

Research Article

Adeiza Isiaka*

Framing victimhood, making war: A linguistic historicizing of secessionist discourses

<https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2022-0247>

received April 22, 2023; accepted September 12, 2023

Abstract: As separatist yearnings resurge and gain traction in Nigeria, the agency of language and digitality in spreading dissident discourses has come under scrutiny. In this study, I investigate the linguistic-historical dimension of the Biafran movements, exploring the rhetorical frames by which the actors curate ethnic victimhood and sustain the secessionist struggle. Drawing on a corpus of memoiristic narrative of the Biafra war and digitally mediated discourses from a new Biafran movement – Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), I identify and discuss the central topoi of warspeak in both narratives across space and time. In this context, the notions of linguistic framing and atrocity propaganda are fruitfully integrated to analyse the range of rhetorical strategies for incentivizing the struggle and for animating its social capital. While both narratives draw on shared belongings, historical precedents, cultural frameworks, and atrocity stories for incitement, they vary in style and audience. I attribute the shifts to changes in actors' demographics, discursive contexts, and Nigeria's ethno-political cartographies.

Keywords: Biafran movements, secessionist discourses, warspeak, rhetorical frames, atrocity narration, digitally mediated communication, Nigeria

1 Introduction

War begets language, yet language also begets war: this dialectic relationship has been explored and theorized from a few vantage points (Barnes 2003, Pieterse 2003, Van Rensburg 2003, Pretorius 2012). These works illuminate the impacts of civil wars on language hierarchies in African nations and their linguistic ecologies. Roos (2003), for instance, shows how certain linguistic practices remain indexical of emotions, histories, and symbolism of the South African Anglo-Boer War, and how they constitute a lattice of intertextual frameworks for new narratives in South African literature. Wartimes are word-breeders, as words that have emerged as by-products of wars often get refurbished and entrenched in language practices. From World War II to the present, words and phrases including *snafu*, *nosedive*, *blitzkrieg*, *axis of evil*, *escalation*, *hybrid warfare*, *friendly fire*, and *carpet bombing* are just a few lexical borrowings from war discourses. Perhaps, the most popular of such is 'Keep Calm and Carry On', a propaganda slogan by the British government in the early days of World War II to reassure the people and boost morale during a time of great uncertainty and fear. The phrase would later resurrect in 2000 and has since assumed an infinite relevance in a variety of contexts beyond its origin.

By the same token, language can be weaponized for warfare – as an instrument to incite wars or induce people to do battle. Thus, studies have examined how, in war times, a language becomes relexicalized or masked, and transformed into an instrument for gaining power, or a conduit for deceit (Merton 1968, Barnes 2003, Johnson 2012). Human history is a blend of war and peace, and most wars have been fought on what

* **Corresponding author: Adeiza Isiaka**, Adeiza Isiaka, GCAC, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada; IfAA, University of Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany, e-mail: adeiza.isiaka@utoronto.ca

Welch describes as “the justice motive... the drive to correct perceived discrepancy between entitlements and benefits” (Welch 1993, 19). The urge to legitimize armed conflicts predates the modern times and has seen the development of concepts such as the Just War Theory – a paradigm for mirroring the justness of war and military operations (Bellamy 2006, Fox and Welch 2012). A large body of studies thus exists on how, over the years, actors in war situations harness rhetorical strategies and media affordances to mould perceptions, with the goal of legitimizing their cause and prevailing in the realm of propaganda (e.g. Badsey 2012, Knightley 2012). Contemporary wars are fought symmetrically with narratives that not only detail how the conflict evolved but also mobilize public support and sentiments.

In Africa, the use of language as a symmetrical arsenal in conflicts is perhaps most exemplified by the Nigeria–Biafra war and its present-day manifestation in the form of IPOB movement. The civil war, fought from 1967 to 1970 between Nigeria and secessionist Biafra, was a complex conflict with deep roots in ethno-regional struggles for power, resources, and self-rule. The country comprises three main ethno-regional groups: Hausa-Fulani (North), Yoruba (South), and Igbo (East). Within these are ethnic minorities which co-constitute its multi-ethnic density. The conflict followed the declaration of Eastern Nigeria as a secessionist republic – Biafra on 30 May 1967. It remains one of the bloodiest civil wars in human history, with over 2 million deaths before an armistice in 1970. Central to the war was the deployment of rhetoric for curating victimhood, legitimizing actions, othering, and issuing a call to arms. Before and after the war, the deft curation of victimhood became a potent strategy for shaping narratives and mobilizing support; and through ethnonarratives of pains and prejudice, the actors evoked sentiments and produced justification for retaliations and violent confrontation.

The advent of democracy in 1999 also liberalized the country for ethnic agitations, engendering the resurgence of a Biafran movement in the form of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Founded in 2012, the group has since gained a strong traction through digital linguistic practices and transnational mobilization, civil rebellion, and guerila warfare. From the analytical standpoints, the Biafran discourses are typically indexed by symbolism, cross-textual allusion, predication strategy, neologism, and semantic shifts. At the macro-discursive level are (de)legitimation (Igwebuike and Ameh 2021), blame-attribution avoidance, socio-cultural framing, and ethnocentric appeal. In these contexts, most recent analyses of pro-Biafran narratives have described them as inflammatory, conspiratorial, hateful, and bigoted (Ugorji 2017, Adeyanju 2018, Ajiboye 2019). The IPOB has also fetched strong attention in sociolinguistic explorations of resistance movements in Nigeria, particularly its leveraging of ethnocultural identity and ideologies for mobilization (Chiluwa 2012), and its use of digital affordances for evading state surveillance and censorship (Nwofe 2019). Inya’s (2016) analysis of the metaphor system in Achebe’s ethnonarrative of the Biafra war is seminal, inaugurating attention to the linguistic instantiation of cultural tropes in Biafran discourses – a similar focus of this study.

This article presents a discursive historicizing of narratives by Biafran actors, particularly analysing the rhetorical elements of warspeak in Ojukwu’s memoirs, written, and published during the war in 1969, along with a corpus of tweets and speeches by Nnamdi Kanu, the foremost leader of the new IPOB. The Biafran memoirs and Kanu’s tweets together constitute a narrativized kaleidoscope of the secessionist struggle, and by far, the largest corpus of liberationist discourse in postcolonial Africa. The following section lays out the analytical framework for a qualitative close reading of these narratives, in which I subsume the notions of *framing* and *atrocity propaganda* under the broader concept of *warspeak*. Next, I identify and discuss two rhetorical frames for semiotizing collective grievances, and the dynamics of linguistic practices in liberationist struggles. The section also explains the scale of stylistic convergences and differences between the discourses across space and time. I argue that the textual instantiation of the Biafran struggle not only reflects the sociocultural contexts of the movement, but also signifies its variegated evolution, participants, strategies, and Nigeria’s ethnopolitical spheres.

2 Rethinking warspeak: framing and atrocity propaganda

From the outmoded ‘magic bullet theory’, which presumes a collective vulnerability to incitement to subsequent models of war propaganda, a more refined focus on understanding the impact of violent messages on

individuals, groups, and cultures is starting to emerge (Benesch 2012, Kiper 2015, Queiroz and Cardoso 2015). This shift, as Kiper notes, has also inspired a redirection towards practical issues such as the forensics of propaganda rather than mere chronicling of war discourses (2015, 130). Benesch (2012), for instance, drawing on legal and historical archives, suggests a series of parameters for establishing causation between incitement and violence, thus offering a potentially relevant tool for trials of war crimes and ethnographic endeavours. Another notable work is Dojcinovic's (2012), which emphasizes the awareness of linguistic and psychosocial contexts of incendiary elements in analysing propaganda during war crime investigations. From the standpoint of cognitive linguistics, he highlights the significance of understanding discourse types and specific words that carry strong social resonance in people's minds, leaving 'mental fingerprints' that may facilitate the recurrence of violence when invoked (2012, 95). Dojcinovic's approach, much like Benesch's, can aid the collection of forensic evidence and serve as a tool for uncovering the role of propaganda in war crimes. However, as Kiper (2015) points out, while these directions have sparked interesting debates on the causal potential of propaganda, they remain highly abstract and lacking on the historical and ethnographic fronts. An interesting aspect of the causal thesis is its borrowing from Speech Acts Theory – as a co-interpretive framework for gauging the perlocutionary force of war rhetoric, thus pioneering an interdisciplinary slant in propaganda studies (Benesch 2008, 2012). From the vantage point of linguistics, particularly in discourse studies, the major missing links in these efforts pertain to the cultural contexts of a war rhetoric and its historical dimensions – a gap Kiper invites ethnographic studies in linguistics to fill (2015, 140).

This article orients towards a re-theorizing of warspeak – as a rhetor-linguistic instantiation of adversarial discourses and as the broad semiotics of warfare. In so doing, I integrate the concept of framing and atrocity propaganda, with a view to constructing a broader paradigm for analysing the sociodiscursive and the cultural elements of conflict-related communications. According to Santaella (2009), warspeak refers to words for justifying war. Words often become transformed into warspeak through the rhetorical act of framing, that is, the range of linguistic strategies for visibilizing grievances and rationalizing the justness of actions. The concept of framing is widely conceived as involving selection and salience or choosing and emphasizing certain elements of a reality towards a discursive goal (Entman 1993, 2007). Framing works through a selective privileging of certain elements in a narrative over others, with the aim of influencing the audience's thoughts, emotions, and decision-making processes in a desired way (Iyengar and Simon 1993, Gross and D'Ambrosio 2004). In the realm of warspeak, framing can be deployed to create narratives that justify a military action or to otherize the enemies through subjective constructions. A government, for example, might frame a war as a necessary measure to protect democracy, cultural heritage, or freedom, while portraying its people as victims and the enemies as mortal. Framing is thus realized through *phrasing* – that is, the range of linguistic strategies for shaping perception and mind conditioning.

A frame may also function as an illocutionary act whose force or uptake depends on certain felicity conditions (Austin 1962). Such conditions may involve the linguistic or the cultural elements of the discourse, including the use of language, allusion to sociocultural sentiments, or intertextual references to kindred entities. Illocutionary acts are inherently performative, thus central to reconstructing realities and framing grievances. Felicity conditions – the contextual prerequisites for successful performative acts – contribute to this manipulation by aligning utterances with existing frameworks of beliefs and emotions of the audience. This alignment shapes the reception of atrocity propaganda and the construction of a climate conducive to conflict. In a sense, felicities may also count as the shared cognitive models to which frames align (Entman 2007, Dojcinovic 2012). Sociocognitive structures are communal and possess generative and interpretive potentials. They can be leveraged in discourse production to reinforce prior beliefs and situate a narrative within its social contexts (Van Dijk 2008). Sociocognitive structures are also reinforced by host of extra- or paralinguistic elements including the cultural authority of a speaker and the cultural contexts of framing (also Benesch 2012, Kiper 2015). Whereas framing applies broadly to various communicative scenarios, atrocity propaganda refers to the strategic use of stories of violence for diverse goals in warfare. Atrocity narratives may consist of grisly stories of harm on women, children, the unarmed, aged, the vulnerable, or graphic accounts of the violated and mangled. They are mostly instantiated in "reports of cruel or shocking acts, circulated widely, and intended to produce an inappropriate martial response" (Morrow 2018, 49). While such narratives can be exploited for mobilization or deployed as the *casus belli* (reasons for conflict), the

chronicling of the enemy's depravity is equally crucial for post-war events (*jus post bellum*), including trials for war crimes, peacebuilding, and reconciliation (Ponsonby 1928, Lasswell 1928, Read 1941, Schmidt 2012).

The understanding of framing and atrocity propaganda as integral topoi of warspeak can allow for more resourcefulness in conceptualizing the intricacies of war discourses. By using specific language cues and privileging narratives that portray atrocities, actors can galvanize public backing for a struggle, stifle opposing viewpoints, and rationalize acts of aggression. The privileging of shared narratives in atrocity propaganda, particularly in incitement, is akin to intertextuality (Kristeva 1986, Graham 2000). Often, this manifests as narrativized cultural symbols, histories, or shared memories aimed at making a propaganda more compelling and impactful on public perceptions. Given the analytical synergy between both concepts, integrating them into a cohesive framework not only simplifies the complexity resulting from theoretical overlap in the analysis of adversarial discourses but also offers a stronger conceptual tool that defines the broad range of strategies for creating and perpetuating conflicts. Thus, the scope of warspeak extends beyond the locutionary acts of incitement and incorporates discourses for creating and sustaining a warfare, including the stirring of armed combatants in the heat of battles and the subjective framing of conflicts for both actors and the public. It transcends the 'words to excuse war' to include the gamut of rhetorical tactics for incentivizing a war and managing its social capital. A renewed notion of warspeak paves way for close readings of discourses generated prior to and during a conflict, including those for inciting and coordinating hostilities, and for signifying their cultural contexts.

In what follows, I discuss the major frames found in the narratives by leaders of the Biafra war and the present-day IPOB movement, illuminating the socio-discursive contexts of the Biafran secessionist struggle and its evolution to date. The data consist of memoiristic narrative by the foremost Biafran leader (Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu), published as two separate volumes in May 1969 during the war. The first volume: *Biafra: Selected Speeches with Journals of Events* (390 pages) features 25 dairies of events and 28 speeches, while the second: *Random Thoughts of Odumegwu Ojukwu* (226 pages) consists of 63 interviews, 39 public addresses, 43 press conferences (local and international), 27 messages to Igbo-Biafrans and international sympathizers, and talks at 23 separate meetings. The IPOB discourses come from a corpus of tweets and digitally mediated speeches of Nnamdi Kanu between 2018 and May 2021. Drawing on snippets from the narratives, I classify the rhetorical acts of singularization and atrocity narration as macro-frames of warspeak and compare their realizations across the data. While I seek to separate the two frames, they are indeed conceptually fluid – especially in cases where they are marked by linguistic elements signifying a shared rhetorical goal.

3 Singularization

Wars are fatal and expensive, and are only resorted to after exhausting diplomacy, negotiations, and concessions. The framing of conflict as the sole remedy to dispute is put forward as singularization, that is, a tunnel-vision of violence as the *only* solution while disregarding other perspectives. Singularization manifests in various ways, including focusing on the exceptionalism of a solution and its remedial potential at the expense of others. It is often signalled by intense persuasion, and urgency, with hardly any tolerance for debate or competing logic. Singularization is thus useful for framing violence as the most viable shield against perceived mortal enemies, as cure for misery, or as the only way to engage the adversary. It can be deployed as a stand-alone strategy or synergized with other frames to persuade. In the excerpts below, while singularization is most effective for precipitating people into a conflict, it also constitutes a powerful tool for morale-boosting by portraying truce as shameful and grimmer than the horrors of war:

(1) As for me, I see no hope for our people without victory in this war. As I have told this assembly, I have no personal ambition and have all along carried out what I consider my duty for the people of this Republic. (Ojukwu 1969b, 217, Vol. 1 [speech delivered on October 11, 1967])

(2) To all that are afflicted by the scourge known as Nigeria, hear this: Fight back because that's the only way. You can never beg your way out of oppression. Never. You can never appease your way out of domination. Fight back until Nigeria does the right thing: Partition. (@MaziNnamdiKanu, March 30, 2021. RT: 5148)

The texts come from different actors and were produced in different spatiotemporal contexts but convergent on the rhetorical front, by constructing conflict as the only path from oppression. Ojukwu was speaking to his Advisory Council of Chiefs and Elders and the Consultative Assembly in the early months of the Biafran war. Kanu's tweet went live at a time of ethnic tension across the country and untrammelled violence in the East, following his founding of a guerilla outfit in southeast Nigeria – the Eastern Security Network (ESN). The advisory council served as the people's congress and played a critical role in the Biafran war. They were relied upon as competent advisors and the grassroots link between Ojukwu and the people, which is why there was a need to perpetually mobilize them. While Ojukwu's speech hints at his subjective assessment of the state of things, it carries an expressive force and implies a directive. As the leader of the new Republic, General of the Biafran Armed Forces, an ex-member of the Supreme Military Council, and a trustworthy source with access to the classified, his views carried a substantial force and conveyed implicit directives. According to Searle (1976, 11), a directive has the propositional content of committing the hearer(s) to some future action, which in this case, comes as a move to renew the people's devotion to the war by framing it as the only hope of survival. Given the social context, his statement can be parsed as urging the elders to help with recruitment, galvanize local support, or prepare for a prolonged war. His alignment with the 'people' endows him with shared belonging, cultural heritage, and portrays him as empathetic towards his fellow Biafrans.

In the following sentence, Ojukwu declares having 'no personal ambition' but acting only in the interest of the people and the Republic. This declarative achieves two things: it shows his altruism by speaking to possible doubts about his personal motivations for the war and renders the conflict as serving the greater good. By framing their actions as sacred duty to their kith and kin, the war becomes a messianic duty or an inevitable sacrifice. Also, the use of 'Republic' ties Ojukwu's call to a nationalist sentiment and a framework of nationhood, implying that the war is being fought for a higher purpose than parochial gains. This framing confers on Biafrans a consciousness of a larger collective working towards a shared goal. Also in Ojukwu's words are elements of ethos—wherein he presents self him as altruistic—and pathos through empathetic appeal to shared hope.

Kanu's call is more direct, strong, and confrontational, conveying an explicit illocutionary force with anaphoric imperatives. Beginning with a phrase that positions his audience as victims of a larger, systemic torture, he generates a sense of collective experience and brotherhood, directing his call to a more diverse population. Unlike Ojukwu whose speech was mostly to Biafrans, Kanu had tweeted at a time of heightened liberationist yearnings across southern Nigeria – when a kindred movement had emerged in the Southwest within the Yoruba nation. The goal here could be to induce pan-ethnic alliance towards inciting wider dissent and secessionist struggle in country. The first sentence is structurally dense, starting with a subordinate clause followed by two successive main clauses and another subordinate clause. The initial main clause 'Hear this' is marked off by a semicolon (;) for emphasis and to assign force to what follows. It serves as a rhetorical cue to beckon attention to what comes next and is culturally relevant as it connects intertextually to the Nigerian homiletic landscape of issuing divine orders. 'Hear this' is axiomatic of Nigerian liturgical rituals and a pragmatic tool widely used by clerics for pronouncing the unassailable. This way, Kanu not only imbues self with a celestial reverence, but also his command. 'Fight back' is thus a clear call to arms and a resonant phrase with the Biafran agitation. The following clause is subordinated by a logical connective that adds a strong appeal to the audience's sense of reason. Thus, 'Fight back because that's the only way' bears an imperative force that signals an urgent call to arms. To have a causal influence on consumers, a propaganda must be reiterated for ease of cognitive impression and retention (Benesch 2012, Dojcinovic 2012). This is realized through the combination of parallelism and the repetitive use of 'never' in the remaining sentences. With the restrictive import of 'only', and the graphological rendering of 'Never', violence is privileged for securing justice and liberation from oppression. Like in Ojukwu's call, the framing also reflects singularization, despising the odds of compromise.

Both excerpts thus demonstrate structural congruence and thematic resonance. The phrase ‘as for me’ in excerpt (1) establishes a personal perspective, indicating authenticity and a sense of kinship with the people. Correspondingly, the assertive ‘I see no hope for our people without victory in this war’ introduces urgency and the exigency of victory as the linchpin for hope. In the subsequent excerpt, the imperative ‘Fight back’ aligns with the overarching theme of agency and quest for triumph. This call reinforces the sequence of assertives that frame combat as the truest path to liberation: ‘You can never beg your way out of oppression’ and ‘You can never appease your way out of domination’ – all of which are aimed at inducing proactive resistance. Both excerpts are thus united by a thematic continuity that oscillates between the urgency of personal conviction (‘as for me’) and the larger collective (‘our people’), and between hopelessness (‘no hope’) and the imperative of violent engagement (‘Fight back’) for political autonomy. The alignment of ‘the right thing’ with ‘partition’ further underscores this imperative, thus establishing a diachronic coherence that spans the narratives.

As demonstrated across the narratives, singularization is often also marked by paranoia-filled rhetoric that appeals to the audience’s fear, anger, and desire for revenge, or reinforces pre-existing beliefs and biases. In the post-hoc ethnographic study of the Rwandan genocide, Alfred Kiruhura, 29, an accused awaiting trial had recalled how he did not consider the Tutsi as threat until hearing repeatedly that they were coming to kill the Hutus and dispossess them of their land. Alfred had been a member of a youth organization which later become violent (Kellow and Steeves 1998, 123). The construction of a certain group as relentless mortal enemies can justify the need to eliminate them. This also works through othering or the subjective framing of adversaries as entities deserving vengeance or as invaders that must be held back. In June 2021, a 17-year IPOB fighter who was arrested while attacking security formations in the southeast confessed to taking up arms after listening to Kanu’s broadcast on Radio Biafra: “I listened to a broadcast of Nnamdi Kanu on Fulani Herdsmen and after everything, I decided to join them, and that was how I joined IPOB” (ChannelsTv, 21 June 2021). Words such as ‘terrorists’, ‘irredentist’, and ‘jihad’ are common collocates for ‘Fulani’ in Kanu’s narratives, thus framing them as an evil horde that must be reined in. In IPOB’s propaganda, the *casus belli* to act is frequently reinforced by the framing of Fulani herdsmen as a formidable, government-backed irredentists with a goal of using pastoralism as front to violently encroach into the south.

(3) Nigerians, what are you waiting for? Soon you will see a ‘President’ with an armed terrorist and unarmed Army Officer. But by then you would’ve all been DEAD, Islamized or Fulanized. (@MaziNnamdiKanu, April 30, 2021. RT: 7118)

(4) What is happening in Nigeria is pure re-colonization by irredentist Fulani elements, aided and abetted by @NGRPresident & @HQNigerianArmy. They will succeed if the South and the indigenous people of the North don’t unite to stop them. Separation is the only way to stop them. (@MaziNnamdiKanu, March 22, 2021. RT: 5323)

The construction of the Fulani herdsmen as irredentists is historically resonant with the idea that they seek to accomplish the jihadist expedition led by Othman Dan Fodio across what would later be known as northern Nigeria in the early nineteenth century. The Fulani Jihad resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in the North and was characterized by a religious fervour, leading to the eventual overthrow of the indigenous Hausa states and their leadership around 1808 (Lovejoy 2016). The conquest is still seen to have shaped the northern religious climate to date, replacing traditional mores with the Islamic order and subsuming all jurisdictional powers under a centralized caliphate. It is believed that Othman had wished to extend his conquest to the south and that his ambition is what today’s Fulani (his descendants) seek to achieve. Addressing a crowd of Biafrans during the war, Ojukwu had quoted a Northerner, Malam Baba Garuba, as saying:

(5) The conquest to the sea is now in sight. When our God-sent Ahmadu Bello said some years ago that our conquest will reach the seashores of Nigeria, some idiots in the South were doubting its possibilities. Today have we not reached the sea? Lagos is reached. It remains Port Harcourt. It must be conquered and taken after December 30, 1964. (Ojukwu 1969a, 149, Vol.1 [Read at the Two Joint Meetings of Chiefs and Elders and the Consultative Assembly, May 26, 1967])

A common stereotype about the Fulani among southern Nigerians is irredentism – a notion propped by their jihadist antecedent in the North. The belief that the Fulani have a covert agenda to spread and dominate their host communities is reinforced by the thinking that certain Fulani individuals have played prominent roles in ethnoreligious movements and held high-level political positions in various West African countries. Ojukwu’s

rather strong allusion to this precedent is mostly signified by his frequent use of the word ‘conquest’ (10×), ‘domination’ (29×), ‘enslavement’ (8×), and ‘subjugation’ (4×). He revealed that the ‘Fulani-North’ was *only* interested in either ‘conquest’ or ‘extermination’ and that the war was the *only* way to stop them. As of the time of Kanu’s tweet (No. 5), there had been violent clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers across villages in the South, and tensions had grown over kidnapping by bandits believed to be Fulani people from the neighbouring countries. These events constitute the major ideologies that animated the Biafran war and have since continued to shape the IPOB movement. The term ‘Islamization’ and ‘Fulanization’ come from the same semantic field and carry metaphors of subjugation. They both acquired prominence in Nigeria’s ethnopolitical lexicon when Muhammadu Buhari became the country’s president in 2015. A Fulani and a Muslim, his ascension was seen as gain to an ethno-religious agenda. In all of Kanu’s tweets and live broadcasts, Buhari @NGRPresident is referred to, albeit conspiratorially, either as dead or being replaced by a doppelgänger, and often as aiding ‘#Fulani terrorists’. The same applies to the country’s military @HQNigerianArmy and other security apparatus also labelled as ‘#licenced terrorists’, ‘murderers’, and as ‘killers of women, children and innocent Biafrans’. In one of his tweets, Kanu refers to the eventual overthrow of Afonja, a Yoruba generalissimo, by the Fulani people with whom he had allied on his territory in the early 1800s, and vows to prevent the same fate from befalling Biafrans:

(6) Afonja...unwittingly & foolishly surrendered Yoruba Illorin Kwara State to his #Fulani friends. Today, Yoruba the true owners of Illorin are effectively Fulani caliphate slaves. #ESN won't allow Ebonyi go same way. (@MaziNnamdiKanu, March 21, 2021. RT: 4903)

The tweet captures the spirit of IPOB’s secessionist struggle – to shield Biafra from domination. The repeated intensifiers ‘unwittingly & foolishly’ invoke his rejection or fear of Afonja’s fall, while the following irony-inversion tacitly underlines the potential consequences of inaction by the South. The establishment of the unofficial, parallel armed organization, #ESN (Eastern Security Network), is framed as a defensive exigency, and its mission across the south justified as a response to an invasion. Hence, Kanu’s call to all ‘Nigerians’ to take up arms and fight or wait for ‘DEATH, Islamization or Fulanization’ is underpinned by the logic of historical precedents, existing beliefs, and biases as well as increased fear – against the backdrop of the country’s ethno-political structure.

4 Atrocity narration

The goal of narrativized atrocities in the Biafra corpus can be subsumed under three conceptual blocks: incitement, solicitation, and justification. In this section, I identify the structural markers of these themes and explain how they are discursively constructed within the narratives. From the angle of linguistics, atrocity narratives are typically marked by lexico-syntactic choices – and by wide-ranging rhetorical practices that make for salience and emotiveness. The choice of graphic words over less emotive alternatives, as widely employed in the narratives, thus serves not just to create a cognitive load of horror, but to also generate realism or immediacy and to rouse the audience on a more viscera level. Another common element of such narratives across the data is bolstering, that is, the adding of evidential details, third-party quotes, and enumeration to increase persuasiveness, prevent doubt, or reduce the likelihood of further fact-checking. Atrocity narratives were a potent weapon both before and during the Biafran war, being resourcefully used to curate victimhood, stir up thirst for vengeance, and goad people into armed hostilities:

(7) The events of the past two months in this country are well known to everyone of us. They have been events tragic in the extreme. The people of Eastern Nigeria have been the direct and unmistakable targets of murderous onslaughts.

In May, thousands of our people, resident in Northern Nigeria, were slaughtered in cold blood like rats. This well-planned and efficiently executed massacre involved innocent civilians. This is not an occasion to stir up emotions, but it is impossible to forget that men, women, and children of our kith and kin were taken out of their beds and slaughtered, they were murdered in hospitals, including women in labour rooms—yes, women in pains trying to deliver children!—they were massacred in places

of worship, in the streets, in marketplaces, on in vehicles trying to carry them to safety. (Ojukwu 1969a, 48–9 [*Address to second meeting of Consultative Assembly, October 4, 1966*])

The speech came in the build-up to the war and could have been purposed for priming. The hooks hint at the time, scale, and victims of violence, and position the audience as co-witnesses before zeroing in on more granular details – again about the time of tragedy, victims, villain (Northern Nigeria), and deaths. A few strategies are significant here: declaring the speech as not for the very goal it serves is a rhetorical act of grafting¹ (Gal 2019). This follows the rendering of Easterners as ‘rats’ deemed worthy of ‘slaughter’ by Northerners. The symbolic association of ‘rats’ with Easterners, despite having no logical basis for comparison, carries a sociocognitive relevance and conveys a strong sense of worthlessness. The self-deprecating portrayal as ‘rats’ also semiotizes a socio-ethnic hierarchy and oppression – and rationalizes the call for revenge. Among Nigerians, especially during Ojukwu’s time, while ‘bush rats’ were viewed as easy prey for kids wandering on farmsteads, they were considered an infestation if found within the house. What emerges from the analogy is an eco-cognitive metaphor of defencelessness and extermination, and construction of Easterners as dispensable or unwanted within the Nigerian space. The choice of ‘massacre’, ‘slaughter’, ‘murdered/murderous’ over lesser-graphic synonyms, the use of emphatic dash, and the distressing narration of horror in hallowed places of safety all signify the sheer scale of violence, thus constructing perpetrators as subhuman deserving vengeance and equal harm (see also Benesch 2008, 524). By laying stress on the despoliation of women in pains of childbirth, children in their sleep, and non-combatants (‘innocent civilians’), the text features the usual tropes of atrocity narratives for inducing outrage and revenge.

Drawing on Benesch (2008, 2012), a major felicity condition for propagandist discourses is repetition. Repetition is critical for conviction and morale-boosting. The consistent replay of horror stories can solidify a sense of victimhood and hostility, fuelling a desire for retribution (also Ponsonby 1928, 14, Morrow 2018, 45). Across the data, repetition of atrocity stories is achieved through the re-semiotic processes of rewording and summarizing. The recasting of horrific events in different words and structures can effectively renew the impact of violence on people’s emotions and sustain their retributive urge. For instance, while other mentions of the story in the corpus are relatively scant or lack contextual details, summary words, and enumeration are used to maintain freshness, brevity, and cognitive density. Lexemes such as ‘thousands’, ‘massacred’, ‘murdered’, and ‘slaughter’ are recast and elaborated upon with more explicit and graphic synonyms: ‘over 50,000 of our people were *shot, hacked to death, burned, or buried alive*; hundreds of women and children were *ravished*; unborn children were *torn* out of their mothers’ wombs.’ While the same event is reported, the successive use of graphic words and phrases creates a cinematic imagery of vileness, which is critical for the re-enactment of shared trauma and collective harm, as well as priming for revenge.

The tropes of atrocity narratives can also be instantiated through syntactic order and evidential components, such as referencing, corroboration, and enumeration. These elements can enhance the power and credibility of such stories and align them with their pragmatic objectives. In most of Ojukwu’s speeches, instances of parallelism and repeat mentions are rhetorically relevant to graphic depictions of violence and villains (e.g. Ojukwu 1969a, 131, 215, 216, 223, 241 and 319). Similar strategies include profuse use of successive mono-clausal sentences for added rhetorical force, and graphological inflection of prosodic behaviours to signify randomness, visceral outbursts, and extemporaneity of thoughts. An instance of parallel clauses is contained in another pre-war speech delivered on April 24, in which Ojukwu further lays out the grounds for secession:

(8) Easterners have now been excluded, permanently at least in the foreseeable future, from two-third of the country. They have been hounded from their usual places of residence and work; they have been hunted in every other corner of Nigeria; they have been driven from the Federal and Northern public services; they are now fleeing from the police force; and they are withdrawn surreptitiously from the diplomatic and consular missions of their country. As things are, no Easterner can hope in

¹ As a framing strategy, ‘grafting’ refers to the act of characterizing an action as belonging to a particular category that is normally reserved for a different type of action, resulting in a valuation that is sharply opposed to what is typically associated with that category (Gal 2019).

the foreseeable future to be welcomed in many parts of Nigeria or access rights and justice there[...]. (Ojukwu 1969a: 131 [Address to Consultative Assembly, April 24, 1967])

In the text are three sentences with the second containing five clauses of parallel structures – mostly beginning with the present perfect verb phrase ‘they have been 4×’. The sentence lays out the premises of secession by sequentially highlighting the ills suffered and why the East must consider becoming a separate entity outside Nigeria. Again, the combination of the perfective verb ‘have now been’ with the intensifier ‘permanently’ in the opening sentence, along with the absolute negation particle ‘no’ and the anaphoric reference to ‘foreseeable future’ at the end of the text, creates a discursive synergy that echoes singularization and suggests a strong sense of permanence, resolve, and finality.

As mentioned earlier, a frame may contain or embed other frames, thereby serving as a meta-frame and carrying a greater rhetorical impact. The report of security operatives participating in ethnic-motivated *hounding* of Easterners, and federal authorities ejecting Easterners from national parastatals speaks of utter defencelessness against an overwhelming foe – for which the only remedy is avoidance. The framing of state security operatives as villainous colluders in ethnic conflicts constitutes a prominent propagandistic trope in Biafran discourses. This is most visible in Kanu’s accounts of extra-judicial killings in which he accuses perceived perpetrators by mentioning them on Twitter or hashtagging them. In IPOB’s data, social media is effectively leveraged to visibilize atrocities through various digital affordances, including the posting of graphic visuals, and to identify victims and heroes, as well as protagonists and antagonists through public naming in tweets. Mentions on Twitter work by creating a hyperlink that notifies those who are mentioned and invites them to the discursive context in which they were mentioned. As opposed to Ojukwu’s speeches, the asynchronous nature of Twitter communication allows for a greater amplification of narratives through various semiotic effects, speed, visibility, and influence.

(9) This is twenty-first century in #Obigbo where a @GovWike, @HQNigerianArmy, @NGRPresident have embarked on a genocide of unimaginable proportions. Families obliterated. Husband, wife, children slaughtered. @GovWike said he is killing Igbo people in #Obigbo. Over 1000 killed & counting. <https://t.co/7lvIVA61cO> (@MaziNnamdiKanu, November 2, 2020. RT: 7510)

This tweet is discursively dense, embedding details of atrocities with overt mention of persons and entities framed as villains and accused publicly. Evidential elements including the numbers of people believed to have been killed and where it happened are also provided. Mentioning is a form of referencing and may have intervention potentials. Mentions of foreign entities believed to have imperial influence over perceived perpetrators can be found in atrocity stories, especially those widely considered gruesome and unacceptable. While the gory theatre of war may be ignored, stories of attacks on the most vulnerable: children, women, and innocent men often attract greater opprobrium or constitute a basis for escalation in the form of external intervention. In this sense, the immediacy of digital communication, which can penetrate the previously impenetrable walls of imperial palaces and media houses, is particularly valuable. While referencing can be helpful in this regard, making accusations or pleas for intervention in atrocity narratives can be counter-productive, especially if they require verification by independent actors who later dispute the claims. Such refutation may inflict a permanent damage on the movement and cast strong doubts on future claims. Since mentions can surface in any part of a story-bearing tweet, the knowledge of the discourse context is often needed to parse who the referenced persons are and how they are framed. Referencing is purposive and implies a strong discursive connection between the story and receiver. A connection might be in the form of shared ideals or events of major concern to referenced entities. In the following tweet, the United Kingdom, United States, European Union, and the UN are subtly summoned to intervene in what is described as ‘the ongoing genocide’ in Biafra:

(10) I hope @UKinNigeria, @USinNigeria, @EUinNigeria, @UN are fully aware of the ongoing genocidal bombardment of #Biafran villages in Akwa Ibom & Benue State. Hope they are also aware that no murderous Fulani Miyetti Allah settlements has never been bombed. (@MaziNnamdiKanu, April 7, 2021. RT: 5709)

(11) Analysis from @persecutionnews finds a majority of the 1,900 Nigerians killed by terrorists in 2020 were killed by Fulani militants, concentrated in Christian communities. Meanwhile, Buhari's regime continues its criminal silence! @StateIRF @SecBlinken <https://t.co/NulsEvE036> (@MaziNnamdiKanu, March 21, 2021. RT: 4180)

World powers are sensitive to reports of genocide and consider it a heinous violation of human rights under international law. Claim of systematic extermination is thus extensively visible in the Biafran discourses, with *genocide* 232× as the second most frequent atrocity word, coming behind *killed* 388× (Figure 1). Ojukwu had used the word about 165× in all his speeches, mostly while addressing the press. As it became clear that he would not defeat Nigeria nor gain secession through combat, the goal became to keep fighting while awaiting external intervention (Ojukwu 1969a, 353–4). Kanu's use of *genocide* 67× was rather connected with his claims of ethnic or persecutory killings of Biafrans and Christians by the Nigerian security operatives or jihadist elements. In all of Kanu's tweets, the word *Christians* 214× collocates widely with atrocity words including *killing/killed*, *massacre(d)*, *burned*, *raped*, *torture(d)*, *murdered*, *(silent) slaughter*, and *genocide* for 194×, and in other contexts occurring with less graphic words such as *brutality*, *displaced*, *deadly attack*, and *violence*.

While Kanu's concern remains Biafra, his inclusion of Christians as co-victims of genocidal attacks and his indictment of the Nigerian government as terroristic serve two major goals: to mobilize international Christian bodies and countries committed to defending religious freedom, and to ratchet up support among Nigerian Christians, especially non-Igbos who had been sceptical about Biafra. A few reasons may be attributed to the frequency of genocide claims in Kanu's narratives. One is his awareness of the global commitment to preventing genocide and its political ramifications for 'big brother countries' that fail to act. Following the Rwandan genocide of 1994 in which Hutus extremists systematically killed almost one million Tutsi people, the international community was criticized for responding too slowly, and there are still questions about why the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda at the time failed to halt the violence (Grünfeld and Huijboom 2007). Another is the lingering wounds of the Biafra war and the widespread abhorrence of history repeating itself. The broad mentions of *genocide* thus instantiate the beseeching of international communities, particularly Western democracies, and interest groups, to intervene by facilitating acquiescence to secessionist demands.

Atrocity narratives – as propaganda tools – are only felicitous to the extent they are deemed credible. To bolster plausibility, evidentiary elements such as references, or corroboration are often inserted to strengthen accounts of events or to counteract doubts. Corroborative elements in both narratives are indicated by observer accounts, appeal to authority, testimonial evidence, and specificity. They include citing of journalistic accounts and the inclusion of hyperlinks to sources. In one narrative of killings during the war, Ojukwu cites

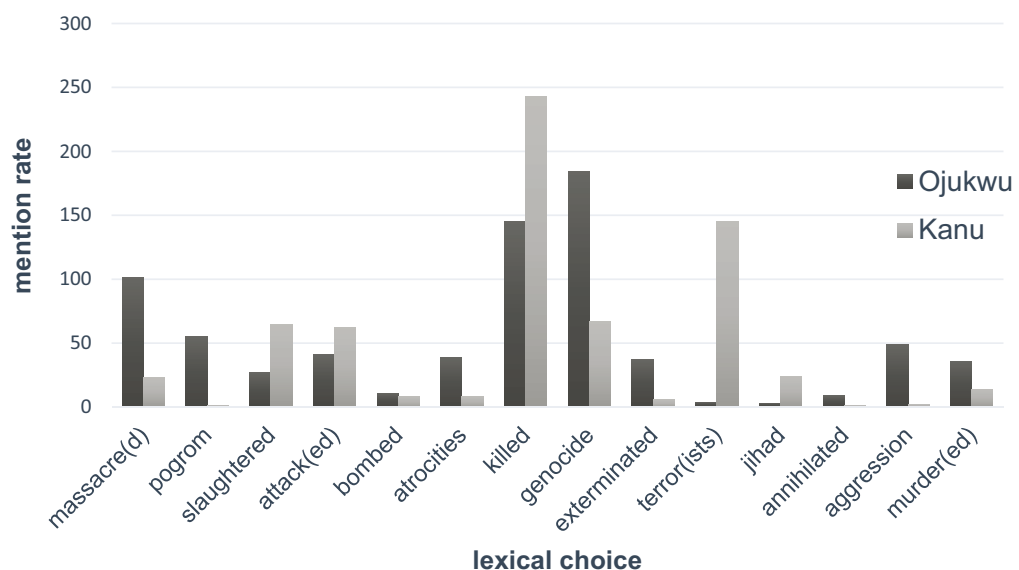


Figure 1: Mention rates of atrocity words in Ojukwu and Kanu's narratives.

the eyewitness account of a 70-year-old Madam Okure from Ikot-Ikpene, who disclosed how “Nigerian soldiers entered the town and killed all that could breathe, except the aged and the maimed left to die of hunger and starvation” and recounted how “all her children living with her were slaughtered [...]” (Ojukwu 1969a, 343). The story is further corroborated with yet another eyewitness account, an Irish Priest’s – Professor Heely, who too narrated to the French News Agency how “during an advance the Nigerians killed everyone – men, women and children.” The truism of these corroborations not only stand on impersonal voices or eyewitness accounts, but also on the sociocultural legitimacy vested on the individuals reported. Even more, the accounts bestow a global legitimization on Ojukwu’s portrayal of the war, particularly his narration of war on Biafra. In selecting sources, consideration is also given to the parameters of legitimacy or the weight of authority. The more credible sources are perceived to be, the greater force their narrative would have. Socioculturally, old people are generally construed as fearless individuals, while aged African women tend to be seen as possessing candour. The believability of their testimonies thus stems from what Van Leeuwen (2007) defines as authorization. Authorization here refers to legitimization derived from socially constructed or cultural conventions rather than logic. Hence, the basis on which a thing is believed, pursued, or done in a certain way is ‘because I or so-and-so say(s) so’ – where the ‘I’ is seen to possess credibility (Van Leeuwen 2007, 94). The stories told by a 70-year-old woman victim and an Irish Priest and Professor “who had spoken” to the media all lends a strong weight of credibility to the narratives.

There are broad convergences and some disparities in the use of atrocity words by Ojukwu and Kanu, which can be interpreted as indicative of their respective contexts of production and perlocutionary goals. Whereas Ojukwu’s narratives use words such as *genocide*, *massacred*, *atrocities*, *pogrom*, and *exterminated* with greater frequency, Kanu’s IPOB narrative has more of *terrorists*, *jihad*, *killed*, *slaughtered*, and *attacked*. The earlier consists mainly of words semiotizing mass killings in the context of ethnic or political differences, thus reflecting Ojukwu’s framing of the Biafra war. His claim that the north-led Nigerian government was covertly interested in ‘exterminating’ Biafrans rather than enforcing Nigeria’s unity is often framed as *pogrom* 55× – as opposed to its lone occurrence in Kanu’s tweets (Figure 1). Similar elements used by Kanu share a discursive links with the religious or ideological motivation for violence, namely *terror(ists)* 145× and *jihad* 24× compared to its fewer occurrence in the counterpart narratives. The ubiquity of *terrorists* in the IPOB’s discourses points to Kanu’s commitment to discrediting the Nigerian government in the eyes of the international community, by portraying it as complicit in aiding terrorists against specific religious or ethnic groups. Despite their differences, both narratives share a common thread in their frequent use of descriptors such as *slaughtered*, *attacked*, and *murdered* in narrativizing atrocities. Across the narratives, the use of these atrocity-depicting lexemes constitutes the grid of warspeak and the propagandist discourses surrounding the Biafran struggle. These micro-linguistic choices and their illocutions not only mirrors the broader sociopolitical contexts of the Biafran conflict but also collectively constitutes a narrative that bolsters the struggle. The IPOB movement, along with its narrative bears significant intertextual imprints of the Biafra war. Many view the IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu, as the reincarnation of Ojukwu and accord him the same reverence and authority. Ojukwu was seen as a saviour and held in a sort of reverence by Igbo-Biafrans during and after the war. The Biafran forces’ anthem, ‘Holy Holy Holy, Odumegwu Ojukwu, is another savior’, which they also sang as a war chant, has since been adapted by IPOB – featuring Kanu as the new saviour. Some IPOB members I have met indeed claimed that Kanu was born during the Biafra war and that his mother received a prophecy about his pre-ordination to continue Ojukwu’s work.

5 Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted a discursive reading of warspeak in narratives by actors of the Biafran movement, analysing the rhetor-linguistic strategies for framing collective victimhood, mobilization, and rationalizing actions. The concept of warspeak was also refurbished to explain a range of discursive strategies pertaining to armed struggles, including those for creating and managing hostilities, and for signalling the sociohistorical contexts of conflicts. In this context, I identify the broad web of frames that constitute warspeak

in Biafran discourses as singularization and atrocity narration and demonstrate that their linguistic elements are indexically relevant to the sociocultural climate and discursive goals of the narratives across various modalities and time periods. It is clear, for instance, that both Ojukwu and Kanu depict conflict as the optimal choice and that while Ojukwu's message is directed primarily at Biafrans, Kanu's narratives are at times aimed at pan-ethnic mobilization against perceived common foes. The IPOB movement resurged on the heels of civil rule in Nigeria and at a time of increased attraction to secessionist yearnings beyond the East. It thus seems that while Kanu's primary objective remains Biafra, his messianic poise is geared towards precipitating a wider disintegration of the national structure. Both discourses unanimously leverage shared belonging, historical precedents, sociocognitive structures, and a wide range of linguistic strategies to reinforce incitement and create a divisive 'us' and 'them' dynamic. Given the crucial role of these strategies in ensuring the narratives resonate with the people, they can be regarded as inherently felicitous or as key components of warspeak (Benesch 2008, 2012). A particularly intriguing finding across the narratives is the reproduction of actors, roles, and their attendant constructions. This consistency is perhaps only disrupted by variation in framing language, with Kanu's semantics tending to be graphic, ruthless, and unappealing, while Ojukwu sometimes made genial and conciliatory overtures, particularly at the height of the war. The continuing reference to Gowon with his rank 'Lt. Colonel' in Ojukwu's narratives not only signals the rituals of mutual respect in the military, but also hints at his sustained invitation of an erstwhile comrade to what he severally terms as 'a polished mahogany table' (Ojukwu 1969b, 45, 61, 87, 98 and 129). A similar contrast between the two narratives is the modality of communication. The affordances of digital linguistic practices are well exploited by the IPOB movement – allowing for immediacy of messaging, transborder mobilization, surveillance evasion, summoning and mentioning, and digital insurgency. This dimension of the IPOB movement not only signals the fading of the digital divide in Africa, but also calls attention to the changing demography of actors and ethnopolitical cartographies in Nigeria. While the active participants in the Biafra war were mostly seniors referred to as 'the elders', the different components of the IPOB movement are predominantly run by millennials and the Igbo-Biafran diaspora. These represent a crucial departure from the old to the new Biafran movement, with the exception of combatants.

A major concomitant of civil rule in Nigeria is the resurgence of old secessionist struggles and the emergence of new ethnic movements. The use of digital technologies and social media for framing perceived wrongs and mobilization remains invaluable in this regard, enabling the virtual reproduction of shared identities and long-distance activism. A component of secessionist narratives that was not explored here pertains to the diaspora block of the Biafran movement, and the linguistic representation of how they synergize with domestic compatriots. A fruitful starting point would be to closely gauge the perlocutionary force of warspeak among Biafrans at home and abroad through the exploration of geotagged responses to mediated Biafrocentric narratives. Also, while this study offers only a bird's eye, qualitative synopsis of this Biafra corpus, it indeed opens the ground for further comparison with those of other separatist movements in Nigeria, namely the Yoruba Nation in the Southwest and MEND in the oil-rich Niger Delta region of the country. These endeavours will illuminate not only our relational understanding of secessionist discourses in Nigeria, but also the agency of linguistic framing in the making and evolution of secessionist conflicts in postcolonial Africa.

Acknowledgments: I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Theresa Heyd, Chair of English Linguistics at the University of Greifswald, for supporting this project and for reading an earlier version of this paper. I extend heartfelt thanks to the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments. Any remaining errors are my own.

Funding information: The author received no specific funding for this research.

Conflict of interest: The author states no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement: The corpus analysed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

References

- Adeyanju, G. Collins. 2018. "The mass media and violent conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs* 4(3), 73–87.
- Ajiboye, Esther. 2019. "Polarisation and the sustenance of Biafra secessionist discourses online." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 55(4), 475–91.
- Queiroz, Fábio Albergaria de and Thiago Bacelar Cardoso. 2015. "The Legitimacy of War under the Perspective of the Speech-Act Theory: The Cases of the First and the Second Gulf Wars (1991/2003) in a Comparative Analysis." *Journal of Politics and Law* 8(2), 54–69. doi: 10.5539/jpl.v8n2p54.
- Austin, John. 1962. "How to do things with words." In *The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, edited by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa. Oxford: Clarendon Press. doi: 10.1177/00936509302000300.
- Barnes, Lawrie. 2003. "Language, war and peace: An overview." *Language Matters* 34(1), 3–12.
- Bellamy, Alex. 2006. *Just wars: From Cicero to Iraq*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Benesch, Susan. 2008. "Vile crime or inalienable right: Defining incitement to genocide." *Virginia Journal of International Law* 48(3), 486–528.
- Benesch, Susan. 2012. "The ghost of causation in international speech crime cases." In *Propaganda, war crimes trials and international law: From speakers' corner to war crimes*, edited by Predrag Dojcinovic, p. 254–68. New York: Routledge.
- Badsey, Stephen. 2012. "Humanitarian War: Justifying Western Military Intervention, 1991–2001." In *Justifying war: Propaganda, politics and the modern age*, edited by David Welch and Joe Fox, p. 313–26. New York: Palgrave.
- Chiluwa, Innocent. 2012. "Social media networks and the discourse of resistance: A sociolinguistic CDA of Biafra online discourses." *Discourse & Society* 23(3), 217–44.
- Dojcinovic, Predrag. 2012. "Word scene investigations: Toward a cognitive linguistic approach to the criminal analysis of open source evidence in war crimes cases." In *Propaganda, war crimes trials and international law: From speakers' corner to war crimes*, edited by Predrag Dojcinovic, p. 71–117. New York: Routledge.
- Entman, Robert. 1993. "Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43(4), 51–8.
- Entman, Robert. 2007. "Framing bias: Media in the distribution of power." *Journal of Communication* 67(1), 163–73.
- Fox, Joe and David Welch. 2012. "Justifying war: Propaganda, politics and the modern age." In *Justifying War: Propaganda, Politics and the Modern Age*, edited by David Welch and Joe Fox, p. 1–22. New York: Palgrave.
- Gal, Susan. 2019. "Making registers in politics: Circulation and ideologies of linguistic authority." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 23, 450–66.
- Graham, Allan. 2000. *Intertextuality*. Routledge.
- Gross, Kimberly and Lisa D'Ambrosio. 2004. "Framing emotional response." *Political Psychology* 25(1), 1–29. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00354.x.
- Grünfeld, Fred and Anke Huijboom. 2007. *Failure to prevent genocide in Rwanda: the role of bystanders*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NY.
- Igwebuike, Ebuka and Akoh, Ameh Dennis. 2021. "Self-legitimation and other-delegitimation in the internet radio speeches of the supreme leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra." *Critical Discourse Studies* 19(6), 575–92. doi: 10.1080/17405904.2021.1921817.
- Inya, Onwu. 2016. "Metaphors for Nation and War in Chinua Achebe's Memoir." In *Political Discourse in Emergent, Fragile, and Failed Democracies*, edited by Daniel Ochieng Orwenjo, Omondi Oketch, and Hameed Tunde Asiru, p. 199–219. Hershey, PA: IGI Global. doi: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0081-0.ch011.
- Iyengar, Shanto and Adams Simon. 1993. "News coverage of the Gulf crisis and public opinion: A study of agenda-setting, priming and framing." *Communication Research* 20, 365–83.
- Johnson, Rob. 2012. "Justifying the Iraq War and managing the media: A comparative historical analysis." In *Justifying war: Propaganda, politics and the modern age*, edited by David Welch and Joe Fox, p. 339–61. New York: Palgrave.
- Kellow, Christine and Leslie Steeves. 1998. "The role of radio in the Rwandan Genocide." *Journal of Communication* 48(3), 107–28. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1998.tb02762.x.
- Kiper, John. 2015. "Toward an anthropology of war propaganda." *Political and Legal Anthropology* 38(1), 129–46. doi: 10.1111/plar.12090.
- Knightley, Phillip. 2012. "The role of the media in justifying and promoting war." In *Justifying war: Propaganda, politics and the modern age*, edited by David Welch and Joe Fox, p. 377–83. New York: Palgrave.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1986. *The kristeva reader*, edited by Toril Moi. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lasswell, Harold. 1928. "The function of the propagandist." *International Journal of Ethics* 38, 258–68. doi: 10.1086/intejethi.38.3.2378152.
- Lovejoy, Paul. 2016. *Jihad in West Africa during the age of revolutions*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Merton, Thomas. 1968. "War and the crisis of language." In *The critique of war: contemporary philosophical explorations*, edited by Robert Ginsberg. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company.
- Read, Morgan. 1941. *Atrocity propaganda, 1914-1919*. New Haven: Yale University Press for University of Louisville.
- Morrow, Paul. 2018. "A theory of atrocity propaganda." *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 9(1), 45–62. doi: 10.1353/hum.2018.0002.
- Nwofe, Emmanuel. 2019. "The internet and activists' digital media practices: A case of the Indigenous People of Biafra Movement in Nigeria." *IAFOR Journal of Media, Communication & Film* 6(1), 23–48.
- Ojukwu, Odumegwu. 1969a. *Biafra – selected speeches with journals of events (Volume 1)*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Ojukwu, Odumegwu. 1969b. *Biafra: selected speeches and random thoughts of col. ojukwu, with diaries of events (Volume 1)*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Pieterse Henning. 2003. "Don't accuse me of being anti-semantic. Some of my best friends are words." *Language Matters* 34(1), 35–47.
- Ponsonby, Arthur. 1928. *Falsehood in wartime: Propaganda lies of the First World War: Containing an assortment of lies circulated throughout the nations during the Great War*. London: Garland Publishing Company.
- Pretorius, Frans-Johan. 2012. "Justifying the South African War: Boer Propaganda, 1899-1902." In *Justifying War: Propaganda, Politics and the Modern Age*, edited by David Welch and Joe Fox, p. 23–45. New York: Palgrave.
- Van Rensburg, Christo. 2003. "Taal, oorlog en oorwinnings." *Language Matters* 34(1), 86–9.
- Van Leeuwen, Theo. 2007. "Legitimation in discourse and communication." *Discourse & Communication* 1(1), 91–112. doi: 10.1177/1750481307071986.
- Roos, Henriette. 2003. "Joiners, AWOL en umkhonto – soldate wat steeds veg binne die Afrikaanse Literêre Taalgebruik." *Language Matters* 34(1), 72–9.
- Santaella, Angel. 2009. "How Words Go to War: Doublespeak and the War in Iraq." *Glossa: An ambilingual Interdisciplinary Journal* 4(2), 295–311.
- Schmidt, Ulf. 2012. "Justifying chemical warfare: The origins and ethics of Britain's chemical warfare programme, 1915–1939." In *Justifying war: Propaganda, politics and the modern age*, edited by David Welch and Joe Fox, p. 129–58. New York: Palgrave.
- Searle, John. 1976. "The classification of illocutionary acts." *Language in Society* 5(1), 1–23.
- Ugorji, Basil. 2017. *Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB): A revitalized social movement*. ICERM Publishers.
- Van Dijk, Teun. 2008. *Discourse and context: A sociocognitive approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Welch, David. 1993. *Justice and the Genesis of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press.