

# A Socio-Pragmatic Discourse of the Re-Introduced Nigerian National Anthem, “Nigeria, We Hail Thee”

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## Abstract

The study conducted a pragmatic analysis of Nigeria's re-introduced national anthem, “Nigeria, We Hail Thee”, in order to examine the communicative functions of the anthem and the ways in which language was used to convey national identity, unity, and duty. Using a mixed-method approach through Searle's Speech Act and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics theories, a qualitative line-by-line analysis was first performed, before categorizing the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, which were analysed quantitatively. The study showed distinct speech acts, including admiring, asserting unity, and encouraging duty, asserting values, declaring, promising, committing, and praying. Statistical analysis of the frequency of illocutionary acts revealed that “praying” was the most frequent illocutionary act, appearing in two lines (25%), while other acts, such as “admiring” and “asserting unity,” occurred once each (12.5%). The study also examined the verbs used in the anthem, categorizing them into Austin's typology of exercitives, behavitives, and verdictives. The analysis found that behavitives, which relate to behaviour and social conduct, dominated the anthem (50%), followed by exercitives (37.5%) and verdictives (12.5%). The findings revealed that the anthem primarily utilised speech acts that promoted national unity, service, and respect for the country's values, with a significant focus on divine intervention and guidance.

**Keyword:** Illocutionary acts, National anthem, Socio-pragmatic, Speech acts, Unity

## 1. Introduction

National anthems are more than just melodies played at official ceremonies; they are powerful linguistic symbols that encapsulate a nation's identity, values, and collective aspirations. As Anderson (1983) suggests in his concept of 'imagined communities', national anthems often play a critical role in fostering a sense of shared identity among citizens, even in nations with vast ethnic and cultural diversity. They often reflect the socio-political climate of the time they were composed, and serve as a rallying cry for unity, patriotism, and national pride (Ajayi, 2019). For many nations, particularly those emerging from colonial rule, the creation and adoption of a national anthem marks a significant moment in the establishment of a distinct national identity (Ode bode, 2020). For Nigeria, a former British colony that gained independence in 1960, the re-adoption of its first national anthem, "Nigeria, We Hail Thee", was emblematic of this transition from colonial subjugation to self-governance.

While "Nigeria, We Hail Thee" was an important symbol of Nigeria's early post-colonial identity, it was replaced in 1978 by "Arise, O Compatriots", a new national anthem composed by Benedict Odiase, a Nigerian composer. This transition reflected the Nigerian government's broader effort to reclaim its identity and distance itself from its colonial past (Mohammed & Ayeni, 2018). The new anthem was perceived to better reflect Nigeria's indigenous values and aspirations, and it was widely embraced by the Nigerian population (Faniyan, 2012). "Nigeria, We Hail Thee" has remained an important historical artifact, reflecting the challenges and aspirations of Nigeria during its early post-independence years (Oyeyemi, 2018). Its relevance, however, resurfaced in 2024, when on May 29th, 2024, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Ahmed Bola Tinubu, officially reinstated the old anthem as the national anthem of Nigeria (Media Nigeria, 2024).

The reintroduction of Nigeria's old national anthem, "Nigeria, We Hail Thee", by President Bola Tinubu through a law passed by the National Assembly, marked a return to the anthem originally used from independence in 1960 until its replacement in 1978 (This Day, 2024; Daily Gazette, 2024). President Tinubu defended the change, positioning it as a priority that underscores Nigeria's diverse heritage and fosters a sense of national unity, even though the anthem itself was penned by a British expatriate, Lillian Jean Williams, with music by Frances Benda (Naija News, 2024). This act, he contends, celebrates Nigeria's foundational values and the ideal of unity amid diversity. The reintroduction, however, has stirred

considerable debate and disapproval, largely because of the prevailing economic hardships many Nigerians face. Critics argue that with the country experiencing a challenging economic environment, aggravated by policy decisions such as the removal of fuel subsidies and the devaluation of the naira, this move appears out of touch with the immediate needs of the average Nigerian (Naija News, 2024). Instead, many feel that government actions should focus on addressing the urgent issues of inflation, unemployment, and living costs that impact daily life more directly. The controversy surrounding the reintroduction, therefore, highlights a perceived disconnect between government actions and public priorities (Naija News, 2024; Daily Gazette, 2024). While the government sees this as a symbolic gesture to bolster national pride, many Nigerians view it as a symbolic distraction from the economic realities they face, where immediate reforms might better serve the nation's collective interest.

The anthem, "Nigeria, We Hail Thee" (1960–1978), was composed by Frances Benda, a British expatriate. Though it was written by a non-Nigerian, the anthem was intended to reflect the aspirations of the newly independent nation, emphasizing sovereignty, national unity, and Nigeria's diverse ethnic composition (Fayomi, et al 2015; Ajayi, 2019). Nigeria, a country with over 450 ethnic groups and multiple languages, faced the enormous challenge of uniting a highly diverse population under one national identity (Falola & Heaton, 2008). This was a common issue for many African nations emerging from colonialism, where arbitrary borders had been drawn by colonial powers with little regard for the existing ethnic, linguistic, or cultural divisions within the population (Oloruntoba, 2023). Therefore, national anthems serve as tools for fostering national identity and cohesion. This supports Faniyan (2012: 1) when he notes that national anthems are more than ceremonial songs; they are "solemn patriotic songs adopted as an expression of national identity".

Consequently, this study aims at assessing the communicative functions of the anthem and the ways in which language was deployed in the anthem to shape or reshape collective national identity, values, and unity in a multicultural society like Nigeria. By so doing, the research is capable of unravelling the socio-pragmatic relevance of the re-enactment of an old national anthem in replacement of a new one. The research will also explore how the re-introduction of the anthem serves political or ideological agendas, reflecting power dynamics between the state and its citizens. And by applying socio-pragmatic tools to a national symbol, the study

can broaden the scope of pragmatics to include institutional and ceremonial discourse.

## 2. Literature Review

National identity is a socio-pragmatic construct shaped by shared values, ideologies, and the collective consciousness of a people. From a linguistic perspective, national anthems are carefully constructed texts that convey specific meanings through their choice of words, syntax, and structure. Faniyan (2012: 1) observes that national anthems are often constructed with a 'semantico-syntactic sense to manifest specific meanings'.

The creation of national anthems in post-colonial states is often intertwined with the need to distance the nation from its colonial past (Mazrui, 1980; Odebo, 2020). National anthems, deeply embedded in the linguistic and socio-political fabric of nations, are powerful vehicles for articulating national identity, unity, and shared values. Several scholars have explored the role of national anthems as tools for fostering national sovereignty and cohesion, especially in newly independent countries. National anthems, in this context, serve as ideological instruments that not only celebrate independence but also enforce a shared sense of purpose among citizens. They reflect the social, political, and cultural contexts in which they are created, often emphasizing themes of unity, patriotism, and national pride.

Nigeria gained independence from Britain on October 1, 1960, becoming a sovereign nation after decades of colonial rule. The post-colonial period in Nigeria was marked by a strong desire to establish a national identity that would transcend the ethnic, linguistic, and regional divisions that characterized the country. Nigeria is home to over 450 ethnic groups, with the largest being the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo (Oyeyemi, 2018; Findlay, 2019). The challenge for the new Nigerian government was to create a sense of national unity and pride in a country that had been divided along ethnic lines by colonial rulers. The adoption of a new national anthem in 1978, replacing "Nigeria, We Hail Thee" with "Arise, O Compatriots," was a deliberate effort to reflect the aspirations of a post-civil war nation. In 1978, "Nigeria, we hail thee" was replaced by a new national anthem, "Arise, o compatriots", which was composed by a Nigerian, Benedict Odiase, as part of the country's broader effort to reclaim its identity and distance itself from its colonial past (Ayoade, 1989). While the second anthem reflected a more indigenous perspective on national unity and identity, the earlier one remains a significant artefact of Nigeria's early post-colonial period (Falola, 2001).

Akinyele (1996) states that the first national anthem was not entirely successful because it was composed by a British expatriate, Frances Benda, and thus did not fully reflect the indigenous values or identity of the Nigerian people. Nevertheless, “Nigeria, we hail thee” served as an important first step in the nation’s journey toward self-determination and national unity. The anthem’s lyrics reflect the aspirations of the new Nigerian state, particularly the desire for peace, unity, and progress, all of which were central themes in Nigeria’s post-colonial political discourse (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). Research by Adebayo (2018) highlighted how the anthem’s lyrics emphasize unity, service, and patriotism. Oladipupo (2021) examined the socio-political and developmental implications of the Nigerian national anthem and pledge, highlighting how their wordings reflect and influence the behaviour of political elites and civil servants. The study argued that while the anthem and pledge aim to inspire patriotism and unity, their significance appears diminished in contemporary Nigeria, raising questions about their ability to effectively address the nation’s cultural and linguistic diversity.

Furthermore, Odebo (2020) conducted a socio-pragmatic analysis of the Nigerian national anthem, “Arise O Compatriots,” using Austin’s (1962) Speech Act theory, Giles et al.’s (1991) Accommodation Theory, and Halliday’s (2004) Systemic Functional Grammar. The study found that the anthem was not just a political song but a tool for praying, informing, and inspiring citizens. It identified major illocutionary acts such as praying and informing, along with minor acts like asserting, summoning, and admonishing, aimed at reminding Nigerians of their civic duties. The analysis revealed that the anthem predominantly used behavitive, exercitive, and verdictive speech acts. Similarly, Onyeachulam and Okoye (2024) used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore the ideological aspects of the anthem, focusing on themes such as patriotism, unity, and equality. Their study concluded that the anthem’s language serves as a tool for social restructuring by fostering national pride and unity, with its phrasing reflecting Nigeria’s ideological values. However, empirical studies evaluating its socio-pragmatic impact on fostering national cohesion remain limited.

In this background, the adoption of a national anthem was a key step in fostering national identity and cohesion. The anthem, “Nigeria, We Hail Thee”, was composed by Frances Benda, a British expatriate, and served as Nigeria’s official anthem from 1960 to 1978. The lyrics of the anthem reflect the aspirations of the new nation, particularly its desire for unity, peace, and progress. As Faniyan (2012: 1) notes, national anthems are not just ceremonial songs; they are ‘a tool to endear

the idea of a fatherland to the hearts of citizens'. This was particularly relevant in Nigeria, where the government sought to create a sense of collective identity that would bring together the country's diverse ethnic groups. This theme of unity is a common thread in the national anthems of many post-colonial African nations, where the establishment of national unity was seen as essential for the success of the new state. As Mohammed and Ayeni (2018) argue, national anthems in post-colonial Africa often serve as tools for promoting cohesion and solidarity in newly independent nations.

The anthem's emphasis on unity, however, was not merely symbolic. Nigeria's early post-colonial years were marked by political instability and ethnic conflict, culminating in the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970). The government's efforts to promote national unity through symbols like the national anthem were part of a broader strategy to hold the country together in the face of these challenges. Faniyan (2012) further asserts that national anthems are designed with a 'semantico-syntactic sense' that allows them to carry profound socio-political meanings. In his analysis of the Nigerian national anthem, he identifies the anthem's structure as a carefully constructed tool intended to inspire loyalty, unity, and service to the nation. He goes further to emphasize that the function of the national anthem is not merely ceremonial but deeply tied to the sociolinguistic identity of the nation it represents. The anthem's linguistic features—its use of collective pronouns, imperative language, and references to national unity—work together to create a cohesive patriotic message that resonates with the citizenry.

Oyeyemi (2018) also highlights the importance of cohesion and prominence in the text of national anthems, describing them as a genre of poetry with profound social significance. He explores how anthems use linguistic features to evoke emotional responses and foster a sense of national pride. Oyeyemi's analysis of Nigeria's national anthems, both old and new, emphasizes the importance of historical context in understanding the linguistic choices made by anthem composers. He argues that these choices are often driven by the need to address socio-political issues and challenges faced by the nation at the time the anthem is composed.

Other scholars, such as Mohammed and Ayeni (2018), have focused on the political dimensions of Nigeria's national anthems. In their critical examination of Nigeria's anthems, they explore how the lyrics reflect the challenges faced by Nigeria's leadership and the broader socio-political landscape. Their study illustrates how the anthems have been used as tools for addressing issues of

governance, leadership, and national development. By invoking themes of unity, sacrifice, and patriotism, Nigeria's national anthems play a key role in shaping the national consciousness and promoting the ideals of good governance. Adegbite (2009) observes that national symbols, including anthems, play a crucial role in the negotiation of identity and power in post-colonial states

Despite the considerable attention given to Nigeria's erstwhile new anthem, *Arise, O Compatriots*, fewer studies have focused on the re-adopted old anthem, "Nigeria, We Hail Thee", in terms of its linguistic and socio-pragmatic relevance. This study builds on the existing literature by specifically focusing on the socio-pragmatic aspects of Nigeria's first national anthem. Drawing on Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday, 1978) and Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962), this paper aims to analyze how the language of the anthem is used to perform. The Systemic Functional Linguistic framework will help to uncover socio-functions of language used to foster national unity, identity, and cohesion, while the Speech Act theory will expose the pragmatic roles of the lines of the anthem. By examining the anthem's linguistic features in its socio-political context, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how national anthems function as tools of national discourse in post-colonial societies.

### 3. Theoretical Frameworks

This study draws on two central linguistic frameworks for the explication of linguistic and socio-political constructs in the Nigeria's re-introduced national anthem. The frameworks are those of Halliday's 1978 Systemic Functional Grammar and Austin's 1962/Searle's 1969 Speech Act Theory.

#### Systemic Functional Grammar

Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is a linguistic theory that views language as a social semiotic system—a tool that people use to make meanings in specific social contexts. Halliday argues that language performs three primary functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Halliday, 1978). The ideational function refers to how language is used to represent the world and convey ideas or experiences. In the context of a national anthem, this function reflects how the lyrics express the nation's values, aspirations, and historical identity. For instance, the line in "Nigeria, We Hail Thee" that says, 'Though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand,' represents Nigeria's ethnic diversity and the nation's aspiration for unity in the face of that diversity. The

interpersonal function of language refers to how speakers use language to establish relationships and interactions between themselves and their listeners. In a national anthem, this function is critical for creating a sense of solidarity and collective identity. By using collective pronouns like ‘we’ and ‘our,’ the anthem fosters a sense of unity among Nigerians, positioning them as equal participants in the project of nation-building. The textual function refers to how language creates coherence and organizes information in a way that makes the text function as a meaningful whole. In the anthem, the structure of the lyrics ensures that the message of unity and patriotism is clearly communicated and reinforced through repetition and parallel structures. Halliday’s (1978) framework on language as a social semiotic emphasizes how linguistic expressions reflect and propagate the cultural and ideological values of a society, fostering cohesion and unity in diverse

### **Speech Act Theory**

John Austin’s Speech Act Theory posits that language is not just a medium for conveying information but also a tool for performing actions. This position corroborates Majeed (2022) that speech acts represent actions performed through utterances. That implies that when utterances are uttered, certain actions are performed. Austin distinguishes between three types of speech acts: locutionary acts (the act of saying something), illocutionary acts (the intention behind the statement), and perlocutionary acts (the effect on the listener). For example, when the anthem states, ‘Nigerians all, are proud to serve our sovereign Motherland,’ the locutionary act is the statement itself, while the illocutionary act is the call to patriotism and service. The perlocutionary effect would be the sense of pride and loyalty the listener is expected to feel.

Searle (1969) builds on Austin’s theory by categorizing speech acts into five types: assertive (statements of fact), directives (commands or requests), commissives (promises or obligations), expressives (statements of emotion), and declaratives (statements that change the state of affairs) (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). In the anthem, there are multiple directives, such as the call to ‘serve our sovereign Motherland,’ which functions as a command for Nigerians to commit themselves to national service. The anthem also includes assertive, such as the statement ‘Though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand,’ which affirms the unity of Nigeria despite its diversity. Using Speech Act Theory to the analysis of “Nigeria, We Hail Thee”, this study explores how the anthem’s language performs specific actions, such as invoking patriotism, encouraging unity,



and promoting national service. These speech acts are crucial for understanding how the anthem functions as a tool of national discourse and identity formation.

#### 4. Methodology

The lyrics of the re-introduced Nigerian anthem were downloaded from the online space of *This Day*, a Nigerian newspaper. The lyrics were rigorously read line by line after which the speech acts performed by each line was noted and manually categorised. The different categories of the speech acts were used as data for the study. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative analyses to explore the thematic content and linguistic structure of the anthem. The choice of a mixed-method approach in analyzing the re-introduced Nigerian national anthem, "*Nigeria, We Hail Thee*," was grounded in the complex and multidimensional nature of the research topic. A line-by-line analysis of the anthem's lyrics was first conducted using both Halliday's (1979) Systemic Functional Linguistics and Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory. Later, the quantitative analysis was done through a frequency distribution of the illocutionary acts. Frequency tables were also generated to quantify the prominence of each thematic category, allowing for a statistical comparison of the anthem's core messages.

#### 5. Data Analysis

Bearing in mind the aim of this research which is to examine the communicative functions of the Nigerian re-introduced national anthem in order to explore how language is deployed to shape or reshape collective national identity, values, and unity in a multicultural society like Nigeria, the analysis will follow a systematic pattern. First, a line-by-line analysis of the lyrics will be espoused before considering the speech act typology and their distribution in the anthem.

Looking at a line-by-line pragmatic analysis of the anthem, "*Nigeria, We Hail Thee*" (1960-1978) which was re-introduced in 2024, it will be discovered that the anthem consists of three stanzas with a total of eight lines, each reflecting different socio-pragmatic meanings for national identity, unity, and service. For example, line 1, 'Nigeria, We Hail Thee, Our own dear native land', being the first locutionary act, is a greeting. That opening clause foregrounds a salutation to the independent nation. It reflects both a celebration of independence and a call for unity in the face of the country's complex diversity. Contextually, the word 'hail' suggests an expression of admiration or salutation towards Nigeria, personifying

the country as a sovereign entity deserving reverence. This personification is significant because it positions Nigeria as a mother figure to its citizens, invoking both emotional and nationalistic attachment. The inclusive deictic element, 'we', has been deployed to conscript every reciter as an addressee in order to foster sense solidarity with their fellow citizens. This aligns with Giles et al. (1991), who assert that a kind of convergence occurs when a speaker uses language that aligns with the addressee's identity. It also supports Bell's (1984) Audience Design Theory, which views the speaker as adjusting their words to express intimacy or solidarity with the audience. In this case, the composer is speaking not as an outsider but as a fellow Nigerian, uniting with the audience in expressing reverence for the nation.

The second phrase, "Our own dear native land", presupposes that Nigeria is a shared homeland, emphasizing a collective sense of ownership and emotional attachment to the land. The use of the possessive pronoun 'our' strengthens this bond between the citizens and their country. The illocutionary act of this line is, therefore, to express admiration and solidarity, while the perlocutionary act is to invoke feelings of pride and belonging in the listeners. The use of 'our' is a significant tool in constructing a national identity that transcended ethnic, religious, and regional differences (Oyeyemi, 2018). The use of a national anthem in this way is a common practice in post-colonial states, where the establishment of a unified national identity is often seen as essential for the stability and cohesion of the new nation-state (Mohammed & Ayeni, 2018). As Oloruntoba (2023) notes, the colonial borders that were drawn in Africa often ignored existing ethnic and cultural divisions, leading to the creation of multi-ethnic states with significant challenges in achieving national cohesion.

Line 2, 'Though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand', is the second locutionary act, and it acknowledges Nigeria's ethnic diversity as exemplified in 'Though tribes and tongues may differ'. That clause acknowledges the ethnic and linguistic diversity of Nigeria but asserts the importance of unity and collective identity (Oyeyemi 2018). These lines were crucial in setting the tone for Nigeria's early post-colonial years, as they emphasized the need for national cohesion in a country with deep-seated ethnic and regional divisions (Nnoli, 1995). The composer recognizes the multiplicity of ethnicities and languages in Nigeria, implicitly addressing the historical divisions that have existed among various groups. However, the second clause, 'In brotherhood we stand,' asserts a unifying message, suggesting that despite these differences, Nigerians are bond together in unity. This message of unity reflects the socio-political context of post-

independence Nigeria, where the government sought to create a unified national identity amidst the country's ethnic diversity. The illocutionary act here is the assertion of unity through brotherhood. The composer is not only acknowledging differences but commanding a sense of solidarity despite these differences. The perlocutionary effect on the audience is the creation of a shared sense of identity that transcends ethnic and linguistic boundaries. This line echoes Giles et al. (1991), who argue that convergence occurs in language when the speaker seeks to reduce social distance between groups. By emphasizing 'brotherhood,' the anthem aims to close the gap between Nigeria's many ethnic groups, fostering a sense of collective identity. This is a common theme in post-colonial national anthems, which often seek to promote national unity in the face of internal diversity and external challenges (Mohammed & Ayeni, 2018).

The third locutionary act (line 3), 'Nigerians all, are proud to serve our sovereign Motherland', spells out the specific duty of the citizens to the country when it says 'Nigerians all, are proud to serve our sovereign Motherland'. The nominal group 'Nigerians all' with the headword and qualifier (h+q) structure also foregrounds inclusivity, suggesting that every Nigerian, regardless of ethnicity or background, has a duty and that is to serve the nation. The use of nominal group, 'sovereign Motherland' with the modifier and headword (m + h) structure reflects the new nation's status as an independent, self-governing entity. The modifier 'sovereign' asserts Nigeria's independence, while the headword 'Motherland' evokes an emotional connection to the country, positioning Nigeria as a nurturing figure deserving loyalty and service. This contrasts with the old colonial narrative where sovereignty was associated with servitude under colonial rule. Here, the illocutionary act is the promotion of national service as a source of pride, while the perlocutionary act is to inspire a sense of duty among Nigerians to protect and serve their newly sovereign nation. Furthermore, the predicate 'proud to serve' which comprises of complement 'proud' and infinitive 'to' plus lexical verb 'serve' is significant as it evokes perpetuity of civil duty.

This is in line with the composer's intent to inspire national pride through service. Socially, this reflects the country's need for collective effort in the post-independence period, where national unity and development become sacrosanct. In addition to promoting unity, the anthem also sought to inspire a sense of responsibility and service among the citizens. The line 'Nigerians all, are proud to serve our sovereign Motherland' emphasizes the duty of every Nigerian to contribute to the development and success of the nation. This emphasis on service

is a common theme in national anthems, particularly in post-colonial states, where the success of the new nation is often seen as dependent on the active participation and loyalty of its citizens (Oyeyemi, 2018). Moreover, the anthem's invocation of patriotism is not limited to a call for unity and service; it also serves as a reminder of the nation's independence and sovereignty (Naija News, 2024). The phrase 'sovereign Motherland' emphasizes Nigeria's break from colonial rule and its status as a free and independent nation (Omosola, 2024). This was particularly important in the early post-colonial years, when the memory of colonialism was still fresh, and the need to assert Nigeria's sovereignty and independence was paramount.

In line 4, 'Our flag shall be a symbol that truth and justice reign', the composer introduces 'the flag' as a symbol of the nation's values for truth and justice. The flag serves as a visual emblem of the ideals the country stands for. The illocutionary act of this line is declarative, asserting that Nigeria's flag represents the reign of truth and justice, both crucial values in the context of post-colonial nation-building. The perlocutionary act here is to evoke respect for the national flag as a symbol of the principles that Nigerians are expected to uphold. By linking the flag to truth and justice, the anthem reinforces the idea that the nation's identity is rooted in these values. Socially, this line positions the citizens as guardians of the nation's integrity, reminding them of their duty to ensure that truth and justice prevail in all national endeavours.

Line 5, 'In peace or battle honoured, and this we count as gain', acknowledges the circumspective circumstances in which the nation may find itself; 'peace or battle'. The composer suggests that whether in times of peace or conflict, the nation and its citizens are 'honoured'. The illocutionary act here is declarative, reaffirming the dignity of serving the country in both peaceful and challenging times. The expression 'we count as gain' presupposes that both peace and battle bring honour and value to the nation. This line serves as a motivational reminder to the citizens that regardless of circumstances, their service to the nation brings honour and reward. The perlocutionary act is to inspire resilience and perseverance among the citizens, encouraging them to view their service as a source of pride, whether in times of peace or adversity.

Line 6, ‘To hand on to our children a banner without stain’ shows a locutionary act which is a declaration of the citizens’ responsibility to preserve the nation’s integrity for future generations. The expression ‘to hand on to our children’ implies a duty to pass down a legacy, while the nominal group ‘a banner without stain’ emphasizes the importance of maintaining purity and honour of the nation’s identity. The illocutionary act here is to invoke a sense of responsibility, urging Nigerians to protect the values of truth, justice, and unity so that future generations can inherit a ‘banner without stain’. The perlocutionary effect is the reinforcement of intergenerational duty, reminding the citizens that their actions today will shape the future of Nigeria.

Line 7, ‘O God of all creation, Grant this our one request’, introduces a prayer-like plea, invoking divine guidance. The illocutionary act is a supplication, requesting God’s intervention in the nation’s affairs. This reflects the African tradition of combining faith with national duty, where prayers often precede significant undertakings. The perlocutionary act is to invoke a sense of reliance on divine assistance, reinforcing the idea that the nation’s success and unity are not solely dependent on human effort but also on divine intervention.

Lastly, line 8, ‘Help us to build a nation where no man is oppressed’, is a direct request for assistance in building a just society. The composer calls on divine help to ensure that Nigeria becomes a nation ‘where no man is oppressed’. The illocutionary act is a prayer for justice and equality, key values in the post-colonial context where the country was seeking to move away from the oppressive structures of colonialism. The perlocutionary act is to inspire the citizens to work towards creating a fair and just society, free from oppression. This reflects Nigeria’s aspirations for social justice and equality in the post-colonial era.

The line-by-line analysis provided earlier is captured in Table 1 below, which categorizes the locutionary and illocutionary acts present in the national anthem. Each line in the anthem represents a specific locutionary act (what is being said), paired with the corresponding illocutionary act (the speaker’s intent).

<b>Locutionary Act</b>	<b>Illocutionary Act</b>
*Nigeria, We Hail Thee, Our own dear native land	Admiring, expressing pride
Though tribes and tongues may differ, In brotherhood we stand	Asserting unity
Nigerians all, are proud to serve Our sovereign	Informing, encouraging

Motherland	duty
**Our flag shall be a symbol That truth and justice reign	Asserting values
In peace or battle honoured, And this we count as gain	Declaring
To hand on to our children A banner without stain	Promising, committing
O God of creation, Grant this our one request	Praying
Help us to build a nation Where no man is oppressed	Praying

**Table 1: Speech Acts Distribution in the Anthem**

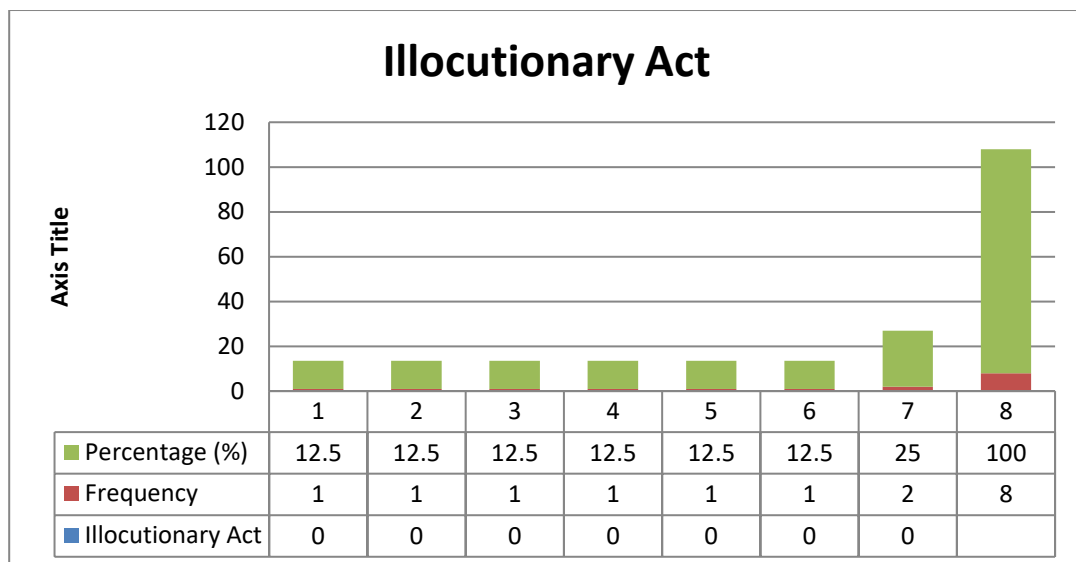
In Table 1, the single asterisk (\*) indicates the start of the first stanza, while the double asterisks (\*\*) indicate the beginning of the second stanza. The analysis shows that both stanzas feature different speech acts, where the speaker alternates between admiring, asserting unity, encouraging duty, and praying.

S/N	Illocutionary Act	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Admiring/Expressing Pride	1	12.5
2.	Asserting Unity	1	12.5
3.	Informing/Encouraging Duty	1	12.5
4.	Asserting Values	1	12.5
5.	Declaring	1	12.5
6.	Promising/Committing	1	12.5
7.	Praying	2	25
<b>Total</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of Illocutionary Acts**

As shown in Table 2, the anthem deploys a total of eight distinct illocutionary acts. Praying is the most frequently occurring illocutionary act, appearing twice (25% of the time), especially in the second stanza, which is directed toward divine intervention. All other illocutionary acts, such as admiring, asserting unity, encouraging duty, and declaring, occur once each, making up 12.5% of the distribution.

This distribution is represented visually in Figure 1, a line chart illustrating the frequency and percentage of illocutionary acts in the anthem.



**Fig. 1: Bar Chart Indicating the Frequency and Percentage of Illocutionary Acts in the Anthem**

In addition to the speech act classification, a further analysis of the verbs in the anthem was conducted based on Austin's (1962) taxonomy of speech acts. The verbs are categorized by the actions they perform in terms of exercitives, behavitives, and verdictives, as shown in the following table 3.

Stanza 1	Line	Verb (Locution)	Speech Act
	1	Hail	Exercitive
	2	may differ, stand	Verdictive, Behavitive
	3	are proud to serve	Behavitive
	4	shall be	Verdictive
	5	count, honoured	Verdictive
	6	hand on	Behavitive
Stanza 2	1	Grant	Exercitive
	2	Help	Exercitive
	3	Build	Behavitive
	4	shall reign	Verdictive

**Table 3: Austin's Classification of Verbs in the Anthem**

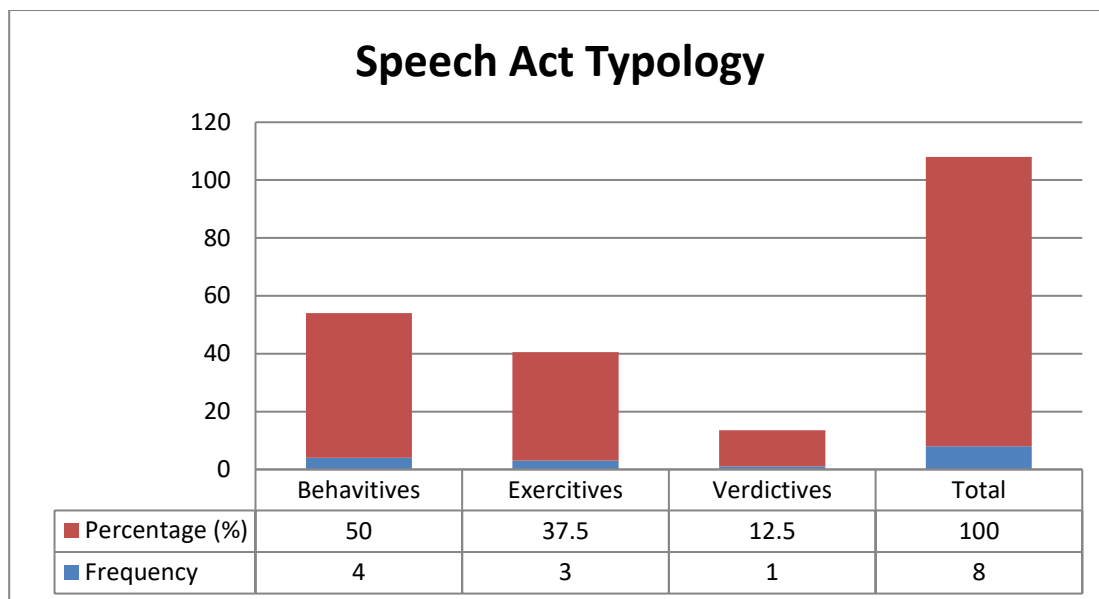
Table 3 above shows Austin's classification of verbs in the two stanzas of the newly re-adopted Nigerian national anthem. In stanza one, the verbs 'hail' and 'stand' are identified as exercitives, which direct or command, according to Austin's classification. The verbs 'may differ,' 'shall be,' and 'count' are classified as verdictives, as they present appraisals or judgments about past or future events. Stanza two features verbs primarily classified as exercitives, which involve making requests or asking for divine intervention, particularly in lines 1 and 2. The verb 'shall reign' is categorized as a verdictive, predicting the future state of the nation.

<b>Speech Act Typology</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Behavitives	4	50
Exercitives	3	37.5
Verdictives	1	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4: Summary of Austin's Speech Act Classification**

As shown in Table 4, behavitives (actions related to behaviour or social conduct) dominate the anthem, accounting for 50% of the speech acts. Exercitives, which involve the exercise of power or authority, make up 37.5%, while verdictives, which convey judgments or appraisals, represent 12.5%. This distribution is visually represented in Figure 2, a bar chart indicating the frequency and percentage of Austin's speech acts in the anthem.





**Fig. 2: Bar Chart Indicating Frequency and Percentage of Austin's Speech Acts**

The analysis of the Nigerian national anthem, “Nigeria, We Hail Thee”, has provided valuable insights into its significance as a symbol of patriotism and national unity. Examining the anthem from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, this study revealed its purpose and the key messages it was intended to convey.

The line-by-line analysis shed light on how each stanza delivers specific messages to inspire a sense of belonging and pride in Nigeria. In the first stanza, words like ‘hail,’ ‘we,’ and ‘our’ were clearly meant to foster a collective identity, helping Nigerians feel proud and united. The anthem's message goes further in the second stanza, where it acknowledges the country's diversity but emphasizes unity—reminding citizens that despite differences in ethnicity or language, they are bound together by shared values and a common purpose. Furthermore, the references to divine guidance and key virtues such as truth and justice show that the anthem was designed not just to express admiration for Nigeria, but also to rally citizens towards upholding moral values and social harmony, even during challenging times.

The statistical analysis supported these observations by highlighting the frequency of different themes throughout the anthem. One of the most dominant themes was the call for prayer, which accounted for 25% of all speech acts,

suggesting the composer's intent to intertwine the country's national aspirations with spiritual guidance. This reflects Nigeria's deep cultural connection with spirituality as part of nation-building. Other important themes, such as admiration for the country, unity, duty, and core values, reinforced that the anthem aimed to create a balanced national identity, incorporating emotional, moral, and spiritual aspects.

Austin's classification of the anthem's verbs provided additional insights into the focus on behaviour, showing that 50% of the speech acts were related to action and conduct. This highlights how the anthem encouraged Nigerians to act responsibly and in unity. The presence of other verbs related to guidance and evaluation indicated that the anthem not only inspired pride but also laid out expectations for the nation's conduct and progress.

In summary, this combined analysis revealed that "Nigeria, We Hail Thee" was not just a song celebrating the nation's pride; it was also a call to action. The anthem emphasized the importance of moral integrity, unity, and the role of divine support in building the country.

## 6. Conclusion

The analysis of "Nigeria, We Hail Thee" demonstrates that the anthem was carefully crafted to go beyond ceremonial purposes. It aimed to shape the national identity by using a mix of emotive messages and calls to action. The line-by-line analysis revealed various speech acts, including expressions of admiration, calls for unity, reminders of duty, and appeals for divine guidance. Together, these elements captured the aspirations of post-independence Nigeria, where unity in diversity, pride in the nation, and service to the country were central themes.

The statistical analysis reinforced these findings by showing how the different messages were distributed across the anthem. The focus on behaviour-related directives highlighted that the anthem was concerned with not just instilling pride but also guiding citizens in their duties. The recurring emphasis on divine support reflected Nigeria's cultural and spiritual values as integral to nation-building.

Through its mix of military and familial metaphors, the anthem appealed to citizens' sense of duty while also fostering an emotional bond with their country. Themes of unity, truth, and justice—alongside the call for divine assistance—offered a complete vision of nation-building that was both practical and spiritual. "Nigeria, We Hail Thee" successfully fulfilled its role as a national symbol, inspiring pride, unity, and a sense of responsibility among citizens. It called upon

Nigerians to not only feel a deep connection to their homeland but to also uphold its values, contribute to its development, and pass these ideals on to future generations.

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## خطاب اجتماعي تداولي للنشيد الوطني النيجيري المعاد تقديمه "نيجيريا، نحييك"

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### المستخلص

تحلل الدراسة تداوليا النشيد الوطني النيجيري المُعاد تقديمه (نيجيريا نحييك)، حيث تتعمق في دراسة الوظائف التواصلية للنشيد، والطرق التي استُعملت بها اللغة للتعبير عن الهوية والوحدة، والواجب الوطني، باستعمال النهج المتعدد الأساليب من خلال نظريات (الأفعال الكلامية) لسيرل و(اللغويات الوظيفية النظامية) لهاليداي، تم أولاً التحليل النوعي بالتتابع قبل تصنيف الأفعال الكلامية اللغوية، والاجرائية والنتجية، التي تم تحليلها كمياً، وتظهر الدراسة أفعالاً كلامية مميزة، منها الإعجاب، والتأكيد على الوحدة، والتشجيع على الواجب، والتأكيد على القيم، والإعلان، والوعد، والالتزام، والدعاء، ويكشف التحليل الإحصائي لتكرار الأفعال الإجرائية أن "الدعاء" هو الفعل الإجرائي الأكثر شيوعاً، حيث ورد في سطرين (25%)، بينما وردت أفعال أخرى، مثل (الإعجاب) و(تأكيد الوحدة) مرة واحدة كلاً منهما (12.5%) كما وتبحث الدراسة الأفعال المستعملة في النشيد الوطني، وتصنفها وحسب تصنيف أوستن إلى الأفعال الكلامية والسلوكية، والحكمية، ويخلص التحليل إلى أن الأفعال السلوكية، التي تتعلق بالسلوك والتصرف الاجتماعي تهيمن على النشيد الوطني (50%)، تليها الأفعال الكلامية (37.5%)، ثم الحكمية (12.5%)، وتكشف النتائج أن النشيد الوطني استعمل وبشكل أساس أفعالاً كلامية تعزز الوحدة الوطنية، والخدمة واحترام قيم الوطن، مع التركيز الكبير على التدخل الإلهي والتوجيه.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأفعال الإجرائية، النشيد الوطني، اجتماعي تداولي، الأفعال الكلامية، الوحدة.