

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Emotive language as construction of situational aggression among drivers at gridlock scenes in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the use of emotive language in the construction of situational aggression among drivers in gridlock scenes along the failed Calabar-Uyo highway, in Southern Nigeria. Data were derived through participants' observations, informal interactions and semi-structured interviews in an eight-month fieldwork involving 36 drivers who formed the representative sample. Insights from Frustration-Aggression and Conceptual Act Theories were utilised to account for how emotive language instantiate displaced aggression. Findings show that the emotive cues used by drivers were principally informed by the bad road which occurred as a result of failed leadership and endemic corruption, and other cues used to exemplify inferiorisation of women, driving incompetence, superiority complex and economic hardship. The exchanges are combined to situate the collective excruciating experience of drivers and a protest against Nigerian political establishment. The emotive language impliedly re-enacts participants' patriarchal beliefs, driving attitudes, multilingual identities and myriad of challenges that describe the Nigerian sociocultural context.

Keywords: emotive language; situational aggression; gridlock scenes; drivers; Nigeria

1. Introduction

Gridlock scene in the Nigerian situation, is one of the sites where aggressive language is often used by frustrated commuters to transfer their personal and society-induced aggression on one another. Orasan^[1] argues that distributive language of abuse with aggressive content is on the increase in the global space. This manner of language use, if not well managed, could possibly degenerate to disharmony. Aggression, whether verbally or physically demonstrated, is a negative form of anti-social behaviour. Kadhim and Mohammed^[2] assert that language of aggression is often initiated through disharmonious communication among interlocutors as consequence of displaced reasons combined with the psychological state of the aggressor. For Hemavathy and Devi^[3], Bocar^[4], and Hamilton^[5], aggression is enacted through intended communication which is a reciprocity process of transmitting information which shows interactive partners' attitude, thought and aggressiveness. The dimension of aggression is often verbally initiated and sometimes limited to acquaintances. The authors demonstrate that verbal aggression covers a diversity of immediate and mediated contexts across the relationship gamut, from intimates to acquaintances to strangers. This positions aggressive act as a spontaneous, situational, remote and context-dependent occurrence. It is on this basis that O'Connor^[6], and Bou-Franch^[7] maintain that the reasons for aggression

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could range from frustration, want, desire, disturbing life events to unpleasant circumstances which are often shown in emotive language use. Language in this form, according to Gee^[8], and Trinch^[9], initiates, constructs and contributes to aggression and it is therefore a reflexive instrument that examines aggressive tendencies and ideologies across cultures. Language, in other contexts, are ideologically loaded to show social practices in certain cultures that appropriate certain behaviours. These orientations set the differences between individual (aggressive) behaviour and the emotive language use that expresses it. This establishes the difference between verbal aggression (the act of using aggressive language on person) and verbal aggressiveness (a person's attitude towards using aggressive language), which according to Livine, Beaty and Limon^[10], stimulate the elicitation of reaction. Aggressive language is emotion-induced and meant to elicit disharmony and violence depending on the participants involved and where it is characterised by closed-minded overtures, disruptive and derogatory expressions meant to ignore others. Uwen et al.^[11] argue that emotion in humans is a complex phenomenon that its activation, utilisation and control is individualistic and produces different outcomes such as aggression. Characteristically, aggressive language is meant to insult, abuse, belittle, incite, provoke, intimidate, embarrass, demean with abusive words, names calling and impolite forms enforced through forceful, coarse and compelling voice where the aggressor include gestures such as pointing of fingers and invading the victim's space. Krupansky^[12] posits that people who use aggressive language do so for short cut to their ends, domination, fun, show of ego and status with the tendency to assault. This category of persons, according to Bayer and Cegala^[13], Malkin^[14], and Lozovska and Gudaite^[15], are often motivated by frustration, deficiency of argumentative skills, seeking for safety, self-defense and confidence. These impulses result in yelling and shouting on others to cause psychological hurt and destroy harmony in social communication. What guides the escalation of aggression is its control and the reaction of the target(s) and other participants within the scene of enactment.

The selected road is Calabar-Uyo highway with distance of about 93.9 km that takes driving time of less than three hours if the road is in good condition. However, the abandoned failed highway (within the period of this study) has caused the waste of countless productive hours of commuters. The situation was even more aggravated by the high volume of vehicular traffic accessing the two capital cities (Calabar and Uyo) that connect Cross River and Akwa Ibom States in Nigeria. These factors contributed to the consistent crawling gridlock often experienced along the road. Frustrated drivers at the gridlock scenes show their anger through the use of language on others who are not the remote causes of the long hours of delay. The study is motivated by the remote and immediate causes of the emotive language used by drivers, how it is managed to avoid escalation and how the participants' exchanges are combined to establish Nigeria's belief system and myriad of challenges. The findings, it is believed, would provide clues on anger management and draw the attention of the political establishment to provide enduring road infrastructure.

2. Theoretical framework

Frustration-Aggression Theory (FAT) and Conceptual Act Theory (CAT) are considered relevant to this study. FAT was conceived by Dollard and Ford^[16] as a psychological theory that accounts for the different behaviours people exhibit when they are frustrated. The theory holds that once people are frustrated, they become angry, and where what causes the frustration is unavailable, the anger is displaced and put on someone or something that may be unrelated to the cause. In this conception, frustration may be seen to be internal and personal, but often aggravated by external circumstances that hinder the aggressor from achieving set goals. Modifying the theory, Miller^[17] introduces the concept of deindividuation to expatiate the tenets. Deindividuation explains that a historically non-aggressive person

could become aggressive when prone to aggression-induced situations. Aggression (whether verbally or actionably demonstrated), has many forms and causes. Berkowitz^[18,19], and Huesmann and Miller^[20] argue that aggression is influenced by social cues and environmental situations which could decrease or escalate and make aggression somewhat acceptable. Exposure to aggression-induced situations, the emotional state of the aggressor, the motives, reasonability and consequences of aggression are factors that direct aggressive actions in many contexts. Aggression is therefore an agency of control and domination shown in some situations because of people's beliefs in their capacity, and Bandura^[21] explains that this is to exercise some measures to control their own functioning and environmental events. The frustration, displacement, control and domination as elements of aggression, are often communicated through emotional language which bears some psychological consequences.

Again, Barrett's^[22,23] idealisation of CAT is hinged on the premise that language plays a major role in the activation and communication of emotions. Language, in this regards, is the agency for the communication of individual or collective awareness of experiences and actions that are emotive in nature. Emotions are indexed particularly in verbal cues that transmit actions that can be seen and heard. Clore and Ortony^[24,25] state that such situations can also be interpreted as excitement, sadness, immodesty, rage, abhorrence, astonishment, suppression and aggression communicated through the tone in the language. Emotive cues in this description, are psychologically interpretable through common awareness, and where the outcomes such as aggression results in visual and auditory actions by the actors or interactants using language. It is this awareness that appropriates and transmits the interpretation of emotive cues. Lindquist et al^[26], Boroditsky^[27], and Lindquist^[28] add that even where the cues are non-verbal, they can be contextually interpretable to show aggression arising from unpleasant circumstances. However, Zhu^[29], argues that emotional language is commonly demonstrated in audible cues through sounds as indicated in tone and intonation. The theories are important to the study because the drivers at the gridlock scenes are frustrated by what they see and hear (which may be remote or immediate). It is these visual and auditory elements that cause the aggression which they demonstrate through the use of inciting emotional language on other drivers.

3. Materials and methods

Using a qualitative research approach, data for the study were generated through participant observations and semi-structured interviews involving 36 purposively sampled drivers in an eight-month fieldwork at the gridlock scenes along the Calabar-Uyo highway. The highway is the only link to Calabar and Uyo by land. The towns are the capital cities of Cross River and Akwa Ibom States located in the Southern region of Nigeria. Apart from the many activities that motivate commuters to access the cities, the two States also share international boundaries with Cameroun and Equatorial Guinea. These factors are combined to cause the increasing volume of vehicular traffic along the highway measuring about 93.9 km in a supposed journey of two hours 30 min. The highway, particularly the Odukpani-Okurikang axis (measuring about 35 km from Calabar), has been perennially dilapidated with failed spots and broken down trucks that caused obstructions before and during the period of this study (March to October 2022). This situation has occasioned the loss of several productive hours of commuters who waited patiently in the crawling gridlock. These frustrated scenes have often resulted in bad driving habits that caused damages to vehicles, avoidable road accidents and altercations among drivers with raised tempers that were communicated using aggressive language.

The researchers were regular travelers on the selected highway which doubled their positionality as drivers and participant observers. Participant observation here, enabled the researchers to relate their

reoccurring experience with the emotional cues of the commuters that defined transferred aggression. The semi-structured interviews, aside from complementing the observations, also deepened participants' communication of the complex and unpleasant experiences on the road, their inner feelings and varying positions on the causes of their avoidable suffering. The interviews were well timed, and conducted when tempers were doused, based on the consent of the interviewees. The purposive sampling technique enabled the researchers to select and focus only on commuters who used aggressive language during tensed encounters. The exchanges by participants in this circumstance are used as Excerpts in the analysis. Through the use of observational techniques, (field)notes and audiotape recordings using smart phones, the aggressive aspects of participants' conversations and opinions in the interviews were documented and recorded. The data were then transcribed and coded into themes for qualitative analysis.

4. Results and discussion

The analysis examines the facets of aggression and aggressive language usage by drivers along the deteriorating Calabar-Uyo highway. The thematisation and interpretation of the emotive language were derived from participants' observations and opinions derived from semi-structured interviews that index meanings within the complex context of the Nigerian society. The aggressive features of the exchanges are coded into six headings to capture the social realities and experiences of Nigerians particularly at the gridlock scenes along Odukpani-Okurikang axis of the highway. The emotive cues are analysed and discussed under the themes of failed leadership, endemic corruption, inferiorisation of women, driving incompetence, superiority complex and economic hardship. The participants' aggressive interactions (labelled Excerpts 1–6) form a micro representation of the impulses of the larger Nigerian society which informed the aggressive language use. The semi-structured interviews were also used to complement the exchanges to strengthen the claims and coding of the excerpts as explained below.

4.1. Failed leadership

One of the major contending issues among Nigeria's plethora of challenges which often resurfaces in public discourse is failed leadership. Uwen^[30] reveals that Nigerians often explore their interactive exchanges to express discontentment with the political establishment. As it is in this context, through the frustration induced exchanges, communication partners have often created subtle reminders on the perennial poor leadership by Nigerian politicians. By this conception, discourse participants in gridlock scenes often express their dissatisfaction with the few 'privileged' leaders who are believed to have plunged citizens into hardship. The content of such exchanges is in the Excerpt 1 below.

Excerpt 1:

A1: Move your vehicle quickly, let me drive to follow! Are you mad?

B1: It's our leaders that are mad not me. If they had worked on this road with the huge budgets, will you have directed your anger at me?

C1: No, of course! Leave those economic vampires, God will judge them one after the other and inflict them with incurable diseases!

D1: How could they bother about our suffering? They fly private jets, so they don't know how the roads look like.

E1: I have been here for eight hours in a supposed journey of about two hours! And they are flying from Calabar or Uyo to Abuja in 45 minutes with tax payers' money!

A1: They are after their personal welfare and that of their families.

In the Excerpt 1 above, the aggressive language is introduced and used by Speaker A1 on the next driver who is probably stuck. Speaker A1's query, aggression and abusive label is indexed in the

expression, *are you mad?* Speaker B1's response shifts the label of insanity to the political leaders who allegedly misappropriated the *huge budgets* meant to have constructed good roads for the citizens. According to B1, the frustration and anger arising from the crawling traffic should rather be directed to the political class (labelled *economic vampires* by speaker C1), not those of them caught up in the circumstance. The speaker's prediction of God's wrath to be meted on this category of leaders suggests the participants' religious beliefs that succinctly recalls Nigerians usual expression of religious consciousness on the supernatural power of God to punish sinners. This religious language, according Uwen and Ukaegbu^[31], is used to domesticate the people's conceptualisation of the religion and benefits derived from worshipping the God that Christians serve. Again, speaker D1's comment instantiates the insensitive attitude of the leaders who do not *bother* about citizens' *suffering*, as *they fly private jets* and probably *do not know how the roads look like*. The lexical choices of the participants are combined to identify failed leadership as Nigeria's major challenge. On this, Ochulor^[32] and Anekwe^[33] have demonstrated that failed leadership is the most critical challenge in Nigeria because it has serious and multiple negative implications in every facet of Nigerian existence and survival. On this, a 40-year old man who has driven along the Calabar-Uyo highway for five years reported that it is the insensitivity of political leaders that plunged the drivers into the suffering and transfer of aggression on one another. Another male driver in his thirties argued that there could have been no altercations among drivers if the politicians knew the value of a functional transportation system. These exchanges also show somewhat displacement from the gridlock scene where the participants were situated. Drawing from the tenets of CAT and FAT, the aggressive language was informed by displaced circumstances, other than the immediate which is the dilapidated road condition. The indexation of the frustration of drivers is expressed in the emotional cues that communicate anger and vexation to situate the participants' stance on failed leadership.

4.2. Endemic corruption

Another strand of stance created in the exchanges of the drivers at the gridlock scenes is endemic corruption. On corruption in Nigeria, Ijaseun^[34] argues that the corruption perception index was increased from 10 in 2001 to 25 in 2020, recording average annual increase of 5.97 percent which makes Nigeria ranks 150 among 180 countries in 2022. This report validates the increasing trend of corruption in Nigeria which is extended to the management of funds meant for quality road construction. The argument in this direction situates the failed roads (especially the one under study) as outcome of endemic corruption. The exchanges that attribute the gridlock to corruption are captured in Excerpt 2 below.

Excerpt 2:

A2: This is what we suffer on this road year after year!

B2: That's the effect of corruption. Is it not this road that we were repeatedly told that it's been awarded on contract to be dualised?

C2: They have stolen the money as usual. Very corrupt human beings!

D2: They mention huge sums and later pay people to pack stones mixed with cement to fill the many and deep bad spots.

E2: Wickedness! It's taking its toll on us!

A2: They make money from every bit of contract, how then could the job be done properly?

In the Excerpt above, Speaker A2 expresses emotion of regret and recurring suffering by commuters who spend long productive hours waiting to 'crawl' passed the road. B2 swiftly connects the suffering with corruption allegedly perpetrated by the handlers of road construction. The speaker here brings to the fore the knowledge that the Calabar-Uyo road had repeatedly *been awarded on contract to be dualised*.

Given the information, C2 is not surprised that the handlers *have stolen the money as usual*. Again, D2 questions the shabby work recurrently done on the road where *huge contract sums were usually mentioned* in the budgets and media, but little or nothing is done for its proper rehabilitation. Speaker E2 labels such habits as *wickedness* which describes its unpleasant toll on commuters. This assertion stimulates A2's revelation that such contract sums are often being deeply pilfered by the handlers.

Also, a 42-year old female driver argued that the media monetary figures on the contract were correct because none of the politicians has publicly disputed that. Another 52-year old male driver concluded that Calabar-Uyo has recently become a case study on corrupt practices. The participants' position is corroborated by Adeyemo and Amade's^[35] argument that cases of corruptible tendencies in Nigeria (road) construction industry pervade various stages from pre-contract, execution, post-contract to project delivery activities which have severe and negative impacts on project performance. This practice, as it is allegedly the case with the Calabar-Uyo highway, has often resulted in poorly handled projects which cannot stand the test of time and environmental impact. The participants' discourse as shown above, is a collective protest by the citizenry to call for managers of the bad roads to rethink on the plights of commuters. This message is passed through the use of emotional language in opinionated discourse which re-enacts the cause of the failed highway to be endemic corruption. Although the immediate cause of the frustration is the long time spent by the discourse participants at the gridlock, the remote's which stimulates the aggressive cues is corruption shown in the allegedly siphoning of parts of the sums meant for quality road construction. This show of aggression in frustrated circumstances aligns with FAT and CAT's propositions that external and internal factors could instigate aggressive behaviour.

4.3. Inferiorisation of women

The long waiting in the gridlock also sparked another strand of aggressive language which inferiorises femininity. In this instance, it is the stuck male drivers, who, out of frustration, transferred aggression on female drivers using demeaning language that portrays patriarchal hegemony. On this category of discriminatory cues, Corbett^[36] argues that gendered language establishes distinction between society-conceived gender hierarchies that often subordinate women and reinforces gender discrimination and domination. Excerpt 3 below exemplifies patriarchal practices at gridlock scenes as seen in the sexist exchanges.

Excerpt 3:

A3: See this woman o, remove your car let me drive out!

B3: Can't you see the gridlock? You want to fly?

A3: Are you supposed to drive?

C3: Madam, get a driver or you better go and cook for your husband!

D3: This kind of driving is not for women, not at all! Go and drive in the streets, *mbok!*

E3: Madam, you no want make person chop your money? Get a paid driver!

B3: Come and push me out then!

In Excerpt 3 above, it is evident that the male drivers' (A3, C3, D3 and E3) angered, suppressive and demeaning language is informed by frustration aggravated by the gridlock, and situated within the canons of CAT and FAT. For instance, *see this woman* as used by speaker A3 is deliberately meant to draw the attention of other males to form sexist solidarity to subordinate the female driver into obeying the speaker's gender induced directive *remove your car let me drive out!* The female driver's (B3) rhetorical queries (*Can't you see the gridlock? You want to fly?*) construe modern feminist approach to situate woman and her voice in a male-dominated society like Nigeria where patriarchy is somehow eulogised. This

corroborates Adebayo and Oyebanji^[37] and Ghevolor, Bassey and Ekpang's^[38] argument that women and girls in Nigeria are regularly subjected to verbal and physical violence ranging from abuses to assault gained from cultural beliefs and call for advocacy for equity, happiness and joy for women and girls in Nigeria. Again, B3's (female driver) retorting encounter is a revolt that communicates contemporary feminist ideals. Speakers A3 and E3's separate enquiries on whether B3 is supposed to be a driver and why she could not hire the services of a (male) driver enact the gendering of driving profession in the lens of patriarchy. C3's inferiorising directive *go and cook for your husband* is a reconstruction of patriarchal hegemony and limitation and restriction of female's competence to domestic affairs. This unfortunately portrays woman as subordinating appendage to her husband. This limitation of female's competence and professionalism is also enacted in D3's hasty and generalised conclusion that *this kind of driving is not for women, not at all! Go and drive in the streets, mbok!* This masculine exemplification of (male) self-competence is, according to Bou-Franch^[39], a recurring aspects of discursive gender construction and the legitimization of violence through the reproduction of gendered stereotypes that underline incompetence and weakness as salient in gender identity representations. The female driver, who in this context is a representation of femininity, is, as the exchanges reveal, socioculturally conceived by the male drivers as weak, incompetent and not 'strong' enough to cope with, and endure the maneuverings along the bad road. To the male drivers, such skills are exclusive preserves for masculinity. On this sneering culture, two female drivers separately argued that the gridlock scenes have become opportunity for men to demonstrate patriarchal hegemony. They pledged to resist (as the female driver has also exemplified), any form of male humiliation intended to demean the female gender.

The Exchanges also present the multilingual identities of the commuters who, in this context, represent the larger Nigerian multilingual society. For instance, the epenthetic vowel *o* seen in A3's utterance *see this woman o*, is a transferred feature of indigenous languages into Nigerian English usage. Such feature in the speech of Nigerian English speakers performs sociopragmatic function of emphasis of prior cognitive knowledge of the message passed. In this instance, it is a call for attention to see a woman who shows departure from the weakling patriarchal conception of women to navigate her way along the road where vehicles, predominantly driven by men, are stuck. Also, *mbok* (an Efik expression for 'please') used by D3 (*go and drive in the streets, mbok*) further shows the multilingual composition of discourse involving Nigerians. Uwen and Ekpe^[40] maintain that such code mixed expressions that show the inclusion of lexical items from Nigerian indigenous languages help in deepening the re-enactment of the ethnolinguistic identities that foster sense of belonging among communication partners

4.4. Driving incompetence

Another example where the frustration of commuters is shown is the use of abusive language that shows the incompetence of drivers as dangerous. Dangerous driving is associated with human factor which has negative impact and contributes to the increasing rate of road traffic crashes (RTCs) in Nigeria. The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) is the statutory agency to check the excesses of drivers. FRSC^[41,42] have established that human factor, particularly driver's poor knowledge of safer road use culture and negligence account for over 70 percent of avoidable RTCs in Nigeria. Based on the bad nature of the Calabar-Uyo highway, commuters' perception is that only trained drivers should be plying the road. The interaction that shows aggressive language use in the description of a perceived incompetent driver is indicated in Excerpt 4 below.

Excerpt 4:

A4: Who is this confused learner in front of my car? *Shebi*, you refused to attend a driving school?

B4: It's your father that is in front of your old car! I should have been jumping on this crawling gridlock? Foolish man!

A4: (Turns off the ignition, rushes and slaps B4. A fight erupts but a few commuters immediately separate them). Is it my father that stopped you from being a trained driver? Idiot! If you know how to drive, you should have maneuvered and pass so that we follow.

B4: You are a double idiot!

C4: (Referring to A4). This category of drivers are dangerous, they have no business in the highways! But you don't have to fight.

D4: I am sure he has no genuine driver's license!

A4: (Responding to C4). He is moving danger! Thank you, my brother, you are correct!

In Excerpt 4 above, speaker A4's anger is vented on the incompetence of B4 which he describes in interrogatively constructed abusive language *who is this learner in front of my car?* B4's response shifted the insulting expression of his inexperience to A4's father. This further infuriates speaker A4 to initiate a fight, and asking if it is his father that caused B4's unskillfulness, referring to him at the same time as an *idiot*. This aggression induced exchange (*idiot* and *a double idiot*) brings the unsolicited support from two other drivers (C4 and D4) who are confident that B4 is not in possession of a valid driver's license and therefore constitutes a potential danger on the highway. On the transfer of aggression to the driver suspected to be incompetent, a 44-year old male driver reported that the failed Calabar-Uyo highway requires only experienced drivers to ply on it. According to him, it is often provoking to see learner-drivers causing more problems to the already infuriated commuters. The participant's opinion corroborates the local driving regulation which states that no person is expected to drive on the road except he or she is trained and has obtained with a valid driver's licence^[42]. (Uwen and Ebam^[43] aver that this regulation is informed on the premise that untrained drivers are potential dangers on the road, and they could cause and add to the increasing cases of RTCs which have accounted for colossal loss of lives and properties in Nigeria. It is this prediction that worsens the anger of A4, C4 and D4 to use aggressive language on the incompetent driver (B4) being the available target even where the latter was not the cause of the bad road and crawling traffic. Excerpt 4 also presents elements of Nigerian multilingualism. For example, *shebi* (Nigerian Pidgin expression meaning 'because') used by speaker A4 and *my brother* (a semantically extended familial term for 'any male' in Nigerian English usage) further express the bi/multilingual composition of the commuters. The exchanges, as CAT and FAT propose, help to instantiate how things seen and heard could stimulate and construct emotions which are expressed through language. Also, the immediate intervention of other commuters and speaker C4's advisory *but you don't have to fight* shows the people resolve to manage a possible escalation of aggression.

4.5. Superiority complex

The next emotive cues in the gridlock scene suggest the demonstration of superiority complex and suppressive ego by some drivers. As observed, this is characteristic of some drivers who use their expensive vehicles to psychologically intimidate those with less expensive ones. This category of drivers are often irritated where a vehicle attempts to smash on the one they drive. They use abusive language and other forms of intimidation to scare off whoever drives closely to them. On this behaviour, (Kernis^[44] adds that most persons who feel self-actualised often issue ego-induced threats and talk down on people they believe possess low social power, sometimes with the tendency to assault. This category of aggressive language is seen in Excerpt 5 below.

Excerpt 5:

A5: Get your old carton out of my way, nonsense!

B5: You called my car carton?

A5: In fact it's worse than rags, what can you do? Can't you see my recently manufactured Prado Jeep? Do you know the cost?

B5: I don't care about the cost, it's blood money!

A5: Your father's blood!

B5: You won't see us, it's your family blood!

C5: Stop intimidating him with your car. Maybe you are a hired driver or a thief.

In the exchanges above, speaker A5 describes B5's apparently cheaper car as *old carton*, used to describe a worn out, obsolete and malfunctioning vehicle in the Nigerian context. When the latter queries the uncomplimentary description of his car, A5 adds further psychologically intimidating quips on the currency and high cost of his jeep, labelling the car as *worse than rags* and boating that B5 cannot do anything. This ultimately inferiorises the status of B5 as A5 covertly eulogises his self-esteem. This disposition agrees with Pal's^[45] argument that superiority complex is the notion of inferiorising others and exercising self-esteem in actions and communication. Uwen and Eyang^[46] posit that such language practices account for the domination of men and the power they wield over others. The verbal threat infuriates B5 to label the huge cost of the *recently manufactured Prado Jeep* as proceeds from *blood money* which bring up other aggressive exchanges by the duo. The lexical choices *blood money* in Nigerian English usage, bears semantically shifted conception within the Nigerian sociocultural context. The collocating term is used to describe wealth acquired through ritual rites involving the sacrifice of human beings. This category of Nigerians (just as speaker A5 demonstrates), publicly intimidate people using money and other expensive and sophisticated belongings to lure people into their confraternities. The referral of A5 by B5 to this gang of ritualists is informed by A5's aggressive behaviour and use of language. Watching closely also, C5 who sees the condemnable intimidating attitude of A5, joins B5 to ascribe the labels of a *hired driver* and/or *thief* on A5. The terms describe a driver who has no financial capacity to acquire that class of vehicle but paid to drive for the actual owner. The terminologies also refer to one who acquires a vehicle from stolen money.

On this set of superiority complex driver commuters, a 37-year old male driver reported that "there is no form of intimidation we don't get from them. Their belief is that because the vehicles they drive are expensive, one should leave the road for them." Another 40-year female driver argued that the situation is worse with some drivers of government-owned vehicles. She stressed that they can bully other road users with loud honk and indiscriminate sirens. Drawing insights from CAT and FAT, the exchanges show the different verbal behaviours of people in frustrated scenes and the language used in such situations. As observed, the derogatory and aggressive cues: *old carton*, *blood money*, *worse than rags*, *your father's blood*, *your family blood*, *hired driver* and *thief*, among others, are stimulated by what is seen (bad road that occasioned snail-like movement gridlock) and what is heard (the aggressive language use). And because the communication partners could not immediately hold onto the remote causes of the gridlock, the aggressor and initiator of the aggressive cues (speaker A5) rather show off his superiority complex on other less 'superior' drivers.

4.6. Economic hardship

The last set of exchanges that signify aggressive use of language among drivers at the Calabar-Uyo gridlock scenes is categorised under economic hardship. Nigerians have myriad of challenges that the citizens confront on daily basis and often represented in their discourse practices. The challenges often provoke aggression among interactants especially in circumstances (such as gridlock scenes) that offer

situation to instantiate anger. Excerpt 6 below is an example of such exchanges influenced by the collective economic experience of the citizens.

Excerpt 6:

A6: Where is this idiot hurrying to in this gridlock? Now you have damaged my car lights.

B6: Sorry, sir. It was not intentional. I was trying to meander through the narrow space.

A6: (Abandons his car, rushes and slaps B6, two other commuters stop him from further harm). I'll beat the hell out of you! Is it 'sorry' that will repair the lights? Or where do you expect me to get money in this harsh economy?

A6: (Panting furiously). That's why I am pleading. It's very tough with me.

C6: Please, *odogwu*, forgive him. The times are hard for us the ordinary citizens. We are all struggling to survive in this country.

A6: That's the more reason everybody has to be cautious! I just have to deal with this man!

D6: *Oga*, abeg forgive am! E no dey mean say e no dey.

The exchanges in Excerpt 6 above show two-sided categories of interactants frustrated by the gridlock: the aggrieved shown in the use of aggressive language and the others who sue for peace and forgiveness, given the fact that the ordinary citizens are bedeviled with common experience of hardship in Nigeria. In the exchanges, A6 is enraged by B6's manner of driving (*to meander through the narrow space*) which resulted in the damage of speaker A6's vehicle lights. The infuriation informs A6's slapping of speaker B6. This succeeds the insulting and offensive interrogation *where is this idiot hurrying to in this gridlock?* Even where the other two drivers (C6 and D6) join to plead for the forgiveness of A6, the latter rather seeks for another opportunity to punish the erring driver as contained in the use of aggression-induced cues (*I'll beat the hell out of you!* and *I just have to deal with this man!*).

However, the common knowledge of the four drivers (A6, B6, C6 and D6) stuck in the gridlock is the economic hardship they are all experiencing which forms the theme of this set of exchanges. The aggressive and apologetic language used by the communication partners are emotive in nature which also demonstrate anger and remorse informed by the economic situation in the country which has brought untold hardship on these motorists as a representative sample of other Nigerians. On poverty indices, Akpomuvie^[47] decries that about two-thirds of Nigerians are poor, despite living in a country with vast potential wealth. This is caused by multiple deprivation of the citizens from stable sources of livelihood from the 'privileged' class. It is the same 'privileged' leaders that misappropriate funds meant for the construction of good roads, result of which is the bad road occasioning the Calabar-Uyo gridlock. A 43-year old male also argued that many unconsciously damaged vehicles have resulted in serious fights among drivers at the gridlock scenes. The driver attributed the altercations to hardship especially where the owner of the damaged car is not sure of any means of getting money to effect repairs. In terms of linguistic choices, *odogwu* (a wealthy person), *oga* (boss) and the Nigerian Pidgin expression *abeg forgive am! E no dey mean say e no dey* (please, forgive him. It's true that he is poor), are combined to instantiate the Nigerian multilingualism and the complex linguistic identities of commuters. This according to Uwen and Ugot^[48], are outcomes of the contact between English and Nigerian indigenous languages which has produced remarkable evidences in Nigerian English expressions. In the exchanges above, it is seen that the bad driving habit of driver B6 is not the remote cause of the gridlock. Drawing from the tenets of CAT and FAT, the aggression as exemplified here, is vented on the available object (other drivers) which rather aggravates the accumulating anger of speaker A6.

5. Conclusion

The study, as demonstrated in the participants' conversations, sets the individual differences in the initiation and use of aggressive (and peaceful) language informed by the emotions of the communicators. Each side of the emotional cues have implications on the interactants. Aggressive language, as observed, has negative implications ranging from reduction of self-worth, shame, personality misinterpretation to social and physical harm which may result in injuries or even death. On the hand, emotional cues that denote peace show that discouraging altercations and remaining calm before verbal aggressors is advisable, acceptable and emulative in order to pursue happiness and harmony in the society. The exchanges create the balance between peaceful-aggressive cues where some participants were over reactive while others were passive or willing to douse the situations to avoid escalation that could result in (more harmful) physical confrontations.

The clues from the exchanges also positioned the corrupt leaders as common enemies of the ordinary citizens who are immersed in economic hardship and bound to face the horrible experiences. Since such category of 'privileged' Nigerians does not use the road, commuters resort to venting their anger on what they see and hear immediately. Going by this, the gridlock sites become a congregating platform where drivers transfer aggression on one another on any slightest provocation. The themes in the exchanges express the dominant concerns in discourses involving Nigerians such as failed leadership, endemic corruption, incompetent drivers that could cause avoidable carnages, inferiorisation of women, show of superiority complex and economic hardship faced by the 'ordinary' citizens. This largest category of 'ordinary' citizens within the region of the highway have been confronted with unpleasant circumstances caused by recurring gridlock along the Calabar-Uyo highway which represents the common experience of drivers in many other roads linking Nigerian cities.

Drawing on insights from CAT and FAT, the excerpts established that frustration elicits emotional situations like anger and rage which could lead to aggression and the use of aggressive language. As it is demonstrated among the participants, the unavailability of the remote causes of the gridlock, delay, bad driving habits, incompetence and collision of vehicles occasioned the misdirection of anger, suppression and abuse on the immediate stimulators of the aggression. Apart from showcasing government's neglect in the transportation sector which is the economic driver of nations, participants' exchanges and opinions are expanded to include the condemnable practices in the Nigeria's sociocultural, political and economic domains that apparently impede national growth and development. The study also presents the 'ordinary' Nigerians (detached from the 'privileged' class) as patient and productive people who discuss and manage their common problems even in agonizing circumstances. The excerpts are therefore expository insignias that call for redressing many social issues. They include proper training of drivers and safer road use culture, rehabilitation of roads and revamping of the transportation system, stoppage of any form of discrimination against women and adoption of modern global gender unbiased practices, and implementation of punishment for corruption and holding erring political office holders accountable for their actions. These measures, where implemented, would reposition the polity, reduce the suffering and aggression of commuters, and provide a direction for quality living by the poor and less privileged Nigerians.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, GOU; methodology, GOU and AJG; software, VOB; validation, GOU, AJG and VOB; formal analysis, GOU; investigation, AJG; resources, VOB; data curation, VOB; writing—original draft

preparation, GOU; writing—review and editing, GOU; visualization, AJG; supervision, VOB; project administration, AJG. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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