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# Language, Culture and the Gender of Nigeria: A Study of the Nigerian National Anthem and Pledge

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## ABSTRACT

The paper analyses language use in Nigeria's National Anthems and Pledge, with the aim to determine consistency or disparity in gendered references to Nigeria and to account for the observed state of affairs. It adopts the Linguistic Anthropology framework, which assumes that the vocabulary of a language reflects the physical and social environment of its speakers. The study finds that Nigeria is portrayed in both the feminine and masculine gender, and queries this disparity from three dimensions, namely the biological sex of composers, the gender systems of English and major Nigerian languages, and sociocultural constructions of gender. Feminine gender reference in the three national symbols is shown to reflect the gender system of English, while masculine gender reference mirrors sociocultural constructions of metaphorical gender stereotypes. The paper concludes that the choice of vocabulary items that express the masculine gender is a natural linguistic consequence of an orientation that promotes maledominance in Nigeria's social structure.

## KEY WORDS:

Nigeria; vocabulary; gender; reference; disparity; Linguistic Anthropology

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a densely multilingual nation, with 527 indigenous languages spoken within its borders (Lewis, Simons & Fennig, 2013). Such a situation necessitates choices or policies as to what language(s) to use in concrete situations of speaking or writing, and in national life. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are recognised as national languages (Elugbe, 1990, Olaofe, 1990), English enjoys the status of official language, i.e. "the language used by officialdom" (Jowitt, 1991:21). English is the language of formal education, public administration and the media, among other uses. Hence, the National Anthems and Pledge are written in the English language.

Jowitt (1991:47) has identified a Popular Nigerian English variety, which represents the English usage "of a large section of the totality, sometimes the near-totality of English users in Nigeria." This study assumes that the National Anthems and Pledge are written in a variety of English that approximates to Jowitt's Popular Nigerian English. References to Nigeria in the National Anthems and Pledge are examined in this study, with the aim to determine consistency or disparity in the expression of gender, and to account for the observed state of affairs.

The Nigerian National Anthems and Pledge have been studied by scholars from various fields, including sociology, politics, ethics, citizenship education, nationalism, history, and linguistics. Linguistic studies of the National Anthem and Pledge also reflect various perspectives, including text linguistics (Oyeyemi, 2018) and systemic functional grammar (Souza, 2008, 2017). However, language use and how it serves as a reflection of society in terms of power structure, attitudes and values, has not been the focus of any of the studies. The present study adopts a sociolinguistic perspective. It identifies a link between the linguistic expression of gender in the national symbols and the social construction of gender in Nigeria.

The paper is organised into seven sections. Section Two reviews the literature on language, culture and gender, and the relationships between them. It also explores the phenomenon of linguistic gender and its manifestation in English and the three major languages of Nigeria, and includes a discussion on the Nigerian National Anthem and Pledge as national symbols. Section Three presents the theoretical framework adopted for the study, while Section Four presents the data and methodology. An analysis of the data is provided in Section Five, and a discussion of findings is given in Section Six. The last section concludes the study.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND GENDER**

One meaning of the term 'language' in the field of linguistics is "a specific system of signs and combinatory rules which are arbitrary but passed on as conventions" and which serves as a "vehicle for the expression or exchanging of thoughts, concepts, knowledge, and information as well as the fixing and transmission of experience and knowledge" (Bussmann, 1996:627). Language is an essential part of human existence used for communication and interaction between humans.

#### **LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND SOCIAL GENDER**

Language does not exist in a vacuum, but in a social setting. Sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society, specifically "the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning" (Holmes, 2013:1). Culture, "the traditional body of social usage" or "the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives" (Sapir, 1939:1, 99) underlies language in such a way that when people communicate with language, they encode their values, ideas, attitudes and emotions in the words of language (Bonvillain, 2003). In short, speech (language) is "the product of long-continued social usage ... a non-instinctive, acquired, 'cultural' function" (Sapir, 1921/1939:1).

The term 'gender' has different meanings. Its fundamental meaning refers to biological sex, i.e. the physiological features on the basis of which humans are categorised into male and female. Early language and gender research recognised that men and women talk differently in many cultures, and focused on differences between "women's language" and "men's language" (Piller & Pavlenko, 2006). Gender is also an important social category. In every known culture, people are assigned roles and duties on the basis of their sex (Eichstedt, Serbin, Poulin-

Dubois&Sen,2002).According to Acker (2004:20), gender refers to the “inequalities, divisions, and differences socially constructed around assumed distinctions between female and male. Gender is a basic organizing principle in social life, a principle for allocation of duties, rights, rewards, and power, including the means of violence.” The social meaning of gender is reflected in later language and gender research, which shifted “away from the earlier focus on women's language towards an understanding of gender as a system of social relations ...structuring social contexts and, by implication, language use in a given context” (Piller&Pavlenko, 2006:489).

Alubo (2016:141) defines gender as the “social and cultural interpretation of roles, duties and responsibilities in everyday life.” Different cultures create distinctive gender arrangements and identities, and what they consider as the roles of men and women(Alubo, 2016; Mead, 1935, as cited in Wood, 2001). Gender roles begin in infancy and persist throughout life (Alubo, 2016), and gender associations form part of the development of cognition in humans(Eichstedt, Serbin, Poulin-Dubois&Sen, 2002). Similarly,beliefs and attributes about the gendersare determined within cultures, for example, emotive gender correlations like feminine and positive, masculine and negative, or associations of frailty and weakness withthe feminine gender, and size and strength with the masculine gender (Curzan, 2003). Social constructions of gender are learned, maintained and perpetuated by speakers; however, they are not fixed, but vary over time, across cultures, by context and by speaker (Curzan, 2003; Piller&Pavlenko, 2006).

### **GENDER IN LANGUAGE**

Gender is also an important linguistic category.A certain connection is assumed between linguistic gender categories (masculine, feminine, neuter) and the natural distinction between male, female and sexless, and linguists have speculated on the nature of this connection for centuries (Curzan, 2003).Gender is manifested in language in two distinct forms. Semantic gender systems assign gender to nouns on the basis of the features of the referents (which may not necessarily be biological sex), while non-semantic/grammatical/formal gender systems assign gender on the basis of linguistic form (morphological and/or phonological features) of referents (Curzan, 2003; Dahl, 2000).All linguistic gender systems divide nouns into formal classes as the basis of grammatical agreement (or concord) between the nouns and other words associated with them in a phrase or sentence(Curzan, 2003; Dahl, 2000).

Among the major languages of Nigeria, gender is not attested in Igbo and Yoruba, both of which belong to the Niger-Congo phylum. There are no formal clues, morphological or phonological, to suggest that nouns in these languages are divided into formal classes based on the criterion of agreement. In contrast, Hausa, which belongs to the Afro-Asiatic phylum,exhibits a grammatical system of gender which assigns nouns to masculine or feminine categories. Certain proper nouns, including names of countries, are feminine, while otherslike names of months of



the year are masculine (Galadanci, 1976). There are also nouns with common gender and conventional gender, but grammatical or formal gender is the rule in Hausa.

The English language has a semantic gender system that categorises animate nouns according to their biological traits, while inanimate nouns are neuter (sexless). It is a system of “logical” gender expressed by the categories of substantives (nouns) and pronouns, which denote male beings, female beings, and inanimates (Jespersen, 1933). It is also a “natural” gender system, and a pronominal gender system, in which gender agreement is reflected only in the gendered personal pronouns (*he/she/it*) and relative pronouns (*who/which*) (Curzan, 2003). However, there are some unusual nouns in the English system which are classified into conventionalized and emotive (affective) references. They involve gender upgrading and downgrading, i.e. the assignment of the “wrong” gender to a referent, thus attributing to it the properties associated with the assigned gender (Curzan, 2003; Dahl, 2000). This has various effects that relate to speakers' feelings about the possession of power or deprivation of power/personality on the part of the referents (Joly, 1975, as cited in Curzan, 2003).

Emotive gender assignments reveal the attitudes of speakers, such as sympathy, affection and indifference, towards the referents (Curzan, 2003; Dahl, 2000; Jespersen, 1933), as in when a person is referred to with the neuter pronoun *it*, or a woman is assigned the masculine gender. Similarly, an inanimate referent may be referred to with a gendered pronoun, as when people speak of their pipe or watch as *he*, or their car or a train as *she*. Gender upgrading or downgrading may become conventionalised (Dahl, 2000) as in the practice in the English language of assigning the feminine gender to ships and countries and to nouns like *sun*, *moon*, *earth*, *city*, *month* and *church*.

## THE NIGERIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM AND PLEDGE AS NATIONAL SYMBOLS

The Anthem and Pledge are two of Nigeria's national symbols, i.e. official, historical, cultural, social and religious symbols that distinguish Nigeria from other countries and/or commemorate landmarks in Nigeria's nationhood (Alawode, Adesanya & Agboola, 2018; Edewor, 1993), and which “may be physical, abstract, religious, cultural, and linguistic, among others” (Alawode, Adesanya & Agboola, 2018: 100). The symbols selected for this study are all linguistic.

In the pre-independence period in Nigeria, the British national anthem was sung at official ceremonies and other important events, but at the attainment of political independence in 1960, an anthem which begins with “Nigeria, we hail thee” was adopted. However, it was later thought that although the anthem stressed national unity, it also acknowledged ethnic differences (Ibhawoh, 2008) and was, therefore, part of Nigeria's colonial legacy (Mbamalu, 2011; Tohceb, 2016). This led to its rejection (Igwarra, 1993) and the adoption of the current one in 1978.

In Souza's (2017) classification of national anthems, the current Nigerian



National Anthem belongs to the power-consolidation category, i.e. anthems produced after the achievement of state power in order to strengthen the position and governing system of the nation-state in the period following the conquering of power (Souza, 2017:577). The Nigerian National Pledge is also a post-independence national symbol.

Souza's (2008) study of the national anthems of 18 English-speaking countries shows that references to nations may be in the form of an abstract political concept of nation, such as the names of the countries and nouns like *country, nation, land, homeland, native land, isle, island, gem, and haven*, or pronouns (*her, you, thee, and thy*), or familial metaphors (*mother, motherland, fatherland*), with the citizens depicted as *children, sons, or sons and daughters*. The current study examines all references to Nigeria in the National Anthems and Pledge.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study assumes the theoretical framework of Linguistic Anthropology, which dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, notably to the works of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. Their views on language, thought and behavior, which have become known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, analysed the vocabulary of some Native American languages in order to uncover the "physical and social environment in which the people live" (Bonvillain, 2003:47). Sapir (1949a, as cited in Bonvillain, 2003:47) found that "the complete vocabulary of a language may indeed be looked upon as a complex inventory of all the ideas, interests and occupations that take up the attention of the community." The relationship between language and culture may also be seen through more complex grammatical relations (Whorf, 1950).

Linguistic Anthropology has undergone several changes, leading to modifications and a broadening of its scope. More work has been carried out within this theoretical framework to portray how "cultural values and symbols are encoded in words or expressions and are then used by speakers to transmit emotional, attitudinal and symbolic meanings" (Bonvillain, 2003:51). Presently, Linguistic Anthropology includes or draws from a wide range of fields, including folklore and performance studies, literacy and education, cognitive sociology, interactional sociology, social cognition, and child language acquisition (Duranti, 1997). Linguistic Anthropology recognises that the words of language are indexes i.e. "pointer toward contextually relevant social coordinates of equality/inequality, solidarity/power" and that the "creative and performative aspect of indexicality... is used by speakers in the construction of ethnic and gender identities" such that "language becomes a tool through which our social and cultural world is constantly described, evaluated, and reproduced" (Duranti, 1997:19). Thus, the focus remains the lexicon (vocabulary), although scholars' interests have diversified (Bonvillain, 2003:47).

The present study focuses on lexical items or vocabulary and is hinged on indexicality – the property of linguistic expressions to point out aspects of the



sociocultural context – which is one of the **theoretical concerns in contemporary Linguistic Anthropology**. The basic assumption of the study is that the culture, beliefs and values of the Nigerian society are reflected in the choice of lexical or vocabulary items in the national symbols studied. This is echoed in the observation by Ember and Ember (1996:80, 82) that there is a relationship between language and culture such that “one way a society's language may reflect its corresponding culture is in its lexical content, or vocabulary,” such that “the vocabulary of a language reflects the everyday distinctions that are important in the society.” In line with the above statements, this study focuses on the lexical content of the National Anthems and Pledge as a reflection of the Nigerian sociocultural situation.

### **DATA AND METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS**

The old National Anthem comprises three stanzas, as follows:

Nigeria we hail thee/ Our own dear native land/ Though tribe and tongue  
may differ/ In brotherhood we stand/ Nigerians all and proud to serve/ Our  
sovereign motherland.

Our flag shall be a symbol/ That truth and justice reign/ In peace or battle  
honoured/ And this we count as gain/ To pass unto our children/ A banner  
without stain.

O God of all creation/ Grant this our one request/ Help us to build a  
nation/ Where no man is oppressed/ And so with peace and plenty/  
Nigeria may be blessed.

This anthem was written by Lillian Jean Williams, a British expatriate who lived in Nigeria then, and the music was written by Frances Benda (Ibhawoh, 2008; Mbamalu, 2011). The first words of each stanza capture the subject matter of its content or the entity to which the content is addressed: “Nigeria”, “Our flag”, “O God”.

The current National Anthem has two stanzas, with lyrics as follows:

Arise, O compatriots/ Nigeria's call obey/ To serve our fatherland/ With love  
and strength and faith/ The labour of our heroes past/ Shall never be in vain/  
To serve with heart and might/ One nation bound in freedom, peace, and  
unity.

Oh God of creation/ Direct our noble cause/ Guide our leaders right/ I help  
our youth the truth to know/ In love and honesty to grow/ And living just  
and true/ Great lofty heights attain/ To build a nation where peace and  
justice shall reign.

The Anthem came about through a national contest to replace the old Anthem, organised by the government. Five Nigerian writers emerged as finalists, and the Anthem is a combination of words from their entries. The music was composed by Benedict Elise Odiase, who was the director of the Nigeria Police Band at the time (Mbamalu, 2011; Otufodunrin, 2013).

The National Pledge is a six-line poem, with wording as follows:



I pledge to Nigeria, my country/ To be faithful, loyal, and honest/ To serve Nigeria with all my strength/ To defend her unity/ And uphold her honour and glory/ So help me God.

It was written by Professor Felicia Adebola Adeyoyin, a Nigerian, for her children. She published it in an article in the *Daily Times* of July 15, 1976, and it was later accepted, modified and formally adopted as a national symbol in 1976 by the then military government, which decreed that all school children should recite it every day (Igwara, 1993; Koleosho, 2006).

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

In the analysis of data, firstly the texts of the old and current National Anthems and Pledge are examined and all potential referential expressions, i.e., nouns and pronouns, are isolated. Secondly, the nouns and pronouns are classified in order to identify those that are used in the data to refer to Nigeria and those that are not. In the third step, the nouns and pronouns used for reference to Nigeria are subdivided into gendered and non-gendered references and the gendered references are compared in order to determine consistency or disparity in their expression of gender.

### NOUNS AND PRONOUNS IN THE DATA

#### (i) Old National Anthem

A total of 36 tokens of potential referential expressions (comprising of 25 nouns and 11 pronouns) were identified in the old National Anthem, as follows:

**Nouns:** *Nigeria* (two tokens), *native land*, *tribe*, *tongue*, *brotherhood*, *Nigerians*, *motherland*, *flag*, *symbol*, *truth*, *justice*, *peace*, *battle*, *gain*, *children*, *banner*, *stain*, *God*, *creation*, *request*, *nation*, *man*, *peace*, *plenty*

**Pronouns:** *we* (three tokens), *our* (five tokens), *thee*, *this*, *we*, *us*

#### (ii) Current National Anthem

The nouns and pronouns in the current National Anthem are a total of 31 tokens (27 nouns and 4 pronouns), as follows:

**Nouns:** *compatriots*, *Nigeria*, *call*, *fatherland*, *love*, *strength*, *faith*, *labour*, *heroes*, *heart*, *might*, *nation* (two tokens), *freedom*, *peace*, *unity*, *God*, *creation*, *cause*, *leaders*, *youth*, *truth*, *love*, *honesty*, *heights*, *peace*, *justice*.

**Pronouns:** *our* (four tokens)

#### (iii) National Pledge

The one-verse National Pledge contains 8 noun tokens and 5 pronoun tokens, as follows:

**Nouns:** *Nigeria* (two tokens), *country*, *strength*, *unity*, *honour*, *glory*, *God*.

**Pronouns:** *my* (two tokens), *her* (two tokens), *me*.

In all, a total of 80 tokens were isolated from the data, comprising 60 nouns and 20 pronouns. Thus, nouns are substantially greater in number than pronouns in the data.

## 5.2 Classification of Nouns and Pronouns in the Data

The nouns in the data can be classified into:

- a. Abstract nouns, most of which represent values expected to be upheld by citizens, or desired attributes of the nation – e.g. *truth, justice, peace, plenty, love, strength, faith, freedom, unity, honesty, honour, glory*. Most of the nouns in the data belong to this category.
- b. Nouns referring to Nigeria – e.g. *Nigeria, nation, country*.
- c. Nouns referring to citizens – e.g. *man, children, heroes, youth, leaders*
- d. Other nouns – e.g. *tribe, tongue, battle, flag, symbol, banner, request, labour, heart, might, heights*.

Similarly, the pronouns in the data are categorised into:

- a. Pronouns referring to Nigeria – *thee, her*.
- b. Pronouns referring to citizens – *we, our, us, my, me*.
- c. An anaphoric pronoun (with an antecedent in the context of the data) – *this* (second stanza of the old National Anthem).

The above data show that the nouns and pronouns used to refer to Nigeria constitute a small subset of the nouns and pronouns in the data. They are further classified in the next segment.

## 5.3 Classification of Nouns and Pronouns Referring to Nigeria

A total of 12 noun tokens are used to refer to Nigeria in the data – 5 in the old National Anthem, 4 in the current Anthem and 3 in the Pledge. They fall into three categories, namely:

- a. The name of the country – (*Nigeria*) – 5 tokens
- b. Nouns that express the political concept of nation (*native land, nation, country*) – 5 tokens
- c. Nouns in the form of familial metaphors (*motherland, fatherland*) – 2 tokens.

The pronoun tokens referring to Nigeria are 3 in the data and are classified as follows:

- i. Gendered pronoun – (*her*) – 2 tokens
- ii. Non-gendered pronoun (*thee*) – 1 token

These data contain only one gendered pronoun used to refer to Nigeria, and a disparity in the gendered nouns used as familial metaphors. This disparity is taken up in the next section.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Gendered pronominal reference to Nigeria in the data is only in the feminine, namely the use of the word *her*. This is found in the National Pledge. However, there is inconsistency in the gender portrayals of Nigeria in the nominal references – the old Anthem employs the feminine gender (i.e., *motherland*), while the current Anthem employs the masculine gender (i.e., *fatherland*). This disparity in gender reference plays out when school children sing the National Anthem and refer to the



country in the masculine gender and immediately follow it with a recitation of the Pledge, in which Nigeria is referred to in the feminine gender (“To serve our *fatherland*...” ... “...To defend *her* unity and uphold *her* honour and glory”).

A number of perspectives could be explored to account for this inconsistency. Firstly, it could be assumed to result from differences in the biological sex of the composers. The old Anthem and the Pledge were both written by women, while the composers of the new Anthem are men. It may be assumed that the choice of lexical/vocabulary items reflects the gender differences of the composers, such that female composers chose *motherland* (and *her*), while male composers preferred *fatherland* to refer to the same entity. Note, however, that the original text of what has become known as the Nigerian National Pledge, as given in Koleosho (2006), had *fatherland* before it was modified and officially adopted.

A second perspective comes from the manifestation of gender in the languages in contact in Nigeria, i.e. English and indigenous Nigerian languages, represented by Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. It has been noted above that linguistic gender is not attested in Igbo and Yoruba, while Hausa has a well-defined grammatical gender system. It is interesting that the proper names of countries are categorised as feminine in Hausa (Galadanci, 1976). Thus the portrayal of Nigeria in the masculine gender in the current Anthem may not be attributed to the influence of indigenous languages like Hausa. The reference to Nigeria as *motherland* and *her* is consistent with the practice, in English, of employing the feminine gender for countries. However, English gender does not account for the use of *fatherland*. There is, therefore, no evidence from any of these four languages to justify the use of *fatherland* in reference to Nigeria. It is noteworthy that in Souza's (2008) study of 18 national anthems, 7 of them were found to represent the nations as parents or home. Of this number, 3 used the words *land* or *homeland*, 3 used the words *Mother* or *Motherland*, and only one (that of Nigeria) used the word *Fatherland*.

The third perspective is the sociocultural construction of gender in Nigeria. Souza (2008) points out that the use of lexical metaphors is one strategy for indirectly realising attitudinal meanings. For example, a nation may be represented as “home” in a national anthem if the figure of home is associated with feelings of security and belonging. An insight into the use of lexical metaphors in the old and current National Anthems with regard to *motherland* and *fatherland* is provided in two studies in the literature, as discussed below.

Toheeb (2017) opines about the use of *motherland* in the old Anthem that “we've assumed that one nation wombs us together irrespective of our cultural backgrounds and political exposure – and that's Nigeria, our mother. The wisdom is that ... there is a stronger bound (sic) among children of the same mother but of different fathers.” Toheeb, thus, justifies the use of *motherland* as a lexical metaphor for a nation that is seen to give birth to its citizens and to unite them. He claims that the replacement of *motherland* in the old Anthem with *fatherland* in the new

Anthem “set a trajectory of gradual disintegration” for the nation.

In contrast, Mbamalu (2011) notes that the figure of father is used metaphorically for “the originator of a family or company or country of persons animated by the same spirit” (p. 20). He claims that it is used by the composers of the new Anthem to refer to the land of Nigeria, which “feeds us for a lifetime and houses us for eternity” (p. 20), pointing out that “father speaks of one who upholds, protects, and nourishes” (p. 38). This view, taken together with that of Tohech (2016), suggests that the preference of one word to another is a reflection of gendered characteristics of men and women within a culture.

Mbamalu maintains that the use of *fatherland* instead of *motherland* is deliberate and that it represents a nationalistic concept, since neither the composers nor the majority of Nigerians are gender-insensitive. Citing evidence from historians and sociologists, Mbamalu (2011:38) submits that “all the different cultures in Nigeria are patriarchal in orientation because power and decision-making reside mainly with men.” Such culture-based metaphorical stereotypes (mother, birth and unity vs. father, protection and provision) may well account for the preference for *fatherland* in the composition of the current National Anthem. It is interesting, however, that in numerous pronominal references to Nigeria, Mbamalu uses the feminine gender. For example, Nigeria is depicted as a “parent” whose children are “supposed to bring her honour and glory” (p. 173). His consistent feminine pronominal reference to Nigeria agrees with the pattern found in gendered pronominal references to Nigeria in the data for this study, specifically in the National Pledge (“*her unity; her honour*”), and is consistent with the English gender system.

It is, thus, obvious that the masculine reference to Nigeria in the text of the current National Anthem is based on a sociocultural construction of gender, in which Nigeria is imagined as male and personalised as such. This pattern seems to reflect the power distinction between the sexes found in conventionalised gender upgrading attested in many languages. Joly (1975, as cited in Curzan, 2003) describes a system of gender upgrading in Indo-European languages in such a way that the choice of a gendered pronoun (*he* or *she*) for inanimate referents reflects two degrees of power within the sphere of humanity – major power (masculine) and minor power (feminine).

A similar pattern of power distinction may account for the use of a masculine lexical metaphor (*fatherland*) that pertains to the sphere of major power. This reflects the type of power structure in the Nigerian sociocultural milieu, namely, patriarchy, which emphasises the dominance or power of the male figure, while the female figure is kept in the background (Alubo, 2016). Thus, the portrayal of Nigeria as masculine is not based on linguistic gender but on a socioculturally constructed metaphorical gender association, which includes the idea that men protect, provide for, dominate and control the family.



## CONCLUSION

The study has examined references to Nigeria in the National Anthems and Pledge, all of which are written in English. It found that all pronominal references to Nigeria are in the feminine gender (*her*), in line with conventionalised gender upgrading in the English language. However, a disparity was identified in gendered nominal references to Nigeria. Whereas the gendered noun in the old National Anthem adheres to the natural gender system of English in its reference to Nigeria as *motherland*, the current Anthem refers to Nigeria with a masculine gendered noun (*fatherland*), which is inconsistent with the gender system of English, and does not represent the system of gender found in an indigenous language Nigerian like Hausa.

In the singing and recitation of the National Anthem and the Pledge consecutively, the feminine pronominal gender reference to Nigeria in the Pledge sharply contrasts with nominal masculine gender reference in the Anthem. The study examined this disparity from three perspectives and concludes that masculine gender reference to Nigeria is based on a sociocultural construction of metaphorical gender that reflects the common stereotypes regarded as typical of the genders, and the patriarchal power structure in the Nigerian society. This affirms the major assumption made in the study that the choice of lexical or vocabulary items reflects the culture and values of society, and lends credence to a basic assumption in Linguistic Anthropology that words convey meanings and values which could be cultural, emotional or symbolic.

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