From Pulpit to Everyday Speech: The Social and Linguistic Impact of Pentecostalism in Nigerian

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ABSTRACT: Nigerian Pentecostalism has emerged as a significant social and cultural force, wielding substantial influence over many aspects of daily life, including language use. The movement has contributed not only to the rise of new lexical expressions that reinforce religious dogmatism in a restrictive sense, but also has fecundated their pervasive deployments in social discourse, in a non-restrictive sense. Through innovative media, Pentecostal ideology—particularly in warfare prayer forms and vernacular—has permeated society, allowing everyday people to adopt these expressions in popular culture to convey various ideologies and identities. This study examines how ordinary Nigerians use these expressions as tools of offense and defense against perceived threats to their progress as well as a means of engagement and socialization. Analytical in nature, the study employs Norman Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis and draws on data from participant observations and unstructured interviews. The findings show that the adoption of Pentecostal language and expressions reflects the changing sociocultural landscape and the influence of religious movements on societal norms and values. Both language and religion are shown to be fundamental instruments in the development of human society.

KEYWORDS: CDA, ideology, language, pentecostalism, religion, warfare prayers,

INTRODUCTION

Language use pervades social life just as the elements of social life are inextricably linked to how language is used. It is the primary means of gaining access to the contents of other people's minds, as well as the primary means of transmitting cultural knowledge. Consequently, any communicative exchange takes place in a social context that constrains the linguistic latitude of participants. The inevitable corollary of the circumscription would be evident in the form and content of their acts of communication which mirror how these participants perceive and define various social constructs. Language as an exclusively human phenomenon cannot be studied in isolation from culture. Society and culture influence the words that we use for a speech act, and the words for this act of communication, in turn, influence society and culture (Lut and Starenkova 2022). Understanding how a people use language can illuminate the structure of a society as it is integral to its functioning. Thus, language behaviors are guided by what a broader community sees as appropriate and expected linguistic practice. Pentecostal activities over the years have made the belief in ubiquitous enemies and their activities widespread in the Nigerian context, leading to the appropriation of 'warfare prayer' models (articulated through the performative and rhetorical force of speech) as an acceptable popular culture to deal with perceived enemies in everyday social interaction. As Wariboko (2016) argues, in West African Pentecostalism, language in the form of common expressions is often used to create new meanings, formulate dynamics of identity, stage a battle ground between forms of aesthetics, and differentiate between inferior and superior or past or future. In examining the dynamics of Pentecostal expressions and everyday language use, this study provides evidence that Pentecostal worldview has been extended to create new meanings in secular spaces.

Pentecostal theology and sensibilities have over the years through the pervasive use of the media spread across the society, leaving an indelible mark on language use and communication in Nigeria. Pentecostal spiritual warfare, vernacular culture and texts have been incorporated into everyday language and deployed not only to confront unseen adversaries but also to convey emotions and sentiments across various social settings. Wariboko (2016) describes the process of adapting, extending, and recreating theology in everyday life as exemplified in the Nigerian context as "correlated theology, in which everyday religious language is based on associative relation rather than logical connection, involving a great deal of parallel processing." Thus, expressions such as *'thunder fire you and your generation,' 'back to sender,' 'Holy ghost fire,' 'Blood of Jesus,' 'testimony,' 'deliverance,' 'binding and casting'* and many others have become integral components of the Nigerian English lexicon and vernaculars. These expressions serve as clichés that symbolize Pentecostal power and ideology, and have become deeply ingrained in the Nigerian social life. The choice of these religious-influenced expressions depends on factors like the social context, time of encounter, the mood of interlocutors, and perceived threats or hostilities. The use of these expressions may not always convey the inherent religious

meanings but instead reflects the unique interpretations and intentions of the speaker. The sociolinguistic transformation driven by Pentecostalism has led to a proliferation of references to Biblical texts in everyday language use in non-religious contexts. Community members actively engage with their experiences and needs, adapting and creating interpretations and meanings as they navigate various situations. According to Uwen (2020), imprecations and curses, which are unique elements of language use characterized by stylistic nuances and popularized by Pentecostalism, have become integral to social interactions in contemporary Nigerian society. They serve as a conduit for accessing others' thoughts and conveying cultural knowledge. Today, many Nigerians use language in their daily social interactions that are significant prototypes of Biblical expressions, interpretations, and sensibilities to achieve their social communicative goals. For example, in the market, bus stations, hospitals, police checkpoints etc. people appropriate these expressions to assert their themselves, denounce negative utterances made against them as well as show their identities.

The study will elucidate how language, shaped by Pentecostalism, functions as a mechanism for defense and offense, a tool for socialization and engagement as well as to proclaim identity and navigate power dynamics in many social contexts. It examines how religious expressions have become cultural markers for status, authority, and self-perception. The research will help us understand how religious ideologies influence language evolution, resulting in the inclusion of spiritual themes into ordinary communication. This study will contribute to sociolinguistic knowledge by demonstrating how religious discourse reshapes everyday language and communication in a specific cultural setting, providing insights into the dynamic interaction of language, religion, and society. It investigates how Pentecostal language use spreads beyond religious contexts and into mainstream culture, so changing Nigeria's communicative landscape. By analyzing the adaptation and reinterpretation of Pentecostal theology in social interactions, the study will provide evidence of how language reflects broader cultural and societal shifts. It illustrates how language is both shaped by and shapes cultural norms, values, and social constructs. The structure and substance of speech are molded by individuals' perceptions of the social context, their comprehension of others' behaviors, knowledge, beliefs, and identities. The task of this study is twofold:

1. To examine how community members have adapted and deployed Pentecostal theology, ideology and vernacular as tools of offense and defense, as well as social engagement at the popular cultural level.
2. To explore how community members use spiritual idioms to assert themselves and shape their identities and power within a larger social context.

THE NEXUS BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

Schegloff (1987:208) has noted that language serves as the "primordial locus for sociality." Apart from being one of the most complex modes of communication, language retains its superordinate posture as a powerful instrument for conveying and instilling social ideals and perceptions (Nnorom & Ogunnaike, 2018). This complex nature of language as a communicative resource with unclear borderlines and indefinite internal structure has been expressed by Halliday (1978). When language is viewed from its indeterminable mechanism as opined by Halliday, language scholars will always grapple with the issue of definitional adequacy, and this will result in a profusion of assumptions about the phenomenon that defines man's humanity. Essentially, language is instrumental in defining social entities and their experiences within the matrix of society, where practices and processes are conditioned by factors that are extrinsic to language itself but are in some dialectical relationship with it (Fairclough, 1989). Fairclough maintains that since language is a defining part of society, linguistic phenomena are social entities of some sort while social phenomena are, to some extent, linguistic in nature, and would need language to explain their operations. language use pervades social life, just as the elements of social life constitute an intrinsic part of the way language is used. It is the principal vehicle for the transmission of cultural knowledge, and the primary means by which we gain access to the contents of others' minds. Thus, any communicative exchange is situated in a social context that constrains the linguistic forms participants use. How these participants define the social situation, their perceptions of what others do and know, think and believe, and the claims they make about their own and others' identities will affect the form and content of their acts of speaking.

Different demonstrations of Pentecostal ideological assumptions, both globally and specifically in Africa, have attracted considerable scholarly attention from diverse perspectives. Notable among these studies are those that investigated the theme of sociopolitical involvement (Marshall, 2016; Adelakun, 2022, 2023; Burack, 2020), poverty alleviation and welfare provision (Oyelade and Omobowale, 2019; Gukurume, 2022), the exaggerated emphasis on the demonic (Richman, 2019; Ojo, 2018), and the interface between language and religion as well as the evolving language of modern Christianity with its influence on South African languages and Nigerian English (Alsaawi, 2022; Tsoraya, Primalaini & Asbar, 2022; Uwen, 2020; Kperogi, 2019; Sekerdej, Kossowska, Czernatowicz-Kukuczka, 2018; Supardi, Hindarto, Ridlo, 2018). How religion mirrors power and identity is evident in (Knott, 2022 and Frederiks, 2015). Although these studies approached Pentecostalism from different angles, they have successfully offered valuable insights that unveil warfare Pentecostalism as fundamentally an ideological assumption within the broader Pentecostal movement that perceives life as a battleground, where spiritual warriors confront evil forces and their human agents deeply embedded in both social and spiritual spaces. The studies have demonstrated the correlation between contemporary Pentecostalism and socioeconomic and political struggles, particularly in the context of poverty in Nigeria, Africa, and other

developing societies. However, beyond parsing references to the use of Pentecostal warfare forms to create new meanings and formulate dynamics of identity, very little attention has been devoted to the adaptation and weaponization of warfare vernacular in everyday culture.

AN OVERVIEW OF PENTECOSTAL RELIGIOUS RENAISSANCE IN NIGERIA

Pentecostalism is a diverse movement within evangelical, charismatic Protestant Christianity. It gained prominence in Nigeria during the 1970s, especially among university students who formed interdenominational fellowships like Scripture Union (SU) to promote "born-again" Christianity and holiness. As Nigeria's economy grew, Pentecostal ministries expanded in the 1980s, distancing themselves from African traditional beliefs. However, amid economic challenges, due to collapsing commodity prices and IMF-imposed conditionalities, the church shifted their message from sanctification to prosperity, healing, and deliverance (Wariboko, 2017; Adelakun, 2022). From the 1990s onward, Nigerian Pentecostal churches have become centers of religious and cultural innovation, appealing to a wide range of socioeconomic groups. They adapt some African traditional religious practices, with a message emphasizing spiritual empowerment. Major denominations feature bureaucracies and influential pastors, positioning themselves as agents of national transformation. Nigerian Pentecostalism adapts its theology to cultural contexts, fostering a worldview that sees the supernatural as integral to daily life and shaping prayer practices. The movement's growth has been amplified by innovative communication strategies, using media to reach a broad audience and expand globally. These strategies have led to the spread of Pentecostal theology, with new churches emerging in diverse spaces, reinforcing a delocalized sense of identity and community (Marshall- Fratani,1998; Olupona, 2008; Wariboko, 2017; Adelakun 2022, 2023; Richman 2020 & Nel 2019).

The effective use of media, particularly with technological advancements that have expanded channels such as the internet, online and social media platforms, as well as location-independent devices such as mobile phones, laptops, iPads, and so on, has significantly increased the reach of Pentecostalism. This has made its theology, prayer practices, testimonies, language, idioms, and other activities more accessible to the general public, allowing for dissemination and access at any time and from any location. The most significant outcome of these collective endeavors is that it granted the public entry into the churches' vernacular culture, particularly in the realm of spiritual warfare. These expressions, with their unique meanings and interpretations, are then put to practical use, demonstrating functionality and relevance in the day-to-day navigation of socioeconomic, political, and cultural experiences. The attraction of the populace to Pentecostalism and its oral culture, is also frequently spurred by the rise in economic hardships, corruption in leadership and degradation of life quality, social uncertainties, frustrations and the daily challenges of survival, which have motivated individuals to appropriate sacred power vocabulary into everyday interactions within secular public spaces.

Theoretical FRAMEWORK & Methodology

Theoretical insights from Norman Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (*henceforth CDA*) provides the analytical path for the analysis of the data. The choice of this model has been informed by the fact that it would bring some lucidity to language use in warfare prayers in Pentecostalism. CDA investigates diverse contours of language use in social contexts, employing a theory of discourse with methodological contributions from discourse analysis. CDA is a paradigm that accounts for how forms of power, ideologies, representations, attitudes, beliefs, values and identities are constructed, reproduced and even maintained in discourse. Van Dijk (1993) argues that the role of CDA is not only to engage in the analysis of the formal structures of language but also to explore the function of language in relation to power and its maintenance in social contexts. This study is purely qualitative and descriptive in nature and draws upon data collected through the participant-observation and unstructured interviews. Analysis provides a veritable model for explicating manifestations of power, ideological leanings, social relationships, and identities which underlie interpersonal communication. The data was gathered in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial and most populous State, known for its diverse population encompassing various ethnicities and nationalities. Lagos stands as a hub for churches, hosting the headquarters or branches of prominent religious institutions in Nigeria. Virtually every street in Lagos features at least two churches, engaging in robust media campaigns to promote their activities and vie for followership. Apart from the churches situated at designated centers, mobile churches are also active in diverse public areas such as marketplaces, bus stations, parking lots, and beneath flyovers. These mobile ministries actively participate in evangelism, engage in warfare prayer, distribute handbills, and collect offerings. They strategically target specific audiences such as interstate travelers at motor parks. These activities contribute in spreading Pentecostal vernacular culture across society.

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Lagos is the commercial as well as the Pentecostal hub of Nigeria with a population of over **16** million people according to - UN, population prospects cited in (Macrotrends, 2024). Life in Lagos is vibrant, fast-paced, and filled with contrasts. As Nigeria's economic and cultural heart, Lagos offers abundant opportunities in business, tech, and entertainment, drawing people from across the country and beyond. The city is alive day and night, with a dynamic blend of local markets, street food, music, and nightlife. However, life in Lagos also comes with its challenges. The city's dense population creates daily traffic jams, and other

environmental issues as infrastructure often struggles to keep up with the needs of its over 16 million residents. The traffic in Lagos can turn even short commutes into hours-long journeys, leading to frustration and stress, in addition to worsening socioeconomic challenges in daily life. For residents and visitors alike, Lagos' notorious traffic is a test of patience and adaptability, requiring resourcefulness and resilience to navigate the city's urban sprawl. Despite these challenges, Lagosians are known for their resilience, entrepreneurial spirit, and ability to thrive in the face of urban challenges, making the city an energetic and ever-evolving metropolis. One of the most intriguing elements of Lagos, as well as other Nigerian cities, particularly in the south, is the significant impact of Pentecostal language on the local sociolinguistic landscape. In marketplaces, for example, some traders use Pentecostal expressions to interact with their current and potential customers. Often, these expressions are used humorously or sarcastically as a strategy to attract attention. For instance, the researcher once observed a man selling women's dresses who was trying to persuade a lady to buy one by saying, "Sister, this dress fits you very well, na correct dress! I swear, if you wear this dress, ehh, you go give testimony." Here, the trader implied that wearing the dress would make the woman attractive enough to attract suitors, leading her to testify about her good fortune in church. In another instance, a trader selling women's underwear called to a potential customer, saying, "Aunty, I have all types and sizes. Look at this one, you fit try am; testing is free. I bet if you wear am, ehh, Oga go speak in tongues," suggesting humorously that if the lady wears the underwear, her partner would not be able to resist her.

Warfare prayer forms and imprecations are also often deployed especially, when there is disagreement in price bargaining. Additionally, during encounters with law enforcement, it's not uncommon to hear expressions such as "God is my witness," "Holy ghost fire consume you," "back to sender," "it is not my portion" or "I am covered by the blood of Jesus" and "God punish you" used as responses by people who feel mistreated or upset. Warfare language has become a frequent tool for addressing minor hostilities, frustrations, or conflicts in public spaces like markets, streets, hospitals, and public transport. These interactions recorded in Lagos are often as entertaining and humorous as they are intense. Nowadays, rather than intervening in conflict situations, onlookers are more inclined to record these events, sharing them online in real time to generate content and spark discussions. Confrontations involving the appropriation of Pentecostal warfare vernacular have become more frequent, driven by socioeconomic and political pressures that leave many feeling tense and reactive to minor provocations.

The primary data for this study comes from one such incident, recorded by the researcher, between two *danfo* (mini-bus) drivers at a bus stop in Lagos Island. The exchange between these two individuals form the central narrative for this study, highlighting its main arguments and research focus. The analysis applies Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, focusing on power dynamics, identity, and representation. Lagos faces constant traffic congestion, especially during peak hours, as millions of commuters, street vendors, and commercial vehicles like *danfos* (minibuses) and *kekes* (tricycle taxis) navigate its narrow, poorly maintained roads. The city's infrastructure struggles to handle this traffic, worsened by limited public transit and heavy reliance on private and informal transportation. Commercial drivers, known for impatience, recklessness and frequent traffic violations, compete for passengers while dealing with harassment from *"agberos"*—touts demanding fees at bus stops and LASMAN (the state traffic management authority). Passengers endure these challenges, breakdowns, and severe traffic jams, often resulting in frustration, disputes, and, at times, confrontations. One such incident occurred when a driver attempted to bypass traffic to pick up passengers, only to be blocked by another driver vying for the same crowd. In their rush, they collided, sparking a fierce argument. Both drivers angrily accused each other, with tensions rising and harsh words exchanged, nearly escalating to a physical fight before the police intervened. Throughout the confrontation, both men employed Pentecostal language and expressions to assert their identities and intentions. As soon as the accident occurred, they jumped out of their vehicles, loudly accusing each other in a heated verbal exchange that unfolded as follows:

Driver 1: Oga if you don't come down now, I go use this bottle scatter you head. Wetin I do you? You drink *"ogogoro"? (local dry gin) for this early morning*? (If you don't come down now, I will use this bottle to break your head what happened? Did you drink alcohol or what?)

Driver 2: Na you drink *"ogogoro."* You no dey see? E be like sey something dey worry you. *(it's you who drank alcohol. Don't you see? It's like something is wrong with you?)*

Driver 1: *"Were,"* (mad man)- God punish you. Thunder fire you and your generation. E no go better for you. *(You are mad. God will punish you. Thunder will strike you and your generation. It will not be well with you).*

Driver 2: "Back to sender," Na you wey him head no correct and na you e no go better for. Holy ghost fire burn you and your entire generation, Mumu. There is no peace for the wicked. *(Back to sender. It's you whose head is not correct and it's you whom it will not be well with. Holy ghost fire burn you and your entire generation. Fool!)*

Driver 1: You go fix my bus. No be you hit me for back? You no dey go anywhere. I go teach you lesson today. You no know wetin you dey do. Holy ghost fire consume you. Bastard! *Mumu (You will fix my bus. Are you not the one that hit me at the back. You are not going anywhere. I will teach you a lesson today. You don't know who you are messing with. Bastard).*

Driver 2: Who you be? Na because of jazz you dey make mouth. "No weapon fashioned against me shall prosper." My God is bigger than your juju and jazz. Occult power na rubbish power. Try me and I go show you say power pass power. *(Who are you? Is it because of jazz that you are boasting. Occult power is rubbish power. Try me and I will show you that (power pass power) all powers are not equal).*

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Driver 1: Oga, e be like say something dey worry you. *"Were ni e."* No mention God for this matter. No just try me. Yes, I dey use jazz. My jazz is Jesus. Make I tell you, I dey eat flesh and drink blood (referring to the Holy Communion). If na send dey send you, you don jam fire. Devil incarnate. That's how you go about looking for trouble. Shebi you wan die for accident, e go soon happen, *Amusu! (Oga, it's like something is wrong with you. Don't bring God into this matter and don't mess with me. Yes, I use jazz, My jazz is Jesus. Let me tell you, I eat flesh and I drink blood. If they sent you (as an agent) you have met your match. Devil incarnate. That's how you go about looking for trouble).*

Driver 2: Back to sender, I reject your evil wishes, accident no be my portion. Holy ghost fire. I am covered by the blood of Jesus. Na you carry your wintch come my side, *na so so trouble you go dey get today.* Mumu! E no go better for you. *(Accident is not my portion… It's you that came to jam me with your witchcraft, that's how you meet with trouble after trouble today. Fool, it will not be well with you).*

The timely intervention of the police deescalated the tension. However, within seconds, the incident had started trending on the internet as people were recording and posting real time as it is now customary for content creators to use mundane acts to attract viewership and comments on their social media pages.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
Power instances
In the context of the interactions between the two *Danfo* drivers, power refers to that form of language use meant to influence or show control over others, whether openly or not. In the text, the utterances show that their verbal power comes from their position as cultural actors. **Driver 1** showed some traditional understanding of how invocations work. Hence, he implores the god of thunder with the expression, *'God punish you; thunder go fire you and your generation.'* The **driver 2** also employs the power of personal conviction and denunciation, leaning on the popular Pentecostal quotations *'Back to sender; Holy ghost fire burn you and your entire generation and 'There is no peace for the wicked*. Power is also visible as driver two's verbal response shows, and this shows that his source of verbal firework is completely drawn from the Pentecostal prayer patterns. These vituperative exchanges reveal the use of warfare language in the business and public space outside the precincts of Pentecostal prayer houses as both powerful weapons of offence and defense. The incorporation of religious expressions into social interactions within non-sacred spaces highlights the profound impact of Pentecostal theology on the social fabric of the Nigerian people. The populace is well aware of the presence of adversaries and their human agents who consistently impede social progress. As a result, any perceived act of aggression by a community member capable of impeding another's socioeconomic flourishing as witnessed in the above scenario is considered intolerable. The community regards such perpetrators as enemies of progress. As McAlister points out, the use of scripture in the form of imprecatory prayer has been discreetly employed by individuals, including Christians and non-Christians. References to biblical texts are not only used strategically to affirm group affiliation and identity but also to cultivate cultural value that can be used to gain respect or to speak authoritatively, extending influence over personal and social spheres of existence (Wariboko, 2016).

Ideological leanings
Ideologies are values, opinions and belief systems that shape the way a person or a group thinks, understands the world or acts. Ideologies are related to power because ideological concerns are embedded in some conventions that depend on power relations which underpin and legitimize them. Undeniably, language use is a social behavior through which people enact or project ideologies. Therefore, language is connected to ideology (Fairclough, 2001). The belief system of the persons engaged in the war of words underscores their ideological leanings. Hence, the covert ideologies in their language use are those of threat, invocation, imprecation and reversal.

Ideology of threat
A threat is a direct or indirect declaration of intent to bring someone harm. It is also seen as a situation whereby a person or a group has either the intention or perceived capacity to cause another person some harm (Davis, 2000). Driver 1 resorted to threat after his complaint as an offence strategy. The threat was begun with the conditional if clause,

Driver 1: If you don't come down now, I go use this …

You go fix my bus o. You no dey go anywhere. I go teach you lesson today. You no know wetin you dey do. (*You will fix my bus. Are you not the one that hit me at the back. You are not going anywhere. I will teach you a lesson today. You don't know who you are messing with. Bastard).*

Driver 2: 'Who you be? Na because of jazz you dey make mouth. "No weapon fashioned against me shall prosper." My God is bigger than your juju and jazz. Occult power na rubbish power. Try me and I go show you say power pass power

Community members, including Christians and non-Christians, share a common belief in the performative power of spoken words to shape or manifest reality, which is rooted in local traditional beliefs. Consequently, when confronted with negative statements directed at them, individuals typically do not remain silent; instead, they actively counter such pronouncements. This viewpoint aligns with Pentecostal theology, exemplified by the mantras, *'a closed mouth is a closed destiny'* and *'Stop them before they stop you."*

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Ideology of invocation and imprecation

In this ideology, Driver 1 shows some belief in the powers of the god of thunder and even God by invoking the supposed supernatural forces on Driver 2. This ideology is visible in the following exchanges:

Driver 1: *God punish you. Thunder fire you and your generation. E no go better for you.* (God will punish you and your generation. It will not be well with you).

Driver 2: "Back to sender," Na you wey him head no correct and na you e no go better for. Holy ghost fire burn you and your entire generation, Mumu. There is no peace for the wicked. *(Back to sender. It's you whose head is not correct and it's you whom it will not be well with. Holy ghost fire burn you and your entire generation. Fool!)*.

Driver 1: *This man, e be like say something dey worry you. "Were ni e." (you are mad). No mention God for this matter. No just try me. Yes, I dey use jazz. My jazz is Jesus. Make I tell you, I dey eat flesh and drink blood (referring to the Holy Communion). If na send dey send you, you don jam fire. Devil incarnate. That's how you go about looking for trouble. Shebi you wan die for accident, e go soon happen, Amusu! (witch). (this man, it's like something is wrong with you. Don't bring God into this matter and don't mess with me. Yes, I use jazz, My jazz is Jesus. Let me tell you, I eat flesh and I drink blood. If they sent you (as an agent) you have met your match. Devil incarnate. That's how you go about looking for trouble).*

Driver 2: Back to sender, I reject your evil wishes, accident no be my portion. Na you go die first. Holy ghost fire. I am covered by the blood of Jesus. Na you carry your wintch come my side, *na so so trouble you go dey get today.* Mumu! E no go better for you. *(Accident is not my portion… It's you that came to jam me with your witchcraft, that's how you meet with trouble after trouble today. Fool, it will not be well with you).*

Imprecations are curses or abusive use of language to convey an angry, a rude or hostile attitude towards another person. Imprecations are marked by denunciatory or acerbic comments. The worsening economic situation, in particular, has imbued community members with greater awareness and suspicion of one another's intentions, leading to labeling in order to affirm or reject commonly acceptable meanings in ways that recognize the fleeting nature of most daily interpersonal encounters. Here, the subjects used Pentecostal speak to shape and affirm their social identities. For instance, in this exchange, both parties employed violent Pentecostal prayers to express anger and frustrations, aiming to undermine each other's credibility. **When Driver 2** accused **driver 1** of boasting confidently because of *juju/jazz* (a spell believed among West Africans, that some people who belong the occult possess magical or supernatural power to cast a spell or harm somebody), he was drawing on Nigerian and West African cultural belief in the potency of *juju/jazz* and curses, especially, when they are used against an opponent. The exchange highlights the dynamics of power and defiance, with both parties referencing cultural beliefs and norms. The use of religious language and cultural references further reinforces the subject's identities.

Ideology of Reversal

In Pentecostal warfare prayers, the 'back to sender' mantra is an ideology of reversal. It is used to return whatever is perceived as coming from the enemy's camp to the perceived enemy. It is a defense strategy launched anytime there is a verbal or other forms of threat or attack. The ideology of reversal is visible in the following expressions:

Driver 1: *"Were ni e." … No just try me. Yes, I dey use jazz. My jazz is Jesus. Make I tell you, I dey eat flesh and drink blood (referring to the Holy Communion). If na send dey send you, you don jam fire. Devil incarnate. That's how you go about looking for trouble. Shebi you wan die for accident, e go soon happen, Amusu!*

Driver 2: *"Back to sender," Na you wey him head no correct and na you e no go better for' 'Na you God go punish'. 'Make your evil words backfire', 'No weapon fashioned against me shall prosper' (Accident is not my portion… It's you that came to jam me with your witchcraft, that's how you meet with trouble after trouble today. Fool, it will not be well with you).*

The interpretation and significance of a linguistic expression depend heavily on practical experiences and the context in which it is used. Consequently, when confronted with unexpected verbal hostility, the reaction is often spontaneous, involving a defensive response that rebukes the aggressor and dismisses the negative utterances. Common phrases like **'back to sender,' 'blood of Jesus,' 'Holy Ghost fire,'** and **'I am covered by the blood of Jesus'** are frequently employed, as evidenced in the interactions described in the texts. The prevailing belief is that failing to address such malevolent or negative expressions may result in them becoming a reality.

Identities and representations

Identities are ideas created in people's minds about themselves as individuals, and how others see them as members of social groups, and they are often reflected in descriptions, nomenclatures, idiosyncrasies that help to identify people. Expressions of identities and how they are represented in the interactions include: *Oga*, bastard, Devil incarnate, god of thunder, God, the Holy Ghost, Jesus, *ogogoro* drinker, witch, occult, *jazz/juju*, eating flesh and drinking blood. **Driver 1** addresses **Driver 2** as *Oga,* a polite way of addressing a male member of the Nigerian society, thereby identifying his gender as male. Beyond identifying the gender of **Driver 2**, the **driver 1** represents him as someone who drinks *ogogoro* (local dry gin) early in the morning, and as such an irresponsible man who should not be on the road driving. Driver 2 also tried to ridicule and cast aspersion on the person of Driver 2 by accusing him of being an occult man who engages in witchcraft and uses jazz/juju for protection as well as to intimidate others. Again, other

forms of identities are seen in the Trinity (god, God, the Holy Ghost and Jesus and The Holy communion metaphorically referred to as drinking blood and eating flesh by driver 1). The Blood of Jesus is represented as a protective weapon (shield) against the onslaughts of an enemy while the Holy Ghost fire is represented as an offensive weapon. God is represented as the giver of justice while the god of thunder is represented as vengeful. Both drivers represent one another as an enemy of progress.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the prevalence of Pentecostal expressions in everyday communication, shedding light on the considerable impact of Pentecostalism on sociocultural discourses in contemporary Nigeria. The study observes that Pentecostalism's innovative communication strategies, particularly through mass media, computer-mediated communication, and online platforms, played a vital role in disseminating and sustaining its theology. The adept use of various media resources has not only spread the churches' vernacular culture throughout society but has also allowed the public to adapt and misappropriate these sacred expressions for use at the popular cultural level. This adaptation serves as a coping mechanism for individuals facing diverse social challenges in their everyday lives. Most importantly, it was observed that these expressions do not carry inherent religious meanings but instead reflect the speaker's individual interpretations and communicative goals.

Additionally, the study highlights the influence of the nation's deteriorating economic conditions and social insecurities on the psychological well-being of community members, manifesting in a general sense of distrust, frustration, irritability, anger and suspicion prompting the profuse use of these religious expressions in everyday sociolinguistic interactions among the populace as a coping mechanism. Nigerians believe in the performative power of speech to shape or alter reality. Pentecostalism has introduced and popularized a distinct set of phrases and terminologies within Nigerian sociolinguistic repertoire. Terms such as "anointing," "breakthrough," "binding and casting," "spiritual warfare," "demonic attack," and "divine favor" are commonly used, not just in religious contexts, but in everyday conversation among adherents. This religious lexicon serves to reinforce the power of Pentecostal ideologies, making them a pervasive part of the linguistic landscape. The use of this specialized language can also act as a marker of in-group identity, distinguishing Pentecostals from other social groups. Thus, individuals from various religious affiliations may employ these forms to maintain the tradition of using spiritual idioms to influence reality, without necessarily adhering to their inherent religious connotations.

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