch*, Nasir El-Rufai's *Accidental Public Servant* and Goodluck Jonathan's *My Transition Hour*, namely, national and strategic representation, unification and national interest, electoral fairness and broad-mindedness. These themes have been differently connected to four conceptualisations in the three texts in cognitive, social and political contexts: cohesion as an orientation to objectivity and concessionary output, positive and negative behavioural traits as national trans-ethnic qualities, membership status and political service strictly as loyalty to the national organicity, and defeat as a tool of national cohesion. Several speech acts, constructed with and without IFIDs, have been identified in connection with national integration (or sometimes disintegration) tendencies. They have also been shown to be determined by the writers' historical, sociological, cultural, interactive, anthropological, ideological, philosophical, religious and political apriori knowledge, shared or unshared with other characters in the texts, the readership and members of the Nigerian public.

The main and supplemental theoretical principles from socio-integration, contextual, socio-cognitive and politeness paradigms deployed in analysing the memoirs have not only revealed the integration-based themes that govern most of the scope of the texts but have also teased out the pragmatic mechanisms engaged in the discourses to demonstrate writer goals and deductive paths to achieving national integration and effective governance system in Nigeria. Models emanating from our pragmatic reading of the texts such as national organicity achievable through critical political loyalty, electoral fairness hinged on getting national support and on ethnic-neutral sentiments, veritable trust in national leadership irrespective of context-based threats, ethnicity and religion-fluid concept of positive political dispositions and empathetic political judgment transcending tribe and geocentricism are instructive for the achievement of national political cohesion and stable polity.

These are the key discoveries of the current study which extant linguistic studies have not addressed strictly. Thus, differently from and beyond Odebunmi (2019), which is interested in conceptual metaphorisation of leadership styles in Obasanjo's *My Watch* and Ugoala (2020) which analyses facework devices in Jonathan's *MTH*, this study has taken a more functional and pragmatic look at the selected memoirs and shown the potentiality of pragmatics research in extracting practical interventions into the question of national integration and leadership from political memoirs.

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## **Address Terms as Linguistic Markers of Social Integration in Bisi Akande's *My Participations***

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### **Abstract**

*The article examines how Bisi Akande, a foremost Nigerian politician of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), in his autobiography, *My Participations*, deploys address forms as linguistic markers to ideologically negotiate identities for some political actors across party affiliations while mapping their roles and (in)action in national development processes. Representative excerpts from the autobiography were purposively selected and analysed, while insights from critical stylistics and social integration theory. The narrator uses three stylistic techniques: naming conventions, modifying nouns, and depicting actions/events as ongoing processes. The strategies highlight the political actors' qualities, experiences, and relationships with narrator. The stylistic choices are motivated by the narrator's need to offer precise narratives while fostering cohesion in a nation marked by ethnopolitical conflicts. As a result, each choice subtly shapes the reader's (and consequently, society's) interpretation of the overall scenario, encompassing the actors involved, their roles, and the narrator's perspective.*

**Keywords:** Address terms, discourse markers, autobiographical memory, critical stylistics, national history, social integration

### **1. Introduction**

The way narrators relate their experiences, for example, at work or home, in writing or informally when experiencing anger, expressing happiness, seeking assistance, or asserting authority, all relate to the "representational" and "social" roles of language (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 2). These language practices are interconnected with how people navigate power dynamics, foster social integration, maintain friendships, and promote harmony during communication. The interpretation of these functions, however, varies across communities. Different cultures place varying degrees of significance on the conventions and intentions employed in addressing individuals. These range from using the actual names to substituting or supporting the names with titles that mark the bearers' professional designation, kinship terms, occupational titles, social titles, etc. Crucial to note here are the social functions associated with the utilisation of these address terms, which encompass aspects of

(im)politeness, (dis)respect, intimacy, deference, social integration, etc. (Chornet, 2022). These functions are contingent on whether the specific positive terms of address are employed, or negative ones are avoided.

Fasold (1990) considers terms of address as words speakers and writers use to designate the persons to whom they are speaking or writing. Bonvillain (2000) suggests that address terms are also known as forms of address, and in any communicative situation, various linguistic forms can be utilised to name, address, or refer to an individual. This is probably why Yule (2006) sees these terms as words used to directly communicate about someone in speech or writing. Regarding the nature of address forms, Aborampah (2023) observes that they can be inherent in the grammar of a language or evolve as a diverse range of titles, names, kinship terms, endearments, and nicknames, typically beginning with an initial capital letter. Depending on the relationship within a specific community, the discourse exponents of the address terms may range from formal to informal (Fitch, 1991), and their occurrence reflects the complexity of the social integration, and societal hierarchy, as well as the dynamics of power, authority, and equilibrium between individuals based on their age and social standing (Echu, 2008). This means address forms serve as a crucial link that mirrors the connection between language and society, offering valuable sociolinguistic insights into the relationship between the individuals represented in a narrative or engaged in interaction and the broader social-cultural setting in which they are situated. Hence, Oyetade (1995, p. 515) argues that address forms include utterances (i.e., words or higher linguistic structures) utilised during narration or discussion to identify or pick out individuals being referred to, and/or their roles during an experience.

Most of the studies on the manner of address have been carried out in the domain of sociolinguistics and pragmatics. The bulk of the research has been concentrated on identifying factors that influence the selection of specific forms when people address each other namely, power and solidarity (e.g., Brown & Gilman, 1960; Brown & Ford, 1961, 1964; Olabode, 1987), social changes in society (e.g., Fang & Heng, 1983), social formalities (e.g., Slobin et al., 1968; DeLisle, 1993; Morand, 1996), cultural expectancies or knowledge (e.g., Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Kempf, 1985; Oyetade, 1995; Sekyi-Baidoo, 2020), gender and age (e.g., Kramer, 1973); kinship or relationship (e.g., Adetugbo 1969; Fadipe, 1970) and language peculiarities (e.g., Lambert & Tucker, 1976; Aborampah, 2023). Generally, the studies have assessed the use of such linguistic forms as names, kinship terms, pronouns,

and honorifics as constrained by social factors. In all these, pronouns have enjoyed the most attention. Thus, other studies have explored the usage of pronouns in other languages such as French (e.g., Lambert & Tucker, 1976), Yoruba (e.g., Fadipe, 1970; Olabode, 1987; Oyetade, 1995), Kolamooof (e.g., Aborampah, 2023), Neues Deutschland (e.g., Kempf, 1985), Chinese (e.g., Fang & Heng, 1983), inter alia. Adetugbo's (1969) treatment of the usage of honorific pronouns in Yoruba as address forms is particularly interesting. Sekyi-Baidoo's (2020) interest in names in a Ghanaian community centre on "non-name" address terms used as titles, names, and title names. The study observes that the usage and connotations of these address forms, as well as their phonological distinctions are influenced by the interaction of two cultures, a native and non-native sociolinguistic setting, among the Akan community.

Despite the extensive research on address terms as highlighted above, the deployment of participants' titles, positions, endearments, nicknames, and role descriptions as address terms, particularly in negotiating autobiographical memory has not been adequately explored. This study, therefore, aims to investigate and analyse the structures and ways in which participants have been addressed in the memoir, *My Participations*. This concern triggers three research questions: (a) what stylistic strategies are utilised in addressing participants in *My Participations*, and what linguistic forms mark the terms of address? (b) What are the contextual elements and socio-pragmatic variables that inform such stylistic strategies and linguistic forms of address deployed? (c) How are these choices likely to promote an attitude of social integration, thereby presenting both the author, Bisi Akande, and the participants portrayed in the text, as accepted and respected members of the Nigerian society? To answer these questions, this study is designed as a qualitative analysis, which purposively focuses on utterances that bear address forms in *My Participations*. The utterances are subjected to a critical content analysis with a focus on the textual (stylistic strategies, and linguistic forms), contextual (discourse, and pragmatic), and critical (ideological, and cultural) elements generated in the text. These are done with insights drawn from the principles of critical stylistics and social integration theory.

In the subsequent sections, a review of the concept of autobiographical memory is presented, with a brief biography of Bisi Akande; the analytical frameworks are described and their relevance to the analysis is justified; then, the findings, discussion, and concluding remarks follow.

## **2. Autobiographical Memory and Bisi Akande's *My Participations***

Autobiographical memory is an intricate combination of memories involving single, recurring, and extended sets of events, woven together into a cohesive narrative of oneself that is formed and assessed through the lens of sociocultural practices (Robinson, 1976). Several approaches have since been employed to investigate autobiographical memory. One method involves simply asking individuals to recall and report the most significant personal events in their lives (cf. Rubin & Berntsen, 2003), or memories that define their sense of self (e.g., Conway et al., 2004). Another commonly used technique is to present participants with cue words and instruct them to describe the personal memory that comes to mind associated with each cue word (e.g., Crovitz & Schiffman, 1974). This method is credited to its inventor, Galton (1883), and popularised in modern times by Crovitz and Schiffman (1974) in what is now known in the literature as the Galton-Crovitz cueing technique.

Numerous studies have examined how autobiographical memories are distributed across the lifespan. These distributions typically display three notable characteristics (Rubin et al., 1986; Janssen et al., 2005). Firstly, there is difficulty in recollecting events from the early years of life, commonly known as childhood amnesia. Secondly, a significant number of memories are often recalled from childhood, roughly between ages 15 and 25, resulting in a "reminiscence bump" in the memory distribution graph. This bump, according to Roediger et al. (2017, p. 8), may be attributed to the cultural life script in Western societies, which includes various significant events during this period. Bohn and Berntsen (2007) corroborate this position by arguing that children also exhibit a reminiscence bump when predicting future events in their lives. Lastly, most reported events are recollections from the most recent years, known as the "recent effect," which is a common example of good recall of recent information.

Given the personal nature of autobiographical memory, researchers usually face challenges in comparing individuals' memories with objective occurrences. In this regard, Brewer (1986) categorised autobiographical memories into three groups namely, personal memories, autobiographical facts, and generic personal memories. Personal memories involve specific events in one's life that are accompanied by mental imagery. These memories are considered by some to be akin to episodic memories studied in specific settings because they represent the episodes of one's life with specific people,

dates, and locations. Autobiographical facts represent pieces of information about oneself that lack personally experienced temporal or special context. Generic personal memories pertain to more abstract knowledge about oneself, such as understanding one's personal traits, or acquired procedural knowledge.

Bisi Akande's *My Participations* has some conceptual overlap among these categories. However, its distinctive characteristics are that the story roundly explores the author's total experiences and reflects a sense of personal history. The story, in Wole Soyinka's foreword, "is one historic reckoning that will make many uncomfortable [as they] will be reminded of the roles played by them which they would rather the nation, indeed the world, forgot" (Akande, 2020, pp. xi-xii). Despite the burden of saying things the way they were (most of which were not too pleasant), Akande still manages to imbibe the cultural norms of civility in addressing participants in the text. As an elder statesman, who served as Deputy Governor of the old Oyo State from 1982 to 1983, Governor of Osun State from 1999 to 2003, and the first interim Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC) – Nigeria's ruling political party, Chief Abdulkareem Adebisi Bamidele Akande is one of Nigeria's politicians whose recently published autobiographical facts have continued to generate a lot of interests. The strong presence of societal stratification and sociocultural kinship in his address strategies, and how these index the social relationships and respect systems capable of forestalling potential social conflicts both at individual and group levels are compelling.

### **3. Analytical Framework**

The study adopts Jeffries' (2010) critical stylistics and draws further insights from social integration theory (Blau, 1960). While critical stylistics reveals the stylistic strategies and accounts for the peculiar linguistic forms by which participants in the memoir are addressed and explains the socio-stylistic functions of the address terms used, the social integration theory examines the link that the stylistic choices and socio-pragmatic functions of the address terms have with the author's ideology of fostering national integration, particularly in the face of ethnic rivalry and sociocultural diversity by which the Nigerian political landscape is marked.

The primary focus of critical stylistics lies in uncovering the techniques employed in a text, the possible intentions of the author, as well as the linguistic components utilised in achieving these objectives. Consequently, it offers not only an unbiased methodology and linguistic framework for dissecting textual content but also furnishes a "critical metalanguage" that

enables readers to articulate instinctive responses to texts (cf. Weber, 1992, p. 12). Jeffries (2010), therefore, proposes ten essential tools for critical stylistic analysis that offer a more lucid approach to revealing a text's purpose and the linguistic means by which it is achieved. They are: naming and describing; representing actions, events, and states; equating and contrasting; exemplifying and enumerating; prioritizing; assuming and implying; negating; hypothesising; presenting the speech and thoughts of other participants; and representing time, space, and society (Jeffries, 2010). According to Jeffries, these tools can effectively facilitate textual examination, shedding light on the intentional or subconscious stylistic techniques employed by a text producer, and enabling readers to uncover the underlying ideological substance. And these, no doubt, are powerful strategies through which the reader's perception can be shaped.

Concerning the task involved in the first research question, two out of the ten tools proposed by Jeffries (2010) are adopted in the paper namely, naming and describing, and representing actions/events/states. Naming and describing involves applying an ideological perspective to the process of describing textual participants, and this necessitates familiarity with the structure of the English nominal group. The linguistic model proposed by Jeffries for naming/describing covers three linguistic forms namely, the choice of a noun to indicate a referent (choice of nouns), the construction of a noun group with modifiers to further determine the nature of the referent (noun modification), and the decision to use the nominal group to express an opinion (nominalisation) (2010, p. 21). This segment of a clause typically serves as a means of designating an entity. Within the data, numerous instances of stylistic manipulation become apparent, wherein the selection of a noun or its modification not only allows the narrator to denote a specific referent but also conveys their viewpoint or evaluation of the referent. This phenomenon arises from the inherent ideological significance of noun groups, given that they possess the ability to encapsulate ideas or information that extends beyond mere entities and encompass processes, events, or actions (Jeffries, 2010, p. 19).

The second tool, representing actions, events, and states, is another strategy that explains the conventional ways autobiographers present the events in their stories, the (in)action taken by the participants portrayed, and their outcomes. As noted by Abed et al. (2023, p. 175), the verbal component of language is where actions and processes occurring between entities find their typical

representation. Thus, representing the verbal component captures the strands of meaning that “stereotypically presents information on what is being done (actions), what is happening (events), or what simply is (states)” (2010, p. 38). This linguistic framework for illustrating this strategy is adapted from Simpson’s (1993) revised version of the Hallidayan transitivity model, which categorises lexical verbs into four distinct groups—namely, material, verbalisation, relational, and mental processes—based on the type they seem to represent (Jeffries, pp. 40-46).

Material processes encompass instances of things that are done or happened, and following Simpson (1993, p. 89), consist of two broad categories of material action viz., the happening process (material action event–MAE) and action process, which in turn divides into material action intentional (MAI) and material action superventional (MAI). The MAI entails purposeful actions performed by conscious beings (e.g., the military arrested the political class), MAS pertains to unintentional actions carried out by conscious beings (e.g., The Vice President wept in detention), while MAE involves the use of verbs with an inanimate Actor, where human involvement is either absent or downplayed (e.g., the lesson learnt from that attack affected us all). The three sub-divisions within the realm of material process, Jeffries contends, can “all have Actors and may also have Goals” (2010, p. 41), which are the participants involved in such processes. Verbalisation processes “describe any action which uses language” (Jeffries, 2010, p.42), and includes a human agent. While certain verbs within this category exhibit a more verbal nature than others, they generally share a common potential group of participants, viz. Sayer (mandatory), some Verbiage (typically present but not always), and a Target (less common yet frequently possible).

On the other hand, relational processes are concerned with describing “the static or stable relationships between Carriers and Attributes, rather than any changes or dynamic actions.” This category encompasses verbs like the copula “to be” and other “intensive” relations (RI), verbs indicative of possessive relations such as “have” (RP), and “circumstantial” relations (RC) that involve movement verbs as well as the verb “be” (Jeffries, 2010, p 43). Mental processes, in turn, primarily denote the internal processes occurring within human beings, and these typically include two chief participants: Sensor and Phenomenon (cf. Halliday, 1985, 1994). Jeffries observes three manifestations of mental processes, namely, mental cognition (MC) verbs like “knowing,” “realising,” “thinking,” etc.; mental reaction (MR) verbs like “hating,” “appreciating,” “liking,” etc., and mental perception (MP) verbs like “feeling,”

“hearing,” “seeing,” sensing,” etc. (Jeffries, 2010, p 44). Drawing insights from these tools, this paper delves into the diverse stylistic strategies and linguistic preferences employed in addressing or describing participants and their conditions in the events they are portrayed.

There are some factors that influence the choice of the linguistic strategies, and these take us back to the first assumption made in this study namely, there is a link between the stylistic choices made in recounting an autobiographical memory and the dynamics of the author, as a leader with an ideological interest to contribute to national integration by making a linguistic effort that brings social cohesion to society. Hence, going by Peter Blau's Social Integration theory, there are intricate processes through which a member of a society commands respect, wins the friendly acceptance of fellow members, becomes integrated into the society, and at the same time fosters the society's social structures (Blau, 1960). A society here is distinguished by the social bonds that unite its members into a more cohesive social structure. These bonds are based on social attraction, where a cohesive group consists of members strongly drawn to one another. The notion of attraction refers to positive feelings towards others, leading to a willingness to engage in social interaction with them. Naturally, these feelings and behaviours are experienced and demonstrated by individual members (Blau, 1960). Bonds of social attraction can be examined from two perspectives: the level of attraction each individual feels towards the group and how appealing everyone is to the rest of the group. The Nigerian society, for instance, is diverse with a complex geopolitical makeup of over 250 distinct ethnic groups, each with its own language, culture, and tradition. While it continues to navigate challenges related to ethnic diversity, promoting inclusivity, celebrating cultural heritage, and recognising shared interests are essential steps toward building stronger bonds between its various ethnic groups and fostering national integration. Therefore, a political leader such as Bisi Akande is expected to, in their use of language, promote the factors that bond the diverse groups thereby fostering national integration. The presentation of data and discussion of findings will demonstrate how Bisi Akande attempts this task in *My Participations*.

### **1. Address terms and discourse markers of social integration in *My Participations***

Going by the findings made from the first research question, the discussions here are sectioned in line with the stylistic strategies revealed. Other findings on the second research question (contextual variables) are incorporated in the discussions. Thus, as earlier mentioned, three broad stylistic strategies have



been observed in *My Participations* namely, use of names (titles and labels), noun modification (pre-head and post-head modifications), and viewing events/actions as processes. These are discussed in succession.

#### 4.1 Naming Practices

Use of names is found to be a concrete way through which the narrator records the identity of the participants being described. Some sociolinguistic peculiarities influence this linguistic practice, such as ethnicity, respect, age, etc. Ethnicity, as Oyetade (1995) supports, plays a major role in the narrator's Yoruba culture, where most names are unisexual. Thus, even when writing in English, or addressing participants that are not Yoruba, the narrator insists on using their full names and titles. As the examples in Tables 1 and 2 show, it is given a slightly broader view to include other forms of naming participants or describing participants' identities. Hence, five linguistic forms have been identified through which this is done, namely, use of proper names (e.g., "...my cousin, James Olayemi Oyebanji" p. 50), fond names (e.g., "Uncle Bola" p. 356), nicknames (e.g., "...popularly known as Jimoh Alabeniye" p. 103), aliases (e.g., "...alias Chrisore" p. 256), titles (e.g., "the Owa-Obokun of Ijeshaland" p. 25), and labels (e.g., "...born-again" p. 370). In all these nuances of identifying participants, only titles and labels hold much stylistic relevance for the strategy in question. Traditional and religious titles, while addressing or introducing people in the Nigerian context, have become an important social and linguistic practice as is manifest in the text in question. Let us consider some instances:

##### *Excerpt 1*

Since this new crisis started during the military era, His Imperial Majesty, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi, the Alaafin of Oyo, had written to General Sani Abacha, complaining about the treatment of the Modakeke people of the Ife. (p. 343)

##### *Excerpt 2*

He also wanted witnesses... Therefore, Adesanya invited His Majesty, Oba Kayode Adetona, the Awujale of Ijebuland, Bishop Bolanle Gbonigi and Bishop Ladigbolu. The giants among the leading members of the Afenifere leadership were also present. (p. 373)

The underlined linguistic items in the texts above are traditional and religious titles. The linguistic context immediately hints at why the titled participants are included in the discourse event. However, the wider socio-political context, which necessitates the inclusion of their titles and honours in

identifying them, makes it more stylistically interesting. For example, in Excerpt 1, one quickly understands the disappointment felt by the narrator, particularly at the fact that a dignitary like Oba Lamidi Adeyemi, in all his glory (“His Imperial Majesty”) and traditional status (“the Alaafin of Oyo”), had officially intervened on the ill-treatment meted out to Modakeke people without any positive response from the General Abacha-led military government at the time. In a similar vein, traditional and religious leaders are mentioned (in Excerpt 2) as witnesses to the important issues to be discussed in a meeting of Afenifere leaders with the then President Olusegun Obasanjo. These participants (“Oba Kayode Adetona...Bishop Bolanle Gbonigi and Bishop Ladigbolu”) are not part of the Afenifere leadership; however, inviting them to the meeting, and more importantly adding full titles to their identity, has something to do with their status and regard in the Yoruba nation. And this corroborates scholars’ views on the importance of traditional rulers (Igwubor, 2020, p. 203) and religious leaders (Haynes, 2009, p. 71) in bearing witness, maintaining mutual trust, and fostering national cohesion, especially when matters of strategic importance are at stake.

Aside from titles, labels have been noticeably and strategically used in *My Participations*. Two main ways of labelling are observed in the text, *viz.* positive and negative. They are used by the narrator to express his opinion on the participants’ character, or achievements. This linguistic practice is largely characterised by two lexical choices, namely, attributive adjectives and emotive metaphors. Some examples can be considered in the excerpts that follow:

*Excerpt 3*

Iyiola Omisore crept into my life like a silent malignant cancer. He came in full force. In a few months, I thought I knew him. I regret I did not know him in his true colours.

...

Yekini was, to me, a most reliable and loyal associate. He was a retired school teacher [*sic*] who, since 1994, voluntarily opted to serve as my Personal Assistant (PPA) with no remuneration. (p. 253)

*Excerpt 4*

Searching for a successor was the most trying assignment I faced in Osun State, especially after Uncle Bola, our Tower of Strength, had been demolished. (p. 403)

In Excerpt 3, both positive and negative labels are also used. Such items as “cancer,” “force” and “colours” are negative metaphors. Notice that words like “force” and “colour”, which do not typically have negative connotations in isolation, are used in a negative sense. This is in part made possible by such demonstrative adjectives as “full” and “true” employed to describe the negative domains of the qualities embedded in the metaphors. These are slightly different from the “cancer” metaphor, which is more direct with the attributive adjectives “silent” and “malignant”. Through these metaphors and their accompanying adjectives, Iyiola Omisore (who became Deputy governor during the narrator’s term as governor, but was later impeached) is framed and his pretense character presented as undesirable. On the other hand, the lexical item “Tower of Strength” used in describing “Uncle Bola” (Chief Bola Ige), is an emotive metaphor sourced from positive attributes such as hope and support which mark Ige’s sociocultural and political achievements over the years. The use of both the negative and positive labels here respectively describes the personalities of Iyiola Omisore and Chief Ige sort the participants out into “specific social categories that determine how members of the public should understand and judge their actions” (Chiluwa, 2011, p. 203).

#### **4.2 Noun-head Modification**

There are many instances where the narrator consciously structures noun groups in specific ways to further determine the identity of the participants being addressed. Jeffries (2010) recognises two kinds of modification, *viz.* pre-head modification (words that occur before the head noun) and post-head modification (structures that come after the head noun). Four slots of information have been observed in the patterns of noun group modification in *My Participations*, although not utilised equally for stylistic purposes. They include the determiner or enumerator (Slot 1), pre-head modifier (Slot 2), head noun (Slot 3), and post-head modifier (Slot 4). Pre-head modifiers, for example, linguistically manifest in the text as epithets and appositions, which are powerful devices used by the narrator to include four kinds of information about participants’ identity: participants’ attributes, profession/position, contributions to politics in Nigeria, and relationship with the narrator. While the epithets are employed to capture participants’ attributes and contributions, the appositions relate to the last two, relationship and profession/position. Some instances from the text may be relevant here:

*Excerpt 5*

Till his death, Papa Ajasin admirably led us and he was succeeded by the equally well-known and fearless Senator Abraham Aderibigbe Adesanya (p. 241)

*Excerpt 6*

His lone living contemporary by 1977, the legendary journalist and nationalist leader, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, was contemplating full retirement from active politics.... (p. 7)

*Excerpt 7*

I knew him [Lawyer Peter Ajibade] through my friend and colleague from my BP days, Alhaji Shehu Ajijola.... (pp. 203-4)

*Excerpt 8*

...the military governor of the Eastern Region, Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, declared the region the Independent Republic of Biafra. (p. 106)

The underlined linguistic items in Excerpts 5 (“well-known” and “fearless”) and 6 (“legendary” and “nationalist”) are epithets. However, the ones in Excerpt 5 describe the attributes of the then Afenifere leader, Senator Abraham Aderibigbe Adesanya, while those in Excerpt 6 focus on the contributions of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe to the field of journalism and the country’s politics and independence. Notice the difference between the use of epithets and appositions in Excerpts 7 (“my friend and colleague from my BP days”) and 8 (“the military governor of the Eastern Region”). The appositional structure in Excerpt 7 gives insight into the cordial relationship the narrator had/has with Alhaji Shehu Ajijola during their work at British Petroleum, while that in Excerpt 8 relates to both Colonel Odumegwu-Ojukwu’s profession as a military veteran and position as the then military governor of Nigeria’s Eastern Region.

Like pre-head modification, post-head modification is also a conscious stylistic strategy that allows the narrator to package up his opinions on the identity of the participants being addressed. However, unlike pre-modification which deals with words and appositional groups, post-modification here relies more on clausal items, which describe participants’ relationship with the narrator, traits, and experience. Some examples may be useful here:

*Excerpt 9*

The second was by Chief Ayo Fasanmi, my political godfather who was the AD National Vice-Chairman and a long-standing friend to Chief Bola Ige (p. 264)

*Excerpt 10*

We were led to every town, village and hamlet by Uncle Bola whose charisma and reputation as an orator of uncommon genius paved the way for us (p. 270)

*Excerpt 11*

Senator Bamgbetan, a journalist and a politician of the military era from Ile-Ife who once represented Ife/Ijesa senatorial district as an SDP member in the Senate during General Babangida military era, was the first to indicate his desire to be my running mate. (p. 258)

The appositive phrase (“my political godfather”) in Excerpt 9 underscores the point of the mentee-mentor relationship as recorded in the text between the narrator and Chief Ayo Fasanmi, particularly by describing the latter as his “political godfather”. This relationship is further made clear with the post-modifying structure (starting from “who” to the end), which extends the friendly relationship to Chief Bola Ige, who—as deduced from Excerpts 4 and 11—is another father figure whom the narrator’s variously fondly refers to as “Uncle Bola” (p. 403), “Arole Awolowo (Awolowo’s heir)” (p. 270), and so on. In Excerpt 10, through the information added to the post-modifying clause (from “whose charisma” to the end), reference is also made to other traits of “Uncle Bola” (Chief Bola Ige), such as his positive allure and uncommon oratory skills. In Excerpt 11, the underlined clausal items outline the litany of experiences the participant (“Senator Bamgbaten”) is associated with. There are two clausal post-modifiers in the excerpt: the first (from “a journalist” to “Ile-Ife”) identifies the participant’s professional and political credentials, while the second (from “who” to the end) hints about his practical experience. From the foregoing, it is obvious, following Wright and Hope’s (1996) observation, that Slots 2 (pre-modifiers) and 4 (post-modifiers) are the ones typically engaged in discourse (p. 4), and in this case, by the narrator to package up information about participants’ identity.

### **4.3 Viewing Events/Actions as Processes**

This is the principal strategy through which the narrator manipulates the verbal element (the predicator) of the clause in presenting the processes that take place between the participants in the memoir. Observably, the narrator

chooses lexical verbs and modifiers that stereotypically present information about the activities going on in the reported discourse, such as, the events happening, the actions taken by participants during the events, and the conditions resulting from events and actions. The four processes (material, mental, relational, and verbalisation) adapted by Jeffries (2010) are relevant here (see Table 1 above). The relational and verbalisation processes, however, dominate the other processes in the text, and this lends credence to the fact that the narrator is essentially focused on reporting the situations not only in the way he recollected them but also in the way he views them.

The relational process is observably deployed for several purposes, the most stylistic of which involve capturing participants' attributes, and revealing participants' roles in the events. This strategy relies on equivalence, and the general pattern is that many (un)favourable conditions faced by some participants in the text are revealed through creating equivalences. In relaying such conditions in the narrative, three relational syntactic structures have been identified through which equivalence is textually constructed in the data: appositional equivalence (making use of apposition convention), metaphorical equivalence (involving fixed and non-fixed metaphors), and intensive relational equivalence (involving the copula verb 'to be'). Let us consider the structure of the following text samples:

*Excerpt 12*

Goke Fayoadé turned out to be a most efficient and dependable police officer who, in spite of the vicissitudes of sponsored riots that rocked the House of Assembly over the attempt to impeach me... remained loyal and honest to his charge as my personal security officer. (p. 267)

*Excerpt 13*

The obstacles for serious engagement was [*sic*] the many petty issues affecting the relationship among the governors. Chief Osoba was nursing the wound he believed Bola Tinubu intentionally inflicted on him when the Lagos State Government took two large plots of land from the land allotted to the school owned by Osoba's wife, Aderinsola. (p. 407)

*Excerpt 14*

Osinbajo is one of our brightest boys. He was a professor of Law at the University of Lagos and he served under Tinubu as Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice. Modest, cerebral, perspicacious, courageous and decent in every sense,

he would be a fitting compliment to the ascetic Muhammadu Buhari whose solder (p. 495)

Excerpts 12 and 13 have instances of metaphorical equivalence. The metaphorical items (“turned out to be” and “was nursing the wound”) deployed as processes in the texts are used in setting up attributive equivalences that relate the Carriers (“Goke Fayoadé” and “Chief Osoba”) to such Attributes as being “a most efficient and dependable police officer...” (in Excerpt 12), and nursing “the wound” inflicted on him. Other relational processes like “was” (in Excerpt 13), “is”, “was” and “would be” (in Excerpt 14) are cases of intensive relational equivalence. In Excerpt 14, particularly, the Carrier, Yemi Osinbajo, is – largely through the use of copula verbs (“is”, “was”) related to some Attributes like being (“professor of Law”, “Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice”) that make him equivalent to a perfect match the Yoruba nation needs for a vice presidential alliance with Muhammadu Buhari, who had just won the presidential ticket at the APC primaries. The appositional convention is also observed in setting up equivalence in Excerpt 14. Although not categorically stated, the list of Attributes is supposed to be kept in apposition with the Carrier, in a manner that reads: [Osinbajo,] “Modest, cerebral, perspicacious, courageous and decent in every sense....” Generally, the relational processes here have been utilized in picking out participants’ backgrounds (e.g., attributes and values) with respect to specific conditions presented in the text. Let us, through the verbalisation process, turn to the roles played by participants.

The verbalisation process is exclusive of the narrator, as it includes many semiotic ways the narrator uses in indicating what has been communicated by participants. Out of the three remarkable ways participants’ positions have been presented in the text (e.g., direct speech – DS, indirect speech – IS, and report of speech act – RS), the IS – as expected in autobiographical memory, is the most preponderant mode of narration, and as such does not hold much promise of stylistic relevance. The DS is usually deployed by the narrator to distance himself from certain decisions taken in the past, while RSA has a more ideological use in the sense that it deals with the narrator’s interpretation of participants’ communicative engagement in context. The issue of ideological interpretation will be given a broader discussion in the section that follows. Let us however consider the examples of DS and RSA below:

*Excerpt 15*

Chief Ige expressed worries about Akinfenwa’s pugnacious bents and his capacity for generating tensions and controversies. ‘Akinfenwa is a single-track-mined person who

is too rigid to blend easily with the views among friends and foes,' he said. (p. 245)

*Excerpt 16*

Governors Segun Osoba, Lam Adesina and I were there. The others were absent. He answered us very rudely and gave no assurance of anything. This time around, there was no special courtesy for Baba Adesanya or even Kabiyesi Awujale or the bishops. Then, we left to go face our fate. (p. 373)

The underlined portion in Excerpt 15 above is an instance of a DS of Chief Bola Ige. Being a major stakeholder in the leadership of *Afenifere* during the governorship election of 1999, Chief Ige's direct voice needs to be heard concerning the outcome of the Alliance for Democracy governorship primaries, which went against Chief Moji Akinfenwa. Perspectivising Chief Ige's disapproving view (from "Akinfenwa is a single-track-mined person" to "foes") on the choice of Chief Akinfenwa's candidature is a way of the narrator setting the records straight: that even though the narrator turned out to become the Alliance for Democracy governorship candidate (and the governor eventually), it was not his decision to oust Chief Akinfenwa. The underlined portion in Excerpt 16, on the other hand, is a speech act reported from President Obasanjo's interaction with the *Afenifere* leaders. Going by the supporting evidence in the next sentence beside the underlined, Obasanjo is viewed as not wanting to abide by the agreement earlier made with the group. Hence, being interpreted as rude and reluctant to commit himself to any previous promise marks disappointment. The verbalisation strategies here allow us to understand the specific roles played by participants in the political discourse presented in the text.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis presented in the sampled texts makes a significant contribution to our understanding of discourse and narrative strategies, particularly in the context of autobiographical memory. In doing this, the paper identifies and categorises three broad stylistic strategies deployed by the narrator (i.e., use of names, noun modification, and viewing events/actions as processes), the systematic categorisation of which helps readers understand the underlying patterns in the autobiographical text. The exploration of the use of names and titles, especially in the context of ethnicity and sociolinguistic peculiarities, contributes to the understanding of how language choices reflect cultural and social norms. The discussion of the importance of traditional and religious



titles adds depth to the analysis, linking linguistic choices to broader socio-political contexts. The detailed analysis of pre-head and post-head noun modifications provides insights into how the narrator shapes the identity of participants. The differentiation between epithets and appositions, and their roles in conveying attributes, professions, contributions, and relationships, adds nuance to the analysis. The analysis also delves into the narrator's manipulation of verbal elements as processes. The emphasis on relational and verbalisation processes as a way of presenting textual activities, with a focus on equivalence, metaphors, and copula verbs, contributes to our understanding of how language constructs meaning and shapes readers' perceptions.

Generally, the discussion of these address strategies highlights the ideological goals of the narrator. The analysis demonstrates how linguistic choices contribute to the narrator's efforts at framing events and participants to shape the reader's perspectives, influence societal perception, and hence contribute to national cohesion. The conclusion ties together the various linguistic strategies discussed and emphasises their implications for how readers perceive the narrative. This corroborates Jeffries' (2010) submission that "we are all susceptible to the nuances of those who speak to us" (p. 37). The acknowledgment of the role of critical stylistics in understanding human thought and expression suggests a broader significance for the findings beyond the specific analysis. In summary, the study makes a substantial contribution by offering a comprehensive exploration of linguistic strategies employed in autobiographical memory, shedding light on the intricate ways language shapes narratives and influences perceptions.

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## **Identity And Leadership Conceptualisations In Obasanjo's *My Watch***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores leadership identity construction in Olusegun Obasanjo's memoirs. Identity defines an individual or societal construction of self and is considered as a product of such individuals' socio-cultural and political realities. The study purposively examined leadership identity and conceptualisations in two volumes of Olusegun Obasanjo memoirs. The study adopts a theoretical triangulation of Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory of intergroup behaviour, Fetzer (2004) model of context and Sbisa's (2006) notion of speech act theory. Findings reveal that fence-mender, game-player, and self-sacrificing leadership identity types, evidently nuanced by the social, economic, and historical contexts play out as intertwining identity types and contexts and culminate in two pragmatic implications of political discourses in Nigeria: negative representation of others' identities, and gamification of leadership acts. The study implicates that memoirs are tools for the construction of the subject realities of ideological polarised positive-self and negative-other conceptualisations.*

**Keywords:** Context, identity construction, ideology, leadership, memoirs, political discourse

## **1. Introduction**

Leadership as a construct defies unified definition in its scholarship. This is predicated on the varying understanding of the phenomenon due to the multifaceted factors that influence people's understanding of the concept. Conceptualisation of leadership takes two groups of people – those with leadership experience and those without, such that experience is considered the crux of leadership as it leads to a higher-level understanding and does so through identity (Lord & Hall, 2005; Francavilla, 2019). Identity, the index of self, is deemed a resource for learning as one's interests, preferences, beliefs and views affect the stimuli an individual chooses to direct attention to and efforts towards (ibid.). In other words, an individual's leadership traits and beliefs are spurred by the experiences they have. Boateng (2012) equates leadership with power, authority, management, administration and supervision. By implication, when a leader defines leadership, he defines it in accordance with the type of power, management prowess, administrative acumen and supervisory strategy he adopts to handle issues affecting the people he leads. In this respect, political memoirs provide the platform for interrogating how political actors recount their experiences and construct their identities in line with how and what they conceived as the art of leadership.

Political actors, in their narratives, most often, conceptualise the art of leadership differently. Their variegated conceptualisations are usually grounded on their personal realities during and after holding certain political offices or influenced by their encounters with other political actors at the helm of governance. In essence, most politicians define leadership in line with the shared social political realities and independent historical records. Memoirs are one major source through which political actors define leadership and establish leadership identities. Hence, there is the imperative need of engaging further scholarly exploration of memoirs that interrogate how these political actors construct identity and leadership in their works. This study is, therefore, aims to tease out the typologies of leadership and identity conceptualisation, the underlying contexts and the pragmatic implications of their construct in Obasanjo's memoirs, *My Watch* (Volumes 2&3).

## **2. Conceptual Clarifications**

This section of the study examines the concepts underpinning the study in order to give the readers' the background knowledge of the subject under investigation.

### **2.1 Political Discourse and Leadership Representation in Africa**

The term political discourse as a macro genre is closely knitted with the understanding of the social domain politics. Politics revolves around the

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affairs and concerns of the institutions of government, parliament and (political) parties. Politics is concerned with the struggle for power in political domains or institutions “through elections, parties, parliamentary procedures and propaganda” (Kirvalidze & Samnidze, 2016). In other words, politics evokes ‘the relationship between the power- wielding and power-affected group who mutually act and react within the context of governance (Odebunmi & Oni, 2012), while political discourse is associated with actors or authors; who are politicians. Political discourse as a broad macro genre in this sense, therefore, refers to all talks and texts in the domain of politics (van Dijk, 1997). However, defining political discourse by its actors and authors is misleading and narrow-given that there are many people involved in political communicative event aside politicians. This, therefore, means that politics and its discourses in the public sphere are wide-ranging to accommodate many actors and recipients within the political communicative events. Indeed, this clearly indicates that political discourse does not only handle the public affairs that concern the citizens but also with the way in which citizens produce and use political discourse to construct and interpret different messages, ideological arguments, and opinion.

It is significant here to state that leadership is a stimulant for the development of a great nation. Little wonder that leadership position is generally thought of as a position to be occupied by people with desirable attributes (Randell and Yerbury, 2020). As Agbaenyi and Owuamanam (2021) opine, effective and productive leadership requires transparency, and accountability among others for good governance, national growth and development. In line with this study, the definition of leadership is narrowed “to the government or to the leadership of an organised state, the totality of the political class that has the capacity to exert influence on the machinery of government even from behind the scene”(Ogbeidi, 2012).Therefore, political leadership is likened with governance (UNDP, 1997). In line with the foregoing, political leaders as ruling class are saddled with the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of a nation. As leaders, they are involved in the policy and decision making for the orderly development of a nation or territory. In this wise, developed nations are recorded as having political leaders with character at the helm of affairs Agbaenyi and Owuamanam (2021), while the trouble with many underdeveloped nations is failed leadership which largely stemmed from poor character.

It is incontrovertible that leadership crisis has impeded Africa, from realising its full potential. This is consequent upon the fact that most African political



leaders have exhibited lack of vision (Ogunsiji & Ogungbemi, 2018, Akinola, 2019). which is an impediment to good performance as well as good governance. It is in this direction that Rotbeg (2003, p. 28) concedes that “leadership in Africa is typified more by disfiguring examples – the Idi Amin’s and Robert Mugabe’s – than by positive role models such as Nelson Mandela and Seretse Khama”. Surprisingly, scholars have equally shown that most nations of the world have experienced the pair of good and failed political leadership (Ogbeidi, 2012). Regrettably, in the words of Saidu et al. (2019), ‘Nigeria, the most populous country and biggest democracy in Africa, is one of the nations that has [sic] consistently faced the challenges of leadership’. This is to say that, characteristically, political leadership in Nigeria like many other African countries can hardly exonerate itself from the bane of poor leadership.

### 3. Memoirs Scholarship

Memoir evolves from a French word ‘Memoria’ denoting memory or reminiscence. This literary genre offers the author the opportunity to bring the past to life through a detailed account of stories and the myriads of events: socio-cultural—cumpolitical. Through this literary medium, memoirists project their voices (Saidu, et al., 2018), engage political arguments (Adegbenro, 2021), comment on epoch adventures, histories and events (Adegboyega, 2021) and let slip of some contentions about a nation (Odebunmi, 2019). A long list of memoirs has been written by Nigerian political leader-writers, namely: Olusegun Obasanjo’s *My Command* (1980), *This Animal Called Man* (1998), *My March through Prison* (1985), *Not My Will* (1990) and *My Watch*, a three- volume text; *The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo* (1960) by Obafemi Awolowo, *My Transition Hour* (2018) by Goodluck Jonathan, *Beckoned to Serve: An Autobiography* (2001) by Shehu Shagari, *The Accidental Public Servant* (2013) by El Ruffai; *My Participations* (2021) by Bisi Akande, and *My Odyssey: An Autobiography* by Nnamdi Azikwe, among others which expound largely on Nigeria’s politics and leadership. Aside blurbs, newspaper commentaries and book reviews, the major scholarship engagement of these political memoirs are: Saidu, et al. (2019), Odebunmi, (2019), Adegboyega (2020), Ugoala (2021), Adegbenro and Osisanwo (2021) and Adegbenro (2022) from both the literary and linguistic perspectives.

Focusing on *My Watch*, Ajala (2017) examines the illocutionary acts, implicatures, presuppositions and, indirect speech acts, contexts and face maintaining strategies in selected utterances of Olusegun Obasanjo. The author claims that the intention of the encoder, mutual intelligibility and the

context of the speech event are the three vital elements that enhance effective communication. Specifically, Odebunmi (2019) attempts a conceptual reading of Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Watch*. He uncovers how the concept of de/responsibilisation has been deployed to reveal the significant political value that the society ascribes to the image of what an individual is, while Adegbenro and Osisanwo (2021) focus on the pragma-dialectal reading of the text. These authors identify five presentational devices: positive pragmatic argument, praxis, presuppositions, negative lexicalisation, passive construction; and six strategic maneuvering techniques: blame game, smokescreen techniques, prerogative argument, fallacious appeal to authority, ad hominem attacks, and ethotic appeal. They confirm that the presentational and strategic manoeuvring techniques tilt towards the beliefs and preferences of the audiences. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, notwithstanding the efforts of the above scholars from the pragmatic lens, memoir pragmatics scholarship in Nigeria has not attended to the construction of leadership identities, and particularly in Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Watch*, which the present study is concerned with.

#### **4. Previous Works on Political Leadership**

A number of studies with different foci on political leadership in Africa exist from political science, history and strategic studies, psychology and linguistics. Ogbeidi (2012) asserts that political leadership in Nigeria cannot be absolved from the travails of socio-economic underdevelopment in the country. In view of this, the scholar from a historical perspective examines corruption and political leadership in Nigeria since 1960 and its implication for socio-economic development. Of significant relevance to this current study is Ogunsiji and Ogungbemi (2016). These scholars unveil how the identities of political leaders are constructed in selected poems of Niyi Osundare using critical stylistic tools. This paper is relevant to the current study as it brings up the issue of leadership identity; however, the study differs in its theoretical orientation aside its limitation of the primary data to poetry. Again, Saidu, et al. (2018) examine leadership perception and self-construction in the autobiographical narrative — *My Odyssey* — by Nnamdi Azikwe. The study concludes that the memoir substantiates the claim that autobiography is more often than not brought forth by crisis. This study by Saidu et al. (2018) apparently differs from the present study in focus, theoretical orientation and data source.

Still in a work of art, in the conjoin movies — “*Saworoide*” and “*Agogo-Èwò*”, Olaiya, (2020) examines the realities of leaders who rely on

natural recourses income. The study reveals issues such as political violence, criminality, state-organised assassination, and annihilation of opposition, elitism, and patrimonial politics as the out-turn of the resources on the governance of the community. The current study differs as it is not limited to movies. Beyond this, the focus is on identity construction as against leadership crisis in natural resource-dependent state. As political scientists, Agbaenyi and Owuamanam (2021) study leadership character with attention on— human rights abuse, corruption and democratic dictatorship as it influences human security. The study reports that Nigeria's leadership character from 1999 to 2021 was drawn on abuse of human rights, official corruption and democratic dictatorship. As such, the paper suggests that Nigerian Government scales up in good leadership character. While Agbaenyi and Owuamanam (2021) examine leadership character and its adverse effects on Nigerians, it differs from the present study which is linguistic- based, and also uncovers how leadership identity is constructed in memoirs through pragmatic tools.

### **5. The Synopsis of the Selected Memoirs**

*My Watch* written by Olusegun Obasanjo and published in 2015 is a trilogy. The first volume- *Early Life and Military* details Obasanjo's early life experiences which began from the village-to the city and runs through to his military service. The second volume -- *Political and Public affairs* – covers his affairs during his second coming as the Nigerian president in the Fourth Republic and, lastly *My Watch Volume 3: Now and Then* captures his reflection on the state of Nigerian political affairs after his presidency. The focus of the current research is on Volumes 2 and 3; hence, the overview runs through these two volumes. *My Watch Volume 2* gives an account of his visions and strategies as Nigerian president. He recounts his experience after his release from the prison to the period of his emergence as the president of the country. He reveals the contentious socio-political issues that prevailed during his administration. Thus, as a watch-man, with facts and figures, he exposes all the villains. Some of these political leaders presented in this volume include: Abubakar Atiku, Bola Tinubu, Tony Anenin, Nuhu Ribadu Nasir El Rufai, among others. He presents some of what he considered as the characters and personality traits of these political leaders. For instance, he describes Atiku Abubakar as a blatant and shameless liar; he presents El Rufai as being 'economical with the truth' and Muhammadu Buhari as one who 'would not be a good economic manager'. The political -leader-writer presents the various key areas of his administrations as well as his efforts in these regards: welfare, finance, economy, and civil service, conflict resolutions and so on. In Volume 3 of '*My Watch*'- *Now and thereafter*, the

author bluntly condemns the 'siddon look' disposition of the Nigerian people to political affairs particularly which he considers as unacceptable. He unveils the problem of bad leadership in President Goodluck Jonathan's administration which brought the administration to a monumental failure.

### **1. Methodology**

The data for this study are two volumes *My Watch Volume 2: Political and Public Affairs* and *My Watch Volume 3: Now and Then* out of the three volumes of Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Watch*. The selection of the two volumes is informed by the apt depiction of leadership characters and implications in Nigeria. A descriptive qualitative design was adopted in the study. It is anchored on the theoretical underpinnings of: Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory of intergroup behaviour, Fetzer's (2004) model of context and Sbisa's (2006) notion of speech act theory. Tajfel and Turner's model of social identity theory situates the construction of identity as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and their membership.

In other words, the theory prioritises that social categorisation that defines the in-group and out-group difference. Accordingly, the two authors opined that social categorisations are conceived as tools segment. They also classify, and order the social environment and thus enable the individual to undertake many forms of social action. In this of undertaking these actions, such individuals provide a system of orientation for self-reference by creating and defining their place in that society. Three theoretical principles govern the realisation of this social identity conception: 1) individual strive to achieve or maintain positive social identity; 2) positive social identity is based on favourable comparisons that exist between in-group and why that should be positively perceived distinguished from out-groups; 3) when social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive either to leave their existing group and join a more positively distinct group or make their existing group positively distinct.

It is from this structure that identities of individuals are constrained by the tripartite: individual mobility, social creativity and social competition. Fetzer's (2004) model of context helps to explain the actions that defined the conceptualisation of leadership in the memoirs. According to Fetzer (2004, p. 1), references to context and references to meaning have the communicative

function of modifying the force of an argument and its propositions by delimiting their domains of validity. In her study, Fetzer (2004) emphasises cognitive, social and linguistic contexts. The cognitive context aids the interpretation of assumptions, propositions and mental representations that underlie the identities constructed and the type of leadership conceived. Language materials that sum up the lexical choices made constitute the linguistic context while the extra-linguistic realities imported to enhance these representations project the social context. These not only aid the interpretation of the text but also help track the intention of the author through the instrumentation of speech act. Sbisá's speech act theory, particularly the aspect that focuses on the trend of performatives' shift to the naturality of inferences.

This idea that Sbisá extracted from the trends of speech act is informed by the argument that 'the conventionality of illocutionary acts, apart from clearly ritual performatives, was linked to the linguistic conventionality of illocutionary force indicating devices' (Strawson 1964 cited in Sbisá 2006, p. 15). Conversely, 'when the force suggested by the illocutionary indicators is inappropriate or irrelevant, the real force of the utterance is inferred by the hearer, with a procedure drawing on the notion of conversational implicature (Grice 1975 cited in Sbisá 2006, p. 13). It could be drawn from the foregoing that this study, in its analysis, not only interprets the illocutionary acts of the political actor but also ascribes meaning to its propositions through the power of inference. The synergy of these theoretical resources offers an in-depth revelation of how leadership is conceived by Olusegun Obasanjo generally, and how his stance on leadership in turn constructs certain kind of identity for his person in the memoirs. The thrust of the analysis thus rests on the principles of pragmatics wherein the top-down analytical approach is utilised to first top-load the topical issues, contexts and identities with their resources of enactment.

## **2. Analysis and Discussion**

### **2.1 Leadership Identity Types and Context in Obasanjo's Political Memoirs**

Three leadership identity types persist in Obasanjo's political memoirs: fence-mender, game- player, and self-sacrificing identity leadership types. These are evidently nuanced by the social, economic, and historical contexts of the memoirs.

### 2.1.1 Fence-mender Leadership Identity (Political Context: Election and Governance)

The fence mender identity construes the ideal national leadership that brings about national integration as an act of getting on board people of different sociocultural, ethnic and political differences. Contextual instantiation of this identity type in OBPM cuts across the political contexts of election, governance and conflict management. Excerpts 1 and 2 are demonstrative of this leadership identity constructed in OBPM.

Excerpt 1:

I went to visit to visit Chief Bola Ige with whom I had struck close friendship when I was in Ibadan in 1967 as the Area Commander: Bola said, “If it would happen, there would be fences to mend.” **I told him that he would be a fence mender with me** (*MY WATCH*, VOL. 2, p. 10)

Excerpt 2:

Alhaji Aminu Dantata is soft-spoken, unassuming, thoughtful and well respected. I called on him at about nine o’clock at night. After the usual pleasantries, I stated my mission. Alhaji listened to me attentively and said, “**I am very concerned about one thing; I don’t want to get a visa to go to Enugu, Lagos or Port-Harcourt.**” I told him that I had accepted to yield to pressure to have a go at the job because like him **I did not want to have to get a visa to go to Kano or any other Nigeria cities he mentioned.** (*MY WATCH*, VOL. 2, p. 24)

The construction of the fence-mender identity in excerpts 1 and 2 is borne out of the visits of OBJ to different political stakeholders while declaring his intention to contest as the President of Nigeria. In excerpt 1, for instance, OBJ paid a courtesy visit to Chief Bola Ige, one of the Yoruba elder statesmen in Ibadan in 1967 to register his intentions to run for President. In the course of their engagements, Chief Bola Ige informed him of fences to be mended, meaning that there were broken relationships that the aspirant should reconcile. The propositional content of the lexical choice “fences to mend” which both interactants share adequate knowledge of, implicates that OBJ’s task should be targeted at national reconciliation. This relies on the historically shared knowledge of variously destroyed relationships as it was a period Nigeria was still recovering from the bloody Civil War. Hence, the illocutionary force of the act of fence-mending dually issues warning and advising. Obasanjo also aligns himself to the social construct and ideological

identity of a fence-mender by smartly admitting and assuming the fence-mender identity by his tactful response “I told him that he would be a fence- mender with me.”

One of the projected broken “fences” in Nigeria is regional unrest and the constant quest for secession led by the Easterners which drastically threatened the national unity and cohesion of the country. As illustrated with Excerpt 2, OBJ’s meeting with Alhaji Aminu Dantata also forayed into the actions that should be put in place to avert disintegration of the nation. After OBJ revealed his mission to him, Alhaji Dantata simply expressed his concern in the locution “I am very concerned about one thing; I don’t want to get a visa to go to Enugu, Lagos or Port-Harcourt.” With this indirect act, the speaker, who is from the north implicates that he does not want any region of the country to divide in such a manner that each would become an independent nation that one has to obtain VISA to visit. Obasanjo again aligns with this stance of Alhaji Aminu Dantata through the illocutionary act of assuring by equally stating that “**I did not want to have to get a visa to go to Kano or any other Nigeria cities**”. By this, a mutual identity of fence mending that frowns at separation is prioritised. As can be fetched from the **historical context**, the period of this political tour of expression of interest by OBJ was a period of identity creation and agenda projection – a platform for him to sell his political leadership mission and ideology.

### **7.1.2 Game-Player Leadership Identity (Political, Social and Economic)**

The game- player leadership identity type depicts political leadership as an exercise of tact and strategies aimed at manoeuvring and getting at set goals. It is the identity of a strategic planner that feasts on the political, social and economic contexts of the polity. OBPMs reel off this leadership identity of Nigerian politicians as a core factor engendered by the national diversity of the Nigerian cultural and political space. It is thus typical of leaders to embrace strategic planning to get the representation of each region in governance. This plays out in excerpts 3 and 4 below.

Excerpt 3:

Before I left government finally, six of us-Yar Adua, Jonathan, Tony Anenih, Ahmadu Alli, Bode George met and take [sic] some decision on zoning the remaining **three offices to be zoned**, with the President, vice president and secretary to the government of the federation (SGF)θ having been zoned by election and Umaru’s appointment of Baba Kingigbe. We had Senate President to a zone for which two people from the North Central showed interest and appeared before the six of us. **We**

interviewed both - David Mark and Abubakar Sodangi. We all settled for David Mark. Next, was the speaker zoned to the South West and for which only one candidate showed interest (I came to understand later that **necessary groundwork** had been down). Folake Patricia Eteh appeared and we all endorsed her. The only office left was the chairman of the party, which was zoned to the south east and for ~~W~~which Governor Sam Egwu was **slotted**, pending Ahmadu Bello **stepping down**... (*MY WATCH*, VOL. 3 , pp. 11- 12)

Excerpt 4:

There was no doubt that the thoughts the leaders in the North and the political leaders across the board had realised that the interest of all Nigerians will be best served if **power shifted** to the South, particularly in the light of June 12 and Abacha saga. It was much later I came to learn of the **game plan** (*MY WATCH*, VOL. 2 p. 8)

Political leadership as a game is anchored on the foundation of strategic planning and representation of the political, social and economic interests of one region, and political party to another. In the two excerpts used for illustration, the game-player identity is situated in the assignment of political offices as a precursor for power shift among the major geopolitical zones in Nigeria. In excerpt 3, for example, the referents and political players – Yar Adua, Jonathan, Tony Anenih, Ahmadu Alli, Bode George – were making decisions on behalf of their party and the nation by extension. The author in *MY WATCH*, VOL. 3 pp. 11-12, remarks that “Next, was the speaker zoned to the South West and for which only one candidate showed interest (I came to understand later that necessary **groundwork** had been down). Folake Patricia Eteh appeared and **we all** endorsed her.” The locution of *necessary groundwork* indexes the leadership construction and conceptualisation of Nigerian politics as a game that is well thought-out to satisfy regional or party biases. Obasanjo also lexicalises the collectiveness of the decision-making process by the deployment of plural pronominals such as “we” and selecting verbs such as “slotted” to concretise the deliberateness of the decisions made. What further stamped out the game-player identity in the OBPMs is the propositional act in Excerpt 4 “if **power shifted** to the South, particularly in the light of June 12 and Abacha saga. It was much later I came to learn of the **game plan**” where power shift was carefully planned as part of a game-plan to address lopsided political power distribution. Nigeria operates a multi-party



system and by reason of his widely diverse frame in terms of population, culture, ethnicity and religion, there is always the ready need for circumspective political strategising which informs the eclectic political manoeuvrings that characterise leadership acts as shown in OBJ's memoir. Every region wants to be ably represented and politicians draw different game plans to realise their goals.

### **7.1.3 Self-Sacrificing Leadership Identity (Social Context)**

Self-sacrificing leadership identity conceives leadership as a selfless means of rendering one's service to the electorate. It typifies social roles performed by an individual who believes in satisfying the interest of the people he or she represents rather than personal gains and interests. In OBPMs, this leadership identity is constructed for self and other allies, and it is grounded in the social context.

Excerpt 5:

I personally gained nothing from being chairman of the (BOT). **If anything, it cost me in terms of time, resources, and efforts to settle quarrels and feuds within the party** (*MY WATCH*, VOL. 3 p. 19)

Excerpt 6:

Ribadu deserved every special promotion given him. He was courageous and trepid [sic] and I fully backed him up. He was even poison [sic] at one time, only God saved his life. **The war against corruption must be seen as life and death matters, as those deeply involved resort to killing the one who fights corruption.** Many people did not believe we could start to wage a war against corruption, we showed we could, but in the end, Nuhu had to step on many toes including Yardua's. (*MY WATCH*, VOL. 3 p. 10)

Excerpt 7:

Here, General Danjuma was spot on in his advice. "Go to T.Y Danjuma", he said. I phoned Yakubu and I visited him at five o'clock one morning. He came down to receive me in his Victoria Island house. When I briefed him, he said, "I salute your courage, I will not do it because I value my freedom." I told him he could not fully appreciate the value of freedom as he had never lost his freedom. I told him, "**I have lost mine and I appreciate the value of freedom, but whatever is needed to sacrifice for the good of Nigeria, I will.**" (*MY WATCH*, VOL. 2 pp. 10-12).

That leadership is a bundle of self-sacrifice is entrenched as an identity trait in OBPMs and this is captured in excerpts 6 and 7, Obasanjo in these memoirs defines leadership as a freedom-costing adventure because of the numerous enemies it generates. Like in excerpt 5, the author highlights the sacrifices he made as a leader to include time, and resources. This invariably construes the social and economic context of the sacrifices made in leadership. He also maintained that he personally gained nothing from these sacrifices. The self-sacrificing leadership identity in excerpt 6 involves other-narrative in that the author narrates the sacrifice one of his loyal allies, Nuhu Ribadu. The illocutionary force was both commending and informing. The propositional content reveals that leadership sacrifice is a matter of life and death and, therefore, is a risky adventure. Here, Obasanjo creates the self-sacrificing identity in the dual context of governance and fight against corruption which attracts stepping on toes and incurring more enemies in the system. The third illustration is demonstrated in excerpt 7 in a conversation between the author and General Danjuma. In their communitive act, the two political actors centred their interaction on the context of freedom and how freedom itself is a victim of service. The illocutionary force of the locution “but whatever is needed to sacrifice for the good of Nigeria, I will” amplifies the self-sacrificing identity OBJ created for himself and people who have denied themselves in the service of the country. This is a positive self-representation for OBJ. It gives the impression that he is a patriot that can lose anything for the sake of his country.

### **1. Discourse Implication of the Leadership Identity in Obasanjo’s Political Memoirs**

Going through the discourses of OBPMs, there are underlying pragmatic implications that are accruable from the identities constructed for the various leadership acts of the author and other political actors that constitute the discourses from which leadership was conceptualised. Two pragmatic implications are identified in this study: negative representation of others’, and gamification of leadership acts. These are examined below.

#### **8.1 Evocation of Potential Negative-Other (Identity) Representation**

A major implication of the narratives that maps out the identity of OBJ is negative-other representation that he often resorts to, when constructing self. Evocation of potential negative-other identity representation involves the amplification of the negative acts and features of ideologically opposite social actors. This invariably portends implications for unity among political actors in the Nigerian space. In the volumes of OBPMs that were studied, the

narrator adopted the strategy to create social identification and categorisation in order to price self above others and also construct favourable identity for self and spotlight the weaknesses of others. It connects with the game-player and self-sacrificing leadership identities. Excerpts 8 and 9 exemplify this strategy:

Excerpt 8:

The most outrageous is the allegation by **el-Rufai** that I said, "No third term, no Nigeria." Under no circumstance would I have said anything like that. Those who know me very well know that I would not pursue anything in my life to the extent of destroying Nigeria or not wish Nigeria well. ... People asked me what I feel about Nasir's book. I always replied that if his so-called friend, Nuhu Ribadu, could claim "**There is a huge integrity deficiency in el-Rufai's book.**"... The best I could do is to have a great pity for him when I realised El-Rufai's **psychological and potential upbringing problem, I tried**, as he dramatically and exaggeratedly narrated on pages 329-354 of his book, **to fill some of the void** (pp. 117-118)

Excerpt 9:

For Nigeria, **Buhari would not be a good economic manager**. I know him well enough that he would be strong and almost inflexible, courageous and firm leader. If Nigeria would avoid a **stubborn mismanagement of the economy**, what should be done to a possible Buhari emergence as an elected president? I agonized on this issue, but came to the conclusion of pairing Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's technical competence and experience in economic management with Buhari's strong political leadership. (p. 117)

Two instances (excerpts 8 and 9), among several in the texts that strategically evinced plausible negative-other identity representation of social actors, have strong implications for the political imaging of the affected social actors and capable of generating discord among these individuals and the writer. Entrenched in the socioeconomic contexts, OBJ in excerpt 8 addressed former Kaduna State governor, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai's personality in reaction to Nasir's book in which the latter made some claims about a supposed Obasanjo's third term agenda that was making rounds. The reaction of OBJ was both constructed in the defending and condemning acts geared towards defining the personality of el-Rufai. In his proposition, OBJ,

referencing el-Rufai's memoir, stated reported the direct locutions of the former governor in the allegation which he OBJ reportedly claimed "no third term, no Nigeria". This allegation was deemed as a misrepresentation of OBJ's identity and, therefore, in his defence, he had to also represent el-Rufai in the negative sense to stamp why he should not be taken seriously, hence describing him as having "psychological and potential upbringing problem." He further went ahead to now revalidate his personal identity of self-sacrificing for the nation, Nigeria. In excerpt 9, OBJ provided a negative evaluation of the economic prowess of Buhari who was vying to become the president of Nigeria. Using the illocutionary acts of informing and recommending, OBJ opined that Buhari is incomplete to manage the economy but he agreed to his other leadership traits.

These evaluative acts simply reveal the negative identities of the social actors and also present the evaluator as having the best ideas in government. This kind of pragmatic implication spells distrust among the political gladiators of the nation.

## 8.2 Gamification of Leadership Acts

Gamification of leadership acts is a pragmatic implication that underscores the competitiveness of the politics of the state. In this strategy, the multifaceted steps taken by OBJ and other social actors in the texts towards either advancing their leadership philosophies and agendas or edging others out of the scene/stage are given prominence. It relates directly to the game-playing identity of political agents in the contexts of election and governance. Excerpts 10 and 11 establish these implicated imports of leadership conceptualisation.

Excerpt 10:

At this point, President Yar'Adua's illness had taken a toll on his work. Tanimu confided in his friend, saying that they all realised that it was only a matter of time; the centre would not hold. **Everybody** then decided to make money for themselves **before the centre collapsed**; and they did so while the No 2 man in government knew nothing about what was going on. My adversaries **tried** other means to get to me. If Obasanjo could not be cut down to size, they must have thought, what about those close to him, including his daughter (*MY WATCH*, VOL. 3, p. 18)

Excerpt 11:

Before embarking on the tedious energy-sapping campaign, I had

earlier called on Alex Ekueme to say that we would have a good and strong four pillars to hold the party, the government and the nation together. Again, taking into account his commendable reaction after the primary, suggested that he should **contest a Senate seat** and take over as the President of the Senate. **I promised to persuade** the Party to **zone the Senate presidency to the South-East**, which would put the presidency in the South-West, Vice-Presidency in the **North East** and Senate presidency in the **South-East** and Party Chairmanship in **the North Central**, with Speaker of the House in the **North-West** and Secretary to Government from the South-South. (*MY WATCH*, VOL. 2, p. 34)

Gamification of leaders' acts has intense implication for the representation Nigerian political terrain. In this depiction, OBJ constructs the desperation of politician underlined by serial acts of gamification. Excerpt 10 demonstrates the gamification of politicians when Late Yar'Adua was at the point of death. These politicians adeptly resolved to looting money by taking advantage of their ill-health of the president. The corruption and governance contexts mapped out how gamification impacts political morality. This was extended to the agential person of OBJ who was considered a threat to their plots to illegally enrich themselves. Hence, OBJ construes them as "adversaries". Excerpt 11 implicates regional gamification where candidates jostle for placement in the guise of party zoning spearheaded by OBJ himself. This distribution of offices to different zones happened before the election and, therefore, implicates that the political sphere in Nigeria promotes the game-player identity and is marked by the context of elections. The overall import of these discourses as represented in OBJ's memoirs reveals that politicians in his era considered it a game to take advantage of situations to either enrich themselves or engage in politicking that favours either their regional or political divides. They often rely on diverse acts of promising [I promise to persuade] and conspiring others' downfall [If Obasanjo could not be cut down to size, they must have thought, what about those close to him, including his daughter] as the strategies ingrained in their game-plan to realise their goals.

### **Conclusion**

As established in this study, memoirs – the active accounts of individuals' representation of their realities in writing – embody a gamut of experiential relation, identity and leadership conceptualisation. In the world of politics, this is more evident. Considering OBJ's *My Watch* in this study, it is revealed

that the former President of Nigeria captures his encounters in the Nigeria politics in these volumes which consequently revealed his understanding of leadership in the Nigerian context and his identity as an active political leader. The study which relies on the resources of Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, Fetzer's contextual orientation and Sbisa's thesis of speech act, identifies three dominant leadership identities: fence-mender, game-player, and self-sacrificing. These principally unravel the Nigerian social political realities and project interventionary measures of leadership that OBJ considered apposite in addressing them. In this light, leadership is conceived as one's ability to build relationship across the nation, engage in skilled politicking and avail oneself for selfless national service.

These leadership identities are again grounded on the contextual indices of election, governance and economy of the nations. Noticeably, the autobiographer's deployment of appropriate illocutionary force and acts of defending self, condemning others and evaluating others' actions ultimately evoke clear implications for the overall discourse of memoir's literature and political identity of Nigeria and beyond. Two predominant pragmatic and discourse implication of these discourses project: negative representation of others' identified, and gamification of leadership acts. In ordinary terms, OBJ's memoirs implicate politicians' ideological negative framing of others while projecting positive self and also promoting the game-playing mechanics that underlie the political operations across party and regional divides.

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## **Politics, War and Leadership Agendas in Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Command***

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### **Abstract**

*Effective leadership is crucial for guidance towards shared objectives. This study analyses Olusegun Obasanjo's memoir, *My Command: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, to explore its significance in understanding the intersections of politics, war, and leadership. Obasanjo's role as a military commander during the Nigerian Civil War offers valuable insights into leadership dynamics in challenging contexts. Despite provoking severe criticisms, scholarly attention to the memoir remains limited. Using transformational leadership theory, this study undertakes a textual analysis of *My Command*, highlighting Obasanjo's leadership principles and their impact on actions and decisions during the conflict. The memoir illuminates power dynamics, war realities, and the importance of effective leadership in crises. Also, Obasanjo emphasises national unity as the bedrock of stability and progress. The memoir serves as a valuable resource for political education, providing insights into Nigeria's history, politics, and the role of effective leadership and unity for national development.*

**Keywords:** History, Nigerian Civil War, politics, transformational leadership, memoir,, unity

## 1. Introduction

Effective leadership is crucial in guiding individuals and organisations toward shared goals. Yukl (2006, p. 8) describes leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives”. Also, Northouse (2010, p. 3) defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal”. These definitions point to various key components of the concept of leadership: (a) it is a process; (b) it entails influencing others; (c) it occurs in the context of a group; (d) it entails goal attainment; and (e) these goals are shared by leaders and their followers. In the military context, Roberts (2018) avers that leadership is paramount to the success of any army. Leadership assumes a critical role as it not only influences strategic decision-making but also shapes the morale and cohesion of forces, thereby playing a decisive role in the success or failure of military operations during times of war. Leaders not only make life and death decisions but directly control the climate and quality of life of their subordinates. This underscores the importance of Olusegun Obasanjo’s memoir, *My Command: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*.

In the memoir, Obasanjo, a prominent figure in Nigerian politics and military history, who later served as both a military and civilian president, offers a unique and invaluable viewpoint on the complex connections between politics, war, and leadership. This memoir explores his experiences during a critical juncture in Nigerian history – the 1967-1970 Nigerian Civil War and the country’s complex political environment. The Nigerian Civil War, often referred to as the Biafra War, is a crucial part of the country’s history. The war began, as vividly described by Obasanjo, with the resounding echo of the initial gunshot on the morning of July 6, 1967. In sobering words, he declared, “The war had started” (Obasanjo 2015, p.18). This powerful statement kicked off a series of events that would ultimately alter Nigeria’s history. The war’s beginning reflected a nation grappling with ethnic and political tensions and moving nearer the precipice of disintegration. In this tense atmosphere, the federal government faced numerous challenges, including scarce resources, demoralised troops, lack of equipment, and strong opposing global views. In *My Command*, first published in 1980, Obasanjo shares not only his journey but also a unique look into the turbulent events that transpired in the country, which culminated in his position as a military commander during the Civil War. His narrative poses crucial questions regarding the place of politics in military operations, the ethical and strategic challenges that leaders must

resolve in times of war, and the long-term effects of these choices on a country's fate. It is in light of this that this study analyses the leadership role of Obasanjo during the Nigerian Civil War. With the aid of transformational leadership theory, this paper explores the multifaceted aspects of Obasanjo's role by examining how transformative leadership principles manifested in his actions and decisions throughout this historical conflict. It also provides valuable insights into leadership dynamics in challenging contexts, particularly in the context of national unity and resilience, as depicted in Obasanjo's memoir.

The next section discusses Nigeria's political landscape and events leading to the Civil War. This is followed by a review of relevant literature, the theoretical framework, the methodology of the study, and the analysis of the memoir.

### **1. Nigeria and the Civil War**

The memoir, *My Command*, opens against a backdrop of the colonial experience in Nigeria. Scholars have averred that the historical antecedents that precipitated the Nigerian civil war lie in the anomalous construction of the Nigerian State by the British colonisers, "the so-called Mistake of 1914' and its attendant malcontents, as well as the unrestrained conflicts over control of state power" (Osaghae & Onwudiwe 2002, p. 3). Madiebo (1980) contends that the roots of the civil war can be traced back to the divide-and-rule system of government introduced by Britain into the country. According to him, this divide-and-rule system underscored distinctions among the diverse ethnic groups and fostered social apartheid which led to division, animosity, detrimental rivalries, and marked developmental disparities among the various peoples of the nation. Consequently, he asserts that, following independence, the struggle to solidify this legacy of political and military dominance by a specific section of Nigeria over the rest of the Federation escalated and devolved into coups and the ensuing violent civil war.

Obasanjo's memoir provides a comprehensive exploration of the pre-war political landscape in Nigeria, revealing a complex interplay of factors that set the stage for the conflict. It explores Nigeria's colonial history and the legacy of ethnic diversity left by British colonial rule. It discusses how colonial policies and administrative divisions laid the groundwork for ethno-regional tensions that would later contribute to the conflict. Obasanjo states:

All the political leaders who had strong and firm bases in the regions fought hard for maximum powers for the regions which weakened the centre. At the same time, the ugly embers of

tribalism and sectionalism had been fanned into a deadly flame by all political leaders. These leaders rode on the crest of this cancerous tribalism, and the ignorance of the people, to power, at the expense of national unity and the nation. Instead of regionalism ensuring and preserving national unity, it became its bane. There was diffusion instead of fusion of the three units. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 4).

With the granting of independence in 1960, more issues came up. Nigeria faced a series of political challenges arising from imbalanced political divisions, the structure of the federal constitution and its operational spirit. During the elections that ushered in the First Republic and gave birth to the formation of the immediate post-independence government in Nigeria, the major political parties in the nation were regionally based, with the leadership of those parties provided by people of the dominant ethnic group in each of the regions.

The First Republic was marked by crises, allegations of electoral fraud and a growing sense of instability. Obasanjo states:

Then came the biggest crisis of them all – the general election of 1964. The election was alleged to be neither free nor fair. All devices were said to have been used by the ruling parties in the regions to eliminate opponents... The Chairman of the Electoral Commission himself admitted there were proven irregularities. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 7)

However, the Western Regional Election of 1965 was worse:

the rigging and irregularities in this election were alleged to have been more brazen and more shameful. Law and order broke down completely, leading to an almost complete state of anarchy. Arson and indiscriminate killings were committed by a private army of thugs. Law-abiding citizens lived in constant fear for their lives and property. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 7)

This turbulent political climate set the stage for the military's intervention in Nigerian politics with the first coup on January 15, 1966. The aim of the coup, which brought in Major General J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi as head of state, was to "establish a strong, unified and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife" (Obasanjo 2015, pp. 7-8). There was a counter-coup on July 29, 1966, that ushered in Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon on August 1, 1966, as the new Nigerian political leader being the most senior army officer of

Northern origin (Obasanjo 2015, p. 9). However, the military's intervention in politics in 1966 further worsened the country's political challenges. Also, a spate of violence erupted between the Hausa and the Igbos in Northern Nigeria following the first military coup of 1966. The violence prompted thousands of Igbos to flee the region. In a broadcast to the people of the North on September 29, 1966, Gowon said:

I receive complaints daily that up till now Easterners living in the North are being killed and molested and their property looted. It appears that it is going beyond reason and is now at a point of recklessness and irresponsibility". (Obasanjo 2015, p. 10)

However, Nigeria's military government failed to guarantee security for the Igbos. Thus, the Military Governor of the Eastern region, Lieutenant Colonel Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, led a move for the secession of the region from Nigeria. Meetings and peace efforts to prevent the secession bid hit the rocks when twelve states were created throughout the country by Gowon on May 27, 1967 (Obasanjo 2015, p. 17). Elaigwu observes that the state creation was a key element in the federal government's reaction to the impending secession move:

While Gowon denied that the creation of states was a political manoeuvre against the so-called Ibo desire for self-determination, there is no doubt that it was partially aimed at diluting support for secession. From available evidence, states might have been created without the threat or imminence of secession, but it can be argued that the latter affected the actual creation of states when it was done. (Elaigwu 1986, p. 102)

Thus, the strategy of creating states served four primary objectives: it significantly eroded backing for secession in the ethnic minority regions of Eastern Nigeria; it fulfilled the aspirations of certain ethnic minorities for independent states; it rectified the regional imbalance between the North and the South by establishing an equal number of states in both regions; and it transformed the dynamics of the relationship between the central government and the states. Obasanjo notes that Enugu reacted quickly and decisively by declaring the "Eastern Region of Nigeria as the independent sovereign state of 'Biafra' on 30 May 1967" (Obasanjo 2015, p. 16). This proved to be the final trigger for the war. All diplomatic efforts to reunite the Eastern Region with the rest of Nigeria failed; and on July 6, 1967, war broke out between Nigeria

and Biafra. Obasanjo asserts that “No self-respecting leader would take Ojukwu’s bluff and treasonable act of secession without reacting with all the force at his disposal” (Obasanjo 2015, p. 18). Thus began a thirty-month-long traumatic war which ended after Biafra surrendered.

A sequence of events unfolded, profoundly shaping Nigeria’s historical trajectory. The war’s commencement reflected a nation on the verge of disintegration, grappling with intensified ethnic and political tensions. Within this tense environment, the federal government encountered numerous challenges, including scarce resources, demoralized troops, a severe shortage of equipment, and the loss of many towns to the Biafran side. Obasanjo notes that,

The Federal success in the Northern areas of operation was completely and effectively nullified by the rebel recapture of Owerri on 26 April, 1969. The seriousness of the situation on the war front, especially in the southern area of operations, dawned on officers and officials alike in Lagos. Frantic efforts were being made to contain the rebels within Owerri. The rebels, having discovered a point of weakness, put everything they had against the 3 Marine Commando Division to widen the dent in the Division’s defences into a crack. The loss of Owerri was quickly followed by the loss of Oguta. The morale of the Division sagged further as the rebels pressed for the recapture of Port Harcourt and the oil-producing areas. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 83)

These setbacks led to the reorganisation of the war operations and change of commanders in the three Divisions of the Army which was announced on May 12, 1969. Obasanjo was put in charge of the 3 Marine Commando Division. His arrival in Port Harcourt marked the commencement of a strategic campaign to secure not only victory in the war but to also capture the hearts and minds of the soldiers. Demonstrating an astute understanding of both human dynamics and the intricacies of warfare, and recognising the vital role of individuals in warfare, he perceptively asserts that, “Men are still the most important instrument in the art of war. Without them, other machines, equipment and instruments of war are useless, no matter how sophisticated” (Obasanjo 2015, p. 95). A fundamental leadership agenda that runs through Obasanjo’s narrative is his commitment to nation-building and the preservation of Nigeria’s unity. The Nigerian Civil War posed a severe threat to the nation’s territorial integrity, and Obasanjo’s role as a military leader was

intrinsically tied to this agenda. His leadership in the war was driven by a deep-seated desire to prevent the disintegration of Nigeria. He states:

As a field commander who was reasonably conversant with the genesis of the civil war and who is an incurable optimist as far as the Nigerian nation, its unity, stability and future progress are concerned, I set to crush rebellion, to end secession and to bloody the heads of rebels without bowing their spirit. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 228)

To achieve this agenda, Obasanjo launched “Operation Tail Wind”, which helped to bring the debilitating civil war to a quick end. He accepted the surrender of the Biafran forces in January 1970.

## **2. A Review of Studies on Obasanjo's *My Command***

Previous studies, including Odebunmi (2019), Osisanwo and Adegbenro (2021), and Aguoru (2022), have largely focused on Olusegun Obasanjo's memoir, *My Watch*, while his memoir, *My Command*, has not enjoyed much scholarly attention. Major references to the memoir are in the form of reviews, newspaper commentaries and rejoinders in the memoirs of some of the officers who fought in the Civil War or those affected by the content of the memoir. For instance, Alabi-Isama (2013), in his account of the Nigerian Civil War, devoted a whole chapter of his memoir to the criticism of *My Command*. He offers a critical perspective on Obasanjo's memoir, asserting that it leans more towards self-glorification than an accurate portrayal of military events during the Nigerian Civil War, particularly within the operational domain of the 3rd Marine Commando (3MCDO). In his analysis, Alabi-Isama contends that *My Command* is largely a work of fiction rather than a reliable historical account.

In the same vein, Ekwe-Ekwe (2012), in his analysis of the memoir, offers a scathing critique of Obasanjo's involvement in the destruction of an International Red Cross aircraft in May 1969. Ekwe-Ekwe highlights the gravity of the incident, emphasising its crucial significance within the context of the Igbo blockade. He delves into Obasanjo's mindset and the subsequent fulfilment of this directive, depicting Obasanjo's satisfaction with the incident as perverse and revolting. He condemns Obasanjo's actions as horrendous and fiendish, underscoring the loss of life resulting from the downing of the relief-bearing plane. He emphasizes the profound impact this event had on the morale of the Air Force and the troops, portraying Obasanjo as a commanding brute who revels in the aftermath of his crime.

On his part, Soyinka (2006) reflects on his role in the Nigerian Civil War, particularly his relationship with General Olusegun Obasanjo and his involvement in negotiating with Colonel Victor Banjo, who was on the Biafran side. Soyinka recounts serving as an emissary between Banjo and Obasanjo, requesting easy passage for Banjo's troops through Obasanjo's command and into Lagos. However, he expresses profound frustration with Obasanjo's attempts to distort historical truth, highlighting the personal toll of witnessing the manipulation of events in which he played a part. He finds it intolerable that Obasanjo would rewrite history to serve his own agenda, describing the experience as frustrating. However, as noted by Oriaku (2002), memoirists of the Nigerian Civil War all aspire to tell the truth from each writer's perspective, thereby explaining their roles in the conflict and interpreting the history of the war from their personal narrow perspectives. This paper is, therefore, a departure from the previous studies reviewed as it focuses on the importance of leadership in crisis situations from the perspective of Obasanjo as depicted in *My Command*.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts James MacGregor Burns' and Bernard Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory. Transformational leadership emerged as a significant leadership style that linked the roles of leaders and followers. Transformational leaders are believed to tap the potential and motives of followers to make it easier to reach the goals of the team. Burns introduced the concept of "transforming leadership" in 1978 to describe a relationship in which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (1978, p. 20). Bernard Bass (1998, p. 26) extends Burns' concept to describe those who motivate followers to greater achievement by presenting followers with a compelling vision and encouraging them to transcend their interests for those of the group or unit. Transformational leaders motivate followers by affecting followers' values and beliefs, which in turn influences behaviours. They typically emerge in moments of profound societal crises, offering solutions rooted in these values.

A key part of the theory is the four leadership factors or behaviours, often referred to as the 4Is, which characterise transformational leadership as identified by Bass and Avolio (1992, p. 22). These are idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration:



- **Idealised Influence** – the leader acts as a role model, earning the trust and confidence of followers through proven benevolence, competency, honesty and authenticity. This relates to performance and morals. Followers are inspired to emulate the leader's behaviour.
- **Inspirational Motivation** – the leader develops and articulates a clear and compelling vision. They communicate that the status quo is not acceptable and there is a need to move towards a desired future state. They communicate this vision effectively, fostering enthusiasm and commitment among the followers.
- **Intellectual Stimulation** – the leader encourages followers to explore new ways of doing things and create something that has not been there before. They challenge beliefs and assumptions and invite followers to try for more and exceed their expectations of what they can achieve. They encourage critical thinking, open communication, and a willingness to challenge the status quo. This helps to foster an environment of continuous improvement.
- **Individualised Consideration** – the leader works to understand the needs and feelings of their followers and helps them to grow. They aim to learn an individual's motivations, skills and passions, connect them to the shared goals and help to remove obstacles. This approach encourages and helps people feel liked, competent, and autonomous.

Fundamentally, in the military context, transformational leadership is a style in which commanders inspire, motivate, influence and stimulate soldiers to foster exceptional trust and belief, aligning them towards shared objectives.

#### **4. Methodology**

This study utilised a qualitative textual analysis approach, specifically employing the technique of close reading, to explore the themes of politics, war, and leadership agendas in the memoir. These were analysed using the elements of the transformational leadership theory. Excerpts that reflect these elements (idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration) were drawn from the text and analysed. These excerpts were randomly selected as they demonstrate Obasanjo's perspective on transformational leadership and its importance in inspiring collaboration, trust, and shared vision, fostering strong political ties through empowerment and mutual respect.

#### **5. Analysis and Discussion**

This section presents an analysis of the memoir in line with the four identified elements of the transformational leadership theory, namely: idealised

influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. Each of these elements is analysed below.

### **6. 1. Idealised Influence in *My Command***

Idealised influence, as demonstrated by Obasanjo in the memoir, is notably characterised by consistency and a commitment to setting high ethical standards. Idealised influence also occurs when the leader does the right thing and engenders the trust and respect of his or her followers (Walumbwa, Christensen & Muchiri, 2013). Obasanjo's punctuality on his first day after assuming command, arriving at work by 8 a.m., serves as an illustrative example:

During the briefing by one of the Staff Officers of the Divisional Headquarters, I had been told that work normally started at 9 a.m. and that I was expected to come to the office at about 10 a.m. I did not say anything to this. But I have always remembered General Eisenhower's philosophy about work to the effect that a man who fails to do half the day's work by ten o'clock runs the risk of leaving the other half undone. On 17 May 1969, my first day to work in Port Harcourt. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 92)

This consistency in adhering to a specific standard of conduct reinforces his image as a role model and fosters trust among his followers. By consistently demonstrating punctuality, Obasanjo establishes a clear expectation for his team regarding professionalism and dedication. Punctuality is a visible and tangible manifestation of a leader's commitment to their responsibilities, and in Obasanjo's case, it sets a positive tone for the entire command. Members of his command are likely to interpret this consistency as a reflection of his strong work ethic and dedication to the mission. Furthermore, this act of idealised influence goes beyond mere symbolism; it conveys a message that Obasanjo values time, discipline and the importance of being a reliable leader. Such actions contribute to the development of a positive organisational culture where individuals are inspired to emulate these qualities, promoting a shared commitment to excellence (Schein and Schein, 2017).

Another element of idealised influence demonstrated by Obasanjo in the memoir is accessibility as revealed in the excerpt below:

At the entrance to my office there was a warning signboard: 'Enter at the pain of Death'. I removed the notice and flung it some fifty metres. Later I saw through the window a soldier

picking it up with delight, carrying it high above his head and breaking the board into pieces. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 92)

In other words, a military commander who is easy to approach embodies idealised influence, thereby gaining trust and inspiring the soldiers (Brandebo, 2015). Effective communication and genuine concern for well-being foster unit cohesion, optimising morale and mission success. This transformational leadership approach ensures a positive and influential impact on the entire military unit, enhancing overall effectiveness. The impact of Obasanjo's idealised influence on his followers is profound and this is noted throughout the narrative. The text suggests that followers view him as more than just a leader; they see him as a role model worthy of emulation. The admiration for Obasanjo's character and leadership qualities is expressed by individuals within his circle, reinforcing the notion that idealised influence has a profound effect on shaping followers' attitudes and behaviours.

Another element of idealised influence in transformational leadership is showing genuine concern for the well-being and development of the followers. Leaders who care about their team foster a positive and supportive environment (Walumbwa, Christensen & Muchiri, 2013). This involves understanding individual needs, providing guidance and offering resources for personal growth. Demonstrating empathy and actively addressing challenges build trust and loyalty. When leaders prioritize the holistic well-being of their followers, it creates a culture of mutual respect and shared goals. This commitment not only enhances individual morale but also contributes to a cohesive and motivated team, ultimately leading to increased productivity and organizational success. This was continuously demonstrated by Obasanjo. He highlights his commitment to the soldiers' welfare: "I had to improve the welfare of all ranks within the formation and make the officers close their ranks...I made it compulsory and conditional for release of funds for salaries and other expenses that the rendering of strength returns of both soldiers and civilians should be made monthly" (Obasanjo 2015, p. 120).

In another instance, emphasising the importance of full salary payment, he reflects his belief that prioritizing soldiers' well-being, including accommodation, food and salaries, is essential for optimal performance and leadership effectiveness:

Only on one subject did I make up my mind before leaving Lagos – full payment of salaries to all soldiers. As an officer cadet, I had been taught that to get the best out of my men, I

should take particular interest in their welfare, especially in their accommodation, food, salaries in full. (Obasanjo 2015, pp. 93-94)

Thus, by prioritizing the welfare of soldiers and recognising the significance of fair compensation, Obasanjo underscores the belief that addressing basic needs is fundamental for fostering a motivated and effective military force. Another element of idealised influence exhibited in the memoir is that of leading from the front. When a military leader leads from the front, they are physically present at the forefront of operations, actively engaging in the challenges and tasks alongside their subordinates. Roberts (2018) notes:

To inspire troops, leaders must instill a pervasive attitude to motivate their troops to advance under withering fire or hold a seemingly untenable position. To accomplish this, leaders must be present at the forward edge of the battle area so their soldiers will follow their example and respect their judgment, leadership ability, and tactical knowledge.

This behaviour exemplifies idealised influence as it portrays the leader as someone who embodies the values, work ethics and commitment expected from the team. By being at the forefront, the leader sets a standard for dedication, courage and competence, fostering a sense of trust and inspiration among their followers. In the military context, leading from the front is often associated with qualities like bravery, resilience, and a willingness to share the risks and hardships faced by the team. This demonstration of leadership by example contributes to the leader's idealised influence, as their actions become a source of inspiration and motivation for those they lead. Obasanjo illustrates this by his active participation in the war:

After we had moved back behind a collapsed bridge, well behind our troops' defensive line, I became aware of some pain and saw blood gushing out from my thigh. It was then I realized that I too was wounded. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 134)

Leading from the front, as demonstrated by Obasanjo in this situation, involves actively participating in the challenges faced by the troops rather than merely giving orders from a safe distance. By placing himself in harm's way and sharing the physical and emotional experiences of the soldiers, Obasanjo becomes a living example of the dedication and sacrifice he expects from his subordinates. The revelation of his own injury at the war front serves as a powerful symbol of leadership. It communicates to the troops that their leader

is not immune to the risks and hardships they face, fostering a sense of camaraderie, trust and respect. This aligns with idealised influence, where the leader's actions inspire followers to emulate their commitment and fortitude. In addition, Obasanjo's description of being wounded during combat demonstrates his use of language to convey a vivid and impactful experience. The narrative is characterised by a sense of immediacy and urgency. This pragmatic language serves to convey the gravity of the situation and the physical toll of warfare.

Obasanjo also demonstrates idealised influence by actively engaging with the officers and men of the Division within the first month of his arrival. He narrates:

Within the first month of my arrival in Port Harcourt, I had visited all battalions of the Division, met almost all the officers and had experienced first-hand the problems and difficulties of officers and men of the Division. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 112)

By personally visiting all battalions, meeting almost all the officers, and experiencing first-hand the problems and difficulties faced by the members of the Division, Obasanjo is setting a powerful example and establishing a standard for active and involved leadership. By this, he displays a commitment to understanding the realities on the ground, fostering a culture of direct engagement and empathetic leadership within the military unit.

## **6.2 Inspirational Motivation in *My Command***

In the narrative, Obasanjo's leadership is marked by his capacity to inspire and motivate his followers through a compelling vision of the future. The text suggests that Obasanjo goes beyond merely managing the present; he actively engages in shaping a vision that resonates with the aspirations of the nation. His ability to communicate this vision becomes a driving force behind the inspiration and commitment of his officers.

Obasanjo's communication style, as depicted in the memoir, underscores his inspirational leadership. The narrative highlights instances where he effectively communicates the goals and objectives that he envisions for the command and the war. Obasanjo strategically employs various communication techniques to instil a sense of purpose and determination among the soldiers under his command. For instance, he writes concerning one of his visits to the troops:

In my address to the troops during the visit, I congratulated them on their past performance. In trying to explain the importance of that stage of the war, I gave the analogy of a

long-distance runner. No matter how good the beginning, the end is what matters... I then listed the advantages of winning the war and the disadvantages of losing which touched on their personal security, safety, and lives and those of their relations and loved ones. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 101)

First, Obasanjo's use of congratulatory language to acknowledge the troops' past performance serves to validate their efforts and boost morale. This linguistic strategy fosters a sense of pride and accomplishment among the troops, reinforcing positive behaviour. Recognition is a motivational tool that boosts morale and makes individuals feel valued for their contributions (Govender & Bussin, 2020). This positive reinforcement is a motivational technique that fosters a sense of accomplishment and pride among the soldiers. Secondly, by employing the analogy of a long-distance runner to elucidate the importance of different stages of the war, Obasanjo engages in analogical reasoning. This linguistic device facilitates comprehension by drawing parallels between familiar concepts and the war context, enhancing understanding and retention of key messages. This metaphor of a long-distance runner emphasises the endurance required for success and encourages the troops to persevere despite the challenges they are facing. It creates a vivid image that resonates with the idea that the journey's end is what ultimately matters.

Additionally, Obasanjo appeals to the troops' emotions by listing the advantages of winning the war and the disadvantages of losing, particularly emphasizing personal security, safety, and the lives of their loved ones. This emotive language evokes feelings of concern, fear, and duty, compelling the troops to consider the stakes involved and the gravity of their mission. This approach aims to instil a deep sense of responsibility and commitment to the cause, elevating the troops beyond immediate challenges to focus on the larger goal. Thus, through the enumeration of advantages and disadvantages, Obasanjo engages in persuasive argumentation. By presenting a compelling case for the importance of victory and the consequences of failure, he seeks to motivate the troops and rally their commitment to the cause. In another instance, Obasanjo states:

After giving my operational intentions for the future and enunciating my policies on training, welfare and discipline, I appealed to all officers for co-operation, loyalty and discipline among themselves and in relation to the higher formation. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 99)

In this case, Obasanjo, by giving operational intentions for the future and outlining policies on training, welfare and discipline, sets a vision and direction for the military operations. Firstly, by articulating his operational intentions, Obasanjo provides a roadmap for the future. This clarity in direction helps inspire the military personnel by giving them a sense of purpose and a shared vision to work towards. Knowing the leader's intentions fosters collective understanding and commitment to the mission. Secondly, the enunciation of policies on training, welfare and discipline demonstrates Obasanjo's concern for the well-being and development of the troops. This approach is motivational as it shows a leader who cares about the growth and welfare of the individuals under his command. It communicates a commitment to their success and overall betterment.

The appeal for cooperation, loyalty and discipline among officers further reinforces the inspirational motivation aspect. Obasanjo does not just give orders but appeals to the officers' sense of duty, teamwork and commitment. This appeal encourages a positive and collaborative atmosphere within the military, fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility. In essence, the memoir illustrates Obasanjo's use of inspirational motivation by providing a clear vision for the future, expressing care for the well-being of the personnel, and appealing to their sense of cooperation, loyalty and discipline. This leadership approach aims to inspire a collective commitment to the mission and instil a shared understanding of the values that will contribute to the command's success.

### **6.3 Intellectual Stimulation in *My Command***

Intellectual stimulation in military leadership involves fostering an environment that encourages innovative thinking, strategic planning and proactive decision-making. It involves inspiring and challenging the minds of individuals within the command to contribute creatively to problem-solving and planning for the future. This is exemplified by Obasanjo's achievement within the first two months of taking over the leadership of the 3 Marine Commando. He recounts:

Within the first two months of my command of the Division, I had managed to beef up the brigades to reasonable strength while at the same time keeping some two thousand and five hundred men in reserve as reinforcement and replacement for battle casualties. I had also succeeded in stockpiling a reasonable reserve of arms, ammunition and materials,

sufficient for waging up to a forty-eight hour battle by each brigade. (Obasanjo 2015, pp. 130-131)

First, by beefing up the brigades, he demonstrated strategic thinking, ensuring the units were at reasonable strength for potential challenges. This decision not only addressed current needs but also anticipated future requirements. Additionally, the reserve of two thousand five hundred men showcased Obasanjo's foresight, providing a strategic pool for reinforcement and replacement in the face of battle casualties. This approach reflects an intellectual engagement with the unpredictable nature of warfare, emphasizing preparedness and adaptability. Additionally, the stockpiling of arms, ammunition, and materials sufficient for a forty-eight-hour battle by each brigade highlights meticulous planning. This strategic reserve is indicative of Obasanjo's commitment to equipping his forces not just adequately, but in a way that anticipates sustained engagement.

Obasanjo's intellectual stimulation translated into a well-prepared and adaptable military force. By encouraging forward-thinking, strategic planning and resource management, he instilled a culture of preparedness within the Division. This not only enhanced the unit's effectiveness but also contributed to a mindset of continuous improvement crucial in the dynamic and challenging context of military operations. In essence, Obasanjo's approach showcased the vital role of intellectual stimulation in military leadership, ensuring a proactive and resilient force capable of facing evolving challenges.

#### **6.4 Individualised Consideration in *My Command***

In the narrative, Obasanjo's leadership style can be characterized by his commitment to individualised consideration. Individualised consideration refers to how a leader appreciates the individual needs and development of every member of the team (Mir, Khan & Abbas, 2020). As observed by Northouse (2022) and Mhatre and Riggio (2014), a leader who exhibits individualised consideration behaviour provides a supportive climate and listens to the needs of individual members.

On several occasions, Obasanjo demonstrates concern for the individual well-being and opinions of the members of the formation, reflecting a personalised and considerate approach to leadership. For instance, he writes about a conference he held with all commanders, heads of supporting arms and services and the staff officers on the evening of May 20, 1969. He says:



I started the conference by asking for a one-minute silence to be observed in honour of all members of the formation who had died in the war. After paying tribute to all ranks of the division including my predecessor for their wonderful performance in the past, I went on to ask for sincere and honest comments and opinions on the ills of the division, emphasizing that I wanted to know WHAT was wrong and not WHO was wrong. (Obasanjo 2015, p. 98)

In this instance, Obasanjo's request for a one-minute silence to honour fallen members of the formation demonstrates the use of symbolic language to convey respect, remembrance, and solidarity. This gesture serves to emotionally connect with the audience and establish a sombre tone for the conference. Specifically, the emphasis on observing a one-minute silence in honour of those who died in the war and paying tribute to all ranks of the division, including his predecessor, conveys a sense of empathy and acknowledgement of the individual contributions and sacrifices made by each member of the formation. In a war setting, soldiers from different ranks contribute to the overall mission, and recognising their diverse roles fosters a sense of unity. It acknowledges that each member, regardless of rank, plays a vital part in the collective effort. Obasanjo employs inclusive language to recognize and validate the contributions of every member. This linguistic strategy fosters a sense of belonging and unity within the group.

Furthermore, when Obasanjo asks for sincere and honest comments and opinions on the challenges facing the division, he emphasises a desire to understand the concerns and perspectives of the individuals within the command. This approach fosters open communication and trust, allowing soldiers to express their concerns and insights without fear of reprisal. This linguistic approach promotes a constructive discourse centred on identifying and addressing systemic issues rather than scapegoating individuals. Discipline in the military is also closely tied to the principle of individualised consideration. Williamson (2020, p. 1) states that:

Discipline or military discipline as it is often referred to, is defined as the state of order and obedience among personnel in a military organization and is characterised by the Soldiers' prompt and willing responsiveness to orders and understanding of compliance to regulation.

Thus, leaders who understand the importance of discipline tailor their approach to inspire and guide their soldiers effectively, contributing to the overall success of military operations. Obasanjo corroborates this:

Discipline is the fundamental requirement of an Army, both in peace and in war, but more so in war. If discipline breaks down within a formation, that formation also breaks down as a fighting unit. The level of indiscipline in the Division in no small measure accounted for the reverses which the Division suffered and the consequent flagging morale, the combination of which nearly marked the Division permanently as a non-effective fighting force. (Obasanjo 2015, pp. 113-114)

Obasanjo's emphasis on discipline underscores its pivotal role in military effectiveness. He highlights some of the ways he tackled indiscipline among the soldiers including the "high level of looting of attractive and durable items by all ranks for sale outside operational areas or for transportation to their home" (p. 113). Another source of indiscipline within the Division was "the existence of commando girls and the use made of them" (p. 113). Obasanjo explains that the girls were recruited as soldiers, given Army numbers and uniforms, but most of them were more useful for social functions than for Army duties. He was able to tackle this by discharging them from the Army as soldiers and engaged them as civilians (p.119). With this, the girls could be disciplined as civil servants if the need arises. The acknowledgement of indiscipline in the Division highlights individualised consideration and recognises that addressing specific instances of misconduct and morale issues is crucial.

### **6.5 Conclusion**

Olusegun Obasanjo's memoir, *My Command: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, is a compelling lens through which the dynamics of power, the harsh realities of war and the essence of effective leadership in the face of formidable challenges can be analysed. It serves as a reminder that history is not just shaped by grand events and political decisions but also by the actions and decisions of individuals who find themselves at the intersection of politics, war and leadership. The memoir captures these complexities, prompting readers to reflect on the complex interplay of human experiences and motivations that have moulded the history of Nigeria. Obasanjo underscores the paramount importance of Nigeria's unity as a *sine qua non* for national stability, progress and resilience. Emphasizing that a divided nation is vulnerable to external and internal threats, Obasanjo

articulates the importance of a united front. He contends that the strength of Nigeria lies in its unity, emphasizing that a cohesive nation can more effectively navigate challenges, harness its diverse strengths and collectively pursue prosperity. In a climate of political and social complexities, Obasanjo's advocacy for unity in the memoir reflects a deep-seated belief that the synergy of a united Nigeria is indispensable for its enduring peace, development and global standing.

The memoir also shows the importance of leadership in every setting, with a focus on the military and leadership in times of crisis. Obasanjo was able to declare that, "Within a space of six months I turned a situation of low morale, desertion and distrust within my division and within the Army into one of high morale, confidence, co-operation and success for my division and for the Army" (p. xix). This illuminates his exceptional ability to navigate challenges, boost morale and foster collaboration. It also emphasises the transformative impact strong leadership can have in mitigating crises and steering an organisation towards success. Essentially, therefore, Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Command* serves as a valuable resource for political education in Nigeria. It offers profound insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of the nation's political landscape and history as well as the importance of effective leadership.

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## **Pragma-Semantic Affordances of Pronouns as Tools for National Integration in Goodluck Jonathan's *My Transition Hours***

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### **Abstract**

*Extant literature on memoir writing reveals that scholars have examined how some past Nigerian leaders have used their memoirs to negotiate memory and identity in recounting their personal experiences in rising to the challenges of leadership in a politically divisive entity like Nigeria. However, existing studies using the tools of linguistics have not explored how former President Goodluck Jonathan deployed pronominal elements as communicative strategies to re/tell the Nigerian story at critical moments of the country's national history, particularly from his vantage position as president of the country. Working within an eclectic paradigm to analyse select extracts from the memoir, this study examines the pragma-semantic affordances of pronominal elements as tools for consolidating peace and national integration. The study reveals that that Goodluck Jonathan tactically uses the pronouns to indicate inclusiveness and exclusiveness in achieving the coveted national integration dream amidst attaining some other socio-political goals in the Nigerian project.*

**Keywords:** Goodluck Jonathan, memoirs, national integration, patriotism, pragma-semantic affordances, pronouns

### **1. Introduction**

Memoirs are typically written accounts of recollected personal experiences through a given period of the memoirist's life. They could be accounts of events that occurred at specific periods or the totality of one's life experiences. *My Transition Hours* was written by the former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan and published in 2018. Goodluck Jonathan stresses that *My Transition Hours* is a personal and very honest account of his stewardship in the days in which brinksmanship was the order of the day. He saw himself together with his team as those with the responsibility to check the excesses and profiteering tendencies of the political class. *My Transition Hours* is, therefore, a brief account of Jonathan's early experiences in politics, his

ascension to the presidential seat and the final handing over to his successor, President Muhammadu Buhari.

Jonathan was Nigeria's President from 2010 to 2015 after having served as Deputy Governor to Diepreye Alamieseigha, Governor of Bayelsa State from 2005-2007; as Governor of Bayelsa State following the former governor's impeachment, and as the Vice President of Nigeria from May 29, 2007 to May 5, 2010. The death of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua on May 5th, 2010 paved the way for him to become the President of Nigeria on May 6, 2010. His tenure as the president came to an end through after having lost the 2015 presidential election to Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC). *My Transition Hours* is, therefore, a subtle way to intimate to the readers his journey before, during and after his presidency (transition). A perusal of the book reveals that he deliberately and strategically deploys certain pronouns to get his readers' attention, express his disgust for certain actions and justify his actions on decisions taken before, during and after his defeat. These strategically selected pronouns in a way serve as rhetorical devices to appeal the sensibilities of the readers on his stance and interventions on some very critical national issues.

There is scant linguistic research and publications on memoirs, especially on *My Transition Hours*. The few available ones focus on Jonathan's communicative strategies on his Facebook page during his administration, while others focus on the politeness strategies deployed in his first inaugural address as Nigeria's president (Ubong & Effiong, 2012). The closest and most recent is Ugoala (2020) which focuses on face mitigation strategies in *My Transition Hours*. There are hardly any studies on *My Transition Hours* that examine the pragma-semantic content of the pronouns and their significance for understanding social and national integration, hence the significance of the present study.

Among other uses, pronouns basically replace nouns and thus function like nouns. They can either occur before their referents (cataphors) or after their referents (anaphors). On the other hand, a possessive determiner distinct from possessive pronouns refers to possessions and typically occur before nouns, i.e., they modify nouns. Pronouns and determiners with their co-occurring constituents often provide readers with background information about their anaphoric and cataphoric referents. Linguistic studies on pronouns abound. On the role that age plays on choice of pronouns in communication, Osifo-Adjei

et al. (2022) observe that age has significant impact on choice of pronouns during communication. Opeibi (2009), while examining M.K.O Abiola's political speeches, also acknowledges that concepts enhance discourse presentation on the perception of the electorate. These studies no doubt contribute to establishing the impact of specific word categories on discourse interpretation. None has, however, examined the role pronouns play in expressing the pragmatic as well as semantic facts embedded in memoirs. As a corollary and in contrast to these studies, an analysis of the choice of pronouns in *My Transition Hours* and their strategic contribution to national integration and good governance will suffice. This leads to the following research questions that will form the judgement parameters for this study:

- i. Are the pronouns deployed in *My Transition Hours* strategic or non-strategic, deliberate or unintentional, effect targeted or not, intended, appropriate or inappropriate?
- ii. How are the various forms of pronouns deployed in *My Transition Hours* relevant in analysing the pragma-semantic notion of national integration?
- iii. Can the pronouns and co-occurring elements serve as classificatory schema for national integration?
- iv. Does *My Transition Hours* contain indices of national integration?

In order to answer the questions above, all pronouns in selected excerpts are isolated based on the pragma-semantic interpretations deducible from their concatenations. Their meanings in isolation as well as in syntactic frames help to identify their effect on the overall notion of national integration being sought based on which thematic indicators such as governance, empathy, inclusivity, peace, national integration, stewardship etc. will be ascertained. Hence, the study does not only examine the thematic and social indicators of national integration but also elucidates the contextual and strategic/non-strategic affordances of national integration resources in the memoir. Data for this study is analysed through the lenses of Grice's (1987) Conversational Maxims, as elaborated upon in Brown and Levinson's (1987), politeness principles, common ground theory, speech acts and social integration theory.

## **2. Statement of Problem**

Extant studies and relevant literature are replete with scholarly efforts to investigate issues relating to national integration in Nigeria. Though a lot seem to have been done from the perspective of language related disciplines (Ralph et al., 2016; Opeibi, 2009; Ajala, 2017; Ezeobi et al., 2019; Chattaraj, 2021;



Ojo & Taiye, 2020; Ohia, 2018) and non-language based disciplines (Ogbonnaya & Oshinfowokan, 2015; Joshua, 2019; Akinyetun, 2020, and Edosa 2014), there exists a gap in investigating memoirs from the choice of pronouns used to categorise political personages in their efforts at consolidating national integration. Non-language based studies, for instance, seem to be more concerned with the history, security and identity relations in relation to national development. Such discourses are often centred on the political trajectory of party formations, elections in the country, inaugural speeches and other attendant issues and challenges that define the complexities of the multicultural Nigeria nation without recourse to the pragmatic as well as semantic contributions of the words deployed. Conversely, language-based perspectives have focused on the place of language in the enforcement of national cohesion in national integration. Only a few have been centred on the structures in *My Transition Hours*. Ugoala (2020), for example, is on the strategies deployed by GEJ to mitigate face threatening acts (FTAs). The study, however, does not include the effect of the concatenations nor the word categories on the theme of national integration for national development.

There is, therefore, a need to bridge the gap by focusing attention on the pragma-semantic indicators of national integration in the pronouns deployed in Nigerian memoirs which is the concern of this study. This study, therefore, does not only serve to explore the subtle ways of ensuring national integration as presented in *My Transition Hours* but also serves to reveal the importance of pronoun choice and use in ensuring national integration in Nigeria.

### **3. Theoretical Orientation**

This study employs an eclectic approach as analytic instrument for the data drawn from *My Transition Hours*. An eclectic approach often combines several theories with distinct methods from different fields as analytical lens for data collected. The choice of this paradigm, therefore, stems from its ability to provide clear analyses and understanding of the topic under examination and most importantly, analyse each facet of excerpt distinctly for achieving the overall aim of the study.

Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) is considered the father of modern sociology and first to conceptualise the idea of social integration. He believed that people's norms, beliefs, and values contribute to their consciousness, and pave ways for their understanding and behaviour in life. Thus, Turner (1981) reports that for Durkheim, collective consciousness binds individuals together and creates social integration. For the purpose of this study, excerpts from *My*

Transition Hours which indicate Goodluck Jonathan's policies and actions aimed at encouraging social integration within and outside Nigerian shall be examined. By analysing how his policies encourage oneness and social cohesion, reduce inequality, and uphold inclusiveness, the study determines if GEJ's policies, as stated, integrate the multi-ethnic Nigerian society or otherwise.

Proposed by Herbert Clark and Brennan (Clark & Brennan 1991), the Common Ground theory, defined as the sum of the information that people assume they share (Clark 2006), posits that participants in speech events already possess and often share some background knowledge which they deploy in their interactions. Clark (1996) distinguishes two types of common ground: the Communal Common Ground – the information common to all members of a speech community such as shared beliefs, assumptions, and presuppositions based on community membership, religion, tribe profession etc. and Personal Common Ground which refers to the personal experiences of the participants of the speech event. Specifically, it pertains to what individuals jointly perceive, namely see, smell, feel touch or hear. For Kecskes (2014), two linguistic common grounds are delineated: Core Common Ground (that which exists prior to conversation) and Emergent Common Ground (that which is based on actual context of situation). For a concise and explicit x-ray which this study deserves, the common ground theory shall serve as lens for all constructions semantically interpretable as background knowledge assumed by the Goodluck Jonathan to be shared by readers of the memoir.

The Politeness Theory examines how speakers interact to avoid causing pain or discomfort to co-interactants. Its basic tenet is the belief that users of language strategise to mitigate the effect of impolite language during communication. Such strategies include: showing some empathy, listening with rapt attention, apologising, silence, employing self-inclusive lexemes such as the pronominals I, we, us, rather than distancing oneself by employing pronominals like they, you, them etc. The origins of Politeness Theory are traceable to Brown and Levinson (1978), elaborated upon in Yule (1996). It has been applied by several researchers including Adegbite and Odebunmi (2006), Odebunmi (2009) and Ugoala (2020), just to mention a few. A thorough elucidation of the excerpts with reference to the strategies used and other subtle language deployed to mitigate the effect of his policies makes for

an objective classification of Goodluck Jonathan as a lover of peace and national integration.

The Speech Acts theory developed by Austin (1962), simply focuses on a complete speech act performed through language use and encompasses three acts; locutionary (the meaning), illocutionary (the intention) and the perlocutionary acts (the actual effect). The excerpts selected will be analysed using this theory to determine the correlation of the three language acts as used by the author and their pragmatic interpretation.

The Conversational Maxims also referred to as the Gricean maxims were first proposed in Grice (1975) with four maxims which requires an interactant to contribute in a conversation but not so much as to be too superfluous, but truthful, relevant and clear. The maxims are;

Quantity (provide only information that is necessary and required);

Quality (always stick to the truth capable of been confirmed to be the case);

Manner (be clear and concise. Avoid the use of verbose language);

Relevance (only say things that are relevant to the conversation).

In addition to the Grician Maxims, Leech's (2014) six politeness maxims namely; tact, approbation, generosity, modesty, agreement, and sympathy, necessary for a speech event to be successful shall be employed. Politeness is, sometimes, culture-specific. Hence, a speech act that is regarded in a particular culture to be impolite, may very well be seen as a norm in certain other cultures or even within similar cultures. These maxims simply require interactants to minimise or maximise belief to self or others, respectively. This principle shall also be employed as instrument for analysing the selected excerpts in this study, where necessary.

#### **4. Methodology**

The data for this study are purposively selected from Goodluck Jonathan's memoir, *My Transition Hours*, consisting a total of fifteen (15) chapters. Since the focus of this study is to determine the pragma-semantic affordances of the pronouns deployed in the memoir and to ascertain the latter's veracity as tools for national integration, care is taken to isolate only the excerpts that show

through their component parts (pronouns and co-occurring constituents) that they possess the pragma-semantic indices of peace and national integration. The memoirist's strategic responses, in terms of declaratives, to his traducers on governance, politics, insecurity, peace, inclusivity, etc. will constitute the major themes and subheadings to be analysed.

## **5. Thematic Isolation and Analysis of Data**

The sub-headings in this section are targeted towards isolating and analysing distinct thematic indicators of national integration and any others indicators that are incidental to the socio-political needs in Nigeria as indicated in selected excerpts. All pronouns in each excerpt shall be categorised and analysed based on their morpho-syntactic and pragmatic affordances relative to meaning construction. For the purposes of this study, all pronouns in the excerpts are in boldfaced by the present researcher for emphasis.

### **5.1 Peace and National Integration**

Excerpts under this sub-group show how the pronouns deployed by Goodluck Jonathan contribute to peace and national integration. The semantics of each pronoun in isolation and together with other constituents is analysed based on the pragmatic facts in the political space. Consider the excerpts below. The pronominal elements are emboldened for emphasis.

#### Excerpt 1

**I** often wonder why **my** political philosophy which insists that 'my political ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian' was not attractive to many amongst **our** politicians. Threats of violence to 'soak' people in 'blood' were seen as warnings to scare voters away from the polling booth. It was one potent threat everyone knew would be carried out if it caught their fancy. (*My Transition Hours*, p. 18)

In excerpt 1, the author employs the three emboldened pronouns; the 1st person singular pronoun, **I**, the singular possessive pronoun **my** and 1st person plural possessive marker **our**. These markers help to show his personal involvement and nature as a peace lover. **I** shows his personal worries as regards the lacklustre attitude of politicians to his philosophy, '**my** political ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian' even when the political landscape was frenzied.

Again, by deploying the possessive determiner *my*, the author foregrounds his peaceful nature as against that of his opponent who he strategically underspecified by not explicitly naming, assuming that his readers have background knowledge of his successor's speech in 2012, *Threats of violence to 'soak' people in 'blood'*. This is strategically chosen to endear him to his readers. This constructs a peace lover identity for the author in contrast to his opponent Muhammadu Buhari. Recall that Buhari had on May 14, 2012, spoken in Hausa while addressing members of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) using the above phrase and metaphorically referring probably to members of other regions, tribe, and religion in their domain.

#### Excerpt 2

It details the months and weeks leading to my unprecedented and unanticipated phone call to Major-General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 2015 to concede the 2015 Presidential election. It captures my return to private life in the days which followed that very deliberate and well thought out concession call. (My Transition Hours, p. 8)

Excerpt 2 is effect-targeted and effect-achieved. Three pronouns are deployed: two possessive determiners *my*, and two neuter pronouns, *it*. While the possessive *my* serves as a determiner co-occurring with noun phrases, namely “unprecedented and unanticipated phone call ...” and “return to private life...”, the two instances of the neuter pronoun *it* make an anaphoric reference to the memoirs.

His choice of the nominal phrases “unprecedented and unanticipated phone call” and “deliberate and well thought out concession call” is strategic but flouts the maxim of modesty as he maximises praise to self. Moreover, the phrase helps to construct a trouble-shooter identity for the author and positions the readers to empathise with him on his return trip to his home. His deployment of the possessive pronoun *my* again endears his readers to him and completes his intention of effectively placing himself above others in his act of making the concession call. More importantly, it is worthy to note that his *unprecedented phone call* helped in keeping the sovereignty of the nation intact as opposed to the violence that had often characterise presidential elections in the country. This evidently qualifies the author as a lover of peace and integration.

Excerpt 3

The essence of **my** campaign was to promote democracy and social justice which encompasses love, peace and togetherness. **I** did not preach hate. Other political parties had other ideas and it was clear as soon as **our** campaign train entered the northern part of Nigeria, especially the North West and East which were the strongholds of **my** opponent. The attack happened in Katsina on January 21, 2015, in Bauchi on January 22, 2015 and in Yola, Adamawa on January 29, 2015. (*My Transition Hours*, p. 58)

Two possessive determiner and a pronoun are deployed in excerpt 3, **my** and **I**. In this excerpt, the author informs his readers about the essence of his campaign, namely to promote democracy and social justice through three vital principles of love, peace and togetherness. He is emphatic about this and by deploying the subjective pronoun, expresses his dislike of hate which his opponent supposedly displayed. Moreover, he uses the in-group identity marker and pronominal **our** to indicate that he together with his team physically experienced the attacks during the campaigns prior to the 2015 presidential elections. His three-point agenda of love, peace and togetherness together endears him to his readers, as these are indicative of a man who appreciates peace and integration.

Excerpt 4

**I** felt so sad for the youth prepped to kill and destroy. **I** was apprehensive of human life that would be lost, properties and investments worth trillions of naira going up in flames. **I** had genuine fear that **my** country would no longer be one if **I** took to serve **my** personal interest.

... '**my** ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian'. The unity, stability and progress of **our** dear country are more important than anything else. (*My Transition Hours*, p. 74)

Excerpt 4 consists of two paragraphs. In paragraph one, the subjective pronoun, **I**, is used four times, all expressing the author's state of being: "I felt..., I was apprehensive..., I had genuine fear...", and an adverbial clause of condition, "if I took...". In paragraph two, the possessive pronoun **my** indicates his conviction that the general well-being of others is more paramount, hence the use of the popular statement that his ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian. This places him as a man with the intent to

integrate the nation. He adheres to the relevance maxim as he is explicit about and sticks to his mantra, “my ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian”, having prioritised the integration of the nation. Once more, his choice of the lexemes, unity, stability and progress and the possessive determiner **our** in the affairs of the nation, underscores his unalloyed love for national integration and self-inclusion. The declaratives in both paragraphs, together with the phrase, “my ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian”, specify the writer’s value for human life helping to endear him to his readers. Deploying the sympathy maxim, the author is able to maximise sympathy for others which further endears him to his readers.

#### Excerpt 5

Without a peaceful country **you** cannot do well in whatever **you** set **your** sights on. The key thing is the nation first! **You** must have a nation before **you** can have any ambition, so whatever **we** do, anything that threatens the survival of **our** nation should be jettisoned, because when **we** dismember the country, one can never be the president of Nigeria, and at best **you** will be president of one tiny part (*My Transition Hours*, (p. 104).

In Excerpt 5, the writer deploys nine (9) pronouns and possessive determiners in all, comprising: **you**, **your**, **we**, and **our**. He is emphatic about the country’s peace and its attendant benefits to whatever task one sets to undertake. He admonishes his readers by deploying the two singular pronouns **you** to place the nation first before personal ambitions. The clause “dismember the country” is analogous to disintegration and further captures the result of pursuing personal gains at the expense of the nation. Though he excludes himself by deploying the second person pronoun *you*, he is quick to include himself in the admonition by employing the in-group identity marker and first-person plural form **we** and the plural possessive determiner **our**. He ensures that he adheres to the maxims of quality and quantity as he says a lot in a few words which further captures his readers’ interest.

#### Excerpt 6

**My** country, Nigeria, remains fully committed to the goal of an integrated and single West African community of nations and people. **We** have, therefore, spared no efforts in ensuring the early detection of conflict and in taking necessary measures for its elimination in our sub-region. **We** do so on the strong conviction that without peace, there will be no development;

and that **our** peoples cannot be weaned out of poverty and deprivation without development (*My Transition Hours*, p. 90).

In Excerpt 6, Goodluck Jonathan deploys the possessive determiner **my** in a bid to identify with his nation as his possession. He further deploys the in-group identity plural markers **we** and **our** to identify with the country and its people. This completes the semantics of the three-sentence excerpt as he vouches for Nigeria as a member of the West African community of nations and his efforts in ensuring that peace reigned in the sub-region being aware that “without peace, there will be no development”. To crown his efforts, in July 2020, Goodluck Jonathan was eventually appointed special envoy of the ECOWAS.

#### Excerpt 7

Theirs was about an exclusive focus on elections, but **you** had to have a country after elections, **I** think. It was **my** duty to present the country intact after **my** service and **I** was not going to let a tiny patch of Nigeria go under **my** watch. It would be reckless and irresponsible to cede portions of one's country through any form of loss (*MTH*, 51).

In Excerpt 7, the author employs the maxim of relation as well as manner in trying to convince his readers explicitly on the need to “present the country intact after [his] service”. Again, his choice of the subjective pronoun **I** and the possessive **my** is apt in expressing his duty to the nation. That is, his resilience in ensuring that not a “tiny patch of Nigeria” [goes] under [his] watch. His choice of the second person pronoun **you** in “**but you had to have a country after elections**” is self-inclusive and refers to everyone rather than the second person singular.

## 5.2 Governance

#### Excerpt 8

**I** must be emphatic that **My Transition Hours** is not **my** biography. That would come later. Rather, this is a personal and very honest account of **my stewardship** in the heady days in which **brinkmanship** was the order of the day in Nigeria, thrusting upon **us** the responsibility to rein **our** nation from a needless dangerous precipice by a menacing and rather tragic



political mercantilism (*My Transition Hours*, p. 8).

Excerpt 8 is a declarative statement made to intimate readers on the aim and objectives of the memoir. Altogether, three pronouns: one first-person singular subjective pronoun **I**, two possessive determiners **my** and **our**, and one first-person plural objective pronoun **us** are deployed to personalise the meanings that are deduced from the structure. While the subjective pronoun **I** functions as the subject of the verb, to be **emphatic**, all the possessive determiners **my** and **our** function as modifiers of the nouns they co-occur with and indicate that the subjective **I** is in possession of the three nominals with which they occur. Consider the phrases below culled from excerpt 8.

My Transition

- i. My biography
- ii. My stewardship

His choice of the pronouns, **me** and **us** in the objective cases are strategic, indicating that the actions of “brinksmanship” and “the responsibility to rein our nation” lies heavily on not just him but his entire team. These choices endear him to his readers as he involves himself in the task of governance, thus precluding the exclusion of himself.

Excerpt 9

Unity of purpose and action has enabled **us** to build **our** strength as **we** move forward to enhanced sub-regional cooperation and integration. The significant progress **we** have made so far, can only be sustained and built upon through even closer consultations, collaboration and cohesion amongst **us** (*My Transition Hours*, p. 89).

Excerpt 9 again highlights the role played when unity of purpose and action is held sacrosanct in sub-regions as done in his government. He ascribes the success of his government “build our strength, sub-regional cooperation and integration” on unity of purpose by his team (**us**). This conforms to the maxim of quantity by staying within the precinct of needed information rather than giving more than is required. His choice of pronouns and determiners in his phrases is also apt, with a clear indication of inclusivity in governance: “enabled us”, and “our strength as we move forward to enhance sub-regional cooperation and integration”. The plural markers, i.e., the objective plural marker **us**, the possessive plural determiner **our** and the subjective plural pronoun **we** are in-group identity markers to show his inclusiveness in the policies set to build a strong, cooperative sub-region and integration.

Excerpt 10

With regard to **our** integration agenda, it must be said that **we** have achieved considerable progress. **We** have gone beyond **our** Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and Goods, to the harmonisation of trade and **our** customs codes (*My Transition Hours*, p. 89).

By deploying the in-group identity markers **we**, in the clauses, “**we have achieved considerable progress and we have gone beyond...**”, the writer is able to identify with his team and further foreground the high intelligence quotient of his team in the task of governance in the nominal phrase “harmonisation of trade and customs codes integration agenda”. He intimates to his reader on his integration agenda by deploying the possessive plural determiner **our**. He flouts the modesty maxim by praising his team for achieving “considerable progress”. He deploys the plural markers, **we** and **our** in all instances to identify with the impressive job of his team.

### 5.3 Security

The excerpts in this sub-section are indicative of Goodluck Jonathan's deployment of pronouns with other constituents to express his security strategies while in governance.

Excerpt 11

If **you** peruse the official UNESCO literacy rates by country, what **you** will find is that all of the top ten most literate nations in the world are at peace, while almost all of the top 10 least literate nations in the world are in a state of either outright war or general insecurity (*My Transition Hours*, p. 195).

In Excerpt 11, the author deploys the maxim of relation by dwelling within the precinct of peace which can roughly be interpreted as his integration agenda. By tying and analysing the UNESCO literacy rates to education and war (insecurity), he is endeared to his readers as he ensures that he discusses within these relevant issues with precision. His choice of the second person pronoun **you**, in “what you will find is that all of the top ten most literate nations in the world are at peace” is strategic and employed to create awareness to his readers on the importance of education for peace as against the least literate nations that are “in a state of either outright war or general insecurity”. He tries to limit his discourse to relevant issues analogous to the Northern Nigerian situation.

Excerpt 12

There were too many deaths. Too many profanities thrown into the political space by otherwise eminent personality. There were extremely reckless phrases like "do or die, garrison commander etc. **They** all militarised the political space to the extent that peace was in full flight. It took **our** tenure in the presidency to rid the polity and politicians of that mind-set (*My Transition Hours*, p. 10).

GEJ chronicles the events prior to the election by deploying the maxim of relevance. This affords him the opportunity to express his thoughts on the "profanities" that were prevalent in the political space. By employing the tact maxim and deploying the third-person plural subjective pronoun, **they**, the author excludes himself and explains the efforts he put in place "to rid the polity and politicians of that mind-set" of those negative traits which often bedevilled the political space for the sake of peace and security. It is worth noting that Goodluck Jonathan again employs the in-group identity marker **our** in a bid to include himself in the scheme of things that helped to keep the nation intact.

Excerpt 13

**I** did not preach hate. Other political parties had other ideas and **it** was pretty clear as soon as **our** campaign train entered the North. Young people were recruited to attack the presidential convoy of Nigeria by stoning. That never happened in **my** part of the country. It does not matter how **you** treated or twisted **it**, **you** came back to see the radical difference play out again and again. A side of the divide is right and the other wrong, but not on account of superiority, but perspectives informed by education, respect for the dignity of man and broader outlook to life (*My Transition Hours*, p. 41).

Six pronouns and one possessive determiner **our** is deployed in Excerpt 13. The author intimates to his readers that he never "preached hate" but tactfully tells his readers of what other political parties in the north did. He reminds his reader of the experience he had with his convoy using the possessive plural determiner **our**. Though he is capable of instituting charges against the culprits, for the sake of peace, a reprisal attack was averted. He attributes this attack to lack of "education, respect for the dignity of man and broader outlook to life". In this instance, he unpretentiously flouts the generosity maxim, with non-conformity to Grice (1989).

#### **5.4 Empathy**

##### Excerpt 14

The corpses were the highlight, but many more people died than was reported. For lovers of peace and country, **we** never could win. **It** was a catch 22 situation (*My Transition Hours*, p. 12).

In Excerpt 14, the author deploys the sympathy maxim again expressing his sympathy for the vulnerable. Though only the corps members who died were reported, he affirms that more people may have died than were reported and therefore, did not want any recurrence. He deploys the in-group identity with the plural pronoun *we* in a bid to include himself as a team who could never win. As a lover of peace and country, he affirms that “It was a catch 22 situation”, i.e., a dilemma obviously difficult for his team to win. He employs the neuter pronoun **it** to refer to the situation he finds himself. This further endears him to his readers.

##### Excerpt 15

**I** hung up the phone, confident that **my** decision was right for Nigeria and would have a great impact (probably) on Africa. Could this be the beginning of a fresh perspective on power? One which places personal preference at the base of the basket and raises up the wellbeing of women and children in their millions, who were always the ones who suffer most, when **we** make the wrong call (*My Transition Hours*, p. 70).

Two pronouns are employed in excerpt 15: the subjective first-person **I** and its plural counterpart **we**. While the pronoun **I** indicates a singular perlocutionary act, **we** indicates inclusivity when the “wrong call” is made. For him, his decision to make the call would have a great impact not only on Nigeria but also on Africa as a whole. By deploying the maxim of manner, he strategically reiterates his mantra that his “ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian”, praising himself for taking the bold step, not minding his personal interest “one which places personal preference at the base of the basket and raises up the wellbeing of women and children in their millions, who were always the ones who suffer most, when we make the wrong call”. This endears him to his readers for his obvious show of sympathy and yearning for the wellbeing of “women and children in their millions”.

Excerpt 16

Nothing **I** wanted was worth the blood of a human being, least of all the people **I** had the direct charge to protect (*My Transition Hours*, p. 43).

In Excerpt 16, the author endears himself to his reader by deploying the modesty maxim. His value for life and his disdain for the waste of human life is made manifest by his use of the first-person-singular subjective pronoun **I**. This portrays him to have the attributes of a steward with obligation to protect the citizens he “had the direct charge to protect”.

Excerpt 17

**I** had always borne a heavy burden to make some difference in the lives of **my** people. To help them as much as **I** could (*My Transition Hours*, p. 30).

Excerpt 17 is the opening line of chapter 1 in which he had the affordance to intimate his readers about the sorry state of his region in Bayelsa State. He sympathises with them over the inattention and purported marginalisation of the area and how he had always had the “burden to make some difference”. His strategy was attention seeking especially to readers and this, he achieved. He deploys the sympathy maxim, signalled by the first-person subject pronoun **I** and further deploys the possessive determiner **my** to identify with his people. These choices make the locutionary force more vociferous and portrays him as a compassionate individual with inherent propensity to build, unify, and a lover of progress rather than a destroyer.

### **Conclusion**

This study sought to isolate and elucidate the pronouns used in Goodluck Jonathan’s *My Transition Hours*. The purpose was to ascertain the affordances of the pronouns within selected excerpts and their variability as tools for national integration. A total of seventeen excerpts were selected and examined from the hard copy comprising fifteen chapters. Each selected excerpt was analysed using the eclectic theoretical lens comprising the conversational maxim, politeness theory, common ground theory, speech act theory, and the social integration theory.

The study found that the pronouns and their co-occurring constituents were strategically deployed for pragmatic reasons. The first- and second-persons singular and plural pronouns and the possessive determiners in his constructions contributed pragmatically, with other syntactic constituents to

the projection of peace, unity, integration, security and empathy. While the first- person singular subjective **I** recurred in almost all excerpts and was identified as semantically relevant in depicting the author's personality, attitude, and desire to take full responsibility of the happenings during his reign, the objective and subjective plural markers **our**, **we** and **us** served as in-group identity markers.

Based on the meanings interpreted from the excerpts, themes such as national integration, sympathy, security, governance etc. were isolated leading to the conclusion that the pronoun choices are strategic, effect-targeting, effect-achieving and influential in the political landscape in Nigeria and Africa in general. This leads to the suggestion that *My Transition Hours* contains indices of national integration and it should serve as an antidote for good governance, peace and national integration. It is believed that this study will prompt other researchers to initiate further studies on other word categories in relation to their occurrence and also investigate the sentence types deployed in memoirs like *My Transition Hours* in order to establish their contribution to peace and selflessness.

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**Memoirs as Instruments for Strengthening National Integration: Shehu Shagari's *Beckoned to Serve* in Perspectives**

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**Abstract**

*The problem of national integration has been a matter of concern for so long, and although previous governments have attempted to promote unity and national integration through a number of policies and interventions, the problem has not been fully solved. Shagari being the first executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has attempted to promote national integration through a number of ways which were given in his memoir *Beckoned to Serve*. This paper explores Shehu Shagari's strategies for achieving national integration. Excerpts from the memoir, which served as data were collected by purposive sampling, though other secondary sources were also consulted to confirm data from the memoir. The data was later analyzed using social integration theory. This research brought to fore some of the strategies followed by Shagari towards national unity and the relevance of some positive traits in promoting national unity.*

**Keywords:** Brotherhood, justice, memoir, national integration, Nigeria.

**1. Introduction**

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and hence the name the 'Giant of Africa', with more than 226.2 million population, as of December, 2023 (Statista.com). It is a multinational state founded on the basis of unity in diversity with an estimation of over 370 ethnic groups of divergent values, culture and religions of which the three major ethnic groups are Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. The country is roughly divided into the northern savannah region and the southern forest region, separated by the Niger and Benue rivers. The northern region is largely dominated by the Hausas and their major religion is Islam, while the Yoruba and Igbo dominated the south, with Christianity as their major religion. The country emerged as one entity as a result of the amalgamation of the Southern Protectorate and the Northern Protectorate by the British colonial masters in 1914. This amalgamation was an act of convenience as the two Protectorates have distinct cultures, values and religions. Nigeria since its formation, has been experiencing enormous challenges, the most notable being the problem of disunity among its people. This is manifest in the question of ethnic, religious, and political diversities.

The relationship between the major ethnic groups was occasionally characterized by fear and suspicion of domination of one state or ethnic group over the other. This has generated unhealthy rivalry which has hampered national integration. This was what eventually led to the Nigeria's civil war of 1967 – 1970 (Olaniyan, 1985). Unfortunately up to today the problem of unity and peaceful co-existence has not been fully solved. Insurgency, which started from the northeastern region in 2009 has now spread to other parts of the country, claiming lives and destroying property. Herders-farmers conflict is another problem fueling the issue of insecurity and national disintegration, while kidnapping, banditry and armed robbery keep growing day by day. These, coupled with poverty and ineffective governance have further exacerbated the already fragile societal set up. These conflicts have impacted heavily upon the lives of people, resulting in several deaths, economic, educational and psychological trauma, displacement and widowhood.

Previous governments have attempted to promote unity and national integration through a number of policies, programmes and interventions such as the establishment of the unity schools, the N.Y.S.C scheme, the Federal Character policy, the establishment of the National Orientation Agency among others. Although there are several memoirs written by former Nigerian leaders containing their strategies in promoting national unity, the contents have remained hidden especially in academic circles, thus due attention has not been given to them. Shagari being the first executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has also attempted to promote national integration through a number of ways which were highlighted in this memoir *Beckoned to Serve*. The objectives of this paper are to explore some of the strategies followed by Shagari in promoting national unity and integration, and to examine the relevance of certain traits (justice, love and brotherhood) in promoting national unity and integration. Data were collected by purposive sampling from the memoir, though other secondary sources such as books, official publications of government, journals, internet materials were also consulted to confirm data from the memoir. The data was later analyzed using social integration theory. This research discovers some of the strategies followed by Shagari and how they helped in promoting national integration and it also finds that certain traits, such as justice are important in promoting national unity.

## **2. Conceptual Framework**

### **2.1 National Integration**

Although every individual agrees that national integration is a term that denotes something that is desirable in any society and nation, there is no consensus as to its definition. Integration, derived either from French *integrate* or Latin *integritas*, means integral or integrate (Ezeobi, et al, 2019). Literally, it means 'restoration' and 'uniting of individual parts into an entity (Oleg & Ilya, 2016). It has been defined in the *Dictionary of Political Thought*, as cited by Naseer (2018) to mean,

different groups within a jurisdiction which have the same rights in law that nevertheless enjoy unequal privileges and desperate social, educational and recreational institutions, integration is the process whereby all such institutions are made available to all members of the state regardless of creed, race and origin with the intention of forming a unified civil society within the jurisdiction of a unified state.

Goddy (2022) sees the term as synonymous with national unity and is used when the citizens of a country are conscious of the fact that they have a common identity, regard themselves as one and work together to ensure the development of their country irrespective of differences in class, ethnicity, religion, political affiliations or any other differences that may exist between them. It involves the uniting of formerly separate groups into one group with the obliteration of any previous social and cultural group differences as well as the removal of separate group identification. Looking at the above definitions from various scholars, the crux of integration as stated by Kayode & Tony (2015) is nothing more than the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country even though they may belong to different ethnic groups, religions and cultures. Citizens in such a setting recognize themselves as one and work towards cohesion and unity. This is important, because it helps towards building a strong and prosperous nation, and thus each and every individual has a vital role to play in national integration.

### **2.2 Memoirs**

Memoir is an English word derived from a French word *memoire* which means 'remembrance' or 'reminiscence'. It is a factual, non-fiction narrative based on the author's personal memories, which aims to recount events that has impacted the writer in some way. The narrative captures the author's experiences for a specific period of life which may focus on family, spiritual journey, political experience or any thematically related event in the writer's

life (supersummary.com). Most memoirs have the following characteristics or elements;

- i. Narrative form: the author tells the story in a narrative form using first person pronouns
- ii. Thematic: Memoirs are written within a particular theme. A memoir focuses on a particular theme, topic, premise or lesson. It is not about the whole life of the author which would then have been an autobiography, but rather on a particular theme, period or event.
- iii. Uniqueness: Memoirs are usually written in a unique form and style, thus being different from others. Every memoirist writes his/her story in his/her own unique way pertaining to the style he/she conveys his/her words and thought, which is unique from others.
- iv. Emotional journey: Memoirs are written through the author's thoughts, feelings and emotions about the historical event, the experiences and lessons learnt and how he integrated them into his life (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### ***Social Integration Theory***

Social integration, which refers to a situation where people with differences, especially minority groups agree to live together and feel part of the larger community has been defined by Jeannotte (2008) as,

...the process of fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity solidarity, security and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

On the theoretical level, Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) who conceptualized the theory of social integration believed that people's actions, customs, ideas and values make up a group's opinion or a common way of looking at the world. Thus, collective understanding unites people and promotes social integration which is very important for the existence of any society. This, according to Beresneviciute (2003, p.97) "indicates principles by which individuals are bound to each other in the social space and how they accept social rules and live together as one community, though conflicts may arise from time to time".

This paper adopts this social integration theory as propounded by Durkheim in analyzing the data extracted from Shagari's *Beckoned to Serve*.

#### **4. Shehu Shagari: *Beckoned to Serve***

This is a memoir written by the first executive President of Nigeria, President Shehu Usman Shagari in which he attempted to record his experiences particularly on politics and governance. The book outlines Shagari's fascinating life from a humble beginning as a son of a village chief going through his early life as a student, a school teacher, his struggles for independence and his life as a politician and finally as the first Executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is a book of 540 pages spread through 14 chapters emphasizing on politics and governance. The objectives of the book are:

1. an attempt to record the experiences of the author, from the rigours of the transition from colonial rule to independence through the struggle of building a stable and developed country with democratic institutions and values;
2. arouse the interest of readers especially in developing countries, in the study of the lives and experiences of public officers who have been privileged to reach the pinnacle of their political careers through dedicated service to their people and countries;
3. be beneficial to future leaders who share the same hopes and aspirations for the building of a better Nigeria.
4. educate the Nigerian public and be better informed on history of political happenings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Nigeria. (Shagari, 2001, pp. 25 – 27)

The issue of national integration came into focus with the swearing in of Shagari as the first executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on October 1, 1979. His ascension to power gave him the opportunity to employ any realistic means which he felt would help towards national cohesion, unity and integration, and in trying to translate the motto of his party into reality. The motto of his party, the National Party of Nigeria was 'One Nation, One Destiny'. He believed that fairness and justice to people irrespective of ethnicity, religious and political convictions, would create love and feeling of brotherhood between them which would finally promote to national unity, therefore advocated for that even for his rivals and opponents. Justice has appeared in several places of the *Qur'an* and the *Bible*. For instance, the

*Qur'an*, Chapter 5, verse 8, Allah has said, “Oh ye who believe, be steadfast witnesses for Allah in equity, and let not the hatred of any people make you avoid justice. Deal justly, that is nearer to piety and your duty. Observe your duty to Allah”. *Qur'an*, Chapter 16, verse 90 also says, “Surely Allah enjoins justice, kindness and doing of good to kith and kin, and forbids all that is shameful, evil and oppressive”. According to the *Bible*, II Samuel, Chapter 23: verse 3, “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God”. In Deuteronomy, Chapter 16: verse 20, it reads, “That which is altogether just shall thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee”.

An example of Shagari’s sense of justice can be seen even before becoming the President, when he was the Federal Minister of Internal Affairs during the Tafawa Balewa rule in 1962. In May 1962, some leaders of the opposition party, Action Group (AG) were accused of importing illegal arms to overthrow the legitimate Federal Government of NPC – NCNC Coalition, thus the leader of the party, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, his lieutenant Chief Anthony Enahoro and over two dozen others were charged with treasonable felony and conspiracy to overthrow the Federal Government and were about to be denied fair hearing. It was Shagari, with his sense of fairness, justice and love for national unity that personally facilitated and authorized the issuance of an entry visa permit to Chief Awolowo’s lawyer, a celebrated British legal luminary, Dingle Foot, Q. C and extended his stay in Nigeria when his visa expired. This happened when some people within the NPC – NCNC Federal Coalition Government attempted to prevent the lawyer from entering the country by almost denying him entry visa permit to Nigeria (Okion, 1982).

According to him, fairness and justice were major factors that could create love and brotherhood between people which would eventually lead to national unity and integration. Towards that, he pledged to give fair treatment to each state of the federation regardless of the people of the region and the party in power in that state (Okion, 1982). He translated his quest for justice and national integration into the appointments he made, his speeches, infrastructural developments and political pardons.

#### **4.1 Appointments**

In case of appointments, Shagari tried to have an inclusive government by appointing capable hands irrespective of region, religion and gender. He said,

The case for fair access to public office in a divided society is an unanswerable one. Especially where many in authority cannot be trusted to act

on the square towards their non-types... No one group has an intrinsic monopoly of talents.

Ours would be a better country if we recognize our mutual worth, and reconcile our concerns with the ethics of the nation, excellence and fair play (Shagari, 2001, p.242)

No region or religion could claim monopoly of the government of Shagari. This could be attested to by his appointments to various offices. The President had involved all parts of the country when appointing ministers and other public officers by requesting each state to provide him with names of seven nominees from which he would choose. And further, it was not just a matter of representing all regions of the country, but rather it was a question of representation of all sectors, and that was why he emphasized to each state that out of its nominees, one must be a woman and one a youth. This had greatly helped in national unification. Even within his inner circles, he had people from different regions. His Chief of Personal Staff for instance, was Michael Prest, Ambassador Yusuf Sada as the Chief of State Protocol, Charles Igoh as the Chief Press Secretary and Abiodun Aloba as his Chief Speech Writer. Even within his advisers, he had people from all walks of life, regions and religions. Dr. Chuba Okadigbo was his Adviser on Political Affairs, Yahaya Dikko, Special Adviser on Petroleum and Energy, Olufunmi Agbasale Adebajo Adviser on Information, Prof. Emmanuel Edozien, Adviser on Economic Affairs, Theophilus Adeleke Akinyele, Director and Special Adviser on Budget Affairs, Dr. Olufemi Olaiifa, Special Adviser on Statutory Boards, Dr. Bukar Shu'aibu, Special Adviser on National Security, and so many others, too numerous to mention here (Shagari, 2001, pp. 286 – 292).

Another strategy employed by Shagari towards national integration was the appointments of women in his cabinet and Diplomatic Corps. Despite the President coming from the northern part of Nigeria, where at that time, the working of women was being frowned at, his personal courage and commitment to national interest had prompted him to appoint women into various important positions in his cabinet. He said, "It was my hope to have females, in the cabinet, but NPN state branches did not help matters. Yet the cabinet was representative enough of the country and its diverse interests" (Shagari, 2001, p.240). Thus, Mrs. Ebun Oyagbola from Egbado area of Ogun State was appointed Minister of National Planning and Mrs. Janet Akinrinade, from Iseyin in Oyo State, was a State Minister in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Similarly, Miss Elizabeth Ogbon, from Agbara in Urhobo area of



Bendel State was appointed as Ambassador (Consul-General) to Hamburg, Germany, Mrs. R. Mohammed, a career diplomat, as Ambassador with accreditations to Botswana and Zimbabwe, Mrs. Asinobi from Imo and Mrs. Ivasie, Benue were appointed as additional ministers during his second tenure in office. These women and many others, had demonstrated competence and this had brought credit to the nation and the President.

#### **4.2 Speeches and Utterances**

Many speeches of Shagari have attested to his desire for national unity and integration. For instance, in addressing and welcoming the Federal Ministers to their new appointments, he had encouraged them “to join hands with him in the unique constitutional endeavor to build a new and better nation for posterity to come” (Okion, 1982, p. 367). He had also spoken of the need to create “a new spirit of meaningful co-operation and national integration and development starting with the unity and complete understanding among the different arms of Government” (Okion, 1982).

Likewise, in his meeting with media Executives when he assumed office, he emphasized their role in promoting national unity when he said,

I called for this meeting not only to further familiarize ourselves but also to exchange views and ideas on how best we can all join hands to promote unity, stability and peace in order to create a favourable atmosphere for all the governments of the federation to take off successfully irrespective of party leanings. As members of the Fourth Estate of the Realm, you have sacred responsibilities to this nation. On your shoulders lie the duty of fostering national cohesion and engendering a sense of belonging in our people (Okion, 1982, p. 373)

In his meeting with the senior officers of the three arms of the Armed Forces – the Army, Navy and Air Force – the President said the meeting has given him a forum not only to meet you but also to seize the opportunity to express my appreciation for the laudable role of national building the Armed Forces have found themselves within the last 13 years, and for making history in formally handing over power to me as the elected representative of the nation. We require not only the co-operation but, more importantly, the

absolute and transparent loyalty, dedication to duty, fortitude and support of your chief and all of you” (Shagari, 1979, p. 335)

To the seventh group of the National Youth Service Corps in July 1980, the President had emphasized on the importance of the scheme as a vehicle for national unity and integration. He said,

The Youth Corps scheme is an important and practical vehicle for uniting the people of this country. I have received reports of many Corps members, all of them serving in states other than their own, who have decided to take permanent jobs in areas where they served. In fact, I am happy to note that many interstate marriages have taken place among corps members and between them and citizens of the areas where they are working. This augurs well for the future of Nigeria. They are laying the foundations of a truly strong and united country” (Shagari, 1979, p.222)

Shagari has equally tasked different organizations in the country to be means of promoting national cohesion, unity and stability. He said, when addressing members of the Lagos Island Club, which was a multi-racial, multi-national premier social club of Nigeria, in December, 1980,

This premier social institution has a vital contribution to make in our efforts to build a virile, united and stable nation...it is a very good instrument of defusing tension and anticipating areas of conflict in our community. But in order to perform this function creditably, the club must continue to be national in outlook by embracing many people from all spheres of life in the country...it could be a forum for inculcating national consciousness and fostering national unity which will spearhead the effort to solve basic national problems. (Shagari, 1979, p. 245).

Shagari had equally emphasized on the role of the traditional rulers and institutions throughout the country as promoters of unity and national

integration. For instance, in a speech at the celebrations of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Foundation of 'Egbaland', Ogun State, Shagari emphasized on the need for peaceful coexistence amongst all people of the country. He said,

The continued understanding among the Egbas and other Nigerians living within their midst augurs well for peace and unity of this great country. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to all Nigerians to cultivate the same spirit of love and brotherhood. We should learn to tolerate and respect each other's views and depoliticize and de-emphasize all those things that tend to divide us. By so doing, we shall, by joint effort, be laying a healthy and strong foundation for unity and prosperity (Shagari, 1979, pp. 303 – 304)

In his bid for unity and integration, himself a devout and pious Muslim, he used to preach for tolerance and peaceful coexistence among different religious groups. This was what prompted him to invite the Pope John Paul II to visit Nigeria. The Pope accepted the invitation and visited the country in February, 1982. This gesture had strengthened the inter-religious and peaceful coexistence amongst the different religions in the country. While receiving the Pope at the State House, the President had said,

though ours is a secular state with diverse religious creeds, we do in fact, live in harmony among ourselves, respect each other's religious beliefs and rise as one people on an august occasion like this. The people of Nigeria have embarked on a drive for a new revolution aimed at strengthening the moral fibre of our people which is about love and brotherhood, honesty, integrity, and respect for those traditions that make a nation (Okion, 1982, p. 388)

#### **4.3 Physical Infrastructure**

The administration even before its debut, had an elaborate blueprint for the programmes to be implemented. These were in the sectors of agriculture, housing, education, health transportation, and industries among many others. Many programmes and projects were successfully completed while others

were started but not completed. But what is impressive was his all-inclusive government where he tried to apportion the work to all the regions of the country. For instance, in the sector of Agriculture, the Administration immediately it assumed office increased the allocation of funds from 6% to 15% of the annual capital budget. Dams and irrigation canals were built across the country such as the Bakalori Dam in Sokoto, the South Chad Irrigation in Borno State, the Ogun River Dam in Ogun State, and so on. Fishing terminals and Strategic Commodity reserves were also built in various locations in the country (Shagari, 2001, pp. 304 - 305).

In the case of Housing, a Ministry of Housing was created and low-cost houses were built throughout the federation. This programme was aimed at providing some 200,000 housing units in the urban and rural areas, at the rate of 2000 units per state, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Special housing programmes were also undertaken in Steel townships like Aladja and Ajaokuta as well as in the satellite towns like Abesan in Lagos State.

In the Education sector, Shagari's administration embarked upon the programme of improving the standard of education at all levels, and introduced the 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 system in 1982 and helped all the states with technical assistance and equipment. It also established new universities apart from the already existing 13 universities, in those states that had no Federal universities, such as Bauchi, Benue, Imo, Ondo, Niger and Ogun states. Seven existing colleges of Education across the country were also upgraded to degree-awarding institutions. These were those in Abraka, Kano, Ondo, Alvan Ikoku in Owerri, Port-Harcourt, Uyo and Zari'a. Eight new Polytechnics, spread throughout the country, were added to the already existing 17. These were located at Ado-Ekiti, Bida, Bauchi, Idah, Ilaro, Uwana (Afikpo) and Yola. All these are indications of how Shagari's administration tried to spread higher institutions across all regions of the country.

Coming to the Industries sector, considerable development was recorded during his administration, especially in steel development. To this end, a special Ministry of Steel Development was created which immediately embarked upon implementing major projects. These were the Aladja Steel Plant which was commissioned in January 1982 and three inland steel Rolling Mills in Katsina, Oshogbo and Jos. Ajaokuta Steel complex was also started in 1980. Vehicle Assembly plants were also established across the country in collaboration with concerned state governments such as Anambra Motor Company, which was commissioned in 1980, the National Truck

Manufacturing Company in Kano, which was commissioned in April 1981. The Steyr Motors at Bauchi and the Leyland at the Ibadan which already existed were further developed. Two cement factories were added on the existing factories. Salt refineries were also established at Ijoko in Ogun State and Oghareki in Bendel and many other industries in various part of the country (Shagari, 2001, pp. 310 – 311).

#### **4.4 Political Pardons**

The President, in his effort to build a peaceful, stable and united nation was magnanimous enough to pardon both Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon (rtd) and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. This act of pardon was facilitative in the process of reconciliation and national integration which was well received throughout the country. He said,

After I became President, it was the same Sati Gogwin who acted as my emissary to Gowon in London, with a message that Gowon could return home a free man. As regards Ojukwu, tremendous pressures were similarly brought to bear upon me in the eastern states...Again, happily, I was able, after series of consultations with all concerned, to grant unconditional pardon to Ojukwu in the third year of my first term (Shagari, 2001, p. 222)

#### **5. Conclusion**

It can be concluded that although various political leaders have written different memoirs mostly on governance and national integration, their contents have remained hidden except during inauguration where only limited politicians and people in governance were invited. This paper has tried to explain some of the strategies followed by Shagari in promoting national unity which were in his memoir. His stance with regards to justice and fair play in appointments to public offices, apportioning of infrastructural developments to various regions and even general governance were testimonies to his love for national integration. The paper has further highlighted the relevance of positive traits such as justice in inculcating mutual love and feeling of brotherhood among citizens which eventually translate into peaceful co-existence and unity. Shagari believed that his efforts towards national unity has rather been achieved. He said,

Besides, there was the urge to pursue the important task of national cohesion through the promotion of peaceful co-existence, love and understanding between the diverse communities which together constitute the Nigerian Nation. Our efforts in this direction had already begun to bear fruit as was later demonstrated... (Shagari, 2001, p. 440).

Shagari's *Beckoned to Serve* has indeed provided a valuable model on national integration for future leaders to come.

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