

# LANGUAGE AND IDEOLOGY IN SELECTED BOKO HARAM SERMONS

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**Abstract:** *Language plays a powerful role in communicating messages and ideas. It helps in presenting ideologies, especially in political and religious discourses. Existing studies on language and ideology have focused on political speeches. However, little scholarly attention has been paid to the way Boko Haram's ideology is communicated through the sermons of their leaders. It is in this light that the study investigated the communicative functions of the language used in selected Boko Haram sermons to project their ideology. Since the tone of the group was set by the first two leaders: Muhammad Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau, six of their transcribed and translated sermons were purposively/randomly selected (three from each leader) for the analysis. Only extracts that portrayed the research questions were selected from the sermons. The sermons were from an online journal, *Afrique Contemporaine*, Volume 255, Issue 3, 2015 pages 41 to 69 by Elodie Aparid. Content analysis and Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis served as the theoretical framework for the research. Five communicative functions were discovered in the sermons. They include commenting, protesting, requesting, directing attention and rejecting. In addition, four ideologies were employed by the leaders. Authoritative ideology was used to give orders and enforce obedience from their followers; comparative ideology was employed to compare the Boko Haram sect with past prophets; historical ideology was used by making reference to the Jihad during the time of the past prophets and convincing ideology was employed to convince their followers that they are on the right part. It was also observed that the selected leaders, Yusuf and Shekau, expressed their opinions in similar ways. However, while Shekau targeted some individuals in his sermons, Yusuf's messages were directed to the general public. This study has contributed to existing works done on the interrelatedness of language and ideology by investigating the way Boko Haram ideologies were communicated through the sermons of their first two leaders: Muhammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau. The similarities and dissimilarities in their manner of presentation were also examined.*

**Keywords:** *Language, Ideology, Sermons, Critical Discourse Analysis, Boko Haram.*

## Introduction

Language is a method of communication among members of a social or ethnic group via spoken, signed or written symbols. Language serves a variety of functions: it is used to communicate, express identity and to express emotions (Crystal & Robins, 2020). Functionalist theories frequently examine language as a dynamic phenomenon because structures are always undergoing changes as their speakers use them. The study of linguistic typology, or the categorization of languages according to structural features, may be used to

show how processes of grammaticalization frequently follow trajectories that are partly dependent on typology. (Newmeeyer, 2000). According to Harris (1990), Saussure believed that language communicates meaning by connecting a sign's shape to its meaning or substance. A sign form must be anything that can be experienced, such as sounds, sights or movements, and then connected, by social convention, to a particular meaning. Linguistic signs can be viewed as arbitrary in the sense that the norm is established socially and historically as opposed to direct relationship between a certain sign form and its meaning. This is true because social conventions serve as the underlying basis for the meaning relationship for the majority of language signals.

Languages require a lexicon of symbols that have specific meanings. A language's lexicon is a collection of arbitrary signals related to multiple meanings and a lexeme is a single sign associated with a meaning. No one word can adequately convey the meaning of a language. Grammatical categories that convey semantic notions are commonly found in the morphology or syntax of a language (Levinson, 2007). Meaning is typically thought of as the mechanism through which a predicate may be claimed to be true or untrue about an entity. Semantics is not restricted to the study of how interpreters and communicators give statements their true meaning, as generally assumed; rather, it entails taking into account, the context in which a sign is perceived (Levinson, 2007).

Institutions in the political, economic, scientific, educational, and cultural arenas are impacted by ideology, which is a system of prevailing ideas and beliefs. In the seventeenth century, French philosophical thought is where the word "ideology" first appeared. The French thinker Destutt de Tracy is credited with creating the term "idéologie" (Destutt, 1995). To enhance and clarify public dialogue, according to his definition, the term refers to the portrayal of the subject's hypothetical relationship to his or her actual living surroundings. (Jameson, 1991). The word was used by Karl Marx to describe the dominant doctrines that underpinned a certain political-economic system. Marxist and neo-Marxist publications use the term "ideology" to refer to a basic set of ideas and values that, from a class-conflict and structural-functionalist perspective, strengthen and legitimise the present social classes and economic system.

Maintaining the status quo of a socially, economically and politically stratified society is the primary goal of ideology. Ideology serves the purpose of legitimising and giving significance to things in the service of power. It also relates to the ways that meaning establishes and maintains relations of dominance. According to Marxist and neo-Marxist reproduction theories, it is the ongoing reproduction of economic relations in order to uphold the ruling class's control (Livingstone, 1995). Ideology is an articulated collection of goals, aims and purposes that aid in understanding the past, the present and the future for the system's participants. Political, economic and cultural ideologies provide a set of universal fundamentals that support national consensus as well as a sense of shared identity and a route selected by those who believe their ideology to be the only true and legitimate one. The crucial and forward-looking role of ideology is to provide alternative groupings that are opposing the state with meaning and a feeling of purpose.

The philosophies of a group of people or an individual are their shared ideas or points of view. Ideology is therefore the style of thinking of a person, a group of people or a society. It can also be characterized as a belief system that permeates all aspects of a persons' way of life (Akinsola, 2020). People utilize a collection of ideas to direct their behavior and actions. Ideology contains opinions, ideas and cultural convictions. It also refers to the extent to which philosophy influences people's lives and social communities. One's view of the world, reality and other issues that have an impact on social communities are shaped by ideology. It also affects social cohesiveness and encourages cooperation among neighbors.

Ideology and language are intertwined. This is because ideologies are channeled and expressed through the use of language. Language is influenced by ideology when people establish ideas and convictions about how to evaluate and use particular linguistic formations. Both the efforts to promote language forms that may be perceived as "good" and "adequate" by a speech community as well as the attempts to reform language forms that are considered as "bad" or "inadequate" by the speech community have their roots in this metapragmatic source. This starting point ultimately acts as the basis for creating language regulations and starting language planning processes. Researchers have observed that it is difficult to specify the limits of linguistic ideology in terms of its scope, importance and applications (Kroskrity, 2012).

According to a linguistic anthropologist, language ideology is a "cluster concept consisting of a number of converging dimensions," with numerous "partially overlapping but analytically distinguishable layers of significance," and the author observes that there is "no particular unity, no core literature, and a range of definitions" among the scholarship that has been written on the subject (Duranti, 2004, p. 502). This idea is unsatisfactory, according to Kroskrity (2012, p. 171), due to the fact that "it fails to problematize language ideological variation and, as a result, promotes an overly homogeneous view of language ideologies within a cultural group." This illustrates how language structure is influenced by speakers' awareness. According to Silverstein (1999, p. 67), language ideologies are "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a justification or rationalization of perceived language structure and use. Language ideologies have been characterized as "self-evident ideas and objectives a group holds concerning the roles of language in the social experiences of members as they contribute to the expression of the group," (Heath, 1997, p. 104). Language ideologies have also been defined as "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (Irvine, 2022, p. 42).

A sermon is a religious speech or oration delivered by a preacher who is often a clergy person. Sermons examine biblical, theological or moral concerns, generally focusing on a given belief, rule or practice in both historical and present contexts. Jama'ah Al-Ahlu Sunnah Li al-Da'wah wa al-Jihad sect, popularly known as Boko Haram, originally surfaced in 2002 as a peaceful local Salafist Islamic group. Shuaibu et al. (2015) claim that the Hausa translation of the word "Boko Haram" is "Western education is forbidden." Boko Haram was established in

Maiduguri, Borno State (the northeastern area of Nigeria) in 2002 by Mohammad Yusuf, a militant Islamist scholar who lived from 1970 to 2009. He established the religious complex known as Markaz after being expelled from two mosques in Maiduguri by Muslim clergy for promoting radical ideas. To ensure their children received a quality education, many low-income Muslim families in Nigeria and the countries around it sent their children to an Islamic school. However, the center's secondary political goal was the creation of an Islamic state with the application of Sharia Law. Later, the facility was used as a recruiting base for attacks on other Nigerian states, especially the northern ones (Chothia, 2012). Under Mallam Lawal's direction, the group was previously known as Shabaab Muslim Youth Organization. Yusuf took over as the movement's head after Lawal traveled to Madina, Saudi Arabia, to pursue his study.

Because of Yusuf's leadership, the group received political influence and recognition (Chothia, 2012). In 2009, the Boko Haram crisis started up. Due to new government laws at the time, motorcycle riders were compelled to wear helmets (Cook, 2011). The governor of Borno State gave the police authority to enforce helmet use as part of Operation Flush Duties, a joint patrol squad. As the sect's members rode motorbikes without helmets to a burial, the police stopped them. Four sect members were killed and about eighteen others were injured in the ensuing confrontation between the police and the sect members. Yusuf was so furious that he wrote the notorious "An Open Letter to the Federal Government," in which he threatened and begged Nigeria's federal government to respond in forty days so that he and the government could come to agreement. Yusuf planned to terrorise the people of Borno State if the authorities remained mute. According to Murtada (2013a), Yusuf asserted that only Allah had the authority to end his ostensible "jihad" campaign. Some observers note that the group members began to make preparations for violence when the forty-day deadline expired without a response from the government (Murtada, 2013b).

Boko Haram made its debut on January 26, 2012 by distributing fliers in Kano. Soon after, 150 city residents, the bulk of whom were Muslims, perished in a Boko Haram offensive attack that was launched against the city. According to certain media reports, Ansaru was founded in response to the incident's murders of innocent Muslims. Since its inception, Ansaru was believed to have coordinated its operations in Nigeria with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which has its headquarters in northern Mali. The US government classified Ansaru and Boko Haram as foreign terrorist groups on November 13, 2013. The Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States region was where the gang operated and exercised power. The majority of the first attacks carried out by Boko Haram took place in Maiduguri, the state capital. Later, the violence spread to portions of the northwest states of Kano and Kaduna as well as the bordering states of Gombe and Bauchi. On June 16, 2011, Boko Haram attacked the Nigerian Police Headquarters, marking the beginning of the nation's first suicide bombings. On August 26, 2011, the group carried out a second attack on the UN building (Liolio, 2013). Boko Haram has already carried out attacks in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, as well as the whole northern region.

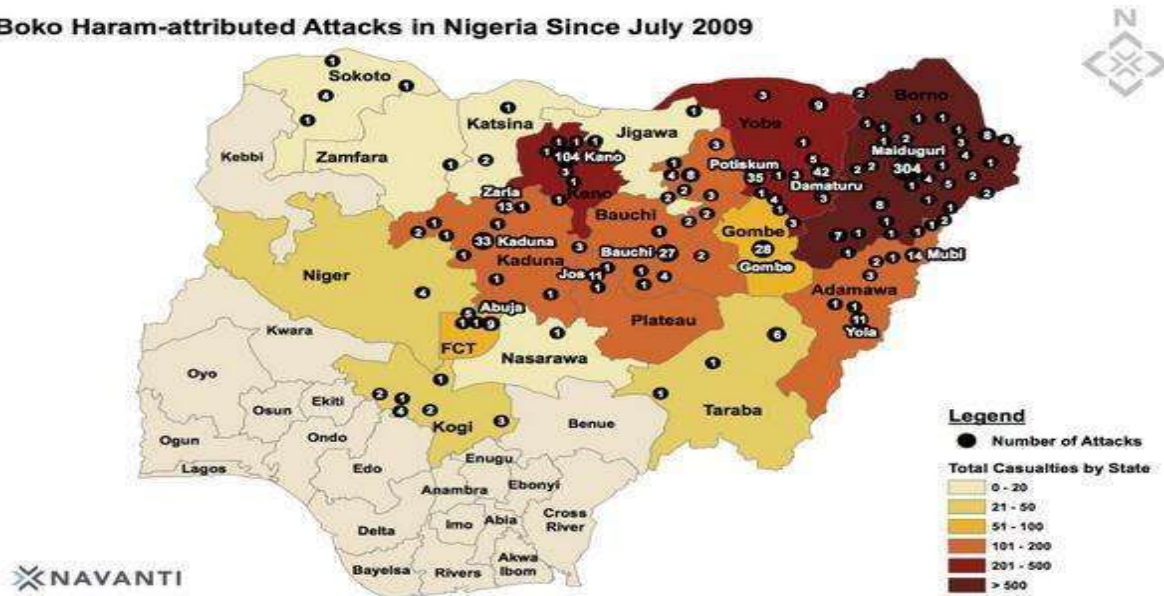
### **Boko Haram: History/Origin and Activities**

Boko Haram, which first emerged in the early 2000s, was a Salafist Sunni Muslim reform organisation with roots in Borno State in northeastern Nigeria. This area has long been plagued by poverty and inequality, dishonest and polarising politics and a ferocious debate over Islam's proper position in the society and government. The term "Boko Haram" refers to a prohibition on acquiring a Western education. The group's name is Jama'ah Ahlu al-Sunnah Li al-Da'wah al-Jihad (People Committed for the Propagation of Sunnah and Jihad). Mohammed Yusuf, the organisation's founder, opposed western influence, Christianity and more moderate forms of Islam. In 2009, Boko Haram started attacking police stations in a number of northern Nigerian cities as a result of a dispute with local authorities. In response, Yusuf and hundreds of his supporters were captured and killed by Nigerian security forces (Husted, 2021).

The organization adheres to the Wahabi understanding of "Tawhid" (God's unity, sometimes referred to as monotheism). In the words of Boko Haram, a secular society encourages state worship or idolatry. The national anthem and the pledge of loyalty to the flag are instances of this devotion and are thus crimes that are subject to the death penalty. According to Boko Haram, the state is a hotbed of corruption that takes advantage of the underprivileged. The state is established and maintained using Western ideologies and educational standards, which are in direct opposition to Allah's will (Campbell, 2014).

When Mohammed Yusuf passed away, Boko Haram re-formed under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, who increased the group's operations to encompass large-scale bombings, territorial claims and cross-border attacks in countries nearby. With the abduction of 276 girls from a school in Chibok, Borno State, in 2014, it gained a reputation for brutality, including the use of women and children as suicide bombers. This sparked the "Bring Back Our Girls" social media movement. Shekau swore allegiance to ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in 2015 (Adegbulu, 2013).

**Boko Haram-attributed Attacks in Nigeria Since July 2009**



Over 5,000 individuals died in Boko Haram assaults between 2013 and 2014; over six million Nigerians have been impacted, with over 300,000 being relocated, according to UN and Nigerian officials. A minimum of 2,000 people perished in the first half of 2014. Nigeria's continued existence as a single nation has recently been in doubt due to the group's threats. Goodluck Jonathan, a former president of Nigeria, proclaimed a state of emergency in Borno State on the grounds that some areas were no longer under governmental authority. The Nigerian Army has fought bravely against the militia ever since (Shuaibu and Salleh, 2015).

Following the murder of the first Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, by a rival terrorist organization in May 2021, hundreds of individuals, including former Boko Haram members, their families and civilians fleeing Boko Haram-controlled areas turned themselves in to Nigerian authorities. Shekau's death marked the passing away of one of the most prominent extremists in the world (Foucher, 2021).

## Biography of the Boko-Haram Leaders

### Mohammad Yusuf

Boko Haram was founded in 2002 by Nigerian extremist, Mohammed Yusuf, also known as Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf. His birthday was January 29, 1970. At the height of the Boko Haram uprising in 2009, he served as the group's leader until his assassination. The actual name of the group is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wa- Jihad, which approximately translates to "People Committed to the Propagation of Sunnah Teachings and Jihad" in Arabic. He was born

in Yobe state, Girgir hamlet in Jakusku local government. Before pursuing his studies in Islamic-related areas and becoming a Salafist, Yusuf completed his local studies in Nigeria (Dowd, 2015).

Lubeck (2011) asserts that despite Yusuf's Shia training, he was mistakenly identified with Salafism and Ibn Taymiyyah's views. His educational background was that of a graduate student. Yusuf never developed a good command of English language. His adherence to the rigid execution of Islamic law reflected his perspective on justice. In an interview conducted by BBC in 2009, Yusuf expressed his opinion that the idea of a spherical Earth is in conflict with Islamic philosophy and ought to be abandoned.

He also disagreed with Darwinian evolution and the idea that rain is produced by the condensation cycle. Yusuf had twelve children and four spouses. After his death, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, one of his offspring, said that he was still the rightful head of Boko Haram. He was against Abubakar Shekau. According to reports, Yusuf lived a wealthy lifestyle and owned a Mercedes-Benz. Yusuf was taken prisoner by the Nigerian military at his in-laws' house after the Boko Haram rebellion in July 2009. Yusuf was slain violently by the police in front of the Maiduguri police station. According to authorities, Yusuf either died from wounds received during a fight with the suspect or was shot while attempting to flee (Thurston, 2017).

### **Abubakar Shekau**

Abubakar Shekau was born in Shekau Town, Tarmuwa local government, the present-day Yobe State. His exact birth year is unknown; however, it is believed to be either 1965 or 1975. Shekau was a Kanuri man who also spoke Fulfulde, Hausa, Arabic and English. He was reputed to have an excellent recall. Before enrolling in the Mohammed Goni College of Legal and Islamic Studies (now known as the Borno College of Legal and Islamic Studies), he relocated to Maiduguri's Mafoni neighborhood in 1990 and completed his studies under a traditional cleric. (BBC, 2014). Shekau left the College without getting a diploma due to ideological reasons. After getting to know Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Jamaat Ahlus Sunnah li Dawah wal Jihad, he finally became one of his assistants. Yusuf was killed in the Boko Haram rebellion in 2009 and in July of the same year, Shekau was proposed as the group's leader. Shekau was wounded in the leg by Nigerian security personnel in 2009 but he escaped. One of Muhammad Yusuf's four widows became Shekau's wife. He was given the Arabic appellation "Darul Tawheed" which means "Specialist in the Islamic Concept of Allah's Oneness" (Jacinto, 2012).

Nigerian officials thought Shekau had been killed in clashes between security forces and Boko Haram in 2009 until he appeared in a video in July 2010 and claimed leadership of the organization. He was routinely supposed to be dead after that, yet he kept popping up (Brock, 2012). Shekau pledged his allegiance to ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in March 2015. Shekau was a Salafi till 2016, when he pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

(ISIS). Shekau killed himself by detonating a suicide vest, according to a May 21, 2021 Wall Street Journal article that has been confirmed by Nigerian officials. Abu Masab al-Barnawi, a rival of Shekau, later claimed that Shekau had committed suicide. His followers announced his death in June 2021 (Akinyelure, 2016).

### **Language and Ideology**

Language is a one-of-a-kind human gift that has enabled the human race to express itself. It allows community participants to express themselves and develop interesting relationships. As a result, it provides the necessary foundation for society's existence, the growth of its institutions, and the preservation of cross-society links. In the words of Odebunmi (2001), language promotes ongoing interaction among speakers in a community. It is the tool used by individuals to do sociocultural analysis. According to Mkandawire. (2018), language is a shared, taught and arbitrary system of vocal symbols that enables members of the same speech group or subculture to interact and communicate based on common cultural experiences and expectations. He often believes that in order for a language to exist, it must be shared by a group of users.

Language is composed of codes that individuals with shared access use to communicate with one another. It serves to express both user expectations and common cultural experiences in social interactions. According to Sapir (2021), language is a wholly human and non-instinctive way for people to identify themselves as members of a social group and contributors to that group's culture through a system of consciously created sounds.

### **Language of Power and Power of Language**

When the term "power" is heard or seen, among other things, dominance, horror, intimidation, authority and control are among the first images that spring to mind. In this view, both ephemeral social good and ephemeral social ill are driven by political power play or power.

As a result, the idea of power becomes extremely intricate and begins to connect to the power of words. Being linguistically powerful means having the ability to both uphold and undermine authority. The link between language and power is intricate and perplexing. Language is, in the end, the most potent tool utilized by all forms of authority. Language is where power is invested, embodied and conveyed. Language commands and dictates authority which others must pay close attention to and obey (Barlett, 2014).

### **The Communicative Functions of Language**

Language can be used to perform different functions. They include commenting, directing, protesting and so on. The commenting communicative function refers to the act of expressing thoughts, opinions or attitude about a particular topic, situation or piece of content. Commenting plays a crucial role in our daily lives, enabling effective exchange of information, ideas and emotions between individuals and groups. This function is vital for conveying



thoughts, expressing opinion and attitudes. Requesting communicative function is an act of asking for something or seeking assistance, information, permission or cooperation from someone. It is a form of communication where an individual expresses their desire or need for a specific action, object, favour or services. The rejecting communicative function refers to the act of declining, refusing or dismissing something or someone. It involves the refusal to accept, acknowledge or comply with a particular request, proposal, idea or individual. The directing attention communicative function is the deliberate act of guiding or focusing someone's awareness or concentration towards a specific object, task, event or information. It involves intentionally capturing and maintaining an individual's attention on a particular subject or point of interest. When directing attention, the goal is to draw someone's focus towards a specific element, idea or action while potentially minimising distractions or irrelevant stimuli. The protesting communicative function refers to the act of expressing strong objection, dissent or disapproval towards a particular issue, policy, action or situation. It involves engaging in collective action or public demonstration to convey a message and advocating for change or to raise awareness about an injustice or perceived wrongdoing (Volkmar, 2021).

### **Ideology**

The Frankfurt School held that ideology is a part of the superstructure of society, which is molded by its material production. The means of production are under the control of the ruling class. Ideology will therefore be molded to suit its own purposes. In order for the governing class to recognize the inequities of reality and solidify their control, a national infrastructure is utilized to create a "false consciousness" among the populace (Devereux, 1998). However, in CDA study, critical linguists offer an unbiased evaluation of ideology. Ideology is "the sum of the ways in which people think, say and interact with the society." (Fowler, 1991, p. 92). Fairclough (1992) defined "ideology" as "significations generated within power relations as a dimension of the exercise of power and struggle over dominance." Wodak (1996, p. 18) describes ideologies as unique ways of explaining and constructing a society that sustains unequal power connections, dominance ties and exploitation relationships using language that is similar to this. Ideology is viewed by Critical Discourse Analysis as a set of values that represents a certain group or class, typically the ruling class.

Van Dijk (1998) defines ideologies as the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs held by members of groups, organizations, or other social groups of people. Van Dijk (1995) claims that "ideologies have the cognitive function of organizing the social representations (attitudes and knowledge) of the group and thus, indirectly monitor the group-related social practice and co-ordinate the group's actions. Despite the fact that ideologies may be interpreted in many different ways, critical linguists agree that they are firmly ingrained in the society and actively participate in social processes. Ideology is thus a collection of beliefs held by a community as a whole that are used to defend and illuminate a particular occurrence that

occurs inside a particular social and cultural setting. It is essential to any analysis of the speech that penetrates our daily lives, thus linguistic academics should learn more about it.

### **Function of Ideology**

Now that ideology has been defined, the following issues arise: What role does ideology play in the daily activities of a given social group? What trait(s) does a given ideology hold its adherents to throughout their lifetimes? In what ways does it discuss their lives in the light of certain socio-individual goals? Van Dijk (1995) has attempted to address these concerns by arguing that ideology can primarily serve the following purposes:

1. promoting oneself on behalf of a certain social group
2. Preserving the membership and identities of its participants
3. Proposing and persuading their socio-cultural practices and struggles
4. Serving the interests of its members above those of other social (ideological) groups

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Fairclough 3-Dimension Model gave the study its overall framework. Language, according to Fairclough (1989), is a sort of social practice. By definition, discourse refers to the complete process of social interaction, of which a text is merely a small element (Horvath, 2009). Fairclough (1989) asserts that critical analysts should also take into account the relationships between texts, in addition to their production processes and social settings. These assumptions served as the foundation for Fairclough's three-dimensional framework (1989, 1992 & 2003). Every communication, in his view, consists of three elements: a text (spoken word, written word, visual image or a mix of these); discursive activity (which includes the production and consumption of texts) and social practice.

Fairclough developed the three CDA phases of description, interpretation and explanation to match the three discourse levels. He views speech as a specific social activity that represents social structure. Interaction, context and text are all intertwined in speech. Text, a product of interaction, is the last thing on the list. Context is essential to understanding as well as the act of innovation. (Fairclough, 1992).

Fairclough (1992) replaces "context" and "interaction" with "sociocultural practice" and "discourse practice" since he views "a mode of action" as discourse. The idea that speech is a type of social practice is emphasized in this way. Figure 3 shows the three-dimensional model in detail.

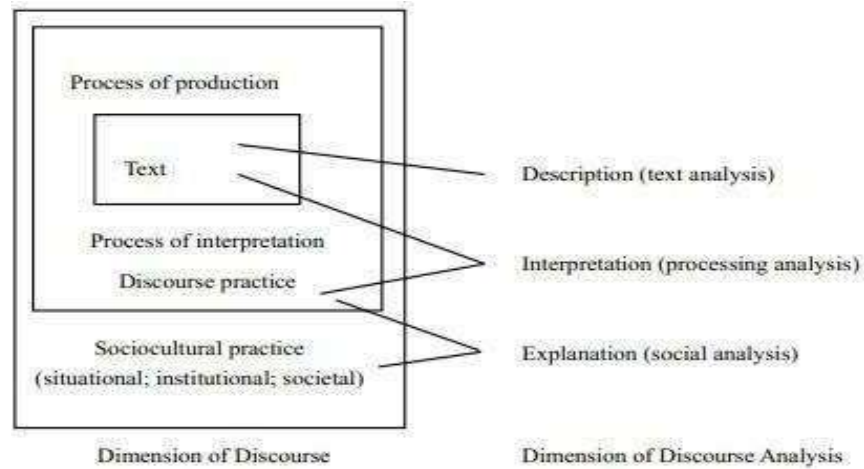


Figure 3. Three-Dimensional View of Discourse

Adapted from Fairclough, Norman. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change* (Page 93, Figure 5-2). Cambridge: PolityPress.

### **Review of Some Existing Studies on Critical Discourse Analysis**

Cheong's and Cheun's (2008) dissertation investigate the "Interaction between Language and Ideology in the Context of the Roman Catholic Church". The study was built on the theory that ideologies have an impact on the language we use. The framework for this analysis is Fairclough's model for Critical Discourse Analysis. By showing that language is more than simply words and that speakers actively build their views, the dissertation assisted readers in developing a better understanding of language usage. More crucially however, language is a part of the social context in which religious movements and ideologies emerge, and language and its social historical context are not incompatible.

Bello (2021) worked on the "Construction of Fear in Jihadist Propaganda: "A Critical Appraisal of Boko Haram's Messages". The findings demonstrate that a variety of discourse strategies are used to instill fear to the public, including assuming responsibility, creating suspense and evoking Allah's omnipotence. According to the study, these strategies and inclinations are unique to Boko Haram and may have been rendered essential by both their strategic objectives and the characteristics of the people they are aiming at. Also, Chiluya and Ajiboye (2014) critically examine the influence and power of ideology in the activities of Boko Haram. Their data comprised tweets and retweets that were created by the group members in an effort to further their ideological position. The tweets' debatable content demonstrates how Islamic extremists use some pre-existing sociocultural norms from Africa to further their intolerant religious ideology. The Boko Haram tweets often portray the 'we' in-group positively and the 'them' negatively, referring to them as 'infidels' and deserving of death. The study also demonstrated how Twitter and tweeting have been utilised recently to propagate various political and religious ideas.

Ajayi (2018) writes on “Language Used and Pain- Relieving Strategies in Christian Funeral Sermons Service in Nigeria”. The study is a descriptive examination of Christian funeral sermons and services in selected Pentecostal, Orthodox and Evangelical churches in Ibadan, Nigeria. It is influenced by the pragmatic sociolinguistic theory of Adegbija. According to the study's findings, Christian pastors and preachers in Nigeria purposefully employ Christian ideological notions in their language usage during funerals as a means of easing the grieving people's suffering.

### **Methodology**

This research work adopted desk research method, a valuable approach for gaining insights and knowledge on a particular topic without conducting primary research (such as surveys or interviews). Content analysis and Fairclough's (1989) three- Dimension model was used to analysed the language and ideology used in the six sermons delivered by the first two leaders of the Boko Haram group: Muhammad Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau. The original sermons were done in Hausa with a mixture of Arabic and Kanuri languages in some instances. The sermons were transcribed and translated by Elodie Aparid in his article “*The Words of Boko Haram; Understanding Speeches*” (Elodie 2015) found in *Afrique Contemporaine Journal*.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The study employed the use of desk/ secondary data collection sources. According to Msabila and (Nalaila 2013), the research instruments used under desk/ secondary data collection methods are documents like journals, reports, films, videos and photographs. The main source of data was the translated sermons obtained from Elodie (2015). Both Muhammad Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau released their recorded sermons through online platforms, such as the Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. They delivered sermons in the mosque or on tour. These leaders have attracted a crowd of sometimes more than 100 followers who are mainly between 20 and 40 years old. The sermons were originally in Hausa and Arabic languages but translated to the English language by Elodie (2015).

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Content analysis using Fairclough three- dimensional model (Fairclough, 1995) was used for the analysis. The communicative functions of language and ideology used by the two leaders were brought out from the sermons. Also, using the communication functions, the languages of the two leaders were compared.

### **List of Sermons**

Table 1.1 presents the analysed sermons according to their titles, place, date of delivery and speakers.

**Table 1.1: List of Texts (Sermons)**

S/N	TEXT	TITLE	PLACE OF SERMON	DATE OF SERMON	DELIVERED BY
1.	Text 1	No Title	Maiduguri	2006	Muhammad Yusuf
2.	Text 2	No Title	Ibn Taymiyya Mosque, Maiduguri	February, 2009	Muhammad Yusuf
3.	Text 3	No Title	Maiduguri	September, 2008	Muhammad Yusuf
4.	Text 4	Message from Abubakar Shekau to Goodluck Jonathan, President of Nigeria	-	January, 11, 2012	Abubakar Shekau
5.	Text 5	Message by Abubakar Shekau	-	March, 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Abubakar Shekau
6.	Text 6	Message from Abubakar Shekau to Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, Emir of Kano	-	December, 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Abubakar Shekau

**Source: Fieldwork, 2024**

### **Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings:**

Every language is used to communicate ideas, thoughts, opinions, etc. The sermons have been analyzed to bring out certain functions of language. The six sermons have shown that the two leaders used communicative function of language in transmitting their ideologies across to their followers. The communicative functions used are: commenting, requesting, protesting, directing attention and rejecting

### **Commenting**

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2000), commenting can be defined as an observation or remark by a person expressing opinion or attitude. The two Leaders of Boko Haram have used this function very well in their sermons. Extracts from their sermons are presented in this order: Text 1-3 are sermons delivered by Muhammad Yusuf while Text 4- 6 are sermons delivered by Abubakar Shekau

### **Extract 1:**

Once [**the infidels**] have power, once they have control,  
they show no mercy; they show no forgiveness.

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text 1, lines 2-3**

Yusuf believed that once people who are not of his religious belief have access to power, they have no mercy on people whose ideologies are different from theirs. He used the lexical item “**the infidels...**” to categorize anyone who is against his group as enemy.

**Extract 2:**

They will act as if they respect you. They will say Yes,  
we must let him **pray**, but as soon as you leave,  
they will laugh at you behind your back. I swear,  
they are like that! If you can't see that this is how they are,  
you have not read the Koran properly. [...]

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text 1: lines 33-**

**36**

In the extract above, Yusuf commented on the attitude of these “Infidels” towards his adherents. He wanted his followers to see them as not being faithful to what they claim. His opinion is that people of other religion are not to be trusted. To Yusuf, the other religion adherents are hypocrites who his followers should not depend upon. His belief is that, who didn't allow you to **pray** is your enemy, because Yusuf and his supporters pray five times a day, since one of Islam's five pillars is prayer.

**Extract 3:**

Allah cannot **order** man to do something impossible.  
If He **orders** something, you can do it.

(Muhammad Yusuf)

**Text 2, line 3**

Boko Haram believed that, once Allah commands one to conduct Jihad, the commandment must be followed. In this extract, Yusuf was commenting on Allah's injunction with an attempt to convince his followers to follow the injunction. Once Allah “**orders**”, there is no excuse, it must be done by all means possible.

**Extract 4:**

Allah asked men to fight the **Jihad**. When someone gives an order to a soldier,  
when someone tells him to walk into the line of fire, he is killed, isn't he?

But he goes! And you, given Allah's order, do you dare hesitate?

When Allah said to fight the jihad, people said yes, that's the way.

They obeyed. [...]

(Muhammad Yusuf)

**Text 2, lines 23-26**

In this extract, Mohammed admonished his fellow extremists to obey the commands of Allah just as soldiers would obey the command of their superior officers without argument and not minding the consequences that come with obeying that instruction. Thus, Mohammed informed his followers that Allah was commanding them to fight **Jihad**, so they must fight without any hesitation.

**Extract 5:**

Our intentions are clear and the door is open to all those who want to join us so we can move forward together. But it's closed to those who don't love us and who don't want to follow **Islam**.

(Abubakar Shekau)

**Text 4, lines 42- 43**

In extract 5 above, Shekau made his intentions clear about how he wanted more people to join his own version of **Islam**. Hence, he stated that "the door is open to all those who want to join us (**Islam**) ..." But whoever does not want to join his group, the door of friendship is closed to them. In other words, there is safety for those who want to join **Islam** in Shekau's camp but whoever does not want to join would be killed. Here, his comment was for those willing to join his group.

**Extract 6:**

**Allah** didn't tell us to love them, but to make them aware and persuade them to follow Him so that we can deliver justice.

This is the truth. You should know it.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 4, lines 44-45**

In continuation of what Shekau said in extract 5, he observed that **Allah** did not instruct them to love those of other faith and ideology. His mission was to explain the biddings of **Allah** and persuade them to accept **Allah** as their God. Shekau was informing the people about his stance and belief. Therefore, when he started to administer justice through his campaign, those of other religions and belief would know that he was only following **Allah's** instruction.

**Extract 7:**

Western education is a **sin**; university is a **sin**. Stop going to university,

bastards! Women, go back to your homes!

(Abubakar Shekau)

**Text lines, 92- 93**

In this extract, Shekau presented the ideology of his group. He condemned Western education by calling it a **sin**. Shekau believed that nobody ought to go to school. The women should be at home, taking care of their husbands and children. This view has then formed part of Shekau's movement. This made him to refer to those who go to school as bastards and committing **sinful** act.

**Extract 8:**

You, Sultan of Kano, is this the way you practice religion? The religion of democracy, of the constitution, of **Western education!**

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 6, lines 14- 15**

Shekau, in this extract, commented on the type of religion practised by Emir of Kano. Shekau believes that the Emir of Kano has not been practising Islam as it should be practised. "You, Emir of Kano, is this the way you practice religion?" Shekau's hatred for **Western education**, democracy and constitutional provision for the country is clearly stated. Hence, it is apparent that Shekau and his men are all out to fight the nation, seeing themselves as emancipators.

**Extract 9:**

If you **submit** to Allah, if you join us so that we can practice the law of Allah, then you'll be our brothers; you'll be part of us, but not in the name of democracy, not in the name of Western education, or in the name of the constitution.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 6, lines 23- 25**

Still commenting on the Emir's attitude to Islam, Shekau called on everyone to **submit** to Allah and reject Emir Sanusi's democracy. He did not believe in Western education nor the country's constitution, as he is agitating for is **submission** to Allah.

**Requesting**

The term 'requesting' can be described as a way of politely or formally asking for something. It can also be defined as an act of expressing a desire for something. A request, at times, may be a polite command.



**Extract 10:**

They asked Allah not to give them too heavy a burden,  
that He have mercy on them, and that He grant them **victory**  
over the infidels. And Allah accepted all their pleas.

(Muhammed Yusuf)

**Text 2, lines 5- 7**

In extract 10, Mohammed discussed how the companions of the prophet asked “Allah not to give them too heavy a burden...” and Allah answered their prayer. Mohammed used this illustration

to admonish his fellow brothers to always tender their request to Allah because he is the all-knowing who also answers prayers. All that Mohammed want is **victory** over the “infidels”.

**Extract 11:**

All we are saying is that people should follow the rules of Islam,  
the way of Allah. **Only** in this way will we have peace and **only**  
in this way will our conscience be at rest in accordance with Allah’s word.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 4, line 28- 31**

Shekau, in extract 11, was requesting that people of other religions should follow the rules of Islam and the way of Allah **only**. But if they failed to honour his plea and join Islam, Shekau and his members would not have peace. This is a kind of plea on the part of Shekau to the public. Perhaps if the public yield to his plea, there will be peace in the nation. According to Shekau, it is **only** in Allah’s way that people will have peace not **only** in this World but in the hereafter.

**Extract 12:**

Therefore, as the leader of this community, I am asking you to **convert**.

This my first appeal to you. **Convert**, Christians. This is my call to you.

The work we do is not ours; it is Allah’s work.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 4, lines 55- 57**

As a follow up statement to what Shekau had stated in extract 11, he reiterated the fact that he wanted Christians to be **converted** from Christianity to Islam. He also buttressed his point by explaining that what he was doing was not his but what Allah had instructed him to do.

Despite Shekau's aggression, he recognised the supremacy of Allah. He, therefore, in Extract 13, requested Allah to **strengthen them and enlighten** them as Allah did to those through whom the Koran was revealed. He longed for Allah's **enlightenment and strength**, as did to those who the Koran was revealed to.

**Extract 13:**

Allah gave life to all beings on earth. We thank you; we glorify you.

What we want is for You to **enlighten** us in the same way.

You **enlightened** those through whom You revealed the Koran.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 5, lines 15- 17**

Shekau's request was not only for **enlightenment** but also for courage to fight their enemies. He even referred to the kind of strength and courage they had when they fought at Giwa Barracks (see Extract 14). Shekau wants **enlightenment** as Allah did to Prophets who through them the Koran was revealed.

**Extract 14:**

Almighty Allah, allow us, Your faithful subjects, give us the **strength and the courage** to fight them, as You did when You guided us in the attack on the Giwa barracks.

(Abubakar Skekau)

**Text 5, lines 57- 58**

**Extract 15:**

My brothers, whether you are in Abuja, Lagos, Kano, or somewhere else,  
I'm **asking** you to work.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 5, line 133- 135**

Shekau **asked** his fellow brothers that shared the same ideology with him to fight the “infidels” they find in their community. He went on to order his brothers not to be afraid of being alone. All he just wanted was for them to attack the “infidels” whether they were alone or not. He used the word “**asking**” to alert them on the need to fight the “infidels”.

With the identified extracts, both Yusuf and Shekau used requesting function to appeal to their followers to plead with the general public, either to join them or fight for the cause.

### **Protesting**

A protest language is a strong complaint expressing disagreement, disapproval, opposition to an idea or a person. It can equally be an occasion when an individual or group of people show that they disagree with something by standing firm on their belief.

Shekau, in his speech directed at a former President of Nigeria, used the protest language. These can be seen in Extracts 15 and 16.

#### **Extract 16:**

The reason for this message is Goodluck Jonathan’s statement about us  
and the words of some people who talk about us, saying that we are  
**traitors and enemies** of the country we call Nigeria.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 4, lines 17- 18**

Extract 16 was a protest against former President Goodluck Jonathan who accused Shekau and his group as “**traitors and enemies** ....” The whole of Extract 15 was directed at the Former President, Jonathan, protesting against Jonathan’s calling them “**traitors and enemies**” of the country.

In Extract 17, he protested because he was accused of killing a Sunni Islamic cleric, Sheikh Albani Zaria. Though he did not admit killing the cleric, his language showed threats and protest: “I’m going to **kill** you all.

#### **Extract 17:**

Um, you say everywhere in the papers that I **killed** Albani.  
Who is Albani? Albani is nothing; he represents nothing.  
I’m going to **kill** you all!

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 5, lines 112- 113**

Apart from reacting against the former President, Shekau also protested against the attitude of the deposed Emir of Kano.

**Extract 18:**

You've gone as far as trying to **raise** the people against us!

Because you're the Sultan of Kano, you think you're allowed  
to do whatever you want?

(Abubakar Shekau)

**Text 6, lines 47- 48**

Shekau was displeased about the fact that the deposed Emir of Kano, Alhaji Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, was against him and his men. He therefore felt that the Sultan of Kano was using his influence to create enemies for him and his people so he told the Emir that his Emirship did not give him the right to do whatever he liked. He was dissatisfied with the former Emir for **raising** people against them.

***Directing Attention***

This entails paying attention, in a directed manner, to a specific information, matter or cognitive process.

**Extract 19:**

In the past, Muslim people were struck and scorned.

All these people endured these humiliations.

Don't be shocked if one day your *mallam* is arrested and struck.

It can happen. That's why infidels must be **fought**.

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text 1, line 27- 29**

In extract 19, Mohammed gave a brief history of how Muslims were struck and scorned by people who did not believe in Islam. Therefore, he informed his followers to take every necessary action that would not let them to be humiliated. He encouraged them that the only way that they could avoid humiliation from those "infidels" was for them to **fight** them. He directed the attention of his followers toward how Muslims suffered in the past so that they would not surrender in their struggles.

**Extract 20:**

The prophet Abraham had a dream and called his son to tell him:

God showed me in a dream where I was to kill you.'

His son answered: 'Father, we must do what God said;

we cannot hesitate.' Abraham was ready to kill his son;

he had his knife to his neck. **He obeyed God's word** with no hesitation.

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text 2, lines 27- 30**

In Extract 20, Mohammed directed the attention of his followers to Allah and ascribed all the glory to Him. He also narrated the story of how Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son just to prove his obedience to God. The statement, '**He obeyed God's word** with no hesitation' was Mohammed's way of motivating the Boko Haram group members to follow the instruction he gave in the name of Allah without hesitation.

**Extract 21:**

Dear Muslim people, understand us. We don't want to **hurt** anyone

but we must follow the way of He who created us and who, even

before creating us, already knew everything about us and our intentions

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 4, line 58- 60**

Shekau informed the Muslims that he and his men do not have the intention of **hurting** people but they would **hurt** anyone who stands in their way. He made his followers to believe that he did not want to **hurt** anybody. Therefore, he provided an alternative way for the people: if they do not want to be **hurt**, they will have to do everything possible to follow the instruction of Allah.

**Extract 22:**

May Allah prevent us from **following** anything that He didn't order in His

book. There is no intelligence, no thought, no power, no knowledge

outside of Allah. May Allah help us in His magnificence?

Allah, we thank You.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 5, lines 10 - 12**

Shekau, in Extract 22, directed the attention of his followers to the book of God, that is, the Qur'an while admitting that there is no intelligent, powerful and knowledgeable being aside Allah. He placed superiority on Allah; that was why he prayed that Allah would prevent him and his men from **following** the things that He did not order. **Following** Allah's way is the only righteous thing to do, according to Skeaku.

## **Rejecting**

This is the process of dismissing something as inadequate, unacceptable or faulty, to refuse of accept, consider, submit to, take for some purpose, or use, either directly or indirectly.

### **Extract 23:**

If you see soldiers coming and they tell you they'll protect you, that is a lie. [...]

(Muhammed Yusuf)

**Text 1, line 32**

The above extract shows how Yusuf rejected the way Nigerian Army presented themselves to his group members, saying that, they will not protect them; rather, they are telling them lies. By this, he was indirectly telling his people to reject any help from the soldiers.

### **Extract 24:**

May Allah prevent us from **following** the Whites, from **following** the Black infidels, from **following** the Democrats”.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 5, lines 9-10**

One of Boko Haram's cardinal objectives is to reject anything that comes from the Western World. In Extract 24, Shekau was blunt in stating his total rejection of the Whites and democrats. He went to the extent of praying to Allah to prevent him from **following** their footsteps in whatever way.

Shekau denied a report carried out by a Radio station that his group members were bombarded at Sambisa Forest. He said it was a lie. He rejected and reputed the news saying that his members were firm, intact and ever ready to fight the government, he tried to **clarify** that his group members were not bombarded (see Extract 25).

### **Extract 25:**

My brothers, I'd like to **clarify** one last point. They say on radio and elsewhere that they fought us and defeated us in some areas. That's a lie.

They mention, among other things, the forest of Sambisa, Where apparently they bombarded us and chased us away toward the Cameroon, Chad and Niger borders, among others. These are all lies. You know very well that the information you give is false.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text 5, lines 137-141**

The six sermons have shown that the two leaders used communicative function of language in communicating their ideologies to their followers. The communicative functions used are commenting, requesting, protesting, directing attention and rejecting.

Having looked at the communication functions that arose in the sermons of the two leaders, it is noticeable that Muhammad Yusuf and Shekau both used commenting, protesting, directing attention and rejecting communication functions in their sermons while Shekau used the requesting communication function, six different times in his sermons.

### **Ideological Representation in Selected Boko-Haram Sermons.**

This segment examines the social practice that formed the ideologies that were found in Mohammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau selected sermons. The fact that Fairclough's model of CDA discusses social practice as an embodiment of social structure makes it relevant to this study. It is used in the analysis of the ideologies found in the selected Boko Haram sermons. Fairclough's three-dimensional model of analysis which are Discourse as text, Discourse as discursive practice and Discourse as social practice, constitute the theoretical framework for this study.

### **Authoritative Ideology**

Authority can be defined as institutionalised and legal power inherent in a job, function, or position that enables the job holder to successfully carry out his/ her responsibilities. According to Fayol, 2013, authority is "the right to give orders and the power to exact obedience. Authority gives the management the power to enforce obedience. It is the power to give orders and make sure that these orders are obeyed. Authority is one of the ideologies that Mohammed and Shekau used to indirectly force the populace to the sect. This ideology was used by Mohammed and Shekau to stand their ground that their religious belief was the right religion to follow and to inform the people that anyone willing to avoid war or fight should follow their way. The following extracts are used to explain and illustrate this.

### **Extract 25:**

They will speak well to try to convince you, but they're liars.

What they say is not what they mean. They don't know the truth.

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text 1, lines 29- 31**

In this extract Mohammed used an authoritative tone to instruct his followers not to be fooled by those who pretend to be in alignment with them. He also told them sternly that these

people are liars and what they say is not what they actually mean. He claims to know the truth against others who are fooling the public.

**Extract 26:**

The lesson to be learned here is that if Allah tells you to do something, you must do it. If you ask for compromises, you're lost. If you hesitate before Allah, you'll never acquire knowledge. Allah's will should never be a burden.

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text, 2 lines 7- 9**

In extract 26, Yusuf used authority to speak to his men. He stated that "if Allah tells you to do something, you must do it". This statement leaves no room for argument; thus no one must compromise or complain when they are being instructed. He also gave the condition that if they intend to acquire knowledge, they must never hesitate to follow Allah's commands. Mohammed at this point used his power as the leader of a cabal to inform them that "Allah's will never be a burden on them".

**Extract 27:**

You, Sultan of Kano, is this the way you practice religion?

The religion of democracy, of the constitution, of Western education!

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text, 6 lines 14- 15**

As it is not a secret that no one dares to order or question an Emir, Shekau dared to question the Emir of Kano by asking demeaning questions like "is this the way you practice religion?" Shekau did not just end his statement here he further challenged and faulted the Emir's religious beliefs in western education with authority.

**Comparative Ideology**

Comparing two or more persons by taking into account their similar, equal, or dissimilar attributes may be referred to as the comparison process. Additionally, comparison is the process of assessing two or more items by identifying their pertinent, comparable features, and then determining which of those traits are similar to, and which of those are distinct from, the other, and to what extent.

One of the philosophies employed by Muhammad Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau to persuade their adherents to adopt their view that Western education is sinful is comparison. The following excerpts serve as examples of this.



**Extract 28:**

“Even faced with the worst attacks, we cannot back down.

The prophets were tortured, but they didn’t back down.

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text, 1 lines 18- 19**

In this extract, Yusuf compared the attacks they faced in the hands of the Nigeria government with the one that the Islamic prophets of old age faced when they were trying to spread the message of Allah. This comparison gave him the courage he needed not to back out even with all the attacks they are getting from the government and citizens.

**Extract 29:**

“We are not enemies; we are not like those who bring people together to teach them bad things. Even if people don’t know us,  
Allah knows everyone.

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text, 4 lines 19- 20**

Shekau believed that his group and himself are not enemies of Nigeria as people think they are. He furthered explained that the enemies of the nation are those who gathered together to teach them bad things i.e., Western education. Shekau compared himself with preachers of other religious background. He went on to say that if people do not know him as a friend of the nation, Allah knows.

Another comparison can be seen in Extract 27, where he compared the views of Christians and Muslims about Jesus Christ. To the Christians, Jesus Christ is God while Muslims see him as a slave (servant) of Allah.

**Extract 30:**

You, Christians, should know that the prophet Issa (Jesus) is the slave (servant)  
of Allah, the prophet of Allah, and not His son.....

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text, 4 lines 46- 49**

To Shekau, Christianity is not a religion. Shekau’s ideology is not only against people of other religious. He frowned at some other Islamic denominations such as the Izala, Tijjaniya, Shiites and the Qadiriya. He compared them with “infidels” mainly because they follow the “Western democracy”.

**Extract 31:**

“The Izala are infidels; they are believers who belong to a *tariqa* are infidels. The Tijani are infidels! Whoever follows the Qadiriyya is an infidel! Shiites are infidels! Whoever follows democracy is an infidel!

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text, 6 line 52- 5**

### **Historical Ideology**

History is the study of past social life in all of its facets in connection to current trends and aspirations for the future. It is an investigation into the past that is supported by evidence, and it looks into what occurred in the past, when it occurred, and how it occurred. It examines how historical human affairs have changed, and how those changes have affected, influenced, or determined societal life patterns (Keiner, 2005). History proposes the possibility of proper understanding of ourselves in the present, by understanding the circumstances and choices that brought us to our current situation. The two leaders made use of this to trace their fight/struggle to the past historical events that happened in the days of the Prophets.

#### **Extract 32:**

“In the days of the Prophet, there was a group of infidels who lived near a well and who had asked the Prophet to send people to teach them the Koran. When the delegation sent by the Prophet arrived, members realized it was a trap and took shelter in a cave.

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text, 3 lines 6- 8**

This statement in Extract 32 was made by Muhammed in the year 2008 during the month Ramadan. Muhammed traced the history of the “infidels” who tricked the Prophet in sending people to teach them the Koran. The Prophet believed them, not knowing that they set a trap for him and the believers. Muhammed therefore used this historical background to inform his people not to trust the “infidels”.

#### **Extract 33:**

“They told us the story of a man who went to fight in Afghanistan. While wounded and disemboweled, with his entrails on the ground, he continued talking to the other soldiers, and before dying he uttered the *shahada*.

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text, 3 lines 16- 18**

In tracing the history of a man who at the point of death accepted Islam, Muhammad encouraged his followers to continue to believe in his ideology, even when faced with death.

This historical comparison was used to encourage his followers not to lose faith when faced with death, just as the soldiers in this extract did not. Instead, they are admonished to utter the *shahada* when they are faced with death or are dying.

### **Convincing Ideology**

To convince means to cause someone to believe something or to do something. In the selected sermons, Mohammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau used their speech to either saw their followers to believe all they say hook, line and sinker or to divert the attention of the populace from them to Allah.

#### **Extract 34:**

When you see that men die while fighting the jihad, you shouldn't think of them as being dead. They're not dead. Allah said that they're not dead. They're there, in Allah's hands.

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text: 3 lines 2- 4**

Muhammed tried convincing his men that fighting Jihad is not a bad thing. He presented fighting and dying in Jihad as an act of Ibadat, Muhammed used this statement to spur his men into the act of fighting without the fear of death. He told his men that even when they die (physically), they shall be in Jannah.

#### **Extract 35:**

"Even if we don't go to war, our days will end, and whether we want it or not, we will die. This is the essence of our religion, so, now, don't think I'm resentful. If you submit to Allah, you'll be welcome so that we can practice our religion together. Submit!

(Abubakar Shekau).

**Text: 6 line 44- 46**

In Extract 35, Shekau is seen presenting death as being inevitable to his followers. This is in a way to convince them to submit to his ideology by fighting in the cause of their religion. He made them realise that even if they do not go to war, they will still die. This is indirectly luring them to join him in the struggle.

Having looked at the communicative functions and ideologies as presented in the sermons of the two leaders, an attempt is made to investigate the similarities or otherwise of the language used by the two leaders. The study found out that both Muhammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau made use of the communicative functions of language to express their thoughts to their followers. They have some similarities in how they present their ideologies, however, they differ in some aspects.

Their areas of similarities lie in their ways or language used in informing and expressing their struggles. These are seen in the Extracts below:

**Extract 2:**

They will act as if they respect you. They will say 'Yes,  
we must let him pray,' but as soon as you leave,  
they will laugh at you behind your back. I swear,  
they are like that! If you can't see that this is how they are,  
you have not read the Koran properly. [...]

(Muhammad Yusuf).

**Text 1: lines 33- 36**

**Extract 3:**

Allah cannot order man to do something impossible.

If He orders something, you can do it"

(Muhammad Yusuf)

**Text 2: line 3**

**Extract 5:**

Our intentions are clear, and the door is open to all those who want  
to join us so we can move forward together. But it's closed to those  
who don't love us and who don't want to follow Islam.

(Abubakar Shekau

**Text 4: lines 42- 43**

**Extract 36:**

Whether you're SSS<sup>31</sup> or even SSSS if you want, know that for me  
there are two categories of people in the world: those that are with us,  
and the rest. I'll be happy to kill those against us every time I encounter  
them. This is now the main goal of my mission, the mission of Shekau,

who is talking to you.

(Abubakar Shekau)

**Text 5: lines 51- 54**

The selected extracts revealed that both Mohammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau were always willing to share their opinions with their followers. In Extract 2 from text 1, Muhammed was discussing with his religious brothers on the need to be careful of those who seem to respect them when they do not. Extract 3, from text 2, Muhammed was informing his followers that Allah cannot order a man to do something that would be impossible for that person. While Shekau in Extract 5, made his intention clear on the need to accommodate whoever want to join his gang and castigated those that are against his mission and Islam, Shekau, in Extract 36, informed the populace that it is either for him and his men or they are against him and he would be glad to kill anyone who is not for him.

It can be seen that there are 4 Extracts above, which showed how Yusuf and Shekau expressed their opinions and exhibited their attitudes towards people who are not with them, and emphasizing that, there message is from Allah, as such their similarities in this direction is on commenting function wise.

### **Expressing Their Opinion**

There are similarities in the way Yusuf and Shekau express their opinions in their sermons and messages to their supporters and the general public. This can be seen in their wordings and the tone of their expressions.

#### **Extract 4:**

“Allah asked men to fight the jihad. When someone gives an order to a soldier,

when someone tells him to walk into the line of fire, he is killed, isn't he?

But he goes! And you, given Allah's order, do you dare hesitate?

When Allah said to fight the jihad, people said yes, that's the way.

They obeyed. [...]

(Muhammad Yusuf)

**Text 2: lines 23-26**

#### **Extract 8:**

“Western education is a sin; university is a sin. Stop going to university,

bastards! Women, go back to your homes!

(Abubakar Shekau)

**Text 5: lines 92- 93**

Yusuf and Shekau also had similar ways of expressing their opinions. Mohammed was quick to chastise anyone who compromised and does not follow Allah's command as seen in Extract 4: Text 2, while in extract 8, Shekau, referred to Western education as a sin which is the philosophy upon which the group was formed. We realize that Yusuf and Shekau major communications were for the Jihad and outright condemnation of Western education as seen in the above two Extracts.

### **Dissimilarities**

A lot of differences were found in the sermons of the two Boko Haram leaders. It was found out that Abubakar Shekau was more aggressive than Muhammad Yusuf in his tone, while delivering his sermons, as shown in the below two Extracts.

#### **Extract 37:**

We haven't forbidden anything; we haven't stopped anything.  
All we are saying is that people should follow the rules of Islam,  
the way of Allah. Only in this way will we have peace, and only  
in this way will our conscience be at rest in accordance with  
Allah's word, but if we go against that, we won't have peace.

**Text 4: lines 28- 29**

#### **Extract 38:**

My brothers, whether you are in Abuja, Lagos, Kano, or somewhere else,  
I'm asking you to work. Even if you're alone, take your weapons and  
slaughter the infidels: Jonathan, Obama, and the others.

**Text 5: lines 133- 135**

Another dissimilarity that can be seen in the sermons of the two religious leaders is that Shekau likes to show off his strength, ability, power more than Muhammed. From the sermons, it was noted that Shekau had about two Extracts showing his pride which is not a positive tendency. Muhammed had one Extract indicating pride out of his three selected sermons. Examples of extracts depicting showing off include:

#### **Extract 39:**

"I swear to you: we're not ashamed, neither afraid."  
(Muhammad Yusuf) **Text 2: line 56**

#### **Extract 40:**

This is a message and an appeal to Goodluck Jonathan,  
the Christian leaders, and all the others.

We are the *Jamā'atu Ahl al-Sunnah Lidda'awati wa-l-Jihād*,  
those they call Boko Haram.

(Abubakar Shekau)

**Text 4: line 7- 9**

**Extract 41:**

So, Jonathan, be aware that this is stronger than you.

It's not our work but Allah's.

(Abubakar Shekau)

**Text 4: line 35- 36**

Equally, Shekau's sermons were addressed and targeted at individuals as seen in Table 4.1 while Yusuf's sermons were to the general public consumption. Though the two of them used vulgar language in their sermons, Shekau called for killing and slitting the throats of the "Infidels" more than Yusuf. The Extracts below shows Shekau's aggressiveness and anger:

**Extract 42:**

I swear, I'm going to slit your throats.

**Text5: line 5**

**Extract 43:**

JTF, 'Kato da Gora,' you are Borno people, aren't you?

I'm going to kill you, I'm going to slit your throats.

Allah asked me to kill you, whoever you are, wherever you are. [...]

**Text5: lines 61-62**

**Extract 44:**

I order you to grab your weapons and slaughter  
those infidel fools. Kill, kill, kill, slaughter, slaughter, slaughter!

**Text5: lines 67-68**

From the three Extracts above, it is observed that Shekau has not minced his words in wanting to kill whoever is against his thought. Also, he was not afraid of mentioning names such as the former President, Goodluck Jonathan and the deposed Emir of Kano, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi.

The Extracts, above showed that Shekau used more of the protest language full of pride than his counterpart. Shekau was always ready to fight or wage war against anyone who was not willing to follow his teachings or anyone who was trying to stop his plans. Muhammed, on the other hand, was willing to stand with Allah even when faced with the worst attacks. It can be said that the similarities and dissimilarities are communicative function wise.

### **Conclusion**

The study examined language and ideology in some selected Boko Haram sermons of Muhammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau. Using desk research method, content analysis and critical discourse analysis, the study examined the communicative functions explored in the sermons of Muhammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau, the study found out that the two leaders used five communicative functions in sending their communications to their followers; the functions are; commenting for showing their thoughts, opinions and attitude. Requesting for requesting their followers to follow Allah's instruction or to abide by the leaders' orders. Protesting to protest against government orders or to protest against what is been said against them. It is noticed that this function was used Abubakar Shekau alone. Directing attention to call for attention of their supporters to a particular issue or of subject that needs attention. Rejecting to reject government imposition of laws or certain thing that they think is against their teachings. The ideologies used by the insurgents were investigated and studied, it was observed that the two leaders used authoritative, comparative, historical and convincing ideologies in the course of their sermons. The authoritative ideology was used by the leaders of the group in delivering their sermons, the talked with authoritative tone to instruct their followers not to be misled by their enemies. The comparative ideology was used by the Boko Haram leaders to compare their time and actions with that of the Prophets time, in order to give courage and confidence to their supporters. Historical ideology was used by the two leaders of the group to traced the history of their struggle to that of the Prophets, so as to justify their actions and their supporters to have confidence in them as God sent messiahs. While the convincing ideology was used to convince their men that fighting Jihad is not a bad thing but an act of Ibadat. By this, they spur their supporters into the act of fight without the fear of death.

The similarities found are that the leaders of the expressed their thoughts and opinions in the same way, they have the same modus operandi when it comes to sending their message to their people with some dissimilarities which are evident in the sermons, Shekau was more aggressive than his counterpart and equally he sent his message to target audience unlike Yusuf who sent it to the general public. The purpose of the research was to study intention behind the language of religious leader while preaching their sermons.



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