

# Pragmatics of Musical Rhetoric in the Post-2015 Elections in Nigeria

Ayodele James Akinola  
Chrisland University

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ayodele James Akinola, Department of English, Chrisland University, Ajebo Road after FMC, Abeokuta, Ogun state, Nigeria, 23409.  
E-mail: james2a2@gmail.com

In linguistics, most studies on rhetoric are approached from the perspective of persuasive ideologies of social actors such as community, religious, and political leaders with a concentration on their speeches and the impacts of the speeches on their followers and society at large. As a result, music as a form of persuasion and political strategy has been under-researched. This paper investigates the rhetoric embedded in politically-motivated musical renditions in the post-2015 elections in Nigeria and identifies ideologies of persuasion, pragmatic choice(s), and implications of the narratives on the Nigerian political landscape. Mey's pragmatic acts serve as the theoretical base. Two popular and viral musical renditions in (Nigerian pidgin) English from social media were selected for the study. Analysis of the selected songs which critiqued the leadership style of President Muhammadu Buhari from two opposing angles was carried out. Both songs exhibited the Pragmemic activity of (in)direct speech acts as well as conversational and psychological acts through their rhythm and lyrics adapted from Harry Song's popular 'Reggae Blues' and re-titled as 'The (Change/Truth) Blues'. Musical political rhetoric relies on co-texts conveyed through verifiable information, (satiric) visuals, history, antecedents, and socio-political realities and sentiments as strategies of persuasion. The pragmatic acts employed include narrating, condemning, accusing and counter-accusing, blaming, justifying, (partial) veiling, threatening, hoping, and praying. The study reveals the political consciousness and conflicting perceptions of some Nigeria citizens in governance and makes a case for 'truth awareness' among the governed. Citizens' active participation and better access to information about the political leadership of the day is, therefore, advocated. All these are invaluable for the reposing of trust in the government and also engender citizens' active participation.

*Keywords:* Pragmatics, musical rhetoric, post-2015 elections, Nigeria

## Introduction

The practice and theory of eloquence and rhetoric, whether spoken or written (Duckworth<sup>1</sup>, 2000), has received global attention over the years. Scholars have been interested in the study of how persuasion is used to drive people into action. Classical rhetoric dates to the time of Aristotle and Plato, where oratory prowess is considered a form of spoken rhetoric (Bizzell and Herzberg, 2000). Although the eloquence that Nestor, Odysseus, and Achilles displayed in the *Iliad* by the Greek poet Homer led many Greeks to look upon Homer as the father of oratory (Duckworth, 2000), there are other accounts on rhetoric regarding a group of teachers who arose and were known as Sophists, with the purpose of making men better speakers by rules of art (Nelson, Megill, & McCloskey 1987, Freese, 1926; Meyer, 2012). Simonson (2013) avered that historically, rhetoric as a social practice takes on particular significance in culturally unsettled moments, such as, those marked with disagreements or widespread doubts. He explains that in such moments, rhetorical practices become primary media through which emergent and traditional forms of life make themselves felt upon hearts, minds, and bodies swimming in larger seas of instability or competing voices. From this, it can be deduced that rhetoric defines the rules that should govern all prose composition or speech designed to influence the judgment or the feelings of people. It, therefore, treats all matters relating to beauty or forcefulness of style (Duckworth, 2000). In a narrower sense, rhetoric is concerned with a consideration of the fundamental principles according to which oratorical discourses are composed such as its invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery (op. cit). The study of rhetoric often coalesces related issues such as metaphor, persuasion, prevarication, and all manners of appeals (see Otieno, 2016; Taiwo, 2013; Michira, 2014; Clarissa, 2012; Vestermark, 2007; Ngoa, 2011).

<sup>1</sup> Duckworth, G. E. (2000). "Rhetoric," Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <http://autocww.colorado.edu/~toldy2/E64ContentFiles/LiteraryGenres/Rhetoric>

### **Rhetoric in twenty-first century literature**

Rhetoric, being a skilful means of influencing and persuading others using all forms of linguistic tools, has continued to attract scholarly attention globally across disciplines and involving inter-disciplinary collaborations. In some of the existing literature in the twenty-first century on the subject, discussions have been based on political personalities and their use of rhetoric to influence opinions of their followers, convince or confuse the opposition, and attempt to gaining the support of neutral observers (see Ike-Nwafor, 2015; Adegaju, 2014). Similarly, other studies focused on rhetoric among religious leaders across the world and as a factor of conflict and resolution (Nwankwo, 2015; Owolabi, 2012; Goldsby, 2011). Many of these researchers construed political and religious leaders as agents of rhetoric. Through these studies, many political or religious key figures and their persuasive use of language became contextualised.

Most of the existing studies considered rhetoric as a form of persuasion embedded in the ideologies of various individuals such as notable or popular political leaders and/or religious personalities. From these, unpopular individuals have enjoyed a paucity of scholarly attention in their linguistic utilisation of persuasion among others. Yet, depending on the chosen style, these individuals are capable of wielding some influences in the socio-political space of any society where they found themselves. Interestingly, the rhetoric of these neglected few can be deduced from any form of arts such as music, interpersonal communication, dance, cinematography, poetry, drama, narration, graffiti, 'latrinalia' (a type of deliberately inscribed markings made on latrines), and many others. Moreover, many of the existing studies on rhetoric approach the subject from the disciplinary standpoint of stylistics, semantics, and other aspects of discourse, ignoring the perspective of pragmatics. In particular, studies on political musical composition of persuasion from the standpoint of pragmatics are rare. In order to reflect on the contextual perception on the subject, a brief review of some of the existing studies on rhetoric, in relation with music and politics, is presented.

### **Rhetoric, music, and politics**

As mentioned earlier, the study of rhetorics has been engaged across various disciplines and has attracted interdisciplinary collaborations. Hence, it has often brought together perspectives from music and politics. This engagement has persisted as scholars continue to discuss the relevance, roles, and interrelationship among rhetoric, music, and politics. Such works included Graham and Luttrell (2018); Peterson, (2018); Thompson (2018); Gray (2017); Schwartz (2016) among others. In other instances, Nwankwo (2015); Ike-Nwafor (2015); Adegaju (2014); Owolabi (2012); Goldsby (2011); Taiwo (2013) provided some useful information on the role of rhetoric in society. Some of these will now be briefly discussed.

Graham and Luttrell (2018) emphasised the social semiotic functioning of string arrangements as styles. They demonstrated the working of the rhetoric and its political implications in the context of the counter-cultural forces active during the mid-1960s. Peterson (2018) examined the intersection of music, rhetoric, and politics and explored evolving patterns and trends in campaign music. In the study, she observed that political parties studied largely made use of congruity in their campaign songs and that the use increased over time. The scholar observed that one of the two major political parties had a critical stance towards the (happenings) in the nation while the other expressed a patriotic stance towards the nation being studied (The United States of America). Thompson (2018) investigated Debussy's manipulation of musical materials. He examined ways that both symbolist poets and impressionist composers enact and contend with poems' structures and semantics. The study also inquired into the hypothetical reconstruction of Debussy's "rhetoric of suggestion". It was discovered that the presumed obliviousness in the use of musical topics is instead a hallmark of Debussy's coherent, albeit subversive, musico-poetic strategies—as part of a larger "rhetoric of suggestion". Among the studies being reviewed, this study dwelled more on the aesthetic than it did for politics or culture.

Moreover, Gray (2017) considered the political tendencies in "Hail Columbia". Specifically, he reviews the tagged of "non-partisanship" on the song. He argued that the it is not valid to consider the song, "Hail Columbia", a spontaneous expression of an embryonic national spirit. He, therefore, said that the song does not merely reflect a spontaneous popular reaction, but rather represents an effort to equate the French conflict with the American Revolution. Gray claimed that the fame of "Hail Columbia" suggests that the deterioration of Franco-American relations left a deep mark on American public consciousness and that because being American was to be connected to England and France, the song endorsed a partial perspective on those relationships. Schwartz

(2016) brought the Marshallese voices into limelight in terms of material and political representations by defining them. The scholar believes that decolonization as a form of nation building depends on Marshallese politics of the voice. According to Schwartz, politics of the voice serves as a reference to colonial encounters and two political ontologies.

### **Rhetorics at other intersections**

Nwankwo (2015) explored rhetoric and the realities of managing ethnoreligious conflicts in Nigeria. She examined the nature, protagonists, and management mechanisms employed in the deployment of rhetoric and argued that the government and civil societies need to play a proactive role in arresting the negative consequences that ethnoreligious conflicts breed. The need to investigate how texts reproduce and sustain power equations and unequal power relations in campaign texts through the rhetoric of gubernatorial campaign speeches was the focus of Ike-Nwafor (2015) using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the basis. In the study, domination and supremacy were identified as strategies of rhetoric through which opinions of the speakers are imposed on others. Adegoju (2014) studied the speeches of selected political figures in the struggles of the June 12 political power-play that was recorded between the military and civilians. With insights also from CDA, deixis is identified as a discursive strategy deployed in the conflict rhetoric, which helped to reproduce dominance and control. Owolabi (2012) observed the manner in which religious leaders manipulate the English language to persuade their audience. In support of the view being advanced by Babatunde (1998), Owolabi asserted that these leaders adopt rhetorical devices such as personification, oxymorons, puns, rhymes and rhythms, et cetera, which serve “ornamental functions of enhancing the aesthetic quality of speakers...” (Owolabi, 2012: 9).

Goldsby (2011) documented blame as a strategy of rhetoric used during Christian versus Muslim conflicts in Nigeria. Criticising an account of Boer on the root cause of the conflicts being the Muslims, and the interrelationship of religion and politics, the scholar opined that conflict in Nigeria is mainly due to the pre-conception of ideas in the minds of the different adherents of the two religions. The researcher observed that based on the rhetoric of blame imposed on followers by their leaders, Christians will always blame Muslims and vice versa. Mutual understanding of one another’s beliefs is, therefore, advocated for peaceful coexistence. Taiwo (2013) identified the rhetorical communication of a political leader (Obafemi Awolowo) in the history of the Nigerian State. He averred that the leader employed the use of the English language as a persuasion strategy so as to gain the support of his audience. Ajewole (2013) examined political speeches made by leaders to persuade, inform, correct and manipulate the audience. Particular attention was focussed on a collection of Awolowo’s speeches. The study aligns with others that perceive rhetoric as a major tool used by political figures to influence their followers. Other studies that have been done on the use of rhetoric by political leaders in Nigeria include Akinwotu (2016), Adetunji (2009), Ezejideaku & Ugwu, (2007), Adebisi (2006), Ayeomoni (2005), among others.

Going by many of the existing studies on rhetoric, it is observed that the concentration of the use of rhetoric is viewed from the leader-followers or leaders-audience approach by scholars whose works were reviewed. This brings about the questions: Do followers deploy rhetoric to show support for their leaders or to influence one another? In what forms is this rhetoric deployed? Are there any pragmatic implications for this? In the succeeding parts of this paper, answers to these questions will be attempted.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Materials**

The materials used for this study are digital videos: “Change Blues” and “The Truth Blues-Corruption Fights Back” downloaded from YouTube. The two renditions are a parody of popular Harrysong<sup>2</sup> song which was released in 2015 titled “Reggae Blues” (see Harrysong and Adasa, 2015). This song had over 6,000,000 views on YouTube at the time this researcher visited the channel. It was from “Reggae Blues” the song “Change Blues” was adapted. “Change Blues” was published on YouTube on July 28, 2016 (see Kuro<sup>3</sup>, 2015) before going viral on other social media platforms. The rendition lasted 5:01 and has over 40,000 views. The composition criticises

<sup>2</sup> Harrysong & Adasa C. (2015). Reggae blues. Nigeria. Five Star Music. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4nT3Od5cxI>

<sup>3</sup> Kuro (2015). Change blues. Nigeria. Zoo Music. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nL\\_gRW2t68](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nL_gRW2t68)

President Muhammadu Buhari's promised change and style of governance since he was elected. The second adaptation used as Text B with the title "The Truth Blues-Corruption Fights Back", serves as a response and defence of the All Progressives Congress (APC)-led government of President Muhammadu. The song attempted to remind the audience that previous members of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) were the root cause of every difficulty being faced by Nigerians at the time of the rendition. This song was published on August 23, 2016, after which it also went viral on other social media platforms. It has a duration of 2:48 and about 11,000 views at the time of the collection of data for this study.

The transcriptions of both songs are presented below:

### Text A: "Change Blues" Lyrics

#### Chorus:

1. *After the election wey dem do, Dem do... Dem Do* [After the election that was conducted]
2. *We still dey wait for the change, The change... the change* [We are still waiting for the change]
3. *All the promise wey dem make, Dem make... dem make* [All the promises that they made]
4. *Edon dey be like say na fake, Na fake.... na fake* [It's like they are fake]
5. *Where the money? where the food?, The food... the food* [Where is the money, where is the food]
6. *'Cos everybody wan improve, Improve... improve* [Because everybody desires improvement]
7. *Since you come na tears and pain, And pain ... and pain* [Since you arrived (became president), it is tears and pain]
8. *We don tire to complain oooo, Ah... Ah* [We are tired of complaining]

#### Solo 1a:

9. *Baba see the bad wey you bin do, You don tear Nigeria into two, In two... in two* [Baba, see the bad things you have done. You have divided Nigeria into two]
10. *97% and 5%, Percent... percent*
11. *You no bin talk like President, Like President...* [You don't talk like the President]
12. *You dey rule Nigeria with sentiment, With sentiment...* [You are ruling Nigeria with sentiment]
13. *And take your office do revenge, Revenge... revenge* [And use your office to seek revenge]

#### Solo 1b:

14. *Oya now, Oga Buhari we dey begi o, Make Nigeria no scatter for your headi o* [Now, Mr Buhari, we are pleading (that) you should not let Nigeria disintegrate during your reign]
15. *Jesu!*

#### Solo 2a:

16. *No employment for the youth, The youths... the youths*
17. *And security no improve, Improve... improve* [And not improved security]
18. *Inflation don dey hit the roof, The roof... roof* [Inflation is getting so high]
19. *Still government no dey say the truth, The truth... the truth* [Yet, the government is untruthful]

#### Solo 2b:

20. *Oya my brother this change na yawa, We don too dey suffer, We pray God for Nigeria,* [Now, my (brother) people, this change is a fraud. We are suffering a lot, we pray to God for Nigeria]
21. *Oya my sister this government na yawa, And you don too dey suffer, We pray God for Nigeria.*

#### Solo 3a:

22. *See as economy just dey fall, Dey fall... dey fall* [See the economy taking a downturn]
23. *And you just dey travel around the world, The world... the world* [And you are globetrotting]
24. *Abi your office dey for sky.....? Or For sky... for sky* [Do you have your office in the sky?]
25. *Coz na time to work you dey take dey fly, Dey fly... dey fly* [Because the time you were supposed to spend working is spent flying]

#### Solo 3b:

26. *We no give you the vote you take am, take am* [We did not vote for you, you stole it]
27. *Certificate sef you fake am, fake am* [You even forged a certificate]

28. *Baba Buhari, election criminal* [Baba Buhari, (you are) an election criminal]
29. *Amechi collect am you hail am, hail am* [Amechi looted (the treasury), you hail him]
30. *Dasuki collect am you jail am, jail am* [Dasuki looted (the treasury), you put him in jail]
31. *Baba Buhari, you too dey partial o.* [Baba Buhari, you are partial!]

**Solo 4:**

32. *Only you and your people dey chop all the loot wey you gather* [Only you and your associates are enjoying all the loot you recovered]
33. *Na enjoyment you dey you no come presidency to suffer, eh eh* [You have only come to enjoy, not to suffer]
34. *You dey rule Naija like say na war, na war... na war* [You are ruling Nigeria as if there is a war]
35. *You dey fight corruption dey break the law, the law... the law* [You are fighting corruption while breaking the law]
36. *Buhari it's better you withdraw, withdraw... withdraw*
37. *Than to blame Jonathan for all your flaws... your flaws... your flaws*
38. *Jonathan don give you power, the man wey no like wahala, Yeba!* [Jonathan has transferred power to you, the man who does not want trouble]
39. *We no believe in your policy. Pack up and let us be.* [We have no confidence in your policy. Pack up and let us be]

**Text B: "The Truth Blues" Lyrics**

**Chorus:**

1. *Before the election wey dem lose, dem lose, dem lose* [Before the election where they were defeated]
2. *Oil price still boku, boku, boku* [Oil prices are still high (valuable)]
3. *Na so so dem thief-thief and loot iyo! and loot, and loot* [(But) there was stealing and looting galore]
4. *Even thief money for guns and boot, and boot, and boot* [They even stole the funds for guns and boots]
5. *Dem buy the jet and cash vamoose, vamoose* [They bought a jet and funds went missing]
6. *20 billion join remove, remove* [20 billion was removed]
7. *Enjoy themselves dey groove and booze, and booze, and booze* [They enjoyed themselves travelling and drinking]
8. *Naira and Naija just dey wail oooo. aaah aah!* [Naira and Nigeria are wailing]
9. *Boko thief Chibok girls pikin, pikin pikin* [Boko Haram (terrorists) kidnapped Chibok children]
10. *Dem still dey dance, loot and steal, and steal and steal* [They were (busy) dancing, looting and stealing]
11. *Dem steal today and tomorrow join o, e join, e join* [They steal the present and even the future]
12. *15 billion dollars remove, Ahhh aahhhh* [15 billion dollars was stolen]
13. *Sotey, nothing dey for account, account, account* [To the extent the account got emptied]
14. *Too much suffer for the land, the land, the land* [There is so much suffering in the land]

**Solo 1:**

15. *Oya na, Oil come dey fall, Naira come dey fall* [(As a result), oil (prices) started falling, The naira started losing its value]
16. *Naija no go follow dem fall at all at all.* [Nigeria will not fall alongside it]

**Solo 2**

17. *After the election come the news, the news, the news* [After the election came the news]
18. *Dem thief like say na we be fool, be fool, be fool* [They have stolen as if we are fools]
19. *Return the loot or go to jail, to jail, to jail*
20. *Thiefy thiefy people dey cry and wail o aahhh ahhh* [The looters are the ones crying and wailing]
21. *Dem say armed robber get im right, im right* [They claimed armed robbers (looters) are entitled to their (fundamental human) rights]
22. *Dem no care say people dey die, dey die,* [They are not concerned that people were dying]
23. *Baba find money go abroad o, abroad, abroad* [Baba went abroad in search of foreign investment/looted funds from abroad]
24. *So Naija money go return, ah ah* [So that recovery can be made]

**Solo 3**

25. *After the election come the news, the news, the news* [After the election came the news]

26. *Dem thief like say na we be fool, be fool, be fool* [They stole as if we are fools]
27. *Return the loot or go to jail, to jail, to jail*
28. *Thiefy thiefy people dey cry and wail o aahhh ahhh* [The looters are the ones crying and wailing]
29. *Dem say armed robber get im right, im right* [They claimed armed robbers (looters) get their (fundamental human) rights]
30. *Dem no care say people dey die, dey die, ,* [They are not concerned that people were dying]
31. *Baba find money go abroad o, abroad, abroad* [Baba went abroad in search of foreign investment/and or looted funds abroad]
32. *So Naija money go return, ah ah* [So that recovery can be made]

#### **Solo 4:**

33. *As corruption dey fight back* [As corruption is fighting back]
34. *Dem begin bomb our pipelines* [They started bombing our pipelines]
35. *To cripple our power and economy*
36. *So that Baba go relax for im fight o* [So that Baba will relax in his fight against corruption]
37. *Dem even sponsor song iyo* [They even sponsored a song]
38. *Naija people make we no gree* [Nigeria people, we must not accept (that)]

#### **Chorus 2**

39. *Before the election wey dem lose, dem lose, dem lose* [Before the election where they were defeated]
40. *Oil price still boku, boku, boku* [Oil prices are still high (valuable)]
41. *Na so so dem thief-thief and loot iyo! and loot, and loot loot* [(But) there was stealing and looting galore]
42. *Money wey be for me and you, for me and you* [Money meant for you and I]
43. *After the election come the news, the news, the news!* [After the election came the news]
44. *Baba no dey for cock and bull, and bull* [Baba does not tolerate this cock and bull story]
45. *Return the loot or go to jail, the jail, the jail.*

### **Methods**

A purposive sampling method was adopted for the study. Through this, content analysis was applied to two Nigerian popular music videos that advanced divergent views on the leadership and governance in the country. The renditions were contextually translated into the English language. These were analysed using Jacob Mey's (2001) pragmatic acts theory. The timeline in which the videos went viral on various social media sites (Facebook, Nairaland, YouTube, and Whatsapp, etc) was between 2015 and 2017.

### **Procedure**

The videos of both songs were downloaded from the internet (YouTube.com). Each of the renditions was stored on a computer hard drive. Thereafter, the researcher watched and listened to each of them and transcribed their lyrics into written texts. The linguistic type deployed in the music videos (Nigerian pidgin) was retained in their original form during transcription. The contents were then subsequently analysed using the pragmatic acts construct of Mey (2001).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Pragmemic activities and choices**

In Mey's (2001) pragmemic assumptions, the application of pragmatics is of two inter-related branches. One of these two parts is the activity part, which involves the interactants in a discourse. It describes the types of activities deployed in achieving the communication goal(s). The other part, called the textual part, provides the choices that are available to the interactant. This can be construed as the basis of the interactions or the situation of communication also known as the context. Therefore, the analysis of data in this study is cognizant of these assumptions.

### The pragmatic events

Conversational acts: Conversation involves an exchange of thoughts, ideas, or messages between one and another person or persons. In songs, both follow call and response patterns, especially in the solos. This is seen in most of the lines of these compositions. Here, the lead singer renders his lines and the backup singers complete the rendition by saying the last word uttered by the lead singer. This strategy is used for emphasis and to provide aesthetic value to the flow of the music. It is also used to perform the pract of *taunting* the supporters on each side and expressing two opposing views as seen in line 1 of each of the songs: “After the election wey dem do, Dem do... Dem Do” (Text A), and “After the election wey dem lose, Dem lose... Dem lose” (Text B). Attention here is on “lose” and “do”. The use of “do” in the conversational context points to a refusal by the singer in Text A to acknowledge that the other party (represented by the singer in Text B) actually won the election. The conversation act produced pract <sup>4</sup>of *narrating* in the sense that both songs follow the linear narrative method with an identifiable starting point and ending. In the starting point, the main issue, which was alluded to the “election” as seen in “after the election wey dem (do/lose), with the ending showing some forms of allegiance to the personalities being supported by each of the songs. For example, Text A eulogises Jonathan (the former president) in A:38 “Jonathan don give you power, the man wey no like wahala” and reject the incumbent president in A:39 “We no believe in your policy. Pack up and let us be”. In the ending of Text B, the incumbent president was eulogised as in “Baba no dey for cock and bull (story)” while threatening the “looters” as in “Return the loot or go to jail”. Generally, both songs tell the story of the state of governance in Nigeria.

(In)Direct speech acts: In Mey’s pragmatic postulations, acts of speech (spoken or written) are not a necessary signifiers of the specific speech acts that can be held accountable for the action (Mey, 2001, p.212). In line with this, a direct speech act is derivable from the tenor of the conversation (texts) (:213). From the texts being studied, direct speech acts are used as practs of *asserting*, *accusing*, and *blaming* respectively. This is seen in: A:8 “Since you come na tears and pain”, A:12 “You dey rule Nigeria with sentiment”, A:26 “We no give you the vote you take am” etc. It is also in the other text; B:3 “Na so so dem thief-thief and loot”. The response of the composer(s) of Text B is a pointer to the effect the composition of Text A has on the audience who felt indirectly addressed, and as a result, did give a response in a similar fashion. This buttresses the role of indirect speech as “pre-sequences” in discourse (Mey, 2001, p. 144).

Psychological acts: For the audience of the compositions, the musical renditions deploy psychological acts through their use of the visuals in the videos to enhance the messages being conveyed. For example, the visuals and sounds of violence, hunger, and destruction of properties are strategies deployed to serve as practs identifying and empathising with the stories being told by each of the musicians. See extracts A:7, 10, 17, and 18; and B: 2, 4, 7, 10 etc. It should be noted that while Text A uses those lines as pract of empathising with the perceived suffering the citizens now must endure, the other text in B uses it as a pract of *identifying* and *commending* the effort of the president in governing the country. These are found in B:1-8, etc.

Physical acts: These are expressed implicitly through the melody and corresponding dances. Here, choreographed monkeys were used in the videos. The significance of this is subject to many interpretations. However, in this paper, they serve as a reference to the government of the day as behaving like animals in the depiction of Text A. The same appears used in depicting the previous government in Text B. From these, the physical acts produced the practs of dancing, wailing (A:8), and praising (B:44). These also align with the notion of body movements, which include gestures as explicated in Mey (2001, p. 222).

Moreover, the hidden identities of both singers produced the pract of veiling. While the actual images were not used in the video, except the introductory pseudo-name, Kuro (Zoo Music) and Zoom<sup>5</sup> Entertainment, Text A’s composer performed the physical act of veiling by way of masking himself as portrayed in the picture below.

<sup>4</sup> Practs (that is, pragmatic acts,) refer to acts that work not just by their wording but also by their being embedded in a situation in which humans act, with every communicative cue brought to their (humans) interactional context. These include intonation, body movements, facial expressions, emotions, and so on (see Mey, 2001: 208-209, 223).

<sup>5</sup> Zoom Entertainment (2015). The truth blues “corruption fights back”. Nigeria. Zoom Entertainment. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoiQUOKYSTw>

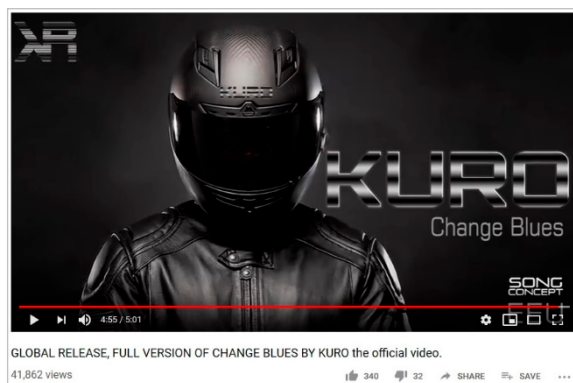


Figure 1. An image of a masked man used to conceal the real identity of the singer.<sup>6</sup>

The pseudo-name “Zoo Music” is also subject to many interpretations. The closest being an unsavoury alias ascribed to the Nigerian nation by one of the secessionist groups from one of the regions that makes up the country<sup>7</sup>.

**Prosody:** This is reflected in the emphatic repetition of the ending phrases in the solos in many parts of the Texts A and B. The pragmatic functions that this serves include the practs of *emphasising*, *mocking*, and achieving melodious aesthetics.

### Contextual significance of the songs

The following are the identifiable choices utilised by participants in the texts:

**Inference:** A *counter-informing* pract is used as a rhetorical strategy in Text B: as the singer draws inference from the poor socio-economic situations in Nigeria as mentioned by the singer in Text A: 1-8. Here, the other singer in Text B: 1-8 debunks the message being conveyed (in Text A) that the poor economic situations and hardships being experienced in Nigeria are caused by the previous government who enjoyed abundance but squandered the resources on frivolities. This also produces the practs of *blaming* and *denying* among others.

**Reference:** Mention was made to issues such as the “certificate, election, change, promise, money, food,” etc., as referential elements in Text A. These provide concrete evidence and clarify the aim of the musical rhetoric. Through these, the audience has a clear idea of the message being championed by the composer(s). The strategies produce practs of *convincing*, *blaming*, and *accusing*. For example, in reference to “certificate” (in A:27), the singer is alleging that the president who was elected mainly due to his integrity and uprightness had committed perjury. According to the singer, the president was not qualified to vie for the office because he did not possess the minimum requirement of a secondary school certificate as required by the Nigerian law. In Text B, the signifiers are “election, oil price, money, loot, Chibok girls,” etc. All these serve as strategies of reasoning, so as to absolve the government of blame in the scenario. Through these, the practs of *appealing*, *denying*, and *counter-accusing* are produced.

**Relevance:** At the place of relevance, both musical renditions converge at the point of Nigeria’s political realities, in the sense that the time of both songs portrays a trying period in the history of the Nigerian nation. During the period being debated, general elections had taken place and winners and losers have emerged. In the history of the nation, an incumbent president had lost a re-election bid. Thereafter emerged the new leadership during which there are social and economic challenges bedevilling the nation. To this, the citizens of the country were divided as to whom to blame. This narrative is what these singers are championing. These narratives are of a significant relevance to the national discourse at the time.

**Shared Situation Knowledge:** In the songs, both found commongrounds in the rhetoric of defeat versus victory in a historic election in modern Nigeria. Additionally, both songs provided shared knowledge of happenings in the country immediately after the 2015 elections. However, this common knowledge is presented with diverse

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> “The ‘Zoo’ called Nigeria”. The Nation Newspaper, June 20, 2017. Retrieved from <https://thenationonlineng.net/zoo-called-nigeria/>



point of views that the fans or listeners on either sides of the argument can relate with as true or untrue state of affairs in Nigeria at the time.

**Metaphor:** Physical objects are used as metaphor to advanced the views being expressed in both songs. These included visuals of people in affluence to depict enjoyment by looters in Text B, and some other people in torn clothes to depict suffering in both Text A and B. Also included are pictures of notable individuals, in both vdeos, to point to real names and faces of political actors related with the narratives; choreographed monkeys to reiterate the suggestion of the zoo alias<sup>8</sup> ascribed to the Nigeria State.

**Voice:** The voices depict that of the opposition versus supporters in Nigeria’s democratic narrative following the 2015 elections. These voices represent the Nigerian individuals with self-belief and alignments with who is to blame for the unfavourable situation. Although, commentators on the links where the videos were posted accused both of the composers of being sponsored, others praised the “creativity” deployed in each instance. In B:37, the composer alleged that the song in Text A was sponsored. This strategy was to discredit the music in Text A as “corruption fight(ing) back” in order to gain credibility for Text B. From the voices of the texts, practs of *persuading*, which conform with the Aristotelian’s three forms of persuasion in rhetoric were deployed. These are ethos (which appeals to the audience’s sense of honesty and/or authority), pathos (appeals to the audience’s sense of emotions), and logos (which appeals to the audience’s sense of logic). According to Aristotle (350 BCE):

Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration... achieved by the speaker’s personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible... may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions... effected through the speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive argument suitable to the case in question.<sup>9</sup>

Going by the aforementioned and from the voices and other pragmatic activities and contexts, the following practs were produced:

**Persuading:** In this, both ethos and pathos in the Aristotelian persuasion forms are utilized, for example, “Jonathan don give you power, the man wey no like wahala, Yeba!” (A:38). This conveys a sense of truth but lacks in the consideration of logos, because the “power” was not transferred as the singer makes it look, but was earned through the popular votes gathered by the eventual winner. However, in the face of pathos, the relinquishing of power by Jonathan is a heroic feat. This strategy utilised in Text A:38 aligns with the general acceptance of the personality depicted even by the eventual winner and earns him the status of a gentleman.

On the other hand, in Text B, the pract of persuading runs across many lines of the music as it tries to absolve the government of blame for the situation. For example in B:33-38: “As corruption dey fight back, Dem begin bomb our pipelines, To cripple our power and economy, So that Baba go relax for im fight o, Dem even sponsor song iyo, Naija people make we no gree”. Here, the singer, as an acceptance of reality, aligns with the true situation at the time which has to do with the bombing of oil pipelines, which nearly led to the crippling of the economy. Although this may have been used to depict ethos and pathos forms of persuasion, however, this may also fail the logos test as the situations described are not necessarily new to the audience and may not be accepted as the major cause of the situation in the country at the point in time.

**Rejecting:** This pract is used as a strategy of condemning the emergence of the Buhari-led APC government. It is identifiable in the last line of Text A:39 “We no believe in your policy. Pack up and let us be”, and serves as a direct address to the government and a form of rejection. However, the Text B pract of rejecting seen in B:37-38 is strategically used as a call on Nigerians to reject the rhetoric of the singer of “Change Blues”. Using these lyrics “Dem even sponsor song iyo, Naija people make we no gree”, “The Truth Blues-Corruption Fights Back” discards, in entirety, the rejection expressed by the “Change Blues” and goes further to persuade other Nigerians that they should not accept the lack of belief in the Buhari-led APC government being advanced by the former.

**Associating:** This pract is used as a strategy of persuasion in both of the songs. For example, in A:20 “Oya my brother this change na yawa, We don too dey suffer”, the Text A composer identified with the suffering people of

<sup>8</sup> “The ‘Zoo’ called Nigeria”. The Nation Newspaper, June 20, 2017. Retrieved from <https://thenationonlineng.net/zoo-called-nigeria/>

<sup>9</sup> “Modes of persuasion”. Retrieved from [https://psychology.wikia.org/wiki/Modes\\_of\\_persuasion](https://psychology.wikia.org/wiki/Modes_of_persuasion)

Nigeria as a result of the perceived “change” in the leadership of the nation whose only hope is in prayer, as in A:20-21 “We pray God for Nigeria”. The other in Text B:26, “Dem thief like say na we be fool”, portrays a rejection of the former while associating themselves with a perceived corruption-free posture of the government of the day. This is buttressed in B:42 -45: “Money wey be for me and you... Baba no dey for cock and bull... Return the loot or go to jail...”

**Dissociating:** Here, each singer separates him/herself from various subjects such as the election, corruption, and government policies. For example, the singer of Text B deploys the pract of dissociating from “the election” that was lost “wey dem lose” by the opposing party. On the other hand, the singer of Text A strategically avoided acknowledging that the election was “won”, instead, he reduced it to the mere stage of “conduct” or “doing” by saying “...the election wey dem do”. Here, he rejects and dissociates himself and his fellow supporters from the credibility that might be attached to the conducted election and victory that brought the government to power.

**Condemning:** From the pract of condemning deployed in each instance, neither personality, that is, former President Jonathan nor incumbent President Buhari, is incompetent when the opposing views are considered in isolation. In another but similar sense, one of the two should be absolved of blame while the other is considered guilty. This rhetoric runs throughout the lines of each song, thus serving as a major motivation throughout each of the renditions.

Other pragmatic acts and examples are presented in the tables below.

Table 1  
*Samples of pragmatic acting in the selected songs*

Practs	Examples	Locations	Comments
Dissuading:	Buhari it’s better you withdraw, ...Than to blame Jonathan for all your flaws”	A:36	With reference to the economy
	“Return the loot or go to jail,	B:45	
Accusing	We no give you the vote you take am... Certificate sef you fake am. Only you and your people dey chop all the loot wey you gather	A:26-27 A:32	Concerning the president’s educational qualifications and the recovered loot
counter-accusing	Thiefy thiefy people dey cry and wail o aahhh ahhh Dem say armed robber get im right, im right	B:28	Referring to the “Change Blues” composers, social media commentators, etc
Blaming	Since you come na tears and pain Dem steal today and tomorrow join o... 15 billion dollars remove...Sotey, nothing dey for account	A:7 B:11-12	Directed at Buhari’s government Directed at Jonathan’s government
Discrediting	We no believe in your policy... Dem even sponsor song iyo. Naija people make we no gree	A:39 B:37	Directed at the performance of Buhari’s government Expressed to discredit the song and its message in Text A

From the corpus utilised in this study, which is highlighted above, it can be deduced that musical political rhetoric (MPR) is deployed in a variety of ways. It is used as a presupposition of Stockholm syndrome. Stockholm syndrome is an idea that describes followers’ rationalisation of the inefficiency of leadership or governance despite the challenges being experienced by the followers through the actions of the leaders (see Jameson, 2010). In other words, it is a situation where the oppressed support and defend their oppressors. The contents of both songs advance a verbal defence of the leaders from both supporters and opposition vice versa in each narrative.

Moreover, while one of the two songs serves as a criticism, the other functions as a reaction. For example, “Truth Blues” was composed and sung as a reaction to the criticisms in “Change Blues”. In both cases, they attempt to engage their listeners in order to persuade them and justify the actions or explain the reasons for the inactions of the political actor(s) that are being promoted.

PRAGMATICS OF MUSICAL RHETORIC IN THE POST-2015 ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Table 2  
Additional samples of pragmatic acting in the selected songs

Practs	Examples	Locations	Comments
Justifying	Since you come na tears and pain... We don tire to complain	A:7-8	Explaining the essence of the song
	Baba find money go abroad o... So Naija money go return...	B:31-32	Absolving the president of junketeering
Commending	Jonathan don give you power, the man way no like wahala	A:38	With regard to the historic transition of the government in 2015
	Baba no dey for cock and bull, and bull	B:44	Extolling Buhari's personality
Rejecting	We no believe in your policy. Pack up and let us be	A:39	Referring to Buhari's government policies and capability
	∅	B	-
	∅	A	-
Threatening	Return the loot or go to jail	B:	To the various people being tried for various corruption charges
Presupposition	Amechi collect am you hail am, hail am Dasuki collect am you jail am, jail am	A:29-30	Perception of the government's fight against corruption ("lopsided")
	Dem say armed robber get im right, Dem no care say people dey die... As corruption dey fight back...	B:21-22 and 33-37	Perception of Buhari's fight against corruption ("justifiable")
(mis)informing and admitting	Only you and your people dey chop all the loot wey you gather	A:32	Acknowledgement of the recovery of loot and the perception of the utilisation of the loot.
	Oil price still boku, boku, boku.	B:2	Acknowledgement of the economic downturn with a justification attempt.
Abusing	Oya my brother/sister this change na yawa, We don too dey suffer, We pray God for Nigeria.	A:20-21	With moderate levels of pessimism
	Oil come dey fall, Naira come dey fall, Naija no go follow dem fall at all at all.	B:15-16	Sees the other critics as those who "fell". It evokes some levels great optimism

In the study, it was discovered that the reference to "economy, power, missing funds, recovered loot", etc are pointers to the social, political, and economic realities. All these fit correctly into the narrative of the Nigerian State. The rhetorical reference serves as a persuasive strategy used by the followers to influence the perception index of their leaders. In other words, it helps the leaders to clearly understand how their followers are perceiving their activities or performance in the governance of their common patrimony. Additionally, the songs serve as opportunistic leveraging. In this sense, both songs are an adaptation of trending music by one artist to another. It also satirises the Nigerian society through the use of satiric visuals such as the use of choreographed monkeys among others.

As can be seen in the study, politically-motivated musical renditions can function as a safe-box of history. Here, both songs indirectly preserved post-2015 election events and serve a referential purpose in the history of Nigeria. Similarly, they are a potential tool for antecedents recalling events before and after the elections.

Another deduction that can be made is that these renditions exhibit and preserve the socio-political realities of Nigeria as a developing nation. In the songs, issues such as hunger, poor economic policies of the past and present, activities of militants, kidnapped Chibok girls, election victories and losses, and many others are foregrounded and as such, preserved in the texts of the songs for future reference. Finally, the deployment of the lyrics from the two songs serves as a means of protestation as well as expressing sentiments. This is typical of followers of political actors in most parts of the world. The songs used in this study display the situation and divergent opinions of many Nigerians on issues that concern them and the nation.

Significantly, all of the aforementioned constitute the strategies of persuasion as used by the musicians, who themselves are followers of their preferred political leaders. These indicate that the followers can be used as agents of persuasion. MPR, therefore, can be construed as a genre of rhetoric in contemporary discourse and

pragmatic studies, most especially as a tool through which followers persuade one another and through which the performance rating of the political leadership can be measured.

## Conclusion

The study revealed the peculiar utilisation of music for advancing narratives among two opposing sides of the Nigerian populace. This is a result of the change in political leadership after the 2015 general elections, most especially the president. Rhetoric, in this study served two purposes: as a mark of loyalty to the ‘idolised’ political figure(s) for whom admiration is expressed; as a parody for whom so much disgust is communicated. Both of these situations were musically exhibited using Pidgin English to sing two pragmatically distinct lyrics of an imitated song with the same music. In both cases, the issue of objectivity of ideas embedded in the attempted persuasions was eroded and became problematised. In other words, each singer posed more questions than answers in their attempts to persuade listeners to their side. Through these, the study helps reveal the political consciousness and conflicting perceptions of some Nigerian citizens on governance and quality of political leadership. The same scenario provides the basis for describing political narratives and the burden of governance in a typical African state. It can be deduced that the lack of awareness of a true state of governance at every point in time from the leaders to the governed and vice versa plays a major role in the rhetorical engagement cum argument among the followers in many forms. Hence, ‘truth awareness’ by the leaders to the governed is advocated. This awareness needs to be complemented with citizens’ active participation and better access to information about the political leadership of the day. This, among others, is invaluable to enhancing trust and confidence in the government and its policies. Further research is, however, necessary in order to ascertain the impacts of music as a tool of influence or otherwise for political participation in Nigeria and other parts of the world.

## References

- Adebiyi, C. O. (2006). Mood and style in public speaking: A critique of a president’s inaugural speech in Mood. In T. Ajiboye & W. Osisanwo (Eds.), *Language and literature* (pp. 111-124). Lagos, Nigeria: Femolus Fetop.
- Adegoju, A. (2014). Person deixis as a discursive practice in Nigeria’s “June 12” conflict rhetoric. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics*, 3(1), 45-64.
- Adetunji, A. (2009). Speech acts and rhetoric in the second inaugural addresses of Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo and American President, George Bush. In A. Odebunmi, A. E. Arua & S. Arimi (Eds.), *Language, gender and politics: A festschrift for Yisa Kehinde Yusuf* (pp. 257-296). Lagos, Nigeria: Centre for Black African Arts and Civilisation.
- Ajewole, O. C. O. (2013). A stylo–rhetorical analysis of Obafemi Awolowo’s “it is not life that matters”. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 3(1), 216-228.
- Akinwotu, A. (2016). Rhetoric in selected speeches of Obafemi Awolowo and Moshood Abiola. *Ihafa: Journal of African Studies*, 8(2), 36-58.
- Ayeomoni, M. O. (2005). A linguistic-stylistic investigation of the language of Nigerian political elite. *Nebula*, 22, 153-168.
- Babatunde, S. T. (1998). Persuasion in Christian Religious Speeches—A Speech Act Analysis. *Studies in Stylistics and Discourse Analysis*, 1, 45-56.
- Bizzell, P., & Herzberg, B. (2000). *The rhetorical tradition: Readings from classical times to the present*. New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin’s.
- Clarissa, V. (2012). Mafumbo: Considering the functions of metaphorical speech in Swahili contexts. *Selected proceedings of the 42nd annual conference on African Linguistics: African languages in context* (pp. 277-290). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Ezejideaku, E., & Ugwu, E. (2007). The rhetoric & propaganda of political campaigns in Nigeria. *Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria*, 10, 9-26.
- Freese, J. H. trans. (1926). *Aristotle. Art of rhetoric*. Cambridge, UK: Harvard University Press.
- Goldsby, A. (2011). *Nigerian Christians vs Nigerian Muslims: Secularism, violence, and the rhetoric of blame*. Retrieved from <https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/handle/10066/7490>

- Gray, M. (2017). A partisan national song: The politics of “Hail Columbia” reconsidered. *Music & Politics*, 2(2), 1-20. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0011.201>
- Graham, P., & Luttrell, B. (2018). A rhetoric of style: Eleanor Rigby and the reordering of popular music. *Social Semiotics*, 29(2), 222-239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2018.1434971>
- Ike-Nwafor, N. G. (2015). Critical discourse analysis of selected political campaign speeches of gubernatorial candidates in south-west Nigeria 2007-2014 (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.
- Jameson, C. (2010). The short step from love to hypnosis: A reconsideration of the Stockholm syndrome. *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14(4), 337–355.
- Mey, J. L. (2001). *Pragmatics. An introduction*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing
- Meyer, M. (2012). Aristotle’s rhetoric. *Topoi*, 31(2), 249–252. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-012-9132-0>
- Michira, J. N. (2014). The language of politics: A CDA of the 2013 Kenyan presidential campaign discourse. *International Journal of Education*, 2(1), 1-18.
- Nelson, J.S, Megill, A., & McCloskey, D. N. (1987). *The rhetoric of human sciences: Language and argument in scholarship and public affairs*. London, UK: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Ngoa, S. N. (2011). A review & analytical narrative of propaganda activities: A Nigerian perspective. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(16), 237-248.
- Nwankwo, B. O. (2015). Rhetorics and realities of managing ethno-religious conflicts: the Nigerian experience. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 3(3), 292-300.
- Otieno, R.F., Owino, F. R., & Attyang, J. M. (2016). Metaphors in political discourse: a review of selected studies. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 7(2), 21-26.
- Owolabi, D. (2012). Rhyme, rhythm and rhetoric in religious discourse in Nigeria’s ESL environment. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 2(5), 1-10.
- Peterson, L. E. (2018) A rhetorical analysis of campaign songs in modern elections (Unpublished master’s thesis). Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Retrieved from <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/6718>
- Reames, R. (Ed.). (2017). *Logos without Rhetoric: The arts of language before Plato* (pp. 209 - 212). Columbia , SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Schwartz, J. A. (2016) Matters of empathy and nuclear colonialism: Marshallese voices marked in story, song, and illustration. *Music & Politics*, 2(2), 1-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0010.206>
- Simonson, P. (2013). On digital religious eloquence and other rhetorical pathways to thinking about media and religion. In K. Lundy (Ed.), *Religion across media: From early antiquity to late modernity* (pp. 7-104). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Taiwo, R. (2013). Metaphors in Nigerian political discourse. In N. Johannesson & D. C. Minugh (Eds.), *Selected Papers from the 2008 Stockholm Metaphor Festival* (pp. 193-205). Stockholm, Sweden: Stockholm University Press.
- Thompson, T. M. (2018). *The Rhetoric of suggestion in Debussy’s Méloides: A contingent poetics of thematicity, temporality, and agency* (pp. vii – 311). Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University
- Vestermark, I. (2007). *Metaphors in Politics*. A study of the metaphorical personification of America in political discourse, an extended essay, Department of Language and Culture. Lulea University of Technology and Culture, Lulea, Sweden.