

Are Nigerians Title-Drunk? A Critical Discourse Analysis of Stances and Ideological Strategies on Honorifics in a Nigerian Twitter Discussion

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Abstract: Through an online debate on Twitter (now X), the study critically explores ideological stances on honorifics in a workplace context, the underlying goals projected by online stance-takers, and the discursive strategies employed to express these ideological positions/goals. Data was gathered from comments randomly sampled from Twitter (now x) threads created by three Nigerian online actors: Dr. Dipo Awojide, Naija, and #ourfavonlineDoc based on a tweet by @iam_temmy. The data was examined within the purview of Du Bois's (2007) stance triangle and the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by van Dijk (2004). The study's findings reveal that stance-taking processes engaged by online actors are characterized by ideological moves such as negative actor description, norm expression, irony/sarcasm, lexicalization, and authority, among others. While some online actors support the author of the stance object on the sociocultural significance of honorifics in conversations between low-power and high-power actors, other online actors disagree with supporters of the author of the stance object. The study concludes that Nigerians leverage social media platforms to potentially reinforce linguistically conveyed sociocultural values on one hand and, on the other hand, challenge the long-existing sociocultural norms that uphold power relations in the broader Nigerian sociolinguistic horizons. This adds to previous findings on the ideological voices expressed on social media platforms.

Keywords: Honorifics, Stance, critical discourse analysis, ideological strategies, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

According to Brown (2020), honorifics are “linguistic forms” traditionally used to show respect or admiration for an entity deserving of respect, usually a person with a higher social status. Over the years, several studies have demonstrated how honorifics serve as linguistic means of reinforcing social hierarchies and power dynamics (e.g., Morand, 2000; Irvine, 1992; Zhang & Morand, 2014), although other studies have argued that honorifics are used for purposes other than just indexing “power dynamics” or “deference” (see, Brown and Whiteman, 2015; Yoon, 2015).

Honorifics in contemporary Nigerian society hold a significant socio-cultural importance. Like what is obtainable in most African cultures, they reflect social standings, age, religious positions,

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academic accomplishments/rankings, and workplace hierarchies. Put differently, they are often used linguistically to show politeness or express regard in many contexts, including organizational settings. For instance, Nigerians have long linguistically adopted English respectful titles², “sir and ma’am,” in workplaces to communicate honor or express politeness to superiors. However, “ma” is the version of “ma’am” widely used in Nigeria. Oftentimes, the essence of these respectful forms is to uphold the apparent status hierarchy.

Furthermore, in addition to English-respectful titles mentioned above, Nigerians ascribe reverence to people who exercise some form of authority over them with an array of other honorific titles such as political titles, chieftaincy titles, religious titles, etc. (see, Samson & Iyanda, 2021; Babalola, 2019; Oumarou, 1997). Given this sociolinguistic reality, the use of honorifics has immensely contributed to the societal and cultural expectations regarding norms governing forms of address when relating with elders or higher-power actors within the Nigerian communicative contexts. In light of this, the attention of several scholars has been drawn to this linguistic phenomenon. For example, Samson and Iyanda (2019) and Ajayi and Balogun (2014), amongst others, have explored honorifics within Nigerian sociolinguistic contexts through the lens of the concept of (im)politeness by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). So far, however, no research has been dedicated to the ideological stances taken by Nigerian online participants on the varying perceptions of the use of honorifics in a Nigerian workplace communicative context. Given this noticeable gap in research, this study, therefore, aims to explore the polarized stances among Nigerian online actors on the use of honorifics in the workplace context. More specifically, with a particular focus on a tweet about a low-power actor who did not use the appropriate address form for a high-power actor via a computed mediated conversation, this study employs a critical discourse-cum approach to uncovering the ideological stances and goals projected by online actors, and the ideological strategies deployed by them to foreground their stances.

2. Literature review

2.1 Overview of Stance on social media

Several studies have explored the discourse of social media, and there is a consensus among discourse analysts that computer-mediated platforms are spaces for a broad range of sociopolitical, sociocultural, and sociolinguistic discourse often characterized by stance-taking and ideological conflicts (see Chandrasegaran & Kong, 2006; 2016; Mohammed et al., 2017). Mohammed et al. (2017), for instance, contend that online interactants often convey their “stance” toward specific entities through their posts on Twitter, Instagram, blogs, etc. Moreover, some Nigerian social media stance-taking discourse analysts (e.g., Ihebuzor and Egbunike, 2018) have attempted to discuss the significance of stance-taking on Twitter to Nigerian political discourse. In addition to political discourse on the Nigerian Twitter space, they proposed that the Nigerian Twitter community is a virtual community for other communities, such as Twitter for literature, football, etc.

² Brown’s study (2020) shows that English honorifics are exclusively limited to respectful titles: “Sir” and “Ma’am.”

2.2 Previous Studies on Honorifics

A considerable body of literature on linguistic behaviors constitutes forms of address/respect in several African languages, including a few Nigerian languages. More so, the investigation of this subject has enjoyed the attention of several researchers from diverse disciplines, especially (socio)linguistics, anthropology, religious studies, and African studies.

Prominent among the works from sociolinguistics is Oyetade (1995). The study investigated the sociolinguistic analysis of forms of address with a particular reference to one of the principal languages in Nigeria, Yoruba. The data for the study were drawn from brief radio and television dramas and a firsthand observation by the author. The study demonstrates that honorifics such as the Yoruba honorific pronouns and titles and certain kinship address forms such as aunty and uncle indicate respect for the referent. The study's findings revealed that appellations employed by interlocutors are a function of the relationship between the interlocutors; in addition, the choice of address forms is determined by factors such as age, social standings, and level of intimacy of or between the interlocutors. Further, the study revealed that age ranks above workplace hierarchy in typical Yoruba sociolinguistic horizons; therefore, the study emphasized that being co-workers in a Yoruba organizational setting does not necessarily signify equality since age commands respect a great deal in the wider Yoruba society.

On the variety of address forms in Igbo, Ideh (2019) primarily explores the array of honorific and euphemistic alternative forms of address used (other than a person's first name) among Igbo adult people. The data for this study was obtained via direct and indirect data collection techniques. The former method included the researcher's onsite observations, interviews with respondents, and focused-group discussion, while the former technique required eliciting data from published texts. The article indicates that the interpretation/significance of the various substitute designations used among the Igbo people can be understood within the context of the exact conversation in which they are used; further, through the lens of the Igbo culture, one can quickly grasp the opaque purpose(s) the Igbo people utilize such designations. This study argues that unless the interlocutors are agemates, addressing people on a first-name basis is a linguistic taboo as there are a wide variety of other face-saving appellations people can be addressed by. The study further explains that the Igbo sociocultural norms forbid addressing a person of high status on a first-name basis. Therefore, the author concludes that it is typical of Igbo society for interactants to employ respectful terms (honorifics) as a face-saving linguistic resource.

In another study, Mensah (2021) examined the underlying socio-pragmatic roles of address forms in ideologically based conversational interaction among a Nigerian university's staff club members. The study was conducted at the University of Calabar and focused on 25 participants aged between 25-70 years. This study is grounded in social identity theory. Amongst other functions, this study found that forms of address are deployed to uphold the imbalances of power relations between senior staff and staff members with lower academic rank or newly admitted members of the club.

Another finding is that the context and kind of relationship between conversational participants can influence the choice of appellations. For example, non-academic staff are more likely to address their friends who are academics as Prof. XYZ in the club, while in another setting, a nickname of the same professor would suffice. Further, the study highlights that address terms interact with sociocultural norms in which social variables such as age and status play vital roles. The study concludes that members of the university's club leverage forms of address to enhance solidarity.

From the studies presented thus far, one can observe that the focus is on how forms of address and honorifics can be used to express politeness, foster solidarity, and enact power relations across different language domains in Nigeria. However, as mentioned earlier, extant literature has yet to explore the ideological stances on honorific forms by online actors regarding their usage in a Nigerian workplace setting.

2.3 Research Questions

The following research questions are of interest to this study:

1. Based on Dubois's (2007) stance triangle, what are the opposing stances on using honorifics as expressed by the netizens?
2. Based on van Dijk's (2004³) framework, what ideological strategies are employed by online actors to express their ideological stances?
3. What are the underlying ideological goals projected by the online actors?

By answering the above research questions, this study intends to contribute to the extant literature on honorifics in Nigeria by unearthing the ideological perspectives of Nigerian online actors. Consequently, this study will provide insight into the sociocultural and non-conventional viewpoints on the nexus between honorifics and power relations in a typical Nigerian workplace setting. Morand (2000) aptly posits that understanding the "analysis of language" demonstrates how power is exercised and conveyed in superior-subordinate relationships reveals how status differentials are "diminished" or "blurred" at the behavioral level.

3. Methodology

The study employs a qualitative method; the qualitative method utilized in this study takes a discourse analysis-cum focus since the data in this study will be analyzed under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis theoretical frameworks. The data for this analysis was drawn from Twitter (now X). Specifically, the data for this study are selected from Tweets by Nigerian online participants, which generated intense arguments – causing participants to take stances among themselves. The selected tweets that constitute the data for this study were randomly sampled from the Twitter threads created in the year 2021 by Dr. Dipo Awojide (@OgbeniDipo)⁴, Naija (@Naija_PR), and #OurFavOnlineDoc (@DrOlufunmilayo) based on the tweet of @iam_temmy, the author of the stance object (whose name

³ The framework was initially highlighted in van Dijk (2004) but reiterated in van Dijk (2006).

⁴ This link leads to the discussion on Twitter (X).

is Tope). Given the ideological strategies in the comments of many netizens, sixteen tweets were selected among the many tweets directed towards the referential tweet that birthed the conversation. It is worth mentioning that the researcher in this study has long bookmarked these tweets since 2021 and has now decided to use the data for this study.

4. Theoretical Frameworks

Given the relevance of van Dijk's (2004) model CDA and Du Bois's (2007) stance framework to discourse and pragmatics, the analysis of this study would be built on both theoretical tools. Given that one of the most used linguistic devices in social and media discourse is sarcasm (Chubaryan & Danielyan, 2022), this study will also evaluate sarcastic comments used to corroborate stances.

4.1 CDA: van Dijk's Model on CDA

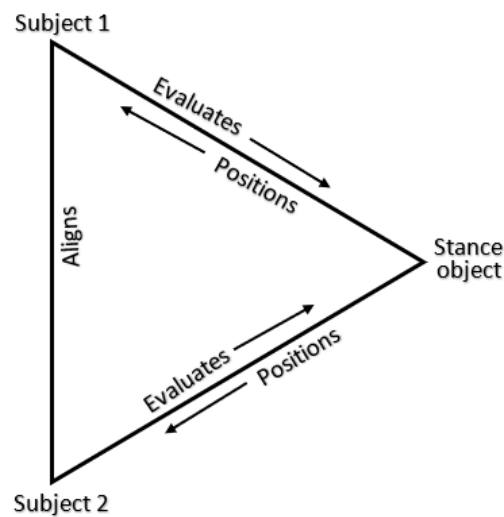
Several studies on CDA have reported that CDA is a field of inquiry encompassing a broad spectrum of approaches (van Dijk, 1998; Rogers et al., 2005, amongst others). For example, Rogers et al. (2005) assert that "CDA brings together social theory and textual analysis" (p. 370). CDA brings "together social theory and textual analysis" (p. 370). This perspective is critical to one of the study's objectives: uncovering how language reinforces power relations. van Dijk (2001) claims that the relationship between power and discourse is the focus of CDA, particularly how text and speaking in the social and political context are used to enact, maintain, and restrain social power abuse, dominance, and inequality. The discursive strategies in van Dijk's (2004, 2006) framework on CDA include the following ideological strategies: actor's description, evidentiality, categorization, norm expression, Us-Them, Implication, irony, and illustration. Following van Dijk's (2004, 2006) framework. The ideological moves relevant to this study are briefly explained below:

- Authority: Mentioning authorities to support one's claim
- Actor's description: negatively or positively describing a particular actor.
- Implication: inferring or making deductions from implied information.
- Irony: expressing one thing while implying something else.
- Categorization: a discursive move for assigning people to distinct groups.
- Illustration/example: to make a position clearer by an example or a contrast.
- Norm expressions: norms, values, and ideologies that state what should be done and what should not be done by an ideological group.
- Lexicalization: a discursive move that entails using word semantics to negatively depict other people.

4.2 Stance and Stance Taking: Du Bois's (2007) Stance Triangle Framework

Stance entails a position an individual or an ideological group maintains in interactive exchanges with others. On the other hand, Stance-taking is the process in which stance-taker express their "positions." To Du Bois (2007), stance is viewed as a single, cohesive act of separate parts. He

interprets the concept of stance to be three acts in one. Arguing further, he notes that the triangle represents the three key nodes in the stance – the first subject, the second subject, and the shared stance object (the object of evaluation). Du Bois (2007) formulated a framework that succinctly captures the dynamic and systematic processes embedded in stance-taking. These processes are evaluation, position, and alignment. Dubois Bois (2007) posits that “stance-taking” entails the “evaluation” of entities in the discourse by a subject, “Concomitant to evaluating the shared stance object, stance-takers position themselves, concomitant to positioning, stance takers define alignment with each other, whether the alignment is convergent or divergent” (Du Bois 2007: 164). Similarly, (Kiesling et. al., 2018) submit that participants create “alignment” and “disalignments” by displaying their differences and similarities in their respective evaluations. Du Bois designed the diagram below to illustrate his viewpoint:



Adopted from Du Bois (2007), p.163.

5.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Details on stance object



	Stance object	Author
	Omo Ure  @iam_temmyy	Tope @iam_temmy
	<p>A new intern was asked to contact me via chat, she referred me and my boss by name. E shock me. 🤔😂😂😂</p> <p>“Hi Tope, xxxx asked me to contact you.” 😂😂😂😂😂😂😂😂</p>	

5.1 Contextualization cues

An intern, a *low-power actor*, was instructed to contact Tope, a higher-power actor, via a digital communication platform. However, the intern, who is a Gen-Z, addressed Tope's boss and Tope on a first-name basis. This, however, came as a massive shock to Tope; hence, his expression of shock in Nigerian Pidgin English – E shocked me. The shock expression could result from the preconceived cultural expectation and his *stance* on how to address a superior colleague within a typical Nigerian communicative and professional context. Following Tope's tweet, a considerable number of online actors engaged in the *act of taking a stance* by evaluating the tweet above and expressing their opinions; this notably divided stance-takers into two primary groupings of strongly different ideologies. In line with the stance-taking concepts of polarized subjects in Du Boi's (2007) stance triangle, tweets that agree with the author of the stance object are considered subject 1, while tweets that reflect disagreement with him are classified as subject 2.



5.2 Subject 1

Table 2: Example (s) Norm Expression and Authority

Excerpt 1	Excerpt 2
	

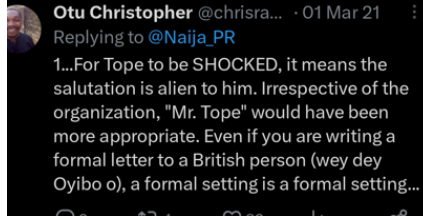
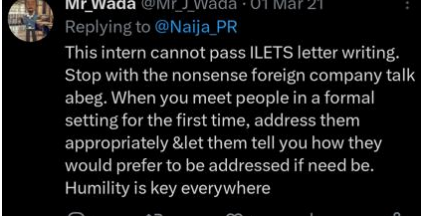
As can be gleaned from the above excerpts, the two authors of these tweets constructed their ideological stance by employing the discursive move of *norm expression*. Upon evaluating the stance object, the submission of the first stance taker is predicated upon “ethics demands.” This online actor adroitly utilizes *norm expression* as an ideological strategy to offer his stance. Similarly, the other netizen in excerpt 2 highlights the underlying norm within a typical Nigerian organization, that is, “the use of the designated title of the addressee alongside the referent last name ‘preferably.’” Further, his mention of the Nigerian government in his tweet indexes the use of *authority* as a complementary ideological device to *norm expression*. This suggests that his position on the tweet under evaluation has sociocultural underpinnings. Apparently, the two stance-takers’ positions on the referential object are *convergent* with the author of the stance object, Tope. This *alignment* is further evident in how each social actor wrapped up their stances in the form of advice to the intern. While the first stance taker draws upon normative values to conclude that junior staff members in workplaces are to respect their superiors using a polite form of address, the stance taker in excerpt 2 concludes that a new intern who addresses her boss on a first-name basis will be considered “rude.”

Table 3: Example (s) of Norm Expression and Lexicalization

Excerpt 3	Excerpt 4
	

To define a *convergent alignment* with the stance object's author, the above social actors (excerpts 3 and 4) frame their stances in a normative and subjective way. Even though the author of excerpt 3 did not expressly state the exact context for the expectation presented in his/her stance, for example, whether it is a cultural or professional expectation, one can suppose that the stance is presented in a way that resonates with a particular normative value (*norm expression*). In addition to this discursive move, the stance taker attempts to solidify the rhetorical efficiency of his/her stance by asking the intern a rhetorical question in Nigerian pidgin English: “Na UK u dey,” meaning “Are you in the UK?” This question is a way to *illustrate* that although the linguistic behavior of the intern might be accepted in the UK, such behavior is not acceptable in a Nigerian setting. Finally, the author of excerpt 3 concludes his/her argument with a *sarcastic* appraisal of the intern; (s)he referred to the intern as the “most exposed” via a code-mixed expression in Yoruba and English. This sarcasm also typifies *lexicalization* as a discursive move. Conversely, the author of excerpt 4 expresses a stance based on his subjective view, hence the phrase “I think.” He reinforces his stance by reiterating the nationality of the participants in the discourse under evaluation. Critically speaking, the implication of utilizing the ideologically inclusive “we” in the phrase “we are Nigerians” is to foreground the fact that the linguistic choice of the intern in her conversation with her superior is alien to Nigerians.

Table 4 Example(s) of Implication and illustration

Excerpt 5	Excerpt 6
	


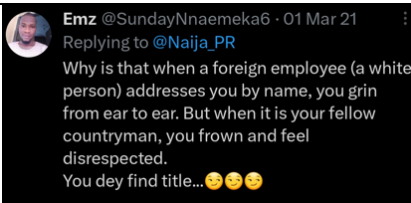

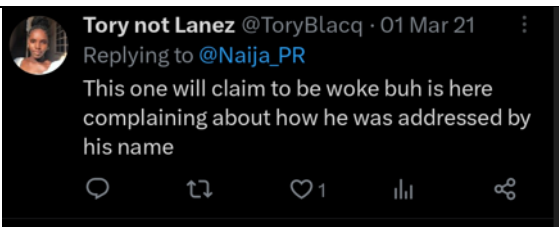
Note: “Abeg” in excerpt 6 is a Nigerian pidgin version of “please.”

A critical perusal of excerpt 5 reveals that the author employs the ideology strategy of *implication* as a discursive tool to deduce what the “shock” expressed by the author of the stance object could mean. By further demonstrating his *convergent alignment* with the author of the stance object, he resourcefully paints a hypothetical picture through the discursive strategy of *illustration*. In particular,

he argues that even if one is to write a formal letter to a British, the rules of formality will not be pushed under the rug. The author of excerpt 6 shares the same ideological position as the authors of excerpts 1-5. Following the *evaluation* of the stance object, he submits that the intern cannot pass the IELTS letter writing test. As such, he advises the netizens who support the intern to quit making references to how foreign companies utilize forms of address in their communication since it is only appropriate to address people formally in formal settings. From his stance, it can be deduced that his interpretation of “addressing people appropriately” entails using the appropriate honorifics/formal titles.

5.3 Subject 2

Table 5: Example(s) of Negative Actor’s Description, Lexicalization, and Illustration

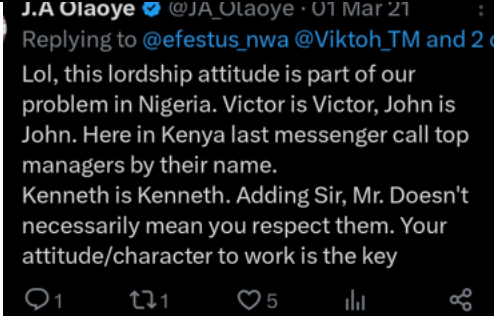

Excerpt 7	Excerpt 8
 <p>Emmy - of the Whole Wor... · 01 Mar 21 Replying to @OgbeniDipo Nigerians are title drunk</p>	 <p>Emz @SundayNnaemeka6 · 01 Mar 21 Replying to @Naija_PR Why is that when a foreign employee (a white person) addresses you by name, you grin from ear to ear. But when it is your fellow countryman, you frown and feel disrespected. You dey find title... 🤔🤔🤔</p>
Excerpt 9	Excerpt 10
 <p>#OurFavOnlineDoc · 01 Mar 21 That people call you “Boda Tope” does not mean they respect you. Neither does it mean you have sense. It only means they understand you may have such a low self-esteem which makes you more bothered with titles rather than actual accomplishments that commands inevitable respect.</p>	 <p>Tory not Lanez @ToryBlacq · 01 Mar 21 Replying to @Naija_PR This one will claim to be woke buh is here complaining about how he was addressed by his name</p>

Note: “Boda Tope” in excerpt 9 means “brother Tope.” It is a Yoruba way of honoring one’s elder brother or any other male who deserves to be honored. Also, “buh” in excerpt 10 means “but”.

As seen in the above excerpts, the above social actors demonstrate a divergent alignment with the stance object's author through a shared intersubjectivity. First, the author of excerpt 7 unapologetically made a bold assertion that “Nigerians are title drunk,” possibly reflecting his experience of how Nigerians are obsessed with honorific titles. This stance, however, is consistent with the argument of Babalobi (2019), who claims there is probably no human race on earth that esteems titles more than Nigerians. Second, the author of excerpt 8 illustrated in the form of a rhetorical question. His question on why Nigerians “grin” when relating with a white boss and act otherwise when relating with a Nigerian boss is an ideological move aimed at providing a basis for reflection for the other online actors with a divergent stance. His conclusion on “titles” aligns with the author of excerpt 9. The author of excerpt 9 employs the *negative actor’s description and lexicalization* to show his divergent perspective with the discursive figure, Tope. He does this by associating the sense of respect people derive from titles with “low self-esteem” and *negatively (negative description)* labels the author of the stance object as one who is obsessed with titles rather than accomplishments. Finally, the actor in excerpt 10 implicitly utilizes the *negative actor’s description* to foreground her support for the intern. Her



assumption that the author of the stance object “claims to be woke⁵” and at the same time “complaining about how he was addressed on a first name basis” is an attempt to paint the author of the stance object negatively or in a bad light.

Table 6: Example(s) of Lexicalization and Illustration

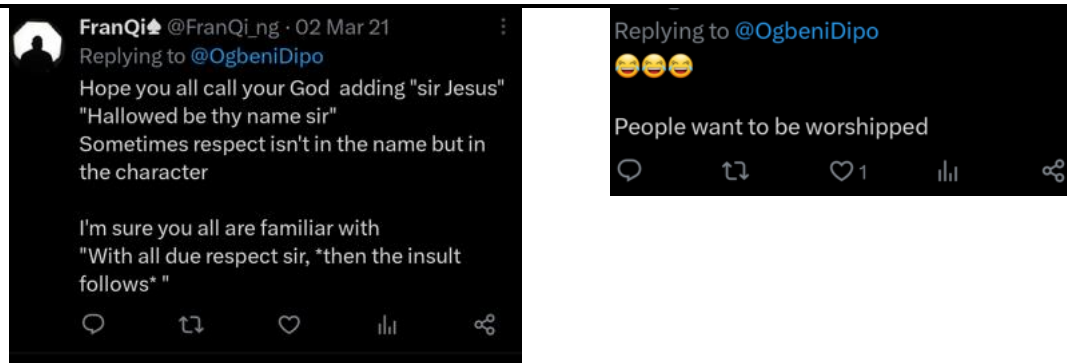
Excerpt 11	Excerpt 12
 <p>J.A Oiaoye @JA_Oiaoye · 01 Mar 21 Replying to @efestus_nwa @Viktoh_TM and 2 others Lol, this lordship attitude is part of our problem in Nigeria. Victor is Victor, John is John. Here in Kenya last messenger call top managers by their name. Kenneth is Kenneth. Adding Sir, Mr. Doesn't necessarily mean you respect them. Your attitude/character to work is the key</p>	 <p>hola アメヤ @myxteri... · 01 Mar 21 Replying to @Naija_PR Is Tope not your name? Nigerians with stupid mentality, I call my boss by his name so does he too. It forster trust, camaraderie nothing to laugh about</p>

The social actors in the above excerpt have a shared interpretation of the object under evaluation. In excerpt 11, the author employs negative *lexicalization* by claiming that the “lordship attitude” contributes to Nigerian issues. Additionally, he utilizes *illustration/example* as a discursive strategy to foreground his stance. On the other hand, the author of excerpt 12 utilizes *lexicalization* to show disalignment with the author of the stance object. This is apparent in his/her description of Nigerians' mentality as “stupid.” Lastly, having illustrated how he addresses his boss with no titles and vice versa, this author implicitly submits that leveling status differentials in a work setting fosters trust amongst others.

Table 7: Examples of Irony/Sarcasm

Excerpt 13	Excerpt 14
 <p>Plangkat @peekaymila · 01 Mar 21 Replying to @OgbeniDipo His Royal Majesty, Egbon Tope, first of his name, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, King of the Andals, the Rhoynar, and the First Men, Protector of the Realm. ...Guardian of respect</p>	 <p>AkureCityHunter @Aku... · 01 Mar 21 Replying to @OgbeniDipo "Hi, the I am that I am, the omnipotent, the omniscience, the unchangeable, unbreakable and unquestionable, keeper of the realm, the epitome of respectology, gm sir.</p>
Excerpt 15	Excerpt 16

⁵ “Woke” in the Nigerian context could mean well-enlightened or knowledgeable about contemporary issues.



Note: The word “Egbon” in excerpt 13 is a Yoruba word for someone older.

Interestingly, the above social actors utilize sarcastic and ironic comments to express their stance or demonstrate disagreement with the stance object's author, especially the supporters of the stance object. The author of excerpt 13 utilizes the ideological move of *irony* to implicitly mock the author of the stance object. It is worth noting that the author of excerpt 13 meant the opposite of the plethora of titles mentioned in his comment. In particular, addressing Tope as “His Royal Majesty,” “Lord of the Seven Heavens,” “King of the Andals,” etc., is an ideologically laden way of negatively labeling him as one who is obsessed with titles. Similarly, the author of excerpt 14 *sarcastically* uses a set of titles to ridicule Tope. The use of the title of a supreme being underscores the *ironic tone* and *sarcastic overtones* embedded in his comment. Further, with a sarcastic undertone, the author of excerpt 15 asked the supporters of Tope, a religious but thought-provoking question on whether they add honorifics to the name of the supreme beings they venerate. He argues that since it is customary in Nigeria for someone to employ the polite formulaic phrase “with all due respect”⁶ before disparaging the intended addressee, “respect” is, therefore, not always a function of honorific forms but rather of “character.” Finally, the author of excerpt 16 aligns with the other authors in excerpts 13-15, first, by using the laughing emoji, which signifies that the expectations tied to the use of honorifics are laughable. Second, by asserting that “people want to be worshipped.” Together, these comments underline the outright opposition against the stance-taking position of the author of the stance-object and his online supporters.

6.0 Discussion of Findings

An integration of Du Bois's (2007) Stance triangle and the framework of van Dijk's (2004) on critical discourse analysis in this study helps to unveil the polarized ideological stances on the use of honorifics and how they are used linguistically to reinforce power relations within the Nigerian communicative contexts. The relevance of critical discourse analysis is particularly crucial to this finding. As van Dijk (1993) argues, an essential prerequisite for conducting a sufficient critical discourse analysis is comprehending the “nature” of power dynamics. Secondly, this study indicates that issues that border on forms of address/honorifics can generate strongly contrasting stances in social media spaces in Nigeria. Further, one of the salient findings in this study is that to some Nigerians, the

⁶ For example, **with all due respect**, you are not my parents, so stop raising your voice at me.

use of honorific titles is a way of upholding the long-existing tradition of showing respect to people who deserve it, such as people of higher social standing. Additionally, a critical examination of the stances leads one to infer that honorifics are a valuable tool for subordinates in a workplace setting to mitigate the possibility of being perceived as disrespectful or lacking basic social etiquette. This agrees with Morand's (1996) submission that "linguistic politeness behaviors" are often used by low-power actors to reduce the likelihood of confrontation with their superiors. On the other end of the spectrum, other online actors perceive honorifics/linguistic forms of respect as linguistic tools capable of reinforcing power dynamics within Nigeria's workplaces and the broader sociolinguistic horizons.

Moreover, it is realized in this study that most online actors who are against the author of the stance object, Tope, and his supporters, utilized a range of stance-taking and ideological moves to implicitly advocate for the reconstruction of the existing Nigerian social norms/beliefs, particularly the ones expressed through honorifics. To them, honorifics covertly enact the apparent power relation between low-power and high-power actors, especially within organizational settings. According to the data, the most salient ideological move employed by stance-takers on both ends is *lexicalization*. Lastly, in addition to the earlier research on stances on Nigerian social media spaces, this study demonstrates that Twitter can be an effective computer-mediated forum for Nigerians to discuss matters pertaining to language reinforcement of sociocultural norms.

7.0 Conclusion

This paper critically analyzes online stance-taking and ideological moves employed by Nigerians in online discourse centered on the use of honorifics. A combination of van Dijk's framework on CDA and Du Boi's stance triangle in this study aids the critical and holistic perusal of the stances held by netizens. Furthermore, integrating these theoretical tools helps in uncovering the ideological moves deployed by online actors to foreground their claims and arguments. While certain online actors agree with the author of the stance object strategies, on the other hand, other actors disagree with the author of the stance object. Given the use of ideological strategies by certain online actors to support the intern's linguistic behavior, it suffices to argue that one of their main ideological goals is to push for the leveling of status differences that have long been woven into the fabric of Nigerian society. Conclusively, this study indicates that Nigerians utilize social media platforms to either reinforce sociocultural values expressed linguistically or challenge existing social norms linguistically reinforced.

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