

MOOD, PERSONAL REFERENCE AND POWER IN CRISES NARRATIVES OF SELECTED GOVERNORS OF BENUE STATE

Clara D.S. Vande-Guma

Abstract

This article analyses how the choices of mood, personal reference and power, as outlined within the Systemic-Functional Linguistic theory, shape the narrative about the crisis between farmers and herders in Benue State, North Central Nigeria. Using the discourse analysis approach, the selected utterances about the crisis by the Governors (immediate past and present) are analysed to determine the speakers' choice of mood systems, personal references and their effect on the contextual feature of power. It has been determined through analyses that both speakers utilised the declarative moods copiously in their speeches albeit with varying semantic choices. While Governor Ortom, the Ex-Governor opted for explicit criticism of then President Buhari, the present Governor Alia has focused on factual accounts about the impact of the crisis on the State. The first person is the major feature of personal reference which centralises the identity of the speakers and their roles in determining how the narrative about the crisis is shaped. The choices of mood and personal reference build up to the realisation, in some instances, of unequal power through the assertion of dominance and criticism of the Federal Government and in other instances equal power through

offer of collaboration with the Federal Government and other actors. Furthermore, the findings verify existing postulations that effective language use is vital to successful governance in Nigeria's multilingual and multicultural context. Conclusions indicate that the narrative about the Farmers-herders conflict in Benue State has been shaped majorly by how State actors project their roles in their respective utterances about the conflict.

Keywords: mood, personal reference, power, governance and crisis narrative

Introduction

This article presents a linguistic analysis of how the utterances by Ex-Governor Ortom (during his tenure as Governor) and his successor, the incumbent Governor Alia have shaped the narratives about the conflicts between herdsmen or pastoralist and indigenous sedentary farmers in Benue State, North Central Nigeria. Benue State is in North Central Nigeria, the geopolitical zone that is also identified with the alias the Middle Belt. By 2022, Benue State had a projected population of 6,141, 300 ("Benue State in Nigeria," 2022). The State population has a rich indigenous cultural diversity that comprises multiple ethnic groups namely Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Etulo, Abakpa, Jukun, Akweya, and Nyifon, however, the dominant ethnic groups are Tiv, Idoma and Igede. Although the rural to urban migration within the State is significant, the State still has a significant rural population that is sustained by an agro-based economy, which has been persistently threatened by the recurrence of conflicts between nomadic pastoralists and the indigenous sedentary crop farmers (Kontangora, 2024). The conflict between

nomadic herders or pastoralist and sedentary crop farmers has plagued Benue State including other states in North Central Nigeria since the return to civilian rule in 1999. The crisis has earned its position as a front burner issue at the centre of the sociopolitical experience in the Benue State polity.

The conflict has been at the centre of the topical battleground between the dominant political parties in Benue politics namely the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All People's Congress (APC). Dr. Samuel Ioraer Ortom was elected Governor of Benue State in 2015 gubernatorial elections as a candidate of the APC (www.stears.co/elections); and approximately a year into office, he was confronted with the upheaval of reactions as result of the killings across the State, especially in rural settlements, where the agrarian communities predominantly reside (www.bbc.com/pidgin). The enactment of the Benue Open-Grazing Prohibition and Establishment of Ranches Law (henceforth anti-open-grazing law) in 2017 and the mass burial of the 77 victims killed in the December 31st 2017 (Akwagyiram, 2018) attacks are some of the momentous and epoch-marking events during Ex-Governor Ortom's first four years as Governor of Benue State. In the 2019 elections, he was re-elected Governor on the platform of the PDP, after defecting from the APC in 2018— which had been deemed an off-shoot of the disaffection between Ex-Governor Ortom and the Buhari Presidency over the handling of the crisis in Benue State amongst other issues (Channels Television, 2018). The anti-open-grazing law, herders' attacks and other issues about insecurity was the highlight of campaign promises by candidates of both the PDP and APC (who was Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia) during the campaigns before the 2023 general elections (Charles, 2022). Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia of the APC defeated Mr. Titus Uba, the flag bearer of the PDP,

Ex-Governor Ortom's political party in the March 2023 Benue State Gubernatorial elections to emerge the Governor-elect. On 29th May, 2023, he succeeded Ex-Governor Ortom as Governor of Benue State.

The conflict persists as a topical battleground between political gladiators, in the persona of the immediate past Governor of the State, Dr Samuel Ioraer Ortom and his successor, the incumbent Governor, Reverend Father Hyacinth Iormem Alia – wherein the stances of each is subjected to public scrutiny and judgment. This article discusses how the utterances by these key state actors have shaped the narrative about the crisis. By stance, it is determined based on how the selected state actors express their positions about the crisis in relation to other actors with roles to play in the crisis such as the Federal Government and the herders. The Governor of Benue State, as well as his counterparts in other States of Nigeria, is solely vested with the powers of land ownership, control and management within the State by the Land Use Act of 1978. The law thus juxtaposes the State Governor's status and President's status in matters relating to land within the boundaries of the State; thus, creating room for the intrigues of any geopolitical contests of interests that could occur. The perceived differences in the approaches by Ex-Governor Ortom and his successor, the incumbent Governor Alia accrue to how both state actors had utilized the lacuna afforded by the law: whether to assert dominance, defiance, or deference or to solicit collaboration. Whatever may be their preferred dispositions, it is evident in how they express their views about the crisis, in other words their choice of language.

Literature Review

Language is inextricable from human interaction which is the crux of the human business of living, especially in the context of governance where those entrusted with the power of institutional agency are required to contribute to discourses about topical issues in the public space. According to Ihejirika (2020: 53) “a symbiotic relationship exists between language and governance”; a relationship made feasible because “man is the principal agent of both language and governance”. He further points out that there is the lack of due “cognizance of the bond between language and governance”. This article demonstrates how the symbiosis between language and governance unfolds in the context of the crisis between herders and farmers in Benue State given the powers afforded the Governor by law over land within the State, especially his functioning as “principal agent” of both language and governance could have great bearing on the crisis narrative.

An ineffective approach to managing language use in a multilingual setting can result to frustration, conflicts and underdevelopment. The aforesaid is posited by Akase, Umaru, Amende and Akwashiki (2022: 181) as they use a descriptive approach based on personal observations to describe the importance of “human language” to transformative “good governance”. The linguistic analyses in this article depict how language use influences the narrative about a conflict such as the one between herders and farmers. Whereas the authors’ study addresses language use and governance in a multilingual society, this article uses a linguistic approach to analyze how state actors address the crisis between parties representing different ethno-cultural groups namely the herders who predominantly are Fulani and the sedentary farmers who belong to the ethnic groups indigenous to the State.

Olaoye (2013) has advocated that language education is pivotal to Nigeria's roadmap to education for all (EFA) in Vision 20:20. According to the author, language education could be harnessed by the Nigerian Government as a resource for youth empowerment, economic emancipation and the development of indigenous knowledge base in science and technology. The relevance of this study is its emphasis on language as instrumental to successful realization of goals of governance in the highlighted areas of needs. The author considers language as it relates to multilingualism, multiculturalism and mother tongue education, however, it is important to recognize that language use in multilingual and multicultural societies could extend beyond assigning statuses to different languages to include how government functionaries' pronouncements about issues could influence how their utterances are interpreted across different groups.

The linguistic analyses in the subsequent section also find bearing in Halliday's postulation that a functional relationship exists between language and social structure. Most critical to this article is Halliday's (1978:189) explication that a systematic relationship exists between the semantic system as realized in grammatical structures and "the semiotic structure of the speech situation". According to him, a speech situation is "a social context" which has "a semiotic structure" comprising three variables namely "a field" the topic of the interaction, "a tenor" which is the social relationship between the people involved in the interaction and "a mode", the means through which the interaction takes place. Each of the variables is related to the semantic system as follows: field is realized by experiential meaning (the representational/ referential meaning), tenor, the interpersonal meaning (the reflection of the nature of relationship between the interactants) and mode, the textual

meaning (the organization of message). This article derives its relevance in that it addresses the variable tenor (more precisely power) as instantiated in what the State actors' utterances about the crisis between herders and farmers portend or not for relations with other stake holders namely the Presidency/ the Federal Government and the herders.

Theoretical Framework

The resources used for analyses are drawn from M. A. K. Halliday's Systemic-Functional Linguistic Theory. The Systemic-Functional Linguistics framework for analyzing language models its approach on the recognition that language is deeply enmeshed in the existential matrices encompassing human interaction. The SFL framework programs the description of the linkages of language structure to extra-textual variables and vice versa. This article uses the SFL parameters mood, personal reference and power as key constructs for subsequent analyses because of plausibility the SFL approach offers for explaining how the herders-farmers' crises narratives in Benue State are shaped by the Governors' utterances.

Mood is the grammatical category for how verb forms reflect the speaker's attitude towards the content of his or her utterance. The aforesaid is the dominant notion of mood in numerous existing literatures on English grammar (including amongst many others Quirk and Greenbaum 1973, Lyons 1981, Ndimele 1996, Leech and Svartvik 3rd ed 2002, Declerck, Reed and Cappelle 2006, Akmajian, Demers, Farmer, and Harnish 2008 5th ed, Greenbaum and Nelson 2013, Gupta 2013, and Khomutova 2014). This paper leverages on the notion of mood as a feature of the verb albeit a subscription to the Systemic-Functional Grammar (SFG) approach to mood analysis, wherein the grammatical category is further

depicted as also realizing a pragmatic function as evidenced in Matthiessen and Halliday's (1997 p3) description of MOOD below:

In interacting with one another, we enter a range of interpersonal relationships, choosing among semantic strategies such as cajoling, persuading, enticing, requesting, ordering, suggesting, asserting, insisting, doubting, and so on. The grammar provides us with the basic resource for expressing these speech functions, in the form of a highly generalized set of clause systems referred to as MOOD.

The capitalized MOOD refers to the system for analyzing the realization of mood in clauses. In SFG, mood analysis entails the description of how grammatical structures within a clause configure to express mood. The citation above, also, indicates that mood is treated in the theory as resource for grammaticalizing the "semantic strategies" for creating, sustaining or managing the various "ranges of interpersonal relationships" during human interactions. The SFG notion of mood (capitalized as MOOD) is both grammatical and pragmatic; hence it is deployed in the linguistic analyses of the selected state actors' stance in speech towards the President and herders.

The system of MOOD relates to the categories known as indicative, imperative, affirmative (exclamative and declarative) and interrogative:

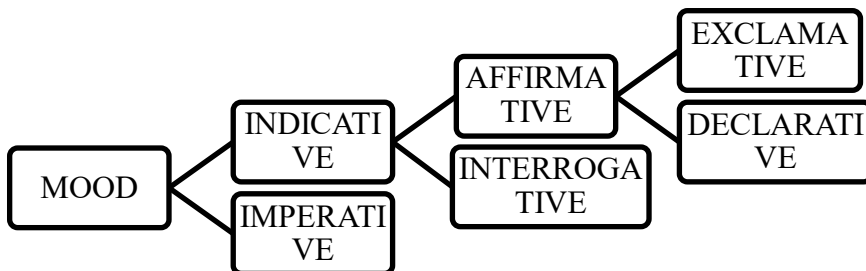


Figure 1 System of MOOD (Adaptation based on Martin 1992, p.44)

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p 14), the indicative mood is “the grammatical category used to exchange information”. The exchange of information can take the shape of statements in declarative form or questions in the interrogative form. They further describe the imperative mood as the grammatical category “used in the exchange of goods and services” in the form of offers and commands (p 165). Martin (1992, p 44-45) adds the “affirmative” to encompass the declarative and exclamative as subtypes of the affirmative which is grouped as a sub-category of the indicative mood.

In addition to treating MOOD as both a grammatical and pragmatic resource, it is also a resource for analysing the **clause as an exchange**. The notion of the clause as an exchange is explained as follows:

The clause is also organized as an interactive event involving speaker, writer and audience... In the act of speaking, the speaker

adopts for himself a particular speech role, and in so doing assigns to the listener a complementary role which he wishes him to adopt in his turn (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 106).

This means that the notion of the clause as an exchange is based on the acknowledgment of the dialogic nature of human interaction. The nature of utterances exchanged is further distinguished as **goods & services (g&s)** and **information**. The exchange of goods & services is realized through offers and commands, while statements and questions are associated with the exchange of information (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004 and 2014). In the realization of statements or questions, “the clause takes the form of a proposition” because its contents “can be argued about – affirmed or denied”; for offers and commands, the clause plays the “semantic function” of a “proposal” which can be accepted or rejected (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p.110-111). Thus, the indicative mood is characteristic of propositions while the imperative mood is typical of proposals.

MOOD is also the system for describing how elements of the lexicogrammar configure to enact the functions of a clause as an exchange. To function as an exchange, the clause comprises two elements: a. Mood and b. Residue. Mood is subdivided into two elements which include “the Subject” usually a nominal element replaced subsequently in the discourse with a pronominal; it is also the element that is replaced by the pronominal in a tag, and “the Finite”, a verbal operator which reoccurs in a tag of a declarative clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 140). The Subject which corresponds to the subject in traditional grammar is, however, conceptualized in SFL theory in functional terms as evidenced in its definition as “the warranty of the exchange”; “the element the speaker makes responsible for the validity of what he is saying”;

“something by reference to which the proposition can be affirmed or denied” (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004, p. 59, p. 117). Residue is “less essential to the arguability of the clause than MOOD components” (Eggs 2004, p. 155). The constituents of Residue include a. the predicator, “the lexical or content part of the verbal group”, b. the complement, “the non-essential participant in the clause” and the adjunct, the “clause elements which contribute additional (but non-essential) information to the clause” (Eggs 2004, p. 155, 157 and 158).

The term personal reference refers to all linguistic expressions used to refer to any being (animate or inanimate) during a speech situation. These include notably linguistic categories such as personal pronouns, nouns and nominals. These items are used to keep track of participants in a text (Eggs 2004). In Halliday and Hasan (1976) personal reference is associated with the roles of interlocutors during communication determined by their relevance. Accordingly, three distinct categories are identified as namely “speech roles” and “other roles” (Halliday & Hasan 1976, p.45). Considered in accordance with the perspective that the speaker assumes a role for himself whilst assigning another role to the listener during an interaction, it means that a speaker’s choice of person is indicative of the role he/she assumes and invariably assigns to the listener or addressee. A sitting Governor’s choice of the 1st person ‘I’, for instance, is indicative of an undertaking to bear the warranty of his proposition or proposal.

Power is one of the components – the others are affective involvement and contact– suggested by Cate Poynton (1985: 78) as “needed for an adequate characterization of the contextual variable tenor”. Tenor constitutes an aspect of the register theory within Systemic-Functional Linguistic theory propounded by M.A.K.

Halliday. According to Halliday and Hasan (1989: 31) the consideration of tenor focuses on “the personal relationships involved”; Eggins (2004, p 63) also explains that tenor refers to “the social role relationships played by interactants”, and points out that “the kind of social role” one plays “in a situation will have an effect on how [one uses] language.” Poynton (1985:77) states that the power of interactants reflects their ability to influence the outcome of a communicative event and their co-interlocutors; this influence she characterizes as “equal” or “unequal”, using the criteria “force”, “authority”, “status” or “experience”. Power as well the other sub variables of tenor is culturally pre-determined significant communicative behaviour. The utterance of ‘I’ by a government official, for instance, marks the weight of authority wielded by the person.

Methodology

This article uses a discourse analysis (DA) approach because the study is language-based. The DA approach uses language as a resource for determining how “language constructs and mediates social and psychological realities” through “the careful examination of talk and texts” (Willig, 2014:341). The DA approach is thus suitable for this research because the data to be analysed is language-based; and the approach could provide insights to how utterances shape the interpretation of the speakers’ intent.

Moreover, the focus on utterances made by the Ex-Governor Ortom and the incumbent Governor Alia is in cognizance of the authority accorded them— previously to the former while he was still in office and currently to the latter— over land within the boundaries of the State by the Land Use Act of 1978. Thus it is deemed that their utterances could have more bearing on shaping the narrative

about the conflict between herders and farmers in the State and reveal their stance towards the Presidency/Federal Government and the herders in the State.

Furthermore, the utterances selected are based on the similarities of their topics and occasion of occurrence i.e both addressed the conflict and proffer solutions for resolving the conflict. To determine the selected state actors' stance, the analysis specifically determines:

1. The mood systems featured in their selected utterances
2. Their choice of personal references

The features of power manifest through their choice of mood and personal references.

Analyses And Discussion

Features of Mood (MOOD), Personal Reference and Power in the Selected Speeches

The analyses in the subsequent subsections identify features of mood (MOOD), personal reference and power in the selected speeches. The analyses determine the occurrence of the featuring of the indicative (more precisely declarative) and imperative mood in the data. MOOD refers to the structural realization of the mood systems (earlier depicted in figure 1) in the selected speeches whereby clauses are parsed into elements identified as subject (**S**), finite (verb) (**F**) and (**Fn**) if negative, predicate (**P**), adjunct (**A**) and complement (**C**). The clause-complex boundaries are marked with triple slashes **///**, clause boundaries are marked with double slashes **//** while rank-shifted clause boundaries are demarcated with double square

brackets [[]]. Each speech comprises clause-complexes, which are numbered. In SFG, the term clause-complex is equivalent for sentence but adopted to distinguish sentences comprising several clauses.

Furthermore, the analyses identify the choices of expressions with which the state actors address other actors involved in or affected by the phenomenon. As mood choices are indicative of speakers' attitudinal stances towards the propositions in their utterances, so their choices of personal references reflect their perceptions of other actors. The nuances resulting from the state actors' choices of mood (MOOD) and personal reference have expected impact on power which is the sub-tenor feature for describing relations between interactants in a communicative event. Accordingly, the analyses address how such nuances are indicative of the state actors' exploration of the lacuna resulting from the Land Use act to assert dominance, defiance or deference, or to solicit collaboration.

Text 1.1 (Governor Ortom's Speech):

This speech was made during a live broadcast on Channels Television, February 11th, 2021.

# Clause-Complex	Clause- Complex	Mood Type
1	/// Our leader(S) is not (Fn) doing (P) well (C). ///	Declarative
2	/// That (S) is (F) why// I (S) am (F) calling (P) on him(C) to step up his action (A) and act faster than the way [[it (S) is (F) being done right now]] (A). ///	Declarative//Imperative
3	/// Declare (F) a State of Emergency on security(C)// so that all resources and all strength (S) would be (F) channeled towards ensuring [[that we (S) have (F) security of lives and property in this country]] (A). ///	Imperative//Imperative
4	4. /// Because for now (A), everything (S) is (F) in disarray// and	Declarative//Declarative

	without security(C), there (S) can (F) be (P) no meaningful development (C). ///	
5	/// And so the Presidency (S) is not (Fn) doing (P) well(C)// that(S) is (F) why// I (S) have (F) to write to him (C), // that (S) is (F) why// I (S) have (F) to eh... open up and publicly declare // that the President (S) must (F) come out and take steps that would redeem his image (C). //	Declarative// Declarative// Declarative//Declarative// Imperative

In the speech, Ex-Governor Ortom makes assessments of former President’s Buhari’s approach to handling the conflict in Benue State and suggestions on how the Ex-President should solve the problem. His assessments are expressed as propositions in full declarative clauses and his suggestions as proposals in the imperative clauses. The opening declaration is an outright condemnation of Ex-President Buhari who is identified as “Our leader” by the Ex-Governor (henceforth the speaker). The noun group functions as the subject (S) of the proposition and its choice could be regarded as a strategy by the speaker to make its referent (Ex-President Buhari) responsible for proving or disproving the validity of the outright condemnation. The verbal operator (is) along with its negator (not)

functions as the finite (**Fn**) element which facilitates the interpretation that the speaker's opinion is absolute. The second clause-complex (that is #2) opens with a subordinate clause in which the (**S**) "that" and (**F**) "is" carry forward the speaker's assessment in the preceding proposition as justification for the command in the main clause. In other words, "that" functioning as the MOOD element (**S**) serves as pronominal for which the entire proposition in the opening clause (i.e. #1) is an antecedent. The justification, thus, still pushes the task of determining the validity to the referent in the opening clause that is Ex-President Buhari while Ex-Governor Ortom only takes direct responsibility for his proposal in the main clause with the self-reference "I am".

The third clause-complex contains two proposals, wherein "declare" functions as the finite element (**F**), while "all resources and all strength" and "would be" function as (**S**) and (**F**) respectively. The Ex-Governor continues to absolve himself of any responsibility in both proposals, first with direct proposal using the imperative, "declare..." wherein the subject (**S**) "you" is implicit and through the 3rd person (**S**) "all resources and all strength" to make a general reference. It is only in the rank shifted clause "that **we** (**S**) **have** (**F**) security of lives and property in this country", that the speaker includes himself as one among the referent of the general 1st person plural (**S**), "We". Thus, associating with those who are expected to benefit from improved actions by the Federal Government rather than playing an active role in bringing about resolution of the conflict.

The blame trend persists in the 4th clause complex. In the 1st and 2nd clauses, therein, the subjects "everything" and "there" depict the chaotic state which the speaker asserts to be the President's fault. In the 5th clause-complex the former, "the Presidency" is the subject

of the speaker's condemnation of "not doing well". Ex-Governor Ortom's condemnation is projected in the subsequent clauses as antecedents for the relative pronoun "that", which function as subordinating clauses articulating justifications for his actions ("writing" and "to open...up and publicly declare") related in the main clauses wherein Ex-Governor projects himself in an active role with the 1st person singular "I". The declarations of condemnation and actions build up to the command in the final clause to the (S) "the President" and the imperative is underscored with the modal "must".

In essence, the dominant mood systems in text 1.1 are the declarative and the imperative moods, for reason that these systems afford the speaker the resources for giving information and making demands. His choice is to pronounce his dissatisfaction with then President Buhari and make demands of him. Thus, it could be deduced that the Ex-Governor Ortom's outright condemnation of Ex-President Buhari depicts his dissatisfaction with the handling of the crisis between crop farmers and pastoralists in the State by the then President Buhari and invariably the Federal Government.

In addition to considering the speaker's choice of mood systems, his choice of speech roles and personal reference underscore how he feels about the subject of his speech. Two speech roles are activated in this communicative event: the roles of the speaker (which is on this occasion active) and the listener (which is passive given that the persons addressed in the speech were not immediately available to respond). As, the speaker, Ex-Governor Ortom opts for criticizing (through the declaratives) and commanding (through the imperatives) the Ex-President Buhari (whose role during the speech is passive by virtue of absence at the occasion of the broadcast).

Ex-Governor Ortom identifies the subject of his criticism in specific terms such as “our leader” “the President” and “the Presidency” with the pronominal “him”, and asserts his position with the 1st person “I” and the collective reference “we”. The choice of second person “you” is implied through the imperatives. The choice of mood, speech roles and personal reference builds up to the nature of power features instantiated by his choice of narrative.

Based on contextual considerations, it can be deduced that the speaker is conscious that his status (then) as Governor is unequal with that of the President Buhari; hence he identifies him as “our leader”, “the President” and “the Presidency”. However, the conscionable reference of the President’s leadership is obfuscated by the outright condemnation of the President in absolute terms. By issuing commands to the President, Ex-Governor Ortom assumes a higher self-justified moral ground and assigns the President a lower status as one who deserves to bear the sole responsibility of not doing enough with the force and authority afforded the office of the President of Nigeria to solve the conflict between herders and farmers in Benue State. Thus Ex-Governor Ortom’s choice of language displays defiance to higher status of the President in governance which has been deciphered as exhibiting a confrontational stance towards the President in the crisis narrative.

Text 1.2 (Governor Alia’s Speech):

The following is an extract from the speech made by Governor Hyacinth I. Alia during an interaction with the paramount ruler of the Tiv people, His Royal Highness Professor James Ayatse Tor Tiv the V on the 31st of May, 2023.

	with security agencies and the Federal Government(A) to ensure the safety of life and property in our state(A). ///	
--	---	--

Governor Alia's orientation in text 1.2 directs focus on the State. The first clause is a factual declaration about the impact of the crisis on "Our State". With "Our State" functioning as subject, the speaker, that is Governor Alia identifies as one among the referents who should bear the responsibility of proving the validity of the facts presented in the statement. The focus on the State is carried further by the pronominal "We", also functioning as (S) in the following clause wherein the focus shifts to making proposals, which itemize promises through the instrumentality of the by-phrase. The subject (S) in the following declarative clause refers to an existential condition in which the speaker asserts ownership with the phrase "our State" and sustains in the subsequent clause with "We" as subject. The final clause articulates a proposal in the declarative mood with the Governor underscoring his ability of enforcement with the 1st person singular "I".

It could be deduced that the narrative in text 1.2 places more emphasis on depicting the conflicts impact on the State and projecting actions to be taken to solve the crisis. Through opting singly for the declarative mood, the speaker describes the effects of the crisis on the State and what he intends to do to resolve the crisis. In other words, the focus is more on describing the situation via statements of facts (see the #1 and #3), expressing his opinions (#4) and intentions via his statements of intent (#2 and #5).

By opting for the predominantly the 1st person, the speaker in text 1.2 places his identity as Governor and the collective identity of the State he governs at the centre of the narrative rather focus on other state actors such as the Federal Government or the President. These terms of personal reference include “our State”, “we” and “I”, “our resolve”, “our resilience”, “our people”, and “our internally displaced persons”. Other terms are mostly in the 3rd person such as “them” and “their ancestral homes” which both refer to the internally displaced persons. Other actors identified in the 3rd person include “security agencies” and “Federal Government”.

The power dynamics emanating from Governor Alia’s choice of mood and personal references are indicative that he has not assumed a higher status nor assigned a lower status to the security agencies or the Federal Government. The expression of commitments to work with other state actors such as “security agencies” and “the Federal Government” plausibly demonstrates the Governor’s preference for collaboration rather than confrontation. The speaker places his position as Governor as focal point in his utterances albeit acknowledging the need to cooperate with the security agencies and the Federal Government. Power in text 1.2 is marked by equal relations between the Governor and the security agencies/Federal Government, on basis of authority, the Governor asserts his authority albeit his cognizance of the potential influence of other state actors namely the security agencies (by virtue of their expertise and force) and the Federal Government of Nigeria (by virtue of its authority).

Conclusion

A governor’s utterances on any topical issue could have phenomenal impact on how the matter is perceived; and thus, be a

truism of the symbiosis between language and governance postulated by Ihejirika (2020). His words bear the force of the agency afforded his office by law and authority. The preceding linguistic analyses determine the veracity of the preceding assertions through using selected parameters of mood (MOOD), personal reference and power in the context of the Systemic-Functional Linguistic theory to describe how the selected Governors' utterances shape the narrative about herders-farmers' crisis within Benue State. On the basis of the analyses, it is determined that text 1.1 makes reprehensive propositions albeit demands while text 1.2 asserts dominance albeit the readiness for collaboration.

The contrasting features observed in text 1.1 and text 1.2 also make plausible Akase et al's (2022) thesis that ineffective language use management could be a hindrance to sound public administration in a multilingual setting as well as Olaoye's (2013) view of the potency of language as resource for managing Nigeria's multiculturalism. The contents of text 1.1 have greater potential of attracting a backlash than text 1.2 due to the explicit content focused on blaming the then President Buhari. In text 1.2, there is no mention of the President, however the structures related to that office namely "security agencies" and "Federal Government" are mentioned in context of a declaration of the willingness to collaborate with other state actors. The relevance of these readings is in the backdrop of contextual considerations: the Fulani ethnicity of the herders and then President Buhari. Text 1.1 does not augur well for managing a crisis between the predominantly Fulani herders and the indigenous farming population. On the other hand text 1.2 asserts the rights of the indigenous farming population but solicit cooperation with external actors.

Beyond the dynamics of impacting the multicultural context of the crisis, discussions also determine that the linguistic features of a texts exhibit a functional relationship with the semiotic features of a speech situation (Halliday 1978). The grammatical features are not autonomous but resources for making meaning in authentic communication instances. The mood systems and personal references in the data have been determined to reflect the speakers' attitude towards other stake holders with roles to play in the crisis narrative: the explicit display of disapproval in text 1.1 and the explicit resolve to seek solutions in text 1.2.

References

- Akase, T., Umaru, J. K., Amende, A. C., & Akwashiki, S. V. (2022). The Issues of language in governance in a multilingual society. *Nasarawa State University Journal of French and Related Studies*, 181-187.
- Akwagyiram, A. (2018). Nigeria holds mass burial for 73 people killed in communal violence <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/nigeria-holds-mass-burial-for-73-people-killed-in-communal-violence-idUSKBN1F02GP/#:~:text=The%20mass%20burial%20took%20place,31> accessed 25th february, 2025
- Burckhardt, T. (2021). *Linguistic diversity and equality within the public administration: issues and challenges*. Research group "Economics, policy analysis, and language".
- Charles, J. (2022). Benue gov: catholic priest, assembly speaker test popularity. <https://punchng.com/benue-gov-catholic-priest-assembly-speaker-test-popularity/> retrieved 25th February 2025
- Declerk, R. . (2006). *The grammar of the English tense system: a comprehensive analysis*. New York and Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Dunn, K., & Neumann, I. B. (2016). *Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research*. USA: University of Michigan Press.
- Eggs, S. (1994). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics 1st edition*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Eggs, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics 2nd edition*. New York and London: Continuum.
- Greenbaum, S. a. (2013). *An introduction to English grammar*. London and new York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

- Gupta, S. (2013). *Current English grammar and usage*. Dehli: Phi Learning Private limited.
- Halliday, M. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotic: the social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M., & Matthiessen, C. I. (2014). *An introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Halliday, M.A.K. Hasan, R. (1989). *Language, context, and text: aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hasan, R. (1996). The nursery tale as genre. In C. D. Cloran, *Ways of saying: ways of meaning selected papers of Ruquaiya Hasan* (pp. 52-72). London and New York: Cassell.
- Iherjirika, R. (2020). Language and governance in Nigeria: a symbiotic relationship. *International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research*, 8(5), 53-59.
- Kontangora, A. (2024). Benue state's farmer-Herder conflict, a major to stability the organisation of world peace. <https://theowp.org/benue-states-farmer-herder-conflict-a-major-threat-to-stability/> retrieved 22nd february, 2025
- Leech, G. a. (2002). *A communicative grammar of English* (3rd ed.). New York and London: Pearson.
- Martin, J. (1992). *English text: system and structure*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Martin, J. R. (2008). *Genre relations: mapping culture*. London: Equinox publishing.
- Martin, J., & Rose, D. (2003). *Working with discourse: meaning beyond the clause*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Matthiessen, C. a. (1997). *Systemic functional grammar: a first step into the theory*.

- Olaoye, A. A. (2013). Towards Vision 20-2020: The Role of Language and Literature in National Development. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* , 3(5), pp. 748-753.
- Poynton, C. (1989). *Language and gender: making the difference*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Quirk, R., & Greenbaum, S. (1973). *A university grammar of English*. New Delhi: Longman.
- Willig, C. (2014). Discourses and discourse analysis. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (pp.341-353). SAGE Publications Ltd
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243>.