Contextualizing Language as a Tool of Value Degeneration: A Sociolinguistic Study of Language of Corruption in Nigeria

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Abstract
Corruption has traversed all lengths and breadth of the Nigerian nation. The corrupt practice is mostly ornamented with language. The present study aims to ascertain the linguistic codings used to mask corruption in educational, civil service, political and social settings. Data for the study were collected from notable online newspaper and media sources, which include: *The Vanguard, The Guardian, The Punch, This Day, The Nation, The Premium, Sahara Reporters, Naira land* and others published between 2015 and 2021. The data from online sources were complemented by focused group discussions, unstructured interviews and participant's observation method. The study adopted a qualitative research design and a random sampling method in selecting a total of hundred respondents from the five states that make up the southeast zone in Nigeria. The paper anchored its analyses on the conceptual model of Sapir-Whorf relativity framework and the analyses were done using interpretative textual analysis model. Findings from the study reveal that using words, phrases and expressions which are reflected in coinages, code-mixing, reduplication, metonymy, metaphor, slang, borrowing, pidginization, lexical reversals and creative usages to mask corruption have far-reaching effects on national development. The paper recommends that in considering the fight against corruption, the government should pay attention to the linguistic embellishments that act as the lifeline of the negative practice.

Keywords: language, corruption, national development, Nigeria, value system and relativism

Introduction

The issue of corruption has generated a lot of scholarly interest given its rising cases which are expressed mainly through language. Language remains the principal means through which a group of people expresses the totality of their being, beliefs, and historical experiences. Their specificity, thoughts, and understanding of their world is largely reflected in their language use and specific semantic changes. Language therefore becomes a vehicle through which thoughts are constructed and expressed simultaneously to achieve the intended purpose of communication. Hence, an individual's experience, behaviour and culture are expressed in the language he or she speaks. The point is made clearer by Jacob Mey citing Treicher (1989) who expresses that language is an instrument that we use in 'organizing the world and constructing our culture' and in that case, language no longer serves as the 'transparent vehicle of content or as the simple

reflection of reality, but itself participates in how that content and reality are formed, apprehended, expressed, and transformed' (2001, 307). Corroborating the position, Jerome Bruner posits that the symbolic systems individuals use in constructing meanings are already deeply entrenched in their culture and language (1990,111). The system helps the user recognize his linguistic world and record his mental activity (cognition) and use them in social and communicative activities.

Apparently, the language system endorsed by members of a linguistic community influences their cognition, behaviour, psychology and the generality of their being either positively or negatively. According to Curtis Hardin and Mahzarin Banaji, (1993, pps 277-308), results of findings of linguistic relativity hypothesis have shown evidence of effects of language on the speakers' cognition. When linguistic colourations are employed in a manner that bespeaks of a deliberate attempt to manipulate language for corrupt and fraudulent purposes, the concomitant result is tacit endorsement and unchallenging acceptance of corrupt practices. Expression of corrupt practices in the language of 'moral obligation' affects the perception and cognition of the language users about the anomalous act. In Nigeria, most corrupt behaviour and practices have been coloured with language. Such colourations present the depraved act in a glorious outlook.

The present paper seeks to find out the linguistic codings that have been tactically employed to reconstruct corrupt behaviour in Nigeria and the implications of such linguistic colourations of corruption in the overall national development of Nigeria.

Previous Studies on Language and Corruption and Problem Identification
Some scholarly works on language and corruption in different settings within and outside the clime are relevant to the present study. These works include Bassey Ekpenyong and Victor Bassey (2014), who studied the language of corruption and anti-corruption in Nigeria. The researchers drawing their data from popular written and creative literature applied lexico-semantic descriptive model to examine how Nigerians refer to corruption and anti-corruption. Findings from their study reveal that Nigerians employ many lexical features, including gradable synonyms, collocations, metaphors, idioms, clichés and coinages, to portray corrupt practices. In like manner, (ADEGOJU 2007) investigates the corruption of language and Nigeria's debased value system. The study draws inference from the coinage 'Naija' and acknowledges that the depravity of Nigeria's social order is alarming and unhealthy for national development. Also, in their contribution, Cecilia Timayi and Aishatu Yero (2015) view the English language as a point of convergence and a tool for building a corrupt-free Nigeria. The work holds that the English language is a major unification tool which has the potential of amalgamating Nigeria's varied positive norms and value systems to achieve a corrupt-free Nigeria. Similarly, (AGBEDO 2012) examines 'verbal carpentry' as language of political corruption in Nigeria. The paper concludes that to give the English language its rightful place in Nigeria, political leaders should strive to use the language with integrity and not as a weapon of mass deception that violates and insults the sensibilities of the people.

Beyond the shores of Nigeria, several studies have also been carried out on language and corruption. In looking at the discursive construction of corruption

in Ghanaian Parliamentary discourse, Kwabena Sarfo-Kantankah (2018) discovers that corruption among the parliamentarians in Ghana is a huge systematic social canker that hinders socio-political and economic development of the country. The paper suggests that stronger measures and more formidable parliamentary commitments are needed to fight corruption. More so, Gudeta Kebede (2013) reviews political corruption from the political and economic perspectives in Ethiopia. The work holds that perpetuation of political corruption is the major reason for the truncation of the country's democratization process and monopolization of the country's economy among other reasons. In looking at Police Officers' perception of corruption in Zimbabwe, Tapfuiwa Katsinde (2020), employs Bourdieu's theory of habitus (1977) to analyse the responses of sixty-four police officers. The study reveals that corrupt people are usually the rich, the middle class, top politicians or top management.

Evidently, the studies mentioned above provide insights to the present study. However, the present study tries to fill the gap observed in the previous studies. Other works studied corruption in a single setting but the present study attempts to investigate how language has been contextualized and manipulated to promote corruption in the educational, civil service, political and social sectors in Nigeria.

Corruption: A Conceptual Construct
Corruption occurs in different shades, making it difficult to find a definition that will encompass the different forms. However, scholars have attempted to define corruption from varied viewpoints. Robert Klitgaard (1998, 3) sees corruption as the misuse of office for unofficial ends and includes bribery, embezzlement, extortion, nepotism, fraud, influence peddling and the use of speed money which is money paid to government officials to speed up their consideration of a business matter falling within their jurisdiction. Toeing the same line of argument, Lipset, S. and Lenz, G. (2000, 112) view corruption as efforts made to gain wealth or power through illegal means. For A. Ndaliman and M. Auwalu (2011,108), corruption is any act that runs contrary to ethical, legal, legitimate, right, positive and moral standard expected of members of a particular society. From the positions of these scholars, corruption constitutes acts that are in contradiction to the expectation of established moral standard in any community for personal gains. In looking at the term wholistically, Nasir El-Rufai (2003, 2) holds that corruption covers a range of social misdemeanors. According to him, it includes but not limited to fraud, extortion, embezzlement, bribery, nepotism, influence peddling, bestowing of favour to friends, rigging of elections, abuse of public property, the leaking of government secret, sale of expired goods to the public and the use of public resources for personal gains among others. For the purpose of this paper, corruption is seen as all behaviours that run contrary to the moral expectations of members of a society and the abuse of entrusted powers by individuals in positions of trust to achieve personal objectives.

Corruption in Nigeria: An Overview
Corruption in Nigeria is an all-pervading phenomenon that has been deeply entrenched in the Nigerian system.   It has enthroned unvarnished dishonesty, moral recklessness, unguided roguery, social retrogression and prevalent disorder

in the nation. Corruption has not only destroyed the social structure but has discouraged hard work and eroded the nation's value system. Decrying the effect of corruption on the value system, Arthur Mbanefo (1999, 11) has this to say:

> How was it possible for our value system to become almost completely destroyed within a space of less than twenty years? Our social fabric has been worn terribly thin, our morality has fallen into disrepute, and our respected institutions have lost their authority, while our educational system has lost its quality. The sad corollary to all these is that, internationally, we have lost respect as a serious people who can be trusted in business.

His position aptly captures the extent to which corruption has affected our value system. Arguably, these corrupt practices are initiated, institutionalized and maintained through language. According to O. Oliyide and K. Odeku (2002, 5), corruption is reflected in the practices, conducts, beliefs, ethics, sayings, idiosyncrasies and heritage of Nigeria. In other words, how most Nigerians talk, behave and act reflects their tacit approval or implicit support for corrupt behaviour.

For the purpose of this paper, an attempt will be made to shed light on some sectors that have become a beehive of corrupt practices. The educational sector has suffered its onslaught of corruption. Different tactics have been deployed to perpetuate examination malpractice, ranging from copying in all its shades, examination paper leakages, bribery and drugging of examination officers, and colluding with other agents to perpetuate cheating. In the tertiary institutions, all manners of corruption are witnessed, ranging from sale of marks, gratifications, victimization, extortion and even the use of sex to gain unmerited grades. Bemoaning the situation, Adeyemi Adegoju (2007, 343), citing Bugaje (1995), comments as follows: 'You no longer need to be qualified to gain admission nor do you need to pass exams to get the degrees, for so many ways of going around all these have been perfected and are gaining ascendancy in the amoral atmosphere of the campuses.'

In the same vein, the Nigeria civil service has become an epicentre of corruption (OLIYIDE and ODEKU, 2002). According to them, these corrupt practices in civil service date back to the pre-independence era. Chinua Achebe (1993, 42) presents the point succinctly when he argues that Nigeria is without any shadow of a doubt, one of the most corrupt nations in the world. And so, from fairly timid manifestations in the 1960s, corruption has grown bold and ravenous as with each succeeding regime, our public servants have become more reckless and blatant. Bemoaning the spate of corruption in the civil service, M. Chigbo (2010) remarks that when you come to an office, a messenger will ask you what you have for him or her and at a checkpoint, the police will ask you what you have for him or her (cited in Linus ODO 2015, 181). Re-emphasing the point, Adibe (2012) adds that law enforcement officers see or hear no evil at the slight inducement; government workers drag their feet and refuse to give their best if there is no enticement, and the journalists would turn the truth on its head once he/she has accepted brown envelopes (quoted in ODO 2015, 179). By implication,

the civil service operates on the notion that anything is possible so long as one is ready to offer a bribe.

Corruption has also been witnessed in the political sector. Corruption in the sector takes place in different shades, which range from bribing of the electorate and officials of the electoral body to snatching of ballot boxes, fraud during result collations, under-aged voting, buying of votes and other forms of political corruption. In fact, corruption in the political sector and in most sectors in Nigeria has remained unabated.

Another corrupt practice that has continued to flourish with innovative sophistication is the advance fee fraud popularly known as 419. Smith (2006) cited in Chris Agbedo (2012, 29) posits that the linguistic coding 419 is named after the number in the Nigeria Criminal Code Act that deals with a specific form of fraud. [1]The linguistic colouration has been extended to become an encompassing term for all forms of dubious behaviour beyond the normal trick of 'obtaining' from people. Such manipulation of truth and ripping others off, in any form, is also referred to as '419'. The situation makes the position of Bugaje (1995) a truism that 'the country is daily receding but the only thing that moves forward in the country is corruption,' which is not only growing and thriving, but has become the biggest industry (quoted in ADEGOJU 2007, 345).

Sadly, the points raised above account for why Nigeria over the last few years has been rated the most corrupt nation on earth, second to Bangladesh, the second most corrupt in 2001, 2002 and 2003, the third most corrupt in 2004; the sixth most corrupt in 2005, and the eighteenth most corrupt in 2006 (The 2007 Transparency International Corruption Index). In 2019, the country is also rated the 146th out of 180 most corrupt countries of the world (The Transparency International Report of 2019). The figures above suggest that corruption has been entrenched and institutionalized in Nigeria.

The realization of the soaring wave of corruption in Nigeria and the need for transparency and accountability has brought about agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) to wage war against the hydra-headed social canker. Although these agencies have recorded some successes, corruption is still endemic in Nigeria. Hence, the present paper seeks to unveil the linguistic choices often used to coat corrupt behaviour in Nigeria. It is believed that exposure of such linguistic expressions will help to unearth and create an awareness of the dynamics of corruption-related language use.

Theoretical Framework
The study is underpinned by Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity (1929)

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[1] Section 419 of The Criminal Code Act of Nigeria states that 'any person who by any false pretence, and with intent to defraud, obtains from any other person anything capable of being stolen, or induces any other person to deliver to any person anything capable of being stolen, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for three years.' The information is a summary of the legal provision under the Criminal Code Act of Nigeria.

as cited in David Mandelbaum (1949). The conceptual framework upholds that there is a relationship between the language one uses, how one talks and how one perceives the world and reality. By implication, our language shapes our reality and restricts the way we think. Insights from the hypothesis reveal the interrelatedness between language and culture, which influences language users' thought processes. Hence, the language habits of the different linguistic communities predispose them to choices of interpretation. Although Scholars like Stephen Pinker (2007,57) have faulted the model arguing about the 'certainty of language' affecting thoughts and how thoughts can be affected by language. However, current studies have shown that language has magnitude impact on cognition. According to D. Casasanto (2016, 159), these studies have suggested that words found in some languages, but not in others can radically transform people's minds and reshape their world. Furthermore, Danslobin (1996) believes that language affects cognition during the process of encoding our thoughts into words, or 'thinking for speaking' which involves picking those features of objects or events that are readily encodable in the speaker's language (cited in CASASANTO 2016, 159).

The model is viewed from two dimensions: linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism. Linguistic relativity is anchored on the principle that the structure of a language affects the speaker's cognition, mental representations or perception of the world, which are context dependent. In other words, the kind of language we use has pervasive influences on how and what we think and predisposes us to view the world in a certain way. On the one hand, linguistic determinism holds that language is a function of thought as language users can only organize their thoughts in line with their language. By implication, linguistic determinism posits that language determines the thoughts of the users and linguistic categories limit and determine cognitive categories. We dissect nature along the lines laid down by our native language.

In line with the tenets of the framework, the model is considered apt for the study given the way language is contextualized and manipulated to reflect the thoughts of the users about corruption in Nigeria. The contextualized language use and linguistic choices affect the cognition and world views of Nigerians as it masks the obnoxious act in an acceptable form. Such ingenious and innovative employment of linguistic coding has helped to enthrone corruption in Nigeria.

Methodology
Data for the study were collected from notable online newspaper and media sources which include: *The Vanguard, The Guardian, The Punch, This Day, The Nation, The Premium, Sahara Reporters, Naira land* and others published between 2015 and 2021. The justification for the period is that it provides adequate data considered to have features relevant to the study. The data from online sources were complemented by focused group discussions, unstructured interviews and participant's observation method. The researcher adopted the type of observation, which Werner and Schoepfle (1987) cited in Micheal Angrosino &Kimberly Mays Deperez (2000, 677) described as a method of observation that is supported by interviews in which the participants' insights open more room for further observations.

The thrust of the investigation is on the corrupt linguistic codings used in the educational, civil service, political and social settings. The study adopted a qualitative research design and a random sampling method to select a hundred respondents from the five states comprising the southeast zone in Nigeria (ten women and ten men from each state). The respondents were chosen from the State Secretariats, State Universities in different states (Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu University (COOU, Anambra State), Ebonyi State University (EBSU), Enugu State University of Technology (ESUT) Imo State University (IMSU) and Abia State University (ABSU) as well as political gatherings in the states under study. The collection of data lasted for a period of six months from March 2021 to September 2021. Few of the expressions from the state secretariats were said in the local languages but translated into English by the researcher. The paper anchored its analyses on the conceptual model of Sapir-Whorf relativity framework and the analyses were done using interpretative textual analysis model. The respondents provided the lexico-semantic descriptions and analyses of words, expressions, phrases collected from the online newspapers, media platforms and interview during the focused group discussion. A total of 75 words, phrases and expressions were analysed. The analyses were presented in a tabular form.

Presentation of Data
Table 1: Corruption Related Linguistic Coding in the Educational Sector

S/no	**Linguistic Coding**	**Context of Use**	**Lexical Category**	**Lexico-semantic Description as Given by the Respondents**
1	Blocking a lecturer's course (*Nairaland*: top 5universities in terms of blocking lecturers)	"What does blocking mean? Bribing a lecturer."	Coinage	Bribing a lecturer with money to pass his/her course
2	Sorting (*Sun online* 13th Oct., 2019)	"sorting started as an aberration… so they offer themselves and/or money to willing lecturers, get awarded good grades in return."	Slang	Inducing a lecturer so as to award a good grade to a student
3	Sex-for-grade (*Guardian Online* 18th	"sex for grade is the practice	Neologism	Linguistic expression to

	Nov., 2019)	of male lecturers blackmailing, forcing, intimidating & demanding sex from female students as a condition for awarding them pass marks in their courses."		mean the use of sex to obtain a higher grade
4	Double decker (*Sun online* 13th, Oct., 2019)	"some notorious randy male lecturers have been branded 'double decker' which means that they would sleep with a female student and also collect money from her to award her good marks."	Slangy Expression	Sleeping with a female student and also collecting money to award good grades
5	Let my people go (*Online Nigeria Tribune* Mar 14th, 2021)	"Lose your grip and let my people go."	Biblical extension	Biblical expression which has been extended to mean awarding at least 'E' grade just to allow a student to pass
6	Purchased certificate	"In Nigeria,	Derived	Linguistic

	(*Geeky online media* Dec. 30th, 2019)	fake degree certificate black market has become sophisticated, making it easy to buy a certificate now more than ever before."	neologism	coating for parading certificates bought and not studied for, by an individual
7	Certificate peddling (*The Nation online* June 30, 2021)	"Prof Is-haq Oloyede has said that many tertiary institutions still mobilize or award certificates to people who never attended the institution."	Derived neologism	Linguistic colouration for issuance of certificates to individuals who never attended the institutions
8	Assisting/ helping students (*Guardian Online* 25th June, 2019)	"I told them I did not understand what they meant, and they said you will allow us to help our students."	Coinage	Linguistic coding for colluding and aiding/ abetting examination practice
9	Mercenaries (*Guardian Online* 25th Jan., 2019)	"They get 'mercenaries' to help their students solve the questions which are now distributed among the students."	Coinage	Linguistic coding for hired individuals who sit for examinations for other people

10	*ọmọkịrịkịrị* (Imo State University)	"If you are caught with omokirikiri, you will have yourself to be blamed ."	Blend of Yoruba and Igbo	Already prepared tiny material used for cheating during examinations
11	*Mgbọ* (Ebonyi State University)	"Mgbo is not allowed in this examination."	Borrowed Igbo word for bullet	An expression used among students to describe copied materials used for examination malpractice
12	*Ogoro* must jump (ChukwuemekaOdimegwu OjukwuUniversity)	"Ogoro must jump."	Loan word from Urhobo	*Ogoro* means frog in Urhobo. It is an expression used among students to express the inevitability of cheating in examinations
13	Microchips (Enugu State University of Tech.)	"If you have fortified yourself with microchips, I will advise you to remove it."	Loanword from English	Computer jargon and linguistic colouration for tiny written material used for cheating during exams
14	Paying in kind (*Nairaland*: Inside 3Nigerian universities where students pay…)	"Students who can't pay in cash are expected to pay in kind."	Extended neologism	the use of sex or other inducement to obtain good grades
15	Formation (Abia State University)	"Guys we need to plan the formation now."	Slang	Linking and selecting who to sit with in the

				examination hall for purpose of cheating
16	Runs (Imo State University)	"It is after the examination that these lazy students do the runs."	Slang	Linguistic colouration used to describe cheating, malpractice and nefarious acts perpetuated by staff and students

Table 2: Corruption Related Linguistic Coding in the Political Sector

S/no	Linguistic Coding	Context of Use	Lexical Category	Lexico-semantic Description as Given by the Respondents
17	Lobbying (*This Day* 1st Nov, 2020)	"Lobbying which is equated to bribery and corruption seek to 'buy' power…"	Extended coinage	Nigerian expression for 'buying' of power and influence through bribery
18	Ballot box snatching (*The Guardian* 17th Nov., 2019)	"Ballot boxes were also snatched away by political thugs at polling units at Crowther College, Lokoja and Muslim Community College, Lokoja."	Coinage	Linguistic coding for taking of ballot boxes forcefully for electoral malpractice

19	Vote buying (*The Guardian* 17th Nov., 2019)	"Prof Adele Jinadu while addressing a world conference said reports from CDD observers indicate widespread violence, intimidation of voters, vote buying…"	Coinage	Linguistic coating for influencing voters' choices through bribery or other inducement
20	Budget padding (*The Punch* 30th Dec., 2016)	"Budget padding is not only fraudulent, it is also a destructive crime against the future of the people."	Derived Neologism	Linguistic colouration for inflating of the national budget for personal gains
21	*Wuru-wuru* (from a political gathering in Awka)	"The man is a wuru-wuru person."	Borrowed Yoruba word	Nigerian expression for a deceitful person or group of persons or unclear process
22	*Mago-mago* (from a political gathering in Awka)	"There is mago-mago in the sharing of the money."	Borrowed Hausa word	Linguistic coding for crooked and tricky process
23	Politics is a dirty game (*The Vanguard* 11th Feb., 2015)	"It is indeed true that politics is a dirty game, said a commentor by name Ade, in the Apapa-	Cliché	Linguistic Colouration to express that politics in Nigeria is characterized by lies, deceits, character assassination, fetish practices, mudsling and others

		bound bus as a radio commentator said something about General Muhammadu Buhari's health."		
24	Second term/third term bid (*The Vanguard* 2nd Oct., 2019)	"Recall that Presidency had vowed that noting(sic) would make Buhari seek for a third term after his second term."	Cliché	Linguistic coding for tenure elongation by politicians
25	Continuity in government (*The Guardian online* 19th Jan., 2015)	"The concept of continuity of people-friendly public policies in governance is well known to us."	Slogan	Linguistic colouration and justification for extension of tenure in office by politicians
26	Dividends of democracy (*The Sun news online* 30th Aug, 2018)	"The dividends of democracy are simply the benefits enjoyed by the masses who voted for the government in power"	Extended coinage	Linguistic coating for enjoyment of benefits accruing from politics by politicians and their associates/false promises

27	Looting *(The Punch online* 30th Aug., 2020)	"The public has a right to know how recovered N800bn loot has been spent, and the details and purpose of the alleged payments of N51bn into individual private accounts."	Cliché	Linguistic coding for unabated stealing of public funds
28	Manipulation of figures *(The Punch online* 17th April., 2017)	"The speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Yakubu Dogara, warned on Monday that figures could be manipulated if a population census was conducted by Nigeria in 2018."	Cliché	Nigerian expression used for falsification or alteration of data for cheating purposes
29	Ghana must go bags *(Urhobo Today* 27th April., 2017)	"A combined team of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the	Coinage	Nigerian expression of describing the idea of massive plundering of public funds

		Army raided three vehicles with several "Ghana must go" bags containing huge sums of money."		
30	Share the money (www. *Tori news* 26th Nov., 2015)	"The real reason why PDP is called 'share the money' party has been revealed by a card-carrying member of the party."	Slogan	Linguistic coding with which a particular political party in Nigeria is known for. The ideology of using bribery to gain undue advantage
31	Chop and clean mouth (Political gathering in Imo State)	"Every one of them has learnt how to chop and clean mouth."	Pidginized expression	Nigerian expression for covering track of corruption
32	Cut corner (Political gathering in Abia)	"People try to cut corners for selfish reasons."	Derived idiom	An expression in Nigeria used to describe dubious and treacherous acts and not following due process
33	Fast lane (Political gathering in Anambra State)	"Our young people seem to be on a fast lane and cannot wait like we elders did in the past."	Derived idiom	Linguistic coding for 'get rich quick syndrome' which is prevalent in the Nigerian system as against the English meaning of a life filled with excitement

34	Sharing the national cake (*The Daily Trust online* 7th May, 2019)	"He (Governor Okowa) complained that South-South States aren't getting their fair share of the national cake"	Derived idiom	An idiom which has been used differently in Nigeria to mean that the country belongs to everybody thereby justifying the reason for massive looting
35	Brown/ yellow envelope (*BBC News* 5th March, 2015)	"It is common for 'brown envelopes'containing cash to be handed out during press briefings- a practice that has been going on for so long that many young journalists with whom I have spoken have no idea that it is unethical"	Derived neologism	Linguistic colouration for indirect monetary inducement especially to journalists
36	Pen robbery (*Nairaland*-pen robbery societal evil)	"There is no doubt that pen robbery is one of the greatest societal evils which has not only eaten deep into every sector in Nigeria but has also become	Figurative expression	Nigerian expression to describe situations where those in the position of authority use their pens (position) to plunder public funds

		official and legal"		

Table 3: Corruption Related Linguistic Coding in the Civil Service

S/no	Linguistic Coding	Context of Use	Lexical Category	Lexico-semantic Description as Given by the Respondents
37	Ghost workers (*The Vanguard news online* 2nd Jan., 2021)	"Of the 22, 556 ghost workers, 14, 762 were discovered at the local government level while 7, 794 were found to be collecting salaries from public primary schools without being teachers."	Cliché	Linguistic colouration for civil servants whose names are on the payroll of different state governments but are not real workers
38	Falsification of age (*The Sun news online* 9th Feb., 2020)	"Again, harsh economic condition, poor government regulations without palliatives in place is some of the reasons people go into age falsification."	Coinage	Nigerian expression for changing of one's date of birth to remain younger and employable
39	Federal character (*The Guardian online* 2nd Nov., 2020)	"Vice President Yemi Osibanjo was quite right that "Federal Character is essentially affirmative to create a balance…If we are to reserve an office for a particular zone,	Lexical extension	Linguistic coding for favouring of particular ethnic group and justification for the appointment of less qualified candidates over more qualified candidates

		that zone should be able to produce the best candidate."		
40	Quota system (State Secretariat, Awka)	"Quota system is used in federal employment and not in state employment."	Lexical extension	Nigerian expression for deep seated divide among the ethnic groups and justification for the sacrifice of merit at the altar of mediocrity
41	Settlement (State Secretariat, Owerri)	"What is in vogue now is government of settlement."	Slogan	Linguistic colouration for implicit request for bribes
42	Nepotism (State Secretariat, Awka)	"They are condemning it but they are the ones encouraging nepotism."	Lexical extension	Nigerian expression to coat the favouring of relatives and friends of the powerful especially by giving them jobs
43	Tribalism *(The Punch online* 17th Nov., 2020)	"Tribalism is a parochial attitude found in every culture, in every nation, and in modern societies across racial lines."	Lexical extension	Linguistic coating for favouring of a particular tribe as against the original meaning of being loyal to one's tribe/group or party
44	Bigotry *(The Vanguard news online* 22nd Nov., 2018)	"In the piece, Lee described bigotry as one of the deadliest social evils plaguing our world today."	Lexical extension	Linguistic colouration for favouritism and support of a course at the detriment of other groups/ interests
45	Sacred cows	"The Federal	Cliché	Nigerian expression for

	(The Vanguard news online 13th Aug., 2020)	Government says there is no sacred cow in the fight against corruption…"		individuals who cannot be prosecuted no matter their offence
46	Anointed ones (*The News Nigeria online* 22nd March, 2021)	"In Nigeria politics, (anointed one) refers to the person whom the powers-that-be have declared should occupy a position, merit or no merit, election or no election."	Biblical Borrowing	Linguistic coating for persons who occupy political positions with or without merit or without being elected
47	Missing files *(The Punch online* 23rd Aug., 2020)	"The missing files also included the non- declaration of assets and possession of foreign account cases against Anambra North Senator, Stella Oduah, the President of the Nigerian football Federation, Amaju…"	Slogan	Linguistic colouration for deliberate disappearance of case files against corrupt individuals as a way of covering traces
48	Jump the line (State Secretariat, Abakiliki)	"Every body is trying to jump the line."	Derived idiom	An idiom which is used differently in Nigeria to colour the act of impatience and not waiting for turns
49	Non-declaration/f alse declaration of assets (*The*	"The Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) has invited a Chief Accountant in the office of the	Derived neologism	Linguistic colouration for deliberate refusal by individuals to declare their properties or declaring less of their assets

	Premium times July 16th, 2021)	Kano State Accountant-General Shehu Ibrahim over alleged false declaration of asset."		
50	Appreciation (State Secretariat, Abakiliki)	"The 'Oga' will expect us to appreciate him for helping us to find the file."	Coinage	Nigerian expression for implicit bribery and inducement
51	Contract inflation (Enugu State Secretariat)	It is surprising that costs of contracts are always inflated by contracors."	Coinage	Linguistic coating for overrating the cost of contracts for personal gains
52	Who dey chop, no dey talk (State Secretariat, Awka)	"They will not speak against what he is doing. Afterall, who dey chop, no dey talk."	Pidginized expression	Linguistic colouration for individual who are benefiting from corruption not to raise an alarm
53	You don't talk while you are eating. (said in Igbo language at State Secretariat, Aba)	"They have learnt not to talk while they are eating."	Figurative expression	Nigerian expression for covering traces of corruption by the beneficiaries.
54	The 11th commandment (Thou shall not be caught) (State Secretariat Owerri)	"Remember the 11th commandment." (Thou shall not be caught)	Biblical borrowing	Linguistic colouration to express caution while cheating.
55	Money laundering (State Secretariat Owerri)	"They use various fictious names for the business of money laundering."	Cliché	Nigerian expression for illegal appropriation of public resources for private uses especially when the monies are lodged in foreign bank accounts

| 56 | Soft landing (*The Punch online* Nov., 14th 2021) | "though it was gathered that some of the politicians and contractors who had abandoned projects in the Niger Delta had returned to the sites, a few others were said to have been making frantic efforts to persuade the Ministry of Justice to hold on to the documents and give them a soft landing." | Slogan | A subtle way of dismissing corruption charges against indicted individuals |

Table 4: Corruption Related Linguistic Coding in the Social Setting

S/no	Linguistic Coding	Context of Use	Lexical Category	Lexico-semantic Description as Given by the Respondents
57	African time (*The Guardian online* 14th April., 2018)	"There is a culture of impunity that is ravaging the African nations called African time."	Slang	Nigerian expression for perceived social tendency to describe relaxed attitude towards time, appointments or events
58	Nigerian factor *(The Punch online* 12th Nov., 2017)	"I'm sure we have all heard this expression (Nigerian factor) and we laugh about it."	Cliché	Linguistic colouration to describe the unworkability of the social system due to perceived unethical behaviour and complacency
59	God-fatherism (*BBC News* 4th Feb., 2019)	"God fathers in Nigerian politics don't usually run	Biblical borrowing	Derived from the concept of baptism which is a Nigerian

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		for the office themselves, but many believe they are the ones who decide the election winners and losers."		expression for a superior personality who sponsors or provides support for another to gain advantage in politics, social, cultural and other aspects
60	Favouritism (*Independent Newspaper* 5th July, 2018)	"Alli, in an interview with news men in Ilorin, said hope of good governance may many people had, had been dashed by the government through nepotism and favouritism."	Slogan	Linguistic coding for appointment of preferred candidates who are not worthy of the position they occupy
61	Yahoo-yahoo (*The Premium times* May 3rd, 2021)	"The 'yahoo-yahoo' business formally known as cyber fraud in Nigeria's cybercrime law is not a new phenomenon in the country."	Slang	Linguistic coatings in Nigeria for cyber fraud where people through counterfeit pretence, impersonation, cheating or through other fraudulent representation of facts
62	Yahoo plus (*The Guardian online* 7th Nov., 2019	"…the use of voodoo and charms for spiritual protection and to charm potential victims is very common among yahoo boys in Nigeria. The practice is referred to as yahoo plus."	Derived neologism	Linguistic coating for the use of traditional charms and mystical powers to charm potential victims
63	Scamming	"Now Mr Okeke	Extended	Nigerian

	(BBC.Com 23rd September, 2019)	or Invictus Obi as he is popularly known is accused by US Authorities of stealing $11m in one online scam alone."	coinage	construction for online crime which has been extended to cover other forms of deceit/lies and fraudulent practices
64	Man-know-man (said in Igbo language at State Secretariat, Aba)	"Nigeria is a country of man know-man, unless you know somebody, you will never get anything."	Pidginized expression	Nigerian appellation used to describe the practice of favouritism
65	Connection (*Naira land:* can one get a government job without connection?)	"You won't even get any job without connections or money."	Slogan	Linguistic colouration for preference of individuals due to whom they know and not usually on the basis of merit
66	*Ima mmadu* (IM) (said in Igbo language at Enugu State Secretariat)	"IM is the order of the day in Nigeria."	Borrowed Igbo expression	Nigeria construction for favouring of one's relations and friends
67	Long leg (State Secretariat, Abakiliki)	"Somebody with a long leg can get anything in Nigeria."	Adapted Nigerian idiom	An idiom which was adapted from British idiom, long arm (which means far reaching power) but is used in Nigeria to mean an undue influence used to gain advantage or favour
68	Money exchanging hands (State Secretariat, Awka)	"Money must exchange hands for you to get such high-profile jobs."	Slogan	Linguistic coding for giving bribes in order to get essential services
69	If you can't	"Nigeria is now a	Derived	Nigeran expression

	beat them, join them. (State Secretariat Owerri)	country of if you cannot beat them you join them."	idiom	to discourage integrity and honesty and encourage collusion in corrupt act
70	Anything goes *(Sahara Reporters* 29 March, 2016)	"But this is Nigeria, a country of anything goes, where perverse actions perpetually multiply and endure as instruments of governance."	Coinage	Nigerian colouration for a system that lacks order and accepts all manner of behaviours
71	Sit don look (State Secretariat, Awka)	"Dog name na sit don look, we go dey look dem."	Pidginized expression	Linguistic coding for *laisez faire* attitude and subtle support for fraudulent practices
72	Sleeping on duty (said in Igbo language at Enugu State Secretariat)	"This man, you need to wake up. Stop sleeping on duty!"	Extended coinage	Linguistic construction to describe a person who is adjudged as not clever enough to participate in dishonest practices
73	Maga (State Secretariat Owerri)	"The man na their maga."	Borrowed word/slang	Nigerian expression derived from West India (maga) which is used to describe a person with a very thin body but is used in Nigeria to describe a fraud victim
74	Clean the money (said in Igbo language at State Secretariat, Aba)	"After everything, they will clean the money."	Coinage	Linguistic colouration which means to divert money gotten through fraudulent means to a more legitimate business

75	Give *Egunje* (State Secretariat, Awka)	"They will always ask for Egunje now."	Borrowed Yoruba word	Linguistic coatings for bribery and other inducements

The Implications of Linguistic Colourations of Corruption in the Overall National Development of Nigeria

The responses from the respondents show that presenting corruption in linguistic colourations has helped to enthrone the unethical act. According to them, such embellishments give corruption attractive looks and downplay the gravity of the act. They further present that shrouding corruption in linguistic coding makes unwary individuals victims as the masking is innovatively and craftily done for dubious purposes. While some respondents argue that corruption has become a tradition in Nigeria and may be difficult to curb, others opine that the linguistic colourations help in the promotion of corruption. Such linguistic ornamentation accounts for increasing rate of corrupt behaviour in Nigeria, and have far-reaching effect in the nation's overall development.

The expressed views of the respondents show that corruption accounts for underdevelopment and poor infrastructural development in Nigeria. As a result of corruption, funds meant for development are converted for personal gains and the acts are covered with language. Deploying linguistic colourations encourages corruption tacitly and most foreign investors may not be able to cope with the consequences of corruption. This also contributes to poor economic growth in the country (ANDREW 2016, n.p.) and (USIFO 2017, n.p.) Another implication of embellishing corruption with language is unemployment and increased poverty level among the citizens. Obviously, any nation that thrives in corruption enriches few citizens while the majority wallows in abject poverty. Finally, in Nigeria, corruption accounts for high rate of insecurity as budgeted funds are lost through corruption and are ultimately covered with linguistic coatings.

Discussion of Findings

The paper investigates the linguistic colourations which are indicative of corruption in Nigeria. The linguistic coatings identified are usages found in the educational, civil service, political and social settings. Using linguistic masking and appropriate moral language to 'conventionalize' corruption does not only give it a fashionable outlook but also presents the perverse behaviour as a social norm in the minds of some Nigerians. In line with the model used for the study, coding corruption helps the language users perceive the act in a certain way. This is evident in the words of B. Hussein (2012, 644) who avers:

> In this view, then, language provides a screen or filter to reality; it determines how speakers perceive and organize the world around them, both the natural world and the social world. Consequently, the language you speak helps to form your world-view. It defines your experience for you; you do not use it simply to report that experience. It is neutral but gets in the way, imposing habits of both looking and thinking.

The same idea is expressed by J. Carrol (1956, 137) who posits that 'the cue to a certain line of behaviour is often given by the analogies of the linguistic formula in which the situation is spoken of, and by which to some degree it is analysed, classified, and allotted its place in that world which is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.' These scholars' position clearly shows that members of a linguistic community only perceive issues as their language allows or predisposes them to. Therefore, masking corruption in a fashionable manner defines Nigerians' experience and perception of corruption.

It is arguable that coding corruption using linguistic forms may not necessarily depict support for corruption. It is also debatable that many language users who mask corruption in linguistic euphmism do not have the intention of coating corruption but view the language of corruption as a language norm among members of the linguistic community. Although this may sound considerable, it has been established by scholars that words found in a language have a way of influencing the people's minds and reshaping their worldview in a radical manner as explained by D. Casasanto (2016, 159). Albeit, such a transformation may be negative or positive. The embellishment or adornment of the negative act provides the users of such language with the impertinence to continue in the negative act. Both the previous and current studies have shown that using linguistic colourations to beautify corruption acts as the lifeline of the act and will make it difficult to curb corruption, especially in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Findings from the study reveal that Nigerians deploy different linguistic categories such as cliché, slang, Biblical borrowings, slogan, derived neologism, extended coinages, Pidginized expressions, borrowed words, creative usages, derived idioms, lexical extensions, figurative expressions, loanwords and blends to mask corrupt behaviour. The present study holds that such linguistic colourations have far-reaching effects on the image and the development of the nation. Hence, the paper has tried to create an awareness of the linguistic embellishments used in reconstructing corruption in Nigeria. The essence of the paper is not to point accusing fingers at any party, but to unmask the linguistic coatings in which corrupt practices are crafted. Therefore, any reasonable fight against corruption by the government should consider the language used in concealing the act as it will help in bringing to the limelight the bare-faced deception achieved through the deployment of linguistic colourations.

Declarations

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