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Semantic Analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's 2022 Independence Day Speech

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Abstract

This study examined the semantic relations in President Muhammed Buhari's 2022 Independence Day Speech with a view to determining how the meaning association could help in unraveling the speaker's intention in any given discourse. The theoretical framework adopted for the study was Wittgenstein's Use theory of meaning as presented by Jaroslav (2011) which states that the knowledge of how words relate with one another is premised on the way the words are used to make meaning. A purposive sampling is considered suitable for the study due to the fact that the President's Independence Speech was solely and intentionally used as the elicitation instrument. Thus, a contextual/qualitative design was employed in analyzing the data. The text was analyzed for the effective use of lexical relations to unveil the message of the President on the Independence Day. The findings revealed that the lexical items that feature in the Speech were carefully chosen and logically woven to present the subject matter in each of the paragraphs, in order to make the Speech a unified whole and effectively communicate the message to the Nigerian citizenry and the international audience. The five major lexical relations that feature prominently in the Speech are collocation, antonymy, hypernymy, hyponymy and synonymy. These classes of sense relations are maximally employed to effect communication. It is therefore concluded that lexical/semantic relations are essential for functional use of language because they help to disambiguate the meaning intended, make the message as convincingly as possible in more captivating and clear terms as evident in 2022 President Buhari's Independence Day Speech.

Keywords: Semantics, Analysis, Independence, Day, Speech

Introduction

A good knowledge of lexis is the basic requirement for the acquisition of communicative competence in any human language (Akande, 2003). The knowledge of words in any language requires the language user to be able to see which shade of meaning is most suitable for the context in which the word occurs and also to make various associations with other related words. Lexical semantics is concerned with what words mean, how they are represented in the speakers' minds and how they are used in text and discourse (Carita, 2013). Cruse (2001) presents two most important fundamental issues addressed by lexical semantics, namely how to describe the meaning of words and how to account for the variability of meaning from context to context.

The positions are necessarily connected since an adequate description of meaning must be able to account for variation in meaning and its subsequent interpretation. An attempt to examine this stirs up the interest to explicate the associative meanings in 2022 Independence Speech of President Mohammed Buhari which enhance the linguistic and aesthetic quality of the speech. Based on this, the specific objectives of the study are to:

I.   Explicate how meaning could be lost in isolation of the context, and
II. Examine how meaning associations could help in unraveling the speaker's intention as in the case of the Presidential Independence speech under study.

Nigeria's Independence Day is an important occasion during which the incumbent President recounts the events in the pre- and post-Independence eras ranging from the factors that influenced the independence, the people involved, the challenges and the way forward. Such a speech usually thanks, appeals and promises the citizenry of a better tomorrow. The speech is basically prepared electronically or in the written form before it is officially read or presented on the Independence Day. We shall therefore review some previous related studies and the theoretical framework adopted for this study in the next section.

Conceptual Review

Lexical Semantics or (Lexico-semantics) is a subfield of linguistics which is concerned with the systematic study of word meaning. It includes the study of how words structure their meanings, how they act in grammar and compositionality, and the relationships between the distinct senses and uses of words. The three important points raised by Cruse (2001), namely, the description of meaning, variation in meaning and interpretation of meaning are fundamental to the study of meaning. He further avers that contextual variation leads in two directions: the processes of selection from a range of permanently available possibilities and the creation of new meanings from old by a means of metaphor and metonymy, in response to contextual pressure.

Another crucial area of inquiry is how vocabularies of languages are structured by a means of sense relations, such as antonymy, synonymy, hyponymy and incompatibility. Sidney & Chevalier (1998) take lexical semantics as a coding system which includes semantic features such as (+animate, object,--action) that also have implications for grammatical use. Based on this, we can say that lexical semantics includes specifications of the word as a noun versus a verb with crossing over being likely in some cases to other word classes subject to morphological rules. Steven & Pelagie (2002) present semantic route spelling which relies on interactions between the semantic system and the graphemic output lexicon. The semantic system represents the conceptual knowledge of word forms while the

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graphemic output lexicon contains information about the orthographic structure of familiar words. It has been proposed that representations in the graphemic output lexicon are normally activated by combined input from both orthographic and phonological representations, examples are homophones and homographs.

Atlay (2017) identifies varieties of lexical relations and categories them under 'has-a' relations and 'is-a' relations, which can otherwise be termed extensive and intensive relations respectively, though there is not only one specific taxonomy as there are other ways recognized by various authors. The 'has-a' relation category is the relation of part and whole. Meronyms can be either necessary or optional parts (Lyons, 1977). Holonymy is the converse relation of meronymy (Murphy, 2006) as holonym is a holistic unit which consists of meronyms. The 'is-a relations' has a rich number of relations compared to the 'a-has relations'. The two major relations in this category are hyperonymy and hyponymy which stand for super ordinate relation. Hyponymy is a relation of inclusion whose converse is hyperonymy. The third one is troponymy which is similar to hyponymy in that it relates only to verb synset pairs in a way to express a particular manner of the other. Some words of multiple meanings in such a way to cause lexical ambiguity due to such relations are polysemy and homonymy. Conversely, hononyms are coincidental forms sharing the same phonological or written forms. Homophones are two distinct words pronounced in the same way, whereas homographs are written without any difference.

Another example of lexical relation can be regarded as metonymy. Metonyms are usually compared with metaphors as figures of speech; however, metaphors are based on analogy while metonyms can stand alone in lexicon with certain sense relations. Among all these lexical relations, synonymy and antonymy are mostly distinguished and focused by teachers, learners and users of English. A synonym is defined as' a word which has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word' and an antonym 'a word which is opposite in meaning to another word' (Richard & Schmidt, 2002 quoted by Atlay (2017).

Akande (2003) following Lyons (1968) recognises two broad aspects of lexical relations, namely, the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic relations. Palmer (1997:67) states that paradigmatic relations are the relations into which a linguistic unit enters through its being contrasted or substitutable in particular environment, with other similar units. The paradigmatic sense/lexical relations in this category are synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy {major ones} and polysemy, homonymy, homophony and homography. On the other hand, syntagmatic relations are those that a unit contracts by virtue of its co-occurrence with similar units. The item used to describe this type of occurrence is collocation which refers to the company that words keep. There are limitations and restrictions in the co-occurrence of words which are determined by their normal field of reference which is termed range of

collocation, namely fixed and unfixed collocation. All these lexical relations shall be described in detail in the subsequent section.

Empirical Review

A few numbers of empirical studies reviewed in this study are expository, revealing the central role of lexical semantic in discourse. Sentianingrum, Mujiyanto & Fitriati (2021) examined three types of lexical relations: synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy in the Rowlings's novel "Harry Potter and the Deadly Hallows''. The study employed qualitative research in the form of content analysis which deeply investigates the meanings in the novel. The findings showed that each type of lexical relation is interconnected with one another. The most dominant type used by the author is antonymy followed by synonymy and hyponymy. The study concluded that lexical relations may help to improve the ability to use language effectively and heighten the effect of language output.

Zamir, Benish, Jahan & Cheema, (2021) analyzed lexico-semantic relationships of nouns used in the Saraiki Newspaper in Pakistan. The study explored the semantic relations found among the nouns in Saraiki. A corpus of 2 million words was created from Saraiki newspaper, a list of 1500 nouns was generated from the corpus after tagging and the nouns were semantically categorized for identifying the lexical relationships among them using machine readable dictionary. The findings revealed that ten lexico-semantic relationships frequently found among the nouns in the newspaper are essential for the development of a lexical data such as wordnet. The lexical relations found were those of synonymy, antonymy, holonymy, meronymy, hyponymy, hypernymy, masculine, feminine, singular and plural. Of all these, singular / plural relationship was the most frequent among the nouns in the newspaper while synonymy was the least. This implies that the Saraiki language was losing its diversity and purity as lexical borrowing was evident in its functional language due to which the frequency of synonyms and antonyms was less.

Thus, Atlay's (2017) study establishes that associating a content word to its rational semantic relations is a learning strategy which contributes to mental lexicon and individual vocabulary development. In the opinion of Haggoort & Berkum, (2007) a central and influential idea in language study is that the meaning of an utterance is a function of the meaning of its parts and of the syntactic rules by which these parts are combined. In other words, lexical semantic relations cannot be treated in isolation of the linguistic environment in which they occur. This present work examines lexical relations in the contexts of use, how the array of the lexical

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items used disambiguate the speaker's intentions and present the message as convincingly as possible. It is observed that the audience's perception of the speaker requires so much effort to win them over, hence, the use of different arrays of lexical relations to drive home his points.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Wittgenstein's (2009) *Use of Meaning*. The theory states that the meaning of an expression is the matter of the way the expression is put to use by its competent users. In other words, if the meaning of an expression is the result of its being used in a certain way, then its meaning is the very use. One cannot guess how a word functions; one has to look at its application to derive its meaning. Wittgenstein claims that meaning properties are constituted by use properties and that the use properties of a given word are determined by certain acceptance properties associated with sentences in which they occur. The theory further states that one may know the dictionary meaning of a word without knowing its uses in the language but if a word has both the meaning and use, one can claim to know the word fully only if he knows both of them. The choice of this theory is predicated on the fact that meanings of words are effected in the context of use and that meaning lies on the interpreter and not on the user of the language (Ifechelobo, 2012). The Presidential Speech could only be interpreted through the relationships that exist between and among the lexical items in the text. Thus, having the knowledge of how words relate with one another to achieve a unified and coherent discourse is premised on the way the words are used to make meaning in any occasion of language use (Wittgenstein, 2009).

Methodology

A homogenous purposive sampling was considered suitable for the study because it allows for a specific text to be examined for the description, analysis and interpretation of items used in a text. Thus, a contextual/qualitative design was adopted in analyzing the data – President Muhammadu Buhari's Independence Day Speech. The text was examined for the use of lexical relations to unravel the Independence Day message for easy access and comprehension by the Nigerian citizens and the international audience. The rationale for the choice of this instrument is based on the fact that presidential speech is for public consumption, thus, the audience's interpretation of the meaning intended by the speaker will help them to express their opinions on the subjects addressed in the speech.

Data Analysis and Discussion

This section presents the contextual analysis of the Presidential Speech for the occurrence of lexical relations and their use to effectively deliver impactful message to the Nigerian populace. The description of lexical relations in this study follows Ogbulogo (2005), Akande (2003) and Palmers (1997). The meanings of the lexical items in the speech were analyzed in terms of their sense relations with other lexical items within the text. Based on this, the study employed two broad aspects of sense relations: paradigmatic and syntagmatic.

The paradigmatic relations that feature prominently in the Speech are synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy and hypernymy, while we have a good number of fixed collocations and phrasal verbs under syntagmatic relations.

A.) Syntagmatic Lexical Relations in the Text Analysed

Synonymy

Synonymy is used to indicate sameness of meaning. It may not be the case that synonyms are exact substitutes in all circumstances. In other words, when two or more lexical items are similar in meaning does not mean they can function in the same context at all times. Thus, we may have words that are total/complete or absolute synonyms if and only if they have the same distribution and are completely synonymous in all their meanings and in all their contexts of occurrence. From all indications, it is generally recognized that complete or absolute synonymy is rare or almost not in existence in any natural language. The following are the samples of synonyms extracted from the text and the italicized lexical items are synonymous to each other or one another:

> ### *Gratitude/ appreciation*
>
> I address you today, with deep sense of ***gratitude*** to God and a high level of ***appreciation*** to all Nigerians… Para 1 lines 1&2
>
> ### *Nigerians/ citizens*
>
> ……I speak to millions of ***Nigerians*** who believe in me………. to bequeath a country where all citizens have equal opportunities…… Para 2 lines 3 & 4.***Nigerians*** and ***citizens*** are synonymous in this context.
>
> ### *Tackle/fight*

I then pledged to improve the Economy, *Tackle* Corruption and *Fight* Insecurity….. Para 6 line1. *Tackle* in this sense could mean to *attack or figh*t……

Huge/ large

…….international support, which aided the repatriation of a *huge* sums of money illegally kept outside the country. Para 10 line 2

The increasing number of prosecutions and convictions, with associated refunds of *large* sums of money is still ongoing**.** Para 11 line

Security agencies/ security forces

…….kidnappings, molestations/ killings of innocent citizens, banditry, all of which are being addressed by our **security** *forces*. Para 20 line4

……..to reposition as well as strengthen the security *agencies* to enable them deal with all forms of security challenges. Para 21 line 3

Practical/ realistic

……..our efforts in re-setting the economy manifested in Nigeria exiting two economic recessions by the very *practical* and *realistic* monetary and *fiscal* economy. Para 13 line 2

Problems/ difficulties/ challenges

……..these *problems* are globally induced. Para 17 line 3

…..our peculiarities in the midst of the growing global economic *difficultie*s…Para 19 line 3

As we continue to de-escalate the security *challenges* that confronted us at the inception of this administration…Para 20 line1

Benefits/gains

……our focused intervention directly to Nigerians through the National Social Intervention Programmes is also yielding ***benefits.*** Para 34 line5

Fellow Nigerians, no matter what ***gains*** we make, without a good governance system anchored on electing credible leaders ……, our efforts would not be enough. Para 37 line1

The use and semantic interpretation of the synonyms in the speech show that the President presents his views and experiences in a realistic manner. He makes a vivid presentation of what had transpired in the previous years from a practical point of view. He portrays himself as a leader who is guided by practical experiences, hence, the use of synonyms to unravel the real situation of things in the country. As it can be in the excerpts above, synonyms are used to emphasize and draw the attention of the audience to the economic/political crises and the state of insecurity that plague every sector of the country

Antonymy

Antonymy is a term used to describe oppositeness of meaning; words that are opposite are antonyms unlike synonyms, there are true antonyms. Antonymy is a regular and very natural feature of language and can be defined fairly precisely. The following types are identified in the text:

i) Gradable Antonyms

Gradable antonyms define words that are at the opposite ends with some gradation between two extremes. In most cases, they are usually comparative adjectives, ending in either-*er* or occurring with *more*. These adjectives have in common the degrees of quality involved. Examples of gradable antonyms from the text are italicized in the extract:

Daunting / surmountable

When you elected me, I really acknowledged the fact that he tasks before me were *daunting* and ***surmountable***…... Para 4 line 2.

Daunting and ***surmountabl****e* are gradable antonyms in the sense that the two can occur with –*more* to indicate comparison in any context.

Bilateral / multilateral

On the international front……. we have continued to take advantage of our *bilateral* and *multilateral* *platforms Para 44 line2*

Bilateral **and** *multilateral* are two opposites; the two can be compared using *more*.

The President's choice of words and the interplay of antonyms and synonyms in the speech point to the fact that the President is futuristic, hoping to bequeath a country of abundance, tranquility and better life for the masses as can be seen in this expression:

……I readily acknowledged that the task before me were *daunting* but *surmountable* because of the growing national consensus... Para4

ii) Complementary Antonyms

These antonyms belong to the set of incompatible terms that are members of two term sets in such a way that denial of one type is equal to the assertion of the other. In other words, if something is not A, it is B and vice versa.

Extracts from the text:

Failures/ success

My various attempts**,** *failures* and eventual *success* in being elected as a Democratic President in 2015 was made possible by the majority of Nigerians. Para 3 line 9.

Prosecutions /convictions

The increasing number of *prosecutions* and *convictions*, with associated refunds of large sums of money is still ongoing. Para 11 line 2.

Internationally /nationally

> The Federal Government will continue to mobilize resources both
> ***internationally*** and ***nationally*** towards funding education....Para 26
> line 2

Individually /collectively

> It is in this spirit I call on all of us to ***individually*** and ***collectively*** bring
> to the fore in dealing with all our development issues. Para 46 line 1

In the Excerpts above, antonyms are used to express the state of confusion, hopelessness and eventual success in becoming the President of Nigeria i.e. *failure and eventual success;* and unrelenting effort at making sure that all the money stolen are refunded i.e. *persecution and conviction.* All these are used to show the two extremes of the state of the points being addressed.

iii) Relational Antonyms

When two lexical items show a reversal of relationships, they are described as relational opposites. These are otherwise known as conversiveness. It could be in the form of spatial direction viewed from different perspectives by participants e.g. above/ below, before / after, etc or relationship between participants in a discourse as we can see in the text analyzed:

President / Nigerians

> Conscious that today's election would be my last on an Independence
> Day as your ***President;***
>
> I speak to the millions of ***Nigerians***, who believed in me....Para 2 line
> 1

Leaders /citizens

> ...the pursuit of an electoral system and processes that guarantee
> election of ***leaders*** by ***citizens*** remains the guiding light as I prepare to
> wind down...

The antonyms used here are directional and definite, pointing to a set of people in a relational order. It presents a sense of bond between the people being referred to in the text and then the success of one depends on the other.

iv) Reversive Antonyms

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These refer to verbs, which denote processes that can be changed and restored to the original state.

Extracts from the text:

> ### *Recurring / redressing*
>
> I must that I am very pained by the ***recurring*** disruption to our tertiary education system…This administration has made appreciable progress in ***redressing*** these issues……Para 25 line 1&6

Recursive antonyms are used in the speech to present the challenges faced and efforts made at rescuing the situation.

Antonyms in the speech analyzed are used for adjustment of expressions. More importantly antonymic pairs appear in speech as a lexical unity; the expressions in opposite makes the speech clearer, richer, and more colourful. They are also used to emphasize points, and explain exactly what is meant. As it could be seen in the speech analyzed, the President employs synonymic and antonymic repletions, with all the components of repletion arranged in order of increasing intensity, as a means of effecting an emotional impact on the audience.

Hyponymy/Hypernymy

Hyponymy is a relationship in which the meaning of one form is included in the meaning of another. Inclusion in this sense is a matter of class membership. There is usually a type of hierarchical relationship. The upper term is known as the super ordinate term, which is otherwise known as hypernym while the lower the hyponym. Thus, a hyponym is a word or phrase whose semantic field is more specific than its hypernym. The concept of hyponymy involves the notion of meaning inclusion, the notion of class inclusion and that of logical entailment (Akande, 2003). The meaning and class of co-hyponyms are included in the meaning of the hypernym-the super ordinate term. For logical entailment, to say, A is a dog, logically implies that –A is an animal but to say – A is an animal -does not imply that it is a dog.

The extracts from the speech analyzed feature hyponyms as used in terms of meaning and class inclusion as can be seen in the following:

> *Economic challenges==debt burden--inflation—unemployment*Para16
>
> *Security   challenges==kidnappings—molestations/killings—banditry Para 20*

_____

> *Ecological challenges== flood—soil erosion—desertification—air pollution Para 29*

Hyponymy relations also exist among the lexical items in the following extract*;*

> There is hardly any ***ward***, ***village*** or ***local government*** in ***Nigeria*** today that has not benefited from one of the following…..

In this case, **Nigeria** is the super ordinate term with **ward**, **village** and **local government** as co-hyponyms.

The meanings of the co-hyponyms in this context are found in the meanings of the super ordinate terms–the hypernyms. Hyponyms are used in the speech to further explicate and make the challenges being presented in the speech more clearer to the audience, hence , the use of hypernyms and their co-hyponyms. These lexical relations are effectively used in introducing logical connections which aid in expressing the meaning of the lexical items used in the speech.

Syntagmatic Relations

Collocation

Collocation is predictable combination of words of any classes such as verbs, nouns, adverbs and adjectives; it is a group of two or more words that usually go together. In other word, it is the company that words keep. Below are some of the collocates used in the speech:

Collocates

Lexical items:

- *Economy, economic recession, monetary measure, financial management, Treasury Single Account. Para line 1-5*
- *Well-educated, literate, proficient, policies, programmes, tertiary education system, classroom. Para 24-25*
- *Governance, leaders, free, fair, credible and transparent elections, electoral process, credibility, transparency, freedom of choice… Para 39-40*

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The use of collation in the above excerpts helps to make the speech explicit as one can see some groups of words that seem to belong to the same field of discourse occurring together. These sets of collates highlight specifically the challenges faced by the country economically, politically, educationally, etc.

Phrasal Verbs/Prepositional Verbs:

Phrasal/Prepositional Verbs: A phrasal/prepositional verb is an idiomatic or colloquial expression that combines a verb and a preposition to make a new word with a distinct meaning. Extracts from the speech:

> ….***cutting down*** on the cost of governance…….Para 13 line4

> …..I prepare to ***wind down*** our administration Para 39 line 4

> …….incentives to Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises that ***resulted in*** creating millions of jobs. Para 15 line.

> …….To further **open up** our communities to economic activities, we have continued to boost our railway infrastructure…… Para 33 line 1

Certain prepositions follow particular verbs in such a way that they keep company:

> ***Settling down*** –*Para 8 line 1*

> ***Accentuated by----****Para 17 line 3*

> ***Supported by***—*Para 18 line 2*

> ***Evidenced by----*** *Para 24 line3*

> ***Addressed by----****Para 20 line4*

> ***Availed with****----Para 19 line 1*

> ***Pained by---***Para 25 lin41

Anchored on----Para 37 line2

> **Used by----** Para 42 line 2

Prepositions with Nouns:

_____

Emphasis on---Para 34 line 1

Prepositions with Adjectives:

Devoid of----Para 41 line 3

Related terms*: **commitment, passion, resilience** ----Paras 7 &28*

The phrasal verbs above present the systematic patterning of grammatical expressions without which meaningful communication can be made. Any attempt to use any prepositions with the different classes of words in the excerpts will completely distort the meaning intended. The use of c*utting down, wind down, open up,* etc. in the excerpts helps in getting the points across quickly without having to use too many words. In this way, complex ideas are communicated in a concise yet comprehensive manner.

Discussion

Lexical /Semantic relations play a crucial role in various communicative situations. These relations existing between /among words in discourse give cues to clear interpretation and understanding of the meanings of words by participants in a discourse situation. Thus, the meanings of words are not only communicated by what they mean (i.e. their denotative features) Malik (2017) but essentially in terms of their relationships with other lexical items in a given context. As can be seen in the Speech analyzed, the lexical items were carefully chosen and logically woven in such a way that various sense relations, especially, of antonymy, synonymy, hyponymy and collocation exist across the lexical items and are interconnected to make the speech a unified whole and to effectively deliver the message of the Independence to the Nigerian populace and the international audience.

From the text analyzed, collocation appears to feature most prominently due to the fact that the Speech touches on different sectors of the country, namely, economy, ecology, security, politics/ administration, education, etc. This calls for the need to use lexical items that must essentially occur together. Antonymy comes next; the use of antonymy in the Speech produces a strong sense of comparison that makes the speech powerfully convincing and helps the reader/listener to understand the intention of the addresser (i.e. the President) much more easily. Hyponymy is used in the Speech to categorize various challenges being confronted by the Nigerians under different superordinate terms-hypernyms, each with its co-hyponyms, that is, the specific terms. This helps in logical classification and presentation of things. This is in tandem with Finch's (2005) assertion that much of the English vocabulary is linked by a system of inclusion which is a vertical relationship that is fundamental to the way in which things are classified. Synonymous relations also play an important role in giving a

clear picture of what is being explained. It should be noted that qualitative analysis of the lexical relations is not carried out based on the fact that there are overlaps in the use of certain types of sense relations, particularly hyponymy and collocation. More so, the study is much more concerned with the use but not quantity. It is therefore evident from the text analyzed that the knowledge of vocabulary items is not enough for the development of lexical competence but the knowledge of the use to which words are put in a given context.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is therefore concluded that lexical relations are essential for functional use of language as evident in 2022 President Buhari's Independence Day Speech. The semantic relations are extensively and effectively employed to disambiguate the meaning intended, make the message as convincingly as possible in more captivating and clear terms, all in assuring the audience of greater and better Nigeria.

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Trauma in African Literature: Culture and the Phenomenon of Mental Distress in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Kilanko's *Daughters who Walk this Path*

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Abstract

One of the issues rarely considered in Achebe's debut is the traumatic experiences of Okonkwo and Nwoye. To illustrate the significance of this mental distress on their lives, this