GONE ARE THE DAYS OF 'KOLA(NUT)': NEW TRENDS IN LANGUAGE HABITS AND CODING OF CORRUPT PRACTICES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria's profile on corruption among other countries around the world is most alarming. Either reasonably expressed or exaggeratedly painted, Nigeria is one country where corruption has taken roots and has badly affected the cause of national development. This article examines language habits such as metaphoric expressions, performative utterances and slang terms (sometimes accompanied with facial and bodily gestures) which are associated with aspects of corrupt practices in Nigeria. Data for the study were sourced through participant observation and informal interactions with different categories of people to elicit information on the context and actual meanings of the codes. The data were classified into different contexts in line with the pragmatic strategies used by actors for communicative effectiveness. The study underlines the fact that corrupt practices in themselves do not exist in a vacuum; they actually thrive on certain verbal and at times accompanying non-verbal cues. Considering the power of language in human affairs, the article advocates that the language of expressing corrupt practices should be properly investigated by relevant anti-graft agencies in the country through commissioned empirically based studies on the subject with a view to investigating how language aids corruption in the system. In this regard, such bodies would be able to track the nuances with which corrupt practices are coded so as to boost the anti-graft crusade in the country.

Keywords: corruption, language, meaning, Nigeria, performative utterances,

1. Introduction

As language could be deployed for realistic national development scheme, so also could it be manipulated for subversive purposes. One of the aspects of a country's national life where the (mis)management of language is tactfully geared towards satisfying individual or group interests which clash with and, in fact, vitiate national interest is corruption. Issues relating to corrupt practices in Nigeria have been and are still being discussed among individuals, in government circles and in the international community. It has even assumed a religious dimension in that it is felt in certain quarters that corruption is so

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entrenched in Nigeria's national life that it would take only divine intervention to rid the country of the social problem. Such a divine perspective would not catch one unawares when one considers an assessment by Eso (1999) in a collection of essays, *Nigeria's Bumpy Ride into the 21st Century: In-depth Analyses by Experts,* as he titles his own contribution 'Nigeria and Corruption: Till Death Do Them Part'.

If corruption has become, as it were, Nigeria's second nature, issues that have been raised have revolved around the causes, effects, challenges of fighting the scourge and the possible practical solutions to it. More often than not, the issue of language vis-à-vis the communicative modes and processes of expressing corrupt practices in the country have been regrettably, and quite dangerously too, downplayed in national discourse except for some academic research on it. Akindele (2005), while critically analysing corruption and its problems in Nigeria, touches on some of the tactics with which office holders as well as non-office holders engage in corrupt practices, largely by using certain phrases alongside 'delaying tactics in inducing their clients into offering bribes before performing their duties' (Akindele 2005, p.11). The researcher considers such phrases as euphemisms for luring the initially unsuspecting clients into giving bribes. Adegoju (2007) in another study attempts a sociolinguistic analysis of the corruption of language (not the language of corruption per se) that has arisen from the debasement of Nigeria's value system. The researcher identifies and discusses the linguistic elements that Nigerians creatively utilise in expressing the perverted Nigerian world. Adeyanju (2008) attempts to analyse the register of extortion on the Nigerian highway, highlighting from the lexico-semantic perspective the performative acts and polite strategies used to extort money by men/women of the Nigeria Police from road users.

The interesting focus of each of the research efforts highlighted above notwithstanding, the present study is significant in a number of respects. First, it draws linguistic resources not only from English but also from some Nigerian indigenous languages, mainly Igbo and Yoruba, as well as Nigerian Pidgin English. Besides considering the general pool of the language habits associated with corrupt practices, it focuses on some slang terms among the youths in configuring some sharp practices and also draws attention to technical or bureaucratic terms used in the corporate world as well as vital government

departments/agencies to cover up corrupt practices. Finally, it attempts to categorise the linguistic habits analysed in line with their pragmatic functions in utterances.

2.   Corruption in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

Defining corruption is somewhat a difficult task in that its definition has continued to be clouded by value preferences, differences in philosophies, cultural differences, and more importantly, differences in acceptable norms in nations around the world. This variation in values and acceptable norms which are culture-specific is what Ochulor, Metuonu & Asuo (2011) call the 'cultural background theory'. To them, what counts as corruption in different cultures may depend on the beliefs and moral orientation of the cultures. Therefore, Yagboyaju (2008) opines that most definitions of the term corruption are often predicated on bribery. What can be inferred from his position is that corruption goes beyond bribery.

Nye (1967) observes that although it is commonplace for corruption to be particularly tied to the act of bribery, it is a general term covering misuse of authority as a result of considerations for personal gain, which need not be monetary. Similarly, Aluko (2002, p. 394) contends that corruption includes 'nepotism, favouritism, bribery, graft and other unfair means adopted by government employees and the public alike to extract some socially and legally prohibited favours'. To Scott (1972), corruption involves a deviation from certain acceptable standards of behaviour. Khan (1996) describes corruption as an act which deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private-regarding motives such as wealth, power or status.

Ochulor, Metuonu & Asuo (2011), in their study of corruption in contemporary Nigeria, argue that a lot of people define corruption only from the perspective of people in public offices and position of authority. On the contrary, they argue that corruption should be properly defined to incorporate everybody who does or desires to do things which are considered synonymous with corruption. Thus, in their view, any definition of corruption that excludes the ordinary common man/woman is unacceptable. Corruption definitely exists in different forms, as Omotola (2007) considers the case of intellectual corruption, which connotes the perversion of intellectual responsibilities, be it deliberately or not, for personal gains at the expense of the system.

One strand that runs through almost all the definitions of corruption given so far is that it is a deviation from acceptable standards or norms in any given society. For the purposes of this study and in view of the different modes and manifestations of corruption in Nigeria, Otite's definition is adopted as our working definition. Otite (1986) defines corruption as the perversion of (the) integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour, or moral depravity and it involves the injection of additional but improper transactions aimed at changing the moral course of events and altering judgement and position of trust by people. In this working definition, any action or behaviour where a public office holder or an individual seeks to gain or have personal advantage at the expense of public interest will be taken as corruption or seen as a corrupt practice. Contextualising corruption in Nigeria, Aluko (2002) argues that corruption covers such acts as: use of one's office for pecuniary advantage; gratification; influence peddling; insincerity in advice with the aim of gaining advantage; less than a full day's work for a full day's pay; tardiness and slovenliness. In this sense, this description takes care of the different modes and manifestations of corruption as seen in Nigeria on a daily basis and takes care of all categories of people.

Not too many Nigerians will dispute Nigeria's position on the ranking table of the Berlin-based Transparency International when it came as the most corrupt nation of the world in 2000. Although successive governments in Nigeria have tried to tackle corruption so as to bring about the much-needed development in the country, the efforts have not really achieved the desired results. Corrupt practices thrive with impunity in political circles, on Nigerian highways by members of the Nigeria Police, at border points by officers of the Nigerian Customs Service, in prisons by officers of the Nigeria Prison Service, in offices by government officials, in the educational institutions by both students and teachers, in law courts and the entire judicial system, etc.

For a very long time now, Nigeria has consistently been listed as one of the ten most corrupt nations of the world by Transparency International. Apart from impacting negatively on the country's image and the integrity of her citizens abroad, some observers also believe that this has also slowed down Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Nigeria. For instance, Transparency International ranks nations based on the weighted average of Corruption Perception Index (CPI). The overall index assesses the degree to which public officials and politicians in

particular countries are involved in such practices as accepting bribes, deliberately delaying duties to get bribed, taking illicit payments, fast-tracking public procurement unduly, embezzling public funds, and completely diverting funds meant for projects or the procurement of facilities to private purposes, etc. All these rampant sharp practices regrettably appear 'normal' to an average Nigerian. Commenting on the situation, Aluko (2002, p. 393) states that 'the most single cankerworm that has eaten into the fabric of our society today is the problem of corruption. And this has so pervaded the nation that most Nigerians are corrupt in one way or the other'.

As is seen in the way offenders and suspects are treated in Nigeria, it is obvious that the agencies to deter corruption are not only weak, but are also themselves corrupt. These agencies are mainly the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and Code of Conduct Bureau. It is equally worrisome that some people who are accused of corruption are from time to time courted and honoured by communities, religious bodies, educational institutions, etc. It has been argued that a major setback to the anti-graft crusade in Nigeria is the presidential pardon granted by President Goodluck Jonathan to the former governor of Bayelsa State and the president's assumed political godfather and benefactor, Chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigha who was arrested, tried and convicted for siphoning large sums of state funds and for money laundering.

Some people have argued that this development, among others, is a way of institutionalising corruption in Nigeria. In more specific terms, some of the fundamental factors that engender corrupt practices in less developed countries, including Nigeria are: (a) great inequality in wealth distribution; (b) political office as the primary means of gaining access to wealth; (c) conflict between changing moral codes; (d) the weakness of social and governmental enforcement mechanisms; and (e) the absence of a strong sense of national community (Dike 2002). Hence, corruption has caused unquantifiable damage to the social, economic, and political development of Nigeria.

3.   Methodology

The data used in this study are composed of language habits on aspects of corrupt practices in Nigeria. The data were gathered for a period spanning two years between October 2011 and December 2013. They

were sourced from interactions with different categories of people in the Nigerian society. The subjects from whom the researchers elicited information included students of tertiary institutions, civil society members, human rights activists, civil servants, journalists and highly placed officials of corporations in the private sector. Apart from direct interactions with these categories of people, the researchers also interacted with people in informal settings such as pubs and other relaxation centres where people would unwittingly laugh away national follies manifested in corrupt practices.

Some data were also collected from cartoons in national newspapers and magazines, live programmes on radio and television addressing the issue of corruption, and home video clips where the issue of corruption is raised mostly in humorous terms. Finally, some data were sourced by the researchers as participant observers at different settings in the academic community, business world, in government circles and everyday normal interaction situations. Both researchers visited different cities for the collection of the data and compared the language practices across settings and subjects in order to streamline the codes. With this attempt at synthesising the data, the researchers were able to structure them in an interpretable manner.

Thereafter, the data were carefully studied and classified according to the contexts where particular language habits thrive mostly and also in line with the pragmatic functions of the utterances. Some utterances which were rendered in Nigerian indigenous languages (Igbo and Yoruba) and Nigerian Pidgin English are still retained in their original forms for authenticity although translated to English in the course of analysing the data for communicative purposes. The data that were recorded on tape in informal interactions were carefully transcribed and thematically marked so as to know the aspects of corrupt practices they address. Aspects of the country's national life that the data reflect are politics, civil service administration, security system, tertiary education system and the corporate world.

4. 'Settlement Galore': Language Habits of Corrupt Practices in Nigeria

The language of corruption in Nigeria is replete with a lot of expressions and coinages. While some are general and have become clichés, others are specific and striking because of their recent evolvement. Among the notable expressions which have permeated the corrupt world of

the country are 'settlement' – any form of gratification, be it monetary or material; 'brown envelope' – packaged money for inducement; 'bottom power' – female influence on a male to get whatever is desired; 'kola(nut)' – inducement either in monetary or material terms; 'Ghana-must-go' – massive money mopped up for influencing political decisions'; 'nothing goes for nothing' – blatant request for inducements; among others.

In the present study, we analyse the language of corruption by attempting to categorise some language habits associated with aspects of corrupt practices in Nigeria under the following headings: blatant requests, cunning/subtle elicitations, proverbial/metaphoric cues and technical/bureaucratic nonce-formations. It is germane to point out right away that these categorisations are not mutually exclusive, as the pragmatic functions of some language habits could straddle two or more categories.

4.1   *Blatant Requests*

More often than not when participants are familiar with each other probably because the other party is a regular visitor to an office or an establishment, it becomes easy for the initiating party to come out openly in seeking gratification. Therefore, when, for instance, one gets to an establishment, the man or woman at the duty post even when he or she has not been told one's mission could just put it straight to the visitor: 'Glad you are here; I can rest assured my lunch/transport fare is fixed for today'. Upon such a warm welcome and an expression of sheer exaltation or compliment, the visitor would be undoing himself or herself if the request for help is taken for granted. All he/she could do is first of all present the mission and assure the speaker that upon the completion of the task, something would be done.

It is interesting that reference to 'lunch' or 'transport fare' in the above expression does not necessarily mean that what the visitor would give would be equivalent to what is requested. The expressions are just linguistic markers for the benchmark of what is expected, as the giver may choose to do more depending on his/her capability or the degree of being impressed with what has been done. In fact, the level of confidence reposed in the visitor or the trust the speaker professes to have in him/her is underlined with the speaker's emotional state expressed in the adjective 'glad' and the verb 'rest assured'. These linguistic markers go a long way to show that there is a psychological

perspective to seeking gratification, as the addressee is already boxed to a corner and cannot afford to belittle his/her status by declining to offer something.

In some cases when the speaker does not want to open up or give clear indicators as to the form of gratification desired, an open request may be presented in Yoruba thus: '*Ẹ má a rí mi/wa kẹẹ to lọ o*' (You would see me/us before you go). 'Seeing' in this sense is metaphoric in that it implies that after the deal has been done, something would be given in return as compensation. Apart from the metaphor of 'seeing', the choice between the use of the pronominal element 'me' and 'us' could be stylistic. If the speaker intends to give the impression that performing the task goes beyond his/her desk, the pronominal 'us' would be favoured, thereby implying that the addressee would have to give something worthwhile that would be able to go round all the 'agents' that would get the task done. Sometimes, the speaker could use 'us' to save face or as an evasive linguistic marker which tends to shift the request from the individual to the collective.

While the examples given so far would come from the man or woman at the duty post who wants to collect something, the reverse is the case in the corporate world where it is the company or establishment that is ready to give something out to the contact person, in the name of doing 'public relations' ('PR'). When a company seeks to win a contract among other competitors, the management often has to 'lobby' or 'woo' the anchor person who could facilitate the deal. One of the expressions which are used as a form of open request is 'Name your next car'. While this expression appears to be imperative, it is actually seductive in that it would take a disciplined mind to reject such a tempting offer, considering that some other offers could have been coming from different quarters.

It is not only in terms of material possession that offers could be made. Offers cover holidaying not just at serene tourist centres in the country but other alluring tourist attractions around the world, as the addressee could be given a 'blanket' offer, as in: 'Where would you want to spend your next holiday?' This expression is not just an interrogative to which an answer is required; it is indeed a performative utterance with the illocutionary force of an avowed commitment to the addressee's cause or a pledge to meeting his/her needs or challenges or making a life-long dream come to pass. It is implied from this performative utterance that no matter what the addressee's taste is,

the addresser is poised not to fail or disappoint in the deal. Sometimes, the offer is put blatantly to the addressee: 'We make it worth your while'. This statement too is not just an act of saying; it is indeed a performative utterance which is an act of promise that whatever the addressee demands or wishes would be done to his or her satisfaction.

4.2   Cunning/Subtle Elicitations

In the discourse of engaging in corrupt practices on the highways, police officers have certain subtle expressions with which they seek offers from private vehicle owners who are supposedly better placed in society than they are. In making such cunning requests, a common Pidgin English expression 'You no chop remain?' (Have you no left-over?) could be used. Apart from this, the expression 'Anything there (for the boys?)' could also be used to ask for gratification. Furthermore, the expression 'Pure water is not too small' is sometimes used to seek gratification. What is interesting about these requests is the way the officers try to whip up sentiments, giving the impression that even though they are gainfully employed, they still cannot feed well.

In fact, their attempt to show subordination to the would-be benefactors is reflected in their not minding any left-over from the abundance that the benefactors supposedly have. Actually, reference to left-over here is metaphoric in that it gives the impression that nothing will be too small if offered. Closely related to the idea of not minding the left-over is the reference to 'pure water'. In the Nigerian context, what is literally referred to as 'pure water' is water packaged in sachets which costs far less than table water. In the sense in which it is used here, it assumes a metaphoric dimension, implying that what is almost as worthless as 'pure water' (because it is affordable even to the lowly) would not be rejected if offered. Reference to 'the boys' is another pointer to psychological appeal of getting from the superior, as he/she would feel complimented.

In some instances, the officers could play upon exchanging pleasantries with the road users by using expressions such as 'How was your journey, Sir/Ma?'; 'Happy weekend, Sir/Ma!' or 'Your car is fine, Sir/Ma'. While one may want to appreciate the officers for being friendly, the accompanying facial expressions and bodily gestures most often betray their sincerity. Thus, when any of the veiled entreaties do not seem to achieve the desired goal, they do not hesitate to open up thus: 'Oga, (master/madam) your boys are on the road o ('o' is an

affective marker)!' This expression is not a declarative statement that seeks to give information but a performative utterance that is actually deployed to place a demand on the addressee.

The place signifier 'on the road' injected into the utterance is a rhetorical attempt to arouse the emotions of the addressee; for 'the road' is considered to be a place of discomfort where the officers would be exposed to the harsh conditions of the elements and, therefore, would not enjoy the luxury of air-conditioner as the addressee. It is commonplace for them to lament sometimes thus in Pidgin English: 'Oga (master/madam), this sun dey too much *o*!' (Master/Madam, this sun is damn scorching), thereby seeking that something be offered to cushion its adverse effect. In some instances, such a metaphoric reference to the road may conjure the fact that while the road user is driving safely, it is some individuals (the law enforcement agents) that make it happen or that the police officers are the ones that not only ward off criminal tendencies on the road but are also prone to the attack of die-hard armed robbers who constitute a menace to the safety of Nigerian roads. Hence, they (the law enforcement agents) need to be appreciated in whatever way the addressee may wish.

4.3   *Proverbial/Metaphoric Cues*

There could be instances when the speaker may sound metaphoric, having it at the back of his or her mind that the addressee would effectively decode the meaning given certain contextual considerations. For instance, when one needs to resolve an issue in an establishment, the man or woman at the duty post may ask: 'Do you want express?' 'Express' is used in a metaphoric sense here to mean that the processing of the matter could be done in such a way that all protocols that could delay the results could be bypassed. While the addressee is confronted with this seeming question which is actually an invitation for inducement, the speaker would follow up with another metaphoric utterance to ensure the case is pushed through the 'express' mode. Therefore, in Igbo, the common expression '*Gba oku*' (Flash your torch) or '*Gbaa gburugburu*' (Run around to look for something) could be used.

In the first utterance, the imagistic expression of flashing the torch is striking. The impression is given here that the task to be done is shrouded in darkness or that the machinery to set the work in motion is somewhat grounded. Therefore, when the torch is flashed,

the light it produces could either be an agent of illumination or the grease that will oil the machine for efficiency. In the second instance, the metaphor of running around derives from the situation in which the addressee would have to seek help from others if he or she is financially incapacitated. This second utterance which appears to be an imperative is indeed a compulsive persuasive utterance which leaves the addressee with no alternative if he or she is to get the work accomplished.

This situation paints the scenario of an extreme case of corrupt practices where the desperate individual would stop at nothing in order to ensure that the addressee would give gratification. It could be that the addressee is even an applicant who cannot afford to part with anything but the pressure being mounted on him or her suggests that lack is not enough a reason not to give gratification, as there would always be friends or acquaintances who could come to his or her aid. Such an extortionist tendency is what is popularly known in Yoruba as '*agbalọwọmeri*' (one who extorts the have-not'). In fact, in the present dispensation, if the offer for inducement is from a superior to a subordinate, the callous expression used to tell off the addressee that is not ready to yield is: 'You are on your own' which is often shortened to 'On your own' with the acronym (OYO) which incidentally is the name of one of the states in south-western Nigeria. The utterance could also be interpreted as a performative which threatens the addressee that he/she stands the risk of forfeiting what is desired should he/she take any chances.

In some other situations when the addressee is perceived to be well to do, he or she is not asked to run around for anything. Rather, an entreaty is made that he or she should give out from the abundance he/she possesses. So, in Yoruba, the expressions '*Ẹ jẹ kó gbọn silẹ*' (Let the crumbs filter down) or '*Ẹ ju nnkan silẹ* (Drop something) could be used as metaphoric invitations to inducement. The Igbo equivalent of the invitation to 'drop something' is '*kpokom*' which is an onomatopoeic utterance usually accompanied with the bodily gesture (hand description) of the act of dropping something. Other similar expressions in Yoruba are '*Ẹ pin desalẹ o*' (Let it flow to the rank and file) and '*Ẹ ma da jẹ o*' (Do not monopolise the largesse). There is also a proverbial expression which is deployed in the discourse of corrupt practices in Yoruba: '*Ẹ domi siwaju kẹ le tẹlẹ to tutu*' (Pour water upfront so that you walk on a wet ground). What is peculiar to all these

metaphoric expressions is the fact that the speaker tends to be evasive in making demands for gratification, as nothing specific is mentioned to be given out and received. What is incontrovertible is that given the shared knowledge or common ground or participants' beliefs in the context of interaction, the addressee would be able to deduce that either monetary or material gains are requested by the speaker for the work to be facilitated.

For students in tertiary institutions who perpetrate some sharp practices, there are certain metaphoric expressions that they have devised. Such expressions may be described as slang terms which are intelligible only to the class that engages in the act or within the campus environment. When students fraudulently have access to examination questions ahead of the examination date, the questions are referred to as 'expo', '*odu*', '*orijo*'. 'Expo' appears to be a clipped form of the word 'exposed'; '*odu*' is an allusion to '*Ifa*', the Yoruba system of divination with the verses of the literary corpus known as '*Odu Ifa*'. '*Odu Ifa*' contains spiritual knowledge that is sacrosanct and is, therefore, trusted for revealing divine knowledge-cum-secrets from the mysterious world. 'Orijo' appears to be a coinage from the word 'original'.

All of these metaphoric expressions point to the fact that the leaked questions that the students claim to have laid their hands on must be 'direct from source', that is, candidates cannot afford to discard them as fake documents being circulated by charlatans. In a situation where such candidates do not just rely on the leaked questions to prepare for examinations but actually go into examination halls with prepared answers, such documents that bear the answers are referred to as 'microchips'. While this expression is metaphoric in a sense in that the answers would normally be compressed or condensed as the case may be on a small sheet of paper, hence the use of the word 'micro', it is also a technical term that is borrowed from the register of computer engineering. As an aiding device, a microchip is a small semiconductor used to relay information through specific electrical characteristics. In the context of cheating in the examination hall, the microchip becomes the channel used for relaying already prepared and smuggled-in questions into the examination hall.

Because such an act is contrary to established rules and regulations, candidates who engage in them are quite aware of the repercussions should they be caught in the act. Therefore, they tend to

mystify the act because they know it is not what could be displayed in the open. In Yoruba, the expressions '*gbe eegun*' (robe the masquerade for performance) and '*rodan*' (wield the magic wand) are used metaphorically. Finally, if they still need to follow up their despicable acts by offering gratifications in any form to the course lecturers so that they could have their desired grades after all, the common expression used in Pidgin English is 'blocking', as it could be said that they need to 'block a course'. 'Blocking' is used metaphorically here to suggest perversion of standards in one's favour such that the true picture or assessment of the situation is not made open but skewed.

4.4   *Technical/Bureaucratic Nonce-formations*

The verbal cues that are discussed here are mostly used in the corporate/bureaucratic world where a lot of corrupt practices are engaged in by staff of establishments but are explained away in bureaucratic or technical terms. The first word that comes to mind is 'motivation'. Motivation is a common term used in business, sport, psychology, education, literature, human resource management, human behaviour and the likes. While there may be different postulations about motivation as a theory particularly in psychology, the sense in which it is used in the corporate (business) world in Nigeria is intriguing. Motivation as used in engaging in corrupt practices has nothing to do with giving the staff the incentives to work with for efficiency; it is directed at a class of people known as 'contact persons' with whom business is to be done.

So, when the expression 'motivating contact persons' is used, it suggests inducing them to enable the company or establishment to achieve its business goal(s). 'Motivation' could actually come in the form of a Greek gift as bait, employment given to a relation either on a contract basis, internship or absorption of the relation as a corps member to serve for one year on the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme, which every Nigerian young graduate mandatorily undergoes. In a bid to reach out to such contact persons, another term that is used is 'social networking' which is actually a euphemism for inducing them. To ensure the contact persons are not lured by other competitors, the expression 'close circuiting/monitoring/marking' is used to keep in constant touch not just by way of ordinary communication but by constant inducement.

One of the ways of 'close circuiting' is what is generally known as 'keeping a client contact event calendar'. It is a term used to monitor

the personal social engagements of the contact person in the form of birthday celebration for self, spouse or children, wedding anniversary and the likes. What normally happens is that on the day of the event, a gift (an inducement) is sent down and labelled 'From all of us at XYZ Investments'. Another type of inducement could be in the form of what is called 'cold call' which could be virtual or physical. 'Cold call' could come in the form of an unsolicited visit, night out to talk over a bottle of beer or wine, or sending of recharge cards. While these inducement apparatuses are material, there is one which engages humans. Some companies hire Business Development Executives (BDE), mostly young female graduates for whom male contact persons would fall easily at the presentation of any business proposal. What all of these expressions used so far suggest is that in the corporate world in Nigeria a lot of business transactions could be carried out without serious considerations for merit. It is the establishment or the firm that can 'motivate' the contact person the most that wins the contract.

In the bureaucratic set-up, especially in the budgeting office of the country, certain verbal cues are used to perpetrate and sustain corrupt practices. In a bid to blow the budget out of proportion so that excess money could be diverted for extra-budgetary allocations, there is a euphemistic expression that is used to trivialise the criminal act of inflating the budget. So, the term 'over-padding' is used to cover up siphoning government resources which accrue as excess budget into private pockets. Besides this fraudulent practice, after budgeting, another corrupt practice could be perpetrated in the name of 'warehousing'. This is the term used to divert the budgetary allocation for a definite purpose into the account of a parastatal under the supervision of a particular ministry. From the account where the money has been 'warehoused', it would then become very easy for it to be misappropriated since the officials of the ministry could argue that the budget was diverted to an area of need within the ministry.

Closely related to this sharp practice is that of 'sorting' where the diverted money instead goes into private accounts. What is normally done is that when capital projects are to be executed, officials of the ministry deliberately beat down the quotation, knowing full well that the budgeted amount would not be enough to execute the project. Meanwhile, the money would still be withdrawn and then deposited in a private account for a period known as 'nine months' tenor' so that the interests accrued over the period would be shared by the collaborators.

At the expiration of nine months, the money would then be returned to government coffers with no interests. Such a sharp practice would normally go unnoticed because nine months is a period not covered by auditing procedures.

Finally, 'virement' is also a term used fraudulently, as money is taken from a surplus account and deposited in a deficit account, ultimately allowing for expenditure which has not been approved expressly in the budget. Meanwhile, before the money is vired, certain projects would have been marked for execution with the contractor given the leverage to spend under the guise of 'authority to incur expenditure' (AIE). Such an authority gives room for the contractor and the accomplices to build all kinds of items into the expenditure which were not budgeted for in the original account from where the money has been vired.

5.   Conclusion

In this study, the researchers have attempted to provide a linguistic perspective to the nagging question of corruption that has decimated the Nigerian system. The study has shown in particular that corrupt practices in themselves do not exist in a vacuum; they actually thrive on the wings of certain verbal cues which are ingeniously crafted to suit the goals of perpetrators in given settings. The linguistic perspective to the vexed issue of corruption which the present study addresses, therefore, raises certain fundamental questions about the crisis of development in Nigeria and the efforts made so far to fix the problems confronting the country.

The analysis shows that perpetrators of corrupt practices, particularly in the lower rungs of the ladder who should be facilitators for effective running of government machinery as public servants have the issue of survival instinct constant in their utterances. The recurrent decimal is 'what to eat', which suggests that there is poverty in the land. To check corrupt practices, therefore, government does not just need to re-orientate the people; it has to address the problem of poverty. For those that are well placed and yet engage in corrupt practices, it is not enough to charge them to have a rethink or renew their sense of patriotism. Relevant anti-graft agencies in the country really need to probe the language of administration so as to be able to plug the linguistic channels through which corrupt practices virtually go unnoticed. In this sense, relevant sections of the constitution which

do not keenly address the language of corruption should be fine-tuned so that it is not only corrupt practices that are focused on but also the verbal cues which tend to cover up the unpatriotic attitudes of the people. Given the delimitation of this present study which does not cover empirical verification, there is the need to engage in commissioned empirical studies on the language of corruption in the system so as to have a holistic assessment of the appropriation of language in perpetrating corrupt practices.

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