

Dialogistic Resources in Online News Discourse on Negrophobic Xenophobia on Nigerian Websites

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Abstract

The study examines the dialogistic resources in online news discourse on negrophobic xenophobia in select Nigerian news websites with a view to eliciting the relevant dialogistic locutions in the selected online news reports; exploring their dialogistic functionality with respect to reporters' stancetaking strategies against heteroglossic backdrops of alternative value positions; and analysing their rhetorical effects with respect to actual or potential addressees, alignment and disalignment. The data comprise twenty news reports on the South African xenophobic experiences retrieved from the news archives of five purposively selected Nigerian news websites: *Sahara Reporters*, *The Punch Online*, *The Vanguard*, *The Guardian* and *Premium Times*. The data are analysed qualitatively via the dialogistic theoretical aspect of Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory. The findings reveal that the dialogistic expansive resources of entertainment and attribution highly dominate the contractive dialogistic resources in the selected news reports. This dominance signals the reporters' advertent neutral reporting stancetaking strategies meant to explicitly create dialogic space for prior, actual and potential alternative viewpoints and ground the reports subjectively against heteroglossic backdrops of potential readers' agreements or contentions. The study, therefore, concludes that Nigerian online news reporters maintain, to a great degree, a neutral stance in their news stories on the xenophobic attacks against Nigerians in South Africa. This neutrality, primarily, maximises heteroglossically the dialogic space for potential alternatives (Xenophobia, Negrophobic xenophobia, dialogistic resources and online news discourse).

Introduction

Xenophobia, a term derived from a blend of the Greek words: “Xenos”, meaning “foreigner” or “stranger” and “Phobos” meaning “fear” (Buthelezi, 2009, p. 4), connotes the display of (intense) fear or hatred for foreigners or anything that is foreign in the host countries (Buthelezi, 2009; Kirton, 2004). To Gomo (2010, p. 10), xenophobia “indicates a hate or dislike for foreigners exemplified by negative attitude towards foreigners, a dislike, or a hatred usually driven by competition for scarce resources”. However, some scholars (e.g. Tshitereke, 1999; Polzer & Takabvirwa, 2010) argue that xenophobia does not only encapsulate attitude, it could also translate into action or “practice” (Hågensen, 2014, p. 1; Harris, 2002, p. 2). Duffield (2008, p. 4) provides a working definition which states that it is “the hatred or fear of foreigners or strangers based on a discreet set of beliefs that may be expressed verbally or manifest in the behaviours of governments, the media and the general public.” The phenomenon is a universal social problem imbued with the belief in the inherent superiority of the host communities over non-nationals’ (Licata & Klein, 2002; Yakushko, 2009; Buthelezi, 2009). Xenophobia, thus, upholds the ideology of a “hierarchical world order” (Yakushko, 2009, p. 44).

Racism and xenophobia are sometimes used synonymously (Wimmer, 1997 cited by Yakushko); however, Yakushko (2009) argues that, to some extent, both have differential features in terms of origins and targets. Nevertheless, the present study supports Wimmer’s (1997) claim that both share much in common in that their targets are primarily non-nationals in host communities and the attitude involved in both is prejudicial. This is also in line with Nyamnjoh’s (2010, p.67) cited by Els (2014, p. 140) that xenophobia is not just “an attitude of dislike”, but it “is often accompanied by violence and is racist and ethnic in its application”. Also Tafira (2011) argues that the so-called xenophobic sentiments of the nationals in South Africa should be termed “New Racism – practised by

people of the same population group, which has characterised post-apartheid South African black social relations” (p. 114).

Nationals most often perceive non-nationals or immigrants as threats in their host communities in that successful ones are believed to have deprived natives of their social, economic and educational rights while indigent immigrants are seen as burdens on the recipient communities (Yakushko, 2009). Most of the discriminations and attacks on immigrants by natives are commonly fuelled by the beliefs that immigrants are responsible for “declining economy, overpopulation, pollution, increased violence, depleted social resources (i.e., medical and educational), erosion of cultural values, and terrorism” (Cowan, Martinez, & Mendiola, 1997; Munro, 2006 cited by Yakushko, 2009, p. 37). Also, Gomo (2010, p. vii) highlights competition for limited resources in the host country, evil inclinations of some of the foreigners and “myths social prejudice” as some additional causes of xenophobia. As a result, immigrants are, most often, depicted as terrorists, illiterates, “aliens”, indigents and interlopers (Els, 2014, p. 150).

Studies on xenophobia (e.g. Barry & Grilo, 2003; Yakushko, 2009; Gomo, 2010) have largely focused on its cause-effect paradigms in diverse sociocultural contexts. For instance, Burns, Kamali & Rydgren (2001) examines causes of high levels of xenophobia and other-isms pervasive in European societies while Yakushko (2009), specifically, explores the reasons for xenophobic sentiments against immigrants in the United States using historical, sociological, social psychological and cross-cultural approaches. Barry and Grilo (2003) examine perceived prejudice and discrimination against East Asian immigrants in their host communities which has resulted in various degrees of psychological disorder for the immigrants. Duffield (2008, p. 2) also interviews ten displaced non-nationals in South Africa with a view to exploring the “discursive nuances of xenophobia and foreigners’ identity within an autochthonous South Africa”. Buthelezi (2009) too applies the empirical phenomenology method to examine the meaning of xenophobia and experiences

of non-national students and international citizens at the University of Zululand in order to inform intervention policies and practices on how to mitigate xenophobic attacks on non-national students in South African universities.

As revealed above, xenophobic attacks are pervasive worldwide, but the South African experience is peculiar due to its extremity and volatility. This present paper, therefore, focuses on the xenophobic experience in South Africa.

The Media, Negrophobic Xenophobia and the South African Experience

Xenophobic attacks in South Africa, which has resulted in “killings, burnings, widespread rioting and looting, and displacement of tens of thousands of foreign Africans” (Duffield, 2008, p. 2), have palpably gone beyond fear of foreigners/immigrants to intense hatred which has culminated in several fatalities. Gomo (2010), for instance, reveals that “between 2000 and March 2008”, xenophobic attacks in different parts of South Africa have claimed not less than 67 lives. Xenophobic attacks that erupted in South Africa in May 2008 evidently marks the expansion, intensification and volatility of xenophobia among the locals against immigrants (Duffield, 2008, p. 10). These are indications that South Africans see immigrants as threats to be exterminated. However, citing Duncan (2012, p. 105), Els (2014, p. 2) observes that “Undocumented migrants, foreigners with legal residence status and South Africans who ‘looked foreign’ fell prey” also xenophobic attacks/groups.

Jansen (2001) infers that extreme stereotypes of “the other”, is pervasive among South Africans due to their historical antecedent of growing up on “an apartheid diet of ‘incompatible races’”. This stereotypical attitude is construed to have been ingrained in South Africans from childhood via institutions like families, churches, schools, sports clubs, peer groups, etc. (Jansen, 2001). Worthy of note is the fact that the xenophobic attacks in May, 2008 were “reminiscent of the

‘Operation Buyelekhaya38’ in Alexandra (Desai, 2008:50) during December 1994 and January 1995, when armed youth gangs assailed suspected illegal immigrants” (Els, 2014, p. 141). The spate of the attacks in recent times has made scholars to see South Africa as a “xenophobic nation” (Els, 2014, p. 114) in that “negative attitudes towards foreign nationals pervade all economic, racial and educational strata of South African society” (Polzer & Takabvirwa, 2010, p. 6).

It is the general belief among South Africans that legal immigrants deprive nationals of educational and economic opportunities that rightfully belong to them while illegal immigrants are corrupt elements that use pernicious means to access the limited resources of the locals. These views have exacerbated the negative emotions of hostility and intolerance towards immigrants, most especially from Africa (Crush and McDonald, 2001; Buthelezi, 2009). As observed by Gomo (2010), African immigrants are the main targets of xenophobic attacks in South Africa while non-African foreigners are mostly treated as tourists, investors, business gurus and sport experts. The peculiarity of the xenophobic pogroms in South Africa lies in the fact that only black Africans were targeted (Harris 2002; Els, 2014; Hågensen, 2014). This buttresses Harris’ (2002, p.5) view that xenophobic sentiments are not equally applied to all foreigners in South Africa. Hence, the derivation of the terms “Afrophobia” or “negrophobic xenophobia”; terms derived by (Gqola, 2008, p. 210 cited by Els, 2014, p. 2) to reveal succinctly that only citizens from neighbouring Southern African nations like Nigeria, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Somali, etc are most vulnerable. Negrophobia is the “fear and dislike of black people and their culture” (Gqola 2009 cited by Tafira, 2011, p. 115), while Afrophobia is the “fear and/or dislike of Africans and their culture” (p. 115). Both terms capture the emergence and uniqueness of the xenophobic experience in South Africa which targets only black immigrants. In the present study, “negrophobic xenophobia” is adopted to represent the South African xenophobic pogrom experience.

The role of the media in the identification, production and propagation of xenophobic discourses in South Africa cannot be overlooked (Rodríguez Borges, 2010). The media (print, broadcast, online) advertently present news texts about foreign nationals to the locals using framing strategies meant to foreground targeted features of the news over and above others with the aim of conditioning audience's reception and interpretation of such news items (Rodríguez Borges, 2010; Gomo, 2010; Smith, 2009). Not only do the media disseminate anti-immigrant discourse, they also construct stereotypical ideologies that perpetuate prejudicial relations between nationals and immigrants (Smith, 2009). Therefore, it has been argued that the media can potentially inflame xenophobic sentiments among the locals (Gomo, 2010).

Scholars across the globe (e.g. Fine & Bird, 2002; McDonald and Jacobs, 2005; Gomo, 2010; Muchiri, 2012; Els, 2014, etc.) have largely investigated South African "xeno-media discourse" (Gomo, 2010, p. 17) which focuses on the media's role in immigration and xenophobia-related crises in South Africa. Majority of these studies have concluded that the South African media covertly harbour xenophobic sentiments against immigrants and are, thus, anti-immigrant.

McDonald and Jacobs (2005), for instance, performs an evaluation of the stealth role of South African English-speaking print media in the volatility of xenophobic sentiments believed to have risen since 1994. Their findings reveal that the South African media have been largely anti-immigrant since the news contents stoke the volatility of prejudicial sentiments against non-nationals. Els (2014) also investigates the discursive representations of the immigrants in the tabloid, the Daily Sun from April to May 2008 coupled with the underlying ideologies that dominate the representations. This is with a view to drawing a parallel between "the xenophobic pogroms in Johannesburg's Alexandra Township on the 11th of May, 2008 and the discursive constructions of non-nationals in the tabloid, the Daily Sun, from April to May 2008" (p. iv) within the

framework of CDA and Halliday's (1994) model of systemic-functional grammar. Likewise, Gomo (2010) performs both qualitative and quantitative examinations of the role of the media in the reportage of xenophobia episodes among youths in Alexandra Township (site of many attacks against African immigrants in April), Johannesburg, South Africa using content analysis. Gomo (2010) and Els (2014), however, conclude that in spite of the ample use of derogatory terms in depicting immigrants in the examined news contents, the media cannot solely be held responsible for the xenophobic attitudes of the locals. Notwithstanding this finding, it is recommended that the media has a significant role to play in stemming xenophobic attitudes among the locals by portraying foreigners/immigrants positively.

Nonetheless, a review of these extant studies revealed that they largely focused on the role of the South African English-based print media in the exacerbation of xenophobic attitudes among locals thereby creating a lacuna on the reportage of the phenomenon in internet media, and specifically, in Nigerian virtual space. Also, majority of the studies explored xenophobic pogroms in South Africa based on cause-effect paradigms thereby circumventing studies on the dialogistic resources advertently deployed by online media outlets in projecting their stances towards the xenophobic events. The present study intends to fill these lacunas by investigating the manner Nigerian online news media represent the South African xenophobic experiences with a view to eliciting the dialogistic resources deployed by the online reporters to underscore their stancetaking strategies against heteroglossic backdrop of prior utterances, alternative value positions and anticipated responses with respect to actual or potential addressees, alignment and disalignment. Since the internet medium with its multi-faceted features has become accessible news conduit for media houses in recent times (Sutherland et al., 2016), it, therefore, becomes imperative to

explore the representations of xenophobia in South Africa in the Nigerian online news media.

The Theoretical Paradigm: Dialogistic Resources

Dialogistic resources, as postulated by Martin and White (2005), construe evaluative locutions deployed by writers/speakers as they position their stances “towards both the material they present and those with whom they communicate” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 1).

These locutions are wordings which had earlier been traditionally categorised by scholars (e.g. Labov, 1984; Chafe & Nichols, 1986; Palmer, 1986; Pagano, 1994, etc.) under such labels as polarity, modality, intensification, concession, evidentiality, consequentiality, attribution, etc. (Martin & White, 2005). These mainstream categories, however, differ from the dialogistic resources in that they consider meanings and structures largely from the theoretical perspectives which position those wordings primarily within their individual, monoglossic and self-expressive linguistic paradigms as opposed to the intersubjective and social relationships espoused in the dialogical perspective (Martin & White, 2005, p. 94).

The dialogistic resources are engagement typologies derived from Martin and White’s (2005) appraisal theory. The appraisal theory constitutes a development and an extension of Halliday’s (1994) interpersonal metafunction within Systemic Functional Linguistics which accounts for speaker/writer’s intersubjective stances (Martin & White, 2005). Appraisals situate interacting into three domains, namely: attitude, engagement and graduation. Attitude encapsulates “feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things”, engagement focuses on “the play of voices around opinions in discourse” while graduation “attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred” (Martin & White, 2005, p.35). Due to space and time constraints, the study confines its analysis within the purview of engagement framework.

The framework adopts the broad category of “engagement” (from Martin, 1997) as an umbrella term for all the dialogistic resources (Martin & White, 2005, p. 95) which constitute the means by which individual speakers/writers engage with “socially-determined value positions and thereby align and dis-align themselves with the social subjects who hold to these positions” (White, 2011, p. 14). Thus, engagement is “a social dialogic perspective” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 36) which is informed by Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogism or heteroglossia. Dialogism focuses on the “interactive presence of multiple perspectives” on any given phenomenon (Holt, 2004, p. 22). It postulates that all discourse, verbal or non-verbal, is dialogic in that “to speak or write is always to reveal the influence of, refer to, or to take up in some way, what has been said/written before, and simultaneously to anticipate the responses of actual, potential or imagined readers/listeners” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 92). Engagement is also positioned alongside Stubb’s (1996) view that speakers or writers encode their viewpoints towards whatever they say or write, respectively.

In this light, the dialogistic resources are “the linguistic resources by which speakers/writers adopt a stance towards the value positions being referenced by the text and with respect to those they address” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 92). They provide a framework for construing diverse possibilities for speakers/writers’ stances and alignment/disalignment (i.e. agreement and disagreement that holds between speakers/writers and others) towards the value positions advanced in their texts, possibilities for “investigating the rhetorical effects associated with these various positionings, and for exploring what is at stake when one stance is chosen over another” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 92). In the words of Martin and White (2005), the focus of the framework

... is with the ways in which these resources act to ‘write the reader into the text’ by presenting the speaker/writer as, for example, taking it for

granted that the addressee shares with them a particular viewpoint, or as anticipating that a given proposition will be problematic (or unproblematic) for the putative reader, or as assuming that the reader may need to be won over to a particular viewpoint, and so on (p. 95)

The dialogistic resources, thus, provide a systematic linguistic account of how speakers/writers “present themselves as standing with, as standing against, as undecided, or as neutral with respect to these other speakers and their value positions” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 93). The dialogistic perspective also performs anticipatory functions in that it attends to how speakers/writers negotiate meanings with their potential audience; that is, “how they expect those they address to respond” to the value positions they advance (Martin & White, 2005, p. 93). It “provides the means to characterise a speaker/writer’s interpersonal style and their rhetorical strategies according to what sort of heteroglossic backdrop of other voices and alternative viewpoints they construct for their text and according to the way in which they engage with that backdrop” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 93). The framework primarily orients towards situating meanings within interpersonal context as opposed to grammatical structures and it characterises the “different intersubjective stances available to the textual voice” (White, 2011, p. 33).

Engagement serves as an umbrella term for all the dialogistic resources (Martin & White, 2005, p. 95). Engagement is further divided into two broad categories based on their distinct orientations to heteroglossic diversity, namely: dialogic expansion and dialogic contraction. Dialogic expansion captures the dialogistic locutions that portray the degree to which an utterance actively references/acknowledges and engages with dialogically alternative positions and voices while dialogic contraction are those locutions that alternatively fend off, act to challenge or restrict the scope of alternative voices and viewpoints. While dialogic expansion opens widely the space for

dialogic alternatives, dialogic contraction closes down such space (Martin & White, 2005, p. 95). Each category has individual options of engagement meanings which are all “enabling variations in stance” (White, 2005, p. 28).

Dialogic expansion has two options, which are entertainment and attribution. Entertainment refers to those wordings by which the textual/authorial voice acknowledges that its position is one out of a range of possible alternatives, and therefore creates “dialogic space” for actual and potential “alternative voices and value positions in the ongoing colloquy within which the text is located” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 104). The attribution option deals with the formulations that attribute a value position to an external source and thereby disassociate it from the authorial voice (Martin & White, 2005, p. 111). Attribution also has two sub-categories: namely, acknowledge and distance. Attribute acknowledge refers to those locutions that do not specify overtly where the authorial voice stands with respect to the referenced proposition while attribute distance acts expressly to separate and distance the authorial voice from the attributed value proposition (Martin & White, 2005).

Dialogic contraction also has two broad categories with their individual sub-categories. The two broad categories are disclaim and proclaim. Disclaim refers to those formulations which act to directly reject or replace some invoked dialogic alternatives while proclaim, on the other hand, are formulations by which some dialogic alternatives are limited, challenged, confronted or excluded via some authorial interpolation, emphasis or intervention (Martin & White, 2005, p. 117-118). Two sub-categories of disclaim can be distinguished, namely: denial/negation and concession/counter-expectation. Denial or negation, as a dialogic contraction, is a formulation in which a dialogic alternative is acknowledged within an ongoing colloquy with the aim of rejecting it expressly (Martin & White, 2005, p. 118) while counter-expectation entails formulations that “represent the current proposition as replacing or supplanting,

and thereby ‘countering’, a proposition which would have been expected in its place” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 120).

Proclaim has three contractive formulations which are concur, pronounce and endorse. Concur involves formulations that expressly announce the authorial voice or addresser as agreeing/aligning or sharing the same knowledge with some referenced dialogic partner in the text, and thus, “represent the proposition/proposal as uncontentious within the current communicative context” (White, 2011, p. 31) . Such announcement aims at limiting the scope of dialogic alternatives (Martin & White, 2005, p. 122). Endorsement refers to “those formulations by which propositions sourced to external sources are construed by the authorial voice as correct, valid, undeniable or otherwise maximally warrantable” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 126). Although endorsement acts to construe a hereroglossic backdrop of actual and potential alternative voices and propositions, it, simultaneously, excludes or restricts the scope of such alternatives through the authorial voice’s endorsement of the announced value position (Martin & White, 2005, p. 126). Pronounce involves formulations that indicate explicit authorial emphasis, authorial interpolation and intervention which “are directed towards confronting and defeating a contrary position” (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 127-129).

With this theoretical background, the present study focuses on the use of specific dialogistic resources within the new reports, the manner in which certain types of resources are favoured/foregrounded over and above others coupled with the rhetorical effects of such dialogistic positionings in the Nigerian online media reportage of the South African xenophobic experience. The study aims at portraying the dialogistic stances/positionings of news reporters against heteroglossic backdrops of alternative voices and value positions advanced in the news reports with a view to understanding the overt and covert dialogistic leanings/positionings of the online news reporters towards the various value positions they advance or reference in their news reportage.

The specific objectives of the study are to: elicit the relevant dialogistic locutions in the selected online news reports; explore the dialogistic functionality/diversity which they indicate with respect to authorial stancetaking strategies against heteroglossic backdrops of prior utterances, alternative value positions and anticipated responses; and analyse their rhetorical effects with respect to actual or potential addressees, alignment and disalignment.

Methodology

The data comprise twenty news reports on the South African xenophobic experiences retrieved from the news archives of five purposively selected Nigerian news websites: *Sahara Reporters*, *The Punch Online*, *Daily Times*, *The Guardian* and *Premium Times*. The wide coverage of the selected news websites coupled with their relatively high level of patronage informed their selection. Also, the selected news reports cover news on xenophobia in South Africa from 2015-2018, a period of four years. The data are analysed qualitatively via the dialogistic theoretical aspect of Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory.

Analysis and Discussion

In this section, the various dialogistic resources as observed in the selected data are elicited and analysed with respect to the role they play in meaning making constructions of the texts, the news reporters' stancetaking strategies, and their negotiations of relationships of alignment/disalignment vis-à-vis prior, actual and anticipated value positions advanced in the texts. For easy analysis, the section is divided into two broad aspects, namely: dialogic expansion and dialogic contraction, with each having its individual sub-sections as it relates to their individual heteroglossic options.

Dialogic Expansion

Dialogic expansions are resources that make allowance for dialogically alternative prior, actual and potential voices and

value positions (Martin & White, 2005). Dialogic expansions as exemplified in the news reports include dialogistic locutions that entertain and attribute dialogic alternative positions on referenced xenophobic news reports. Each option of entertain and attribute is discussed in turns:

Entertain

Entertain deals with locutions that overtly present an angle of the news reports as one out of a range of possible dialogic alternatives and thereby hinge the advanced report on the contingent subjective view of an individual. Resources of entertain deployed in the news reports include modal adjuncts and verbal processes as exemplified in Excerpts 1-3:

Ex. 1) Olubajo said that the union`s executive had visited the city on a fact finding tour and had already spoken to Nigerians in the area.

“Nigerians and their families told us that the situation is very dangerous and that their lives are not safe.

“They also alleged that some group of people were abducting Nigerians and requesting money to bail themselves... (Guardian, 16 February 2018)

Ex. 2) Mr Miller said the victim was murdered in cold blood over his accent and habit, which the mobsters supposedly found offensive. (Premium, April 23, 2018)

Ex.3) Xenophobia attacks in South Africa have led to the death of many Nigerians, in recent years including 39-year-old Uchenna Eloh and 35-year-old Clement Kalu, who was allegedly tortured to death

by the South African police... (Sahara
Reporters, New York Jul 12, 2018)

In Ex. 1, the news reporter uses the verbal process *alleged* in a heteroglossic sense as opposed to its informational construal. The locution *alleged* advances the likelihood that the report that some South Africans are abducting Nigerians as part of the xenophobic sentiments is contentious since it lacks proof. The reporter, thus, covertly makes space in the report's heteroglossic backdrop for those who may want to disagree with the reporter's story, and thus, entertains alternative views. In a similar vein, the modal adjuncts *supposedly* and *allegedly* in Ex. 2 and Ex. 3, respectively, act to accommodate alternative views of the reports. In Ex. 2, the use of *supposedly* conveys the reporter's lack of commitment to the truth value of Miller's report that the victim was slayed as a result of his offensive accent and habit. Likewise in Ex. 3, the use of *allegedly* allows the reporter to present the story on the murder of the victim by the South African police as an event that contains some elements of authenticity but which has not yet been proven.

Dialogically, the locutions in the three excerpts mark the reporters as limited in their knowledge of the xenophobic experiences they report, and therefore, ground their reporting subjectively against heteroglossic backdrops of alternative views. The explicit subjectivities of the reporters signal their stancetaking strategies in which they limit the degree of their commitments to their narrations thereby modelling their readers to individual evaluations. The reporters, therefore, create dialogic space for possible agreement or disagreement from their audience. The reporters' stancetaking mechanisms can also be portrayed as a distancing formulation towards their reporting with a view to shielding themselves from any legal repercussions of their reportage.

Attribute: Acknowledge

Attribute deals with formulations that act to disassociate news reports from the reporters' voices by ascribing their sources to some external voices. Attribute acknowledge option takes precedence in the data. This is mostly realised in the data via the grammar of (in) direct speech by means of communicative process reporting verbs such as *said*, *told*, *stated*, *noted*, *reports*, *added*; and adverbial adjuncts such as *according to*. Instances of these are replete in the data as seen in the following excerpts:

Ex. 4) "South Africa has lots of businesses in Nigeria and they are doing well. Also, South Africans live in Nigeria and it is on record that Nigerians have never carried out xenophobic attacks on fellow Africans," he said. (Vanguard, April 17, 2015)

Ex. 5) The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the latest killing brings the number of Nigerians killed in the former apartheid enclave since February 2016 to 118. (Premium Times, May 15, 2018)

Ex. 6) According to him, the union received information that there will be xenophobic attacks against foreigners on Feb. 22 and Feb. 23. (Sahara Reporters, Feb 19, 2017)

Reporting verbs *said* and *reports* in Ex. 4 and 5, respectively, as well as the adverbial adjunct *according to him* in Ex. 6, all function as attributions of acknowledgement in that they act to disassociate the reporters' voices from the news reports. The assertions that South Africans resident in Nigeria are not subjected to xenophobic attacks in Ex. 4; the aggregate number of deaths recorded since the start of xenophobia against Nigerians in Ex. 5; and the prior warning of the union of

possible xenophobic attacks are all attributed to external sources. Such acknowledgements are dialogic in that they ascribe the news reports to external voices thereby depicting the news reporters and the attributed external sources as dialogic partners. Also, the reporting verbs and the adjunct ground the cited reports in the individual subjective views of the attributed sources thereby presenting their stories as one out of possible dialogic alternatives. This, thus, creates more dialogic space for possible readers' alignment or disalignment. Also, acknowledging attributions in the three excerpts explicitly indicate the neutral stances of the reporters; they present the reporters as not taking responsibility for the credibility of the news stories, and as a result, not liable for any misinformation.

Disclaim

Disclaim deals with dialogically contractive locutions that act to fend off, replace or restrict dialogic alternatives. Two options of disclaim are identified, namely denial/negation and concession/counter-expectation. Each will be discussed in turn:

Disclaim: Denial/Negation

Denial or negation deals with formulations that acknowledge "the alternative positive position into the dialogue and hence acknowledging it, so as to reject it" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 118). Findings reveal in the data that the adverbial *not* is mostly used as a functional negation that overtly acts to acknowledge the existence of alternative value positions in the reports with a view to rejecting them. Excerpts 7 to 9 illustrate denials of news stories via the heteroglossic locution *not*:

Ex. 7) ... the National Assembly took a swipe at the Federal Government for not engaging the South African government seriously over the attacks on Nigerians and others in the country. (Vanguard, March 1, 2017)
Guardian

Ex. 8) Olubajo said the union could not continue to keep quiet on this criminality and xenophobic act meted to Nigerians in South Africa...

“There is need for the Nigerian government to engage with its counterpart in South Africa. It’s not correct that those who were attacked and killed are criminals. “Such statements are misinformation and misleading,” he said. (Guardian, 16 February 2018)

Ex. 9) Describing the killing of Nigerians in South Africa as criminally motivated, Ramaphosa explained that Nigerians are not the only victims of crimes in his country...(Sahara Reporters, New York Jul 12, 2018)

In Exs. 7, 8 and 9, the underlined adverb *not* is heteroglossic in that it acts to invoke and acknowledge the alternative viewpoints that the Nigerian Government could have engaged the South African government in averting xenophobic attacks on Nigerians resident in South Africa; insinuations that Nigerians attacked and killed in the xenophobic attacks were criminals; and Nigerians are the only victims of xenophobia in South Africa. By acknowledging implicitly these positive positions in the reports, the negative *not* seeks to respond to them by rejecting or invalidating their reliability.

The denials in the above excerpts are directed away from writer-reader to some dialogic partners in the reports. That is, the reporters use the denials in the excerpts to indicate disalignments between attributed external voices in the stories. In Ex. 7, the reporter indicates a disalignment between the National Assembly and the Federal Government on their lack of

proactivity in ending the xenophobic menace. In Ex. 8, the disalignment is between the South African government and the Nigerian Union officials in South African; the union rejects expressly the allegation that Nigerians attacked and killed in South Africa are criminals. The South African President, in Ex. 9, while describing xenophobia as a crime-induced act, rejects the position that Nigerians are its only victims. These denials are confrontational in that they are presented to reject supposedly false views that readers are likely susceptible to believe about the xenophobic attacks, and in so doing, pull readers also into disalignment with the denied positions.

Disclaimer: Counter-expectation

Counter-expectation focuses on those dialogistic resources that present advanced value positions as “replacing or supplanting, and thereby ‘countering’, a proposition which would have been expected in its place” (Martins & White, 2005, p. 120). Subordinating conjunctions such as *though*, *although*, *however* and prepositional connectives like *despite* and *in spite of* are locutions used as triggers for countering in the data as exemplified in the following excerpts:

Ex. 10) Senate Chief Whip, Senator Olusola Adeyeye, who recalled the pivotal role played by the Nigerian Government during the apartheid regime. He berated South Africans for maltreating Nigerians, despite the nation’s sacrifice. (Guardian, 28 February 2017)

Ex. 11) ... An MTN worker said the staff ran to safety when the vandals invaded the premises. Police operatives however stopped the attack shortly afterwards. (The Punch, February 23, 2017)

The lexis *despite* in Ex. 10 enacts a countering link between the reports on Nigeria's magnanimity towards South Africans during the Apartheid regime and the current xenophobic sentiments towards Nigerian by the same South Africans. The xenophobic attacks, therefore, counters the normal expectation that South Africans would reciprocate the benevolence of Nigerians. Also, in Ex. 11, the report on how the Nigeria police curbed reprisal attacks against MTN facilities is also in a countering relationship with reports on South African police's complicity in xenophobic attacks against Nigerians. The use of the adverbial, *however*, implicitly marks the reporter's attempt to pitch the Nigerian Police with the South African Police. The South African police's inability to stop xenophobic attacks against Nigerians is subtly juxtaposed with the Nigerian Police's prompt quelling of the reprisal attacks. These counters heteroglossically act to project onto readers particular beliefs about Nigeria/Nigerians and South African/South Africans with the aim of gaining their solidarity. However, while the position in Ex. 10 is grounded in the individual subjectivity of an attributed external voice (Senate Chief Whip, Senator Olusola Adeyeye), Ex. 11 marks the reporter's individual subjectivity. The stancetaking mechanism of the reporter in both cases is to pull readers into alignment with the news stories.

Proclaim

Proclaim resources act to limit the scope of dialogic alternatives. Findings in the analysis reveal that out of the three sub-types of proclaim, which are: concur, endorse and pronounce, only the dialogistic resources of concur and endorse can be observed in the data. Each of the two sub-types is discussed in turns:

Proclaim: Concur

The "concur" category involves formulations which explicitly announce the reporters as "agreeing with, or having the same knowledge as, some projected dialogic partner" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 122). Very few instances of this sub-type,

exemplified via gerund and verbal process, can be observed in the data as seen in Exs. 12 and 13:

Ex. 12) Admitting that South Africans were more of the perpetrators of the criminal acts, Ramaphosa said: "In the course of everything else, people in various part of the country do get engulfed in acts of criminality; the majority of them are South Africans." (Sahara Reporters, New York Jul 12, 2018)

Ex. 13) Speaking on a television programme, she admitted that there were foreigners who commit crime in South Africa, and they can be dealt with, but not by discriminating against Nigerians or any other race or country, an online news medium, The Cable reports. (The Punch, March 12, 2017)

The use of the gerund, *admitting* (in Ex. 11) and the verbal process, *admitted* (in Ex. 12) construe for the reports reporters and readers that share the views being advanced about xenophobia in South Africa. In Ex. 11, by foregrounding the lexeme *admitting*, the reporter indicates that the South African President also shares the views with Nigerians that South Africans are the real criminals, not the assaulted foreigners. Likewise in Ex. 12, the admission of the speaker is expressly foregrounded by the reporter to indicate that everybody shares the view that some foreigners in South Africa are criminals. The use of the word *admit* in its variant forms in these excerpts, heteroglossically act to acknowledge the advanced views, and present the reporters and dialogic partners/readers as totally in alignment with the advanced propositions. Thus, the reporters maintain an implicit affirmative stance to the advanced viewpoints in the

excerpts. However, this alignment is dialogically contractive in that the use of the locution *admit* to depict concession among the communicative participants has subtly suppressed or blocked off possible alternative voices or positions.

Proclaim: Endorse

Endorsement refers to those formulations by which news reports attributed to external voices are construed by the reporters as credible and undeniable (Martins & White, 2005). Findings in the analysis reveal that the locution that features most as dialogistic resources of endorsement is the verb process *confirm* as illustrated in the following excerpts:

Ex. 14) The Nigerian Community in South Africa has announced the killing of Clement Nwaogu, who was burnt alive by a mob in the latest xenophobia attack in that country.

The Publicity Secretary of the Nigeria Union in South Africa, Habib Miller, confirmed the killing from Pretoria in a telephone interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Port Harcourt on Monday. (Premium Times, April 23, 2018)

Ex. 15) The Nigerian Community in South Africa have confirmed attacks and looting of Nigerian-owned businesses in Pretoria West on Saturday. (Sahara Reporters, Feb 19, 2017)

Ex. 16) ...“At about 11.00 a.m. South African time on Wednesday, a Nigerian, Uchenna Emmanuel Eloho, popularly known as ‘Monkey,’ was killed by South African police officers...

President of Nigerian Union in South Africa, Ikechukwu Anyene, who also confirmed the incident, called for an end to the incessant killing of Nigerians in South Africa. (The Punch, August 17, 2017)

The use of the verb process *confirmed* in the three excerpts performs both retrospective and anticipatory dialogic functions. Retrospectively, the wordings reference and stamp as credible prior stories on the “killing of Clement Nwaogu” in the xenophobic attacks in South Africa (in Ex. 14); the xenophobic “attacks and looting Nigerian-owned businesses in Pretoria West on Saturday” (in Ex. 15); and the gruesome murder of “Uchenna Emmanuel Elo” by some South African police officers. By referencing and endorsing as credible these news views, the reporters enter into dialogic relationship of alignments with the attributed sources of the news, namely: the “Publicity Secretary of the Nigeria Union in South Africa, Habib Miller” in Ex. 14; the “Nigerian Community in South Africa” in Ex. 15; and the “President of Nigerian Union in South Africa, Ikechukwu Anyene” in Ex. 16.

However, the reporters’ alignments with the attributed sources seek to share the responsibility of the reportage between the cited sources and the reporters. Thus, the reporters’ subtle interventions do not only lend credence to the credibility of the xenophobic attacks, it also acts to construe the likelihood of alternative positions with a view to suppressing their reliability. Rhetorically, such dialogically contractive endorsements seek to align readers with the positions being advanced and pull them into agreement.

Concluding Remarks

The study examines the dialogistic resources of expansion and contraction in online news discourse on negrophobic xenophobia in select Nigerian news websites with a view to eliciting the relevant dialogistic locutions in the selected online

news reports; exploring their dialogistic functionality with respect to reporters' stancetaking strategies against heteroglossic backdrops of prior utterances, alternative value positions and anticipated responses; and analysing their rhetorical effects with respect to actual or potential addressees, alignment and disalignment.

Findings in the analysis reveal that the dialogistic expansive resources of entertainment and attribution highly dominate contractive dialogistic resources in the selected news reporters. The dominance of the expansive resources signals the reporters' advertent reporting stancetaking strategies meant to explicitly create dialogic space in the reports for others who may want to align or disalign with the reporter's stories, and thus, entertains and acknowledge alternative viewpoints. More significantly, the resources of attribution are amply deployed by the reporters to portray their neutral stancetaking dispositions towards the xenophobic reports; convey their lack of commitment to the truth value of the reports; and most importantly, ground the reports subjectively against heteroglossic backdrops of alternative views. Rhetorically, attributions are distancing formulations used by the reporters to remain unimplicated in their reporting as well as to maximise the dialogic space for potential agreements or contentions.

Few instances of dialogistically contractive resources of denial, countering, concur and endorsement are observed in the data. However, endorsement locutions, which dominate other contractive resources in the data, construe the reporters' subtle intervening stances with a view to sharing the responsibility of the reports between the attributed sources and the reporters. Thus, the reporters' subtle interventions seek to validate the xenophobic attacks with the aim of suppressing contrary reports. Rhetorically, such dialogically contractive endorsements primarily perform reporter-reader alignment functions.

In the light of these findings, the study concludes that online news reporters maintain, to a great degree, a neutral stance in their news stories on the xenophobic attacks against

Nigerians in South Africa. Their neutrality not only help them to remain unimplicated in their reportage, it primarily heteroglossically maximises the space for potential dialogic alternatives and makes allowance for readers to either align or disalign with the news reports.

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