Exonyms and Ethnophaulism of Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Igala

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Abstract

Inter-ethnic strife has been recorded within the multi-ethnic Nigerian nation, often termed political or religious. Not much rift has been attributed to misconception in identity evidenced especially in name calling, which may have shaped the mindset of many. This research explores the phenomenon of naming or identification of an ethnic group by non-indigenes, with focus on Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Igala (henceforth, YIHI) ethnic groups in Nigeria. The aim of this study is to examine exonyms and ethnophaulisms existing in the YIHI ethnic groups using symbolic interactionism theory to evaluate how people come up with labeling through social interaction and also analyze the effect of such labels. Data are sourced through interviews from 5 native speakers, from ages 40-70years, from every language selected for the study and 23 tokens of inter-ethnic naming terms are collected for this study. The analysis shows that behaviour, habits, mannerisms, first communication context, geography, appearance, etc., influence exonyms and ethnophaulisms. Exonyms may arise due to pronunciation difficulties, historical interaction and cultural differences; however these reasons may acquire derogatory meaning over time leading to ethnophaulism. The findings highlight

semantic shift, Nigeria's cultural diversity and the challenges of navigating inter-ethnic relations in a multicultural society. It also reveals a dual nature of some of inter-ethnic naming terms, while they can promote inter-ethnic friendship in some context, they may also fuel inter-ethnic prejudice or social alienation when used in a negative sense. This study concludes that a better understanding of these terms is critical to fostering healthier inter-ethnic communication and reducing ethnic stereotyping in Nigeria.

Keywords: Exonyms, ethnophaulisms, semantic shift, first encounter and cultural diversity.

1. Introduction

Nigeria with its diverse ethnic groups and languages presents a unique case study for examining how some Nigerian tribes dub or refer to other tribes given the social, political or cultural practices of these tribes. Inter-ethnicl relationship in Nigeria has been shaped over the years by decades of migration, historical interactions, trade, political alliances, inter-ethnic marriage, and cultural exchanges contributing to the formation of complex webs of identity that transcends individual ethnic affiliations (Isichie, 1976; Falola & Heaton, 2008).

This web of identity may have gotten us some reason to bond or unify as one. Unfortunately, the diversity took a ton on Nigeria through identifying what we consider new in other cultures and instead of viewing its strength of uniqueness, we have built walls in between by making mockery of the beautiful things that define us. Things like language, wears, facial marks, delicacies, geography etc. are used as weapons of mockery if they are fascinating enough to draw attention. Not all attempts are harmful though, an example would be the reference of the Hausas as '*Ndi ugwu*' by the Igbos which translates literally as 'hill people' and this is because of the

hilly terrain of northern Nigeria where the Hausas predominantly reside. This could also be a compass pointer towards (up) north in contrast to the expression …*gbadaa ndida*, indicating the (down) movement towards the eastern part of the country.

This research aims at unfolding the reasons Nigerian ethnic groups adopt certain naming system for each other which are sometimes perceived as neutral and at other times as derogatory, stereotypical or even as ethnic slurs. These derogatory terms may not be perceived as negative in the first or early instance, they could be merely friendly banters to reflect humour, mutual recognition and shared history. In some cases, they serve as a shorthand for complex social interactions and historical events, capturing the essence of inter-ethnic relationships in a simple word or phrase (Ekeh, 1975). In the same way, Osaghae (1994) opines that while these terms or nicknames are ostensibly friendly, they can also carry connotations of simplicity depending on the context.

The diverse nature of Nigerian ethnicity and culture has often led to inter-ethnic tensions, misunderstandings and stereotypes. In the context of language, the ways in which one ethnic group refers to another through nicknames or identity terms can reflect the way these ethnic groups feel about each other. While much research has been done on Nigeria's ethnic and cultural diversity, there is a noticeable gap in the systematic study of inter-ethnic terms. Specifically, there is limited study on how the YIHI languages refer to one another, what these terms signify, and how they originated. These terms often embedded in languages, carry historical connotations that are yet to be fully explored. The interest in the choice of ethnic groups rests in Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa as the majority languages in Nigeria; and Igala, because it has a common boundary, tradition and linguistic connections with Igbo people of Anambra State where this research emanates from; and

also because these are in the central region of the country, affiliated to Yoruba and has rich interaction with the Hausa people (Isichie, 1976; Obayemi,1976; Ukwedeh, 2003; Ottah, 2016). This study seeks to identify exonymic and ethnophaulistic terms amongst the YIHI languages, explore the reasons for the adoptation of these identity terms and access the impact these concepts have, in shaping the perception of the common man.

1.1 Brief background of the YIHI languages

This study focuses on the identity naming relationship between the selected Nigerian inter-ethnic groups – Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Igala. The Yoruba language is a major language spoken in Nigeria. It is spoken by the ethnic Yoruba people and its speakers number roughly 50 million, including L1 and L2 speakers (Ethnologue, 2024). The bulk of the Yoruba people live in southwest Nigeria, in six states: Ekiti, Ogun, Oyo, Osun and Lagos states. Large population of Yoruba speakers can also be found in Kwara and Kogi states in North-central Nigeria. Yoruba is also spoken outside the shores of Nigeria (Ethnologue, 2024).

The Yoruba language is the most popular language of the Yoruboid family and has a rich linguistic structure and numerous researched works (Bamgbose,1969). The Igbo language, another one of the three major languages in Nigeria, estimated to have 31 million speakers, is spoken in the southeastern region – Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi states; and Northeast of Delta state and Southeast of Rivers State; some parts of Akwa Ibom and Bayelsa States. It is also spoken in Cameroon and Equitorial Guinea (Ethnologue, 2024). The Igbo language has rich linguistic features (Emenanjo, 1978) and is classified under the Igboid group of Benue-Congo Phylum (Ethnologue, 2024). The Igbo people share a boundary with the Igala people. The Hausa language is also one of

the major languages spoken in Nigeria. It is a Chadic language. The Hausa language serves as lingua franca in the northern part of Nigeria and some West African countries. It is estimated to have over 88 million L1 and L2 speakers (Ethnologue, 2024, Skinner, 1977). The Igala people reside on the left bank of the Niger River and the language belongs to Yoruboid language family group of the Benue-Congo family. The Igala language is spoken by the Igala ethnic group in Kogi State and also in other parts of Benue, Enugu, Anambra and Edo State in Nigeria. It is estimated to have over 1.6million speakers (Ethnologue, 2024). This study will be instrumental in discovering the relationship among these inter-ethnic groups, the historical interactions they have had over the years using the names used by these groups to describe one another.

2. Exonyms and Ethnophaulism

Ethnonym, is derived from ancient Greek *éthnos* meaning nation and *ónoma* meaning name. Ethnonym, is a name applied to a given ethnic group and can be categorized into; (i)Exonyms (name of ethnic group created by another group of people in referring to an ethnic group) and (ii) Autonyms or endonyms (name created and used by the ethnic group itself (Rinderle & Montaya , 2004). Shagun (2022) in her work, *ethnonyms used among the Hispanic population in the Midwest*, identifies different identity concepts which she referred to as ethnonyms ascribes to the Hispanic race. She examines the term Hispanic and how it is closely tied to Spanish culture and often defined by its connection to Spain and Spanish-speaking countries. Survey responses and existing literature highlight that being Hispanic involves a cultural and most importantly, a linguistic link to Spain. Language plays a key role in this identity, with 62% of survey respondents associating "Hispanic" with being Spanish speaking. Scholars emphasize that

Spanish language use is integral to Hispanic culture, particularly in the U.S., and it strongly influences identity development within Hispanic communities. The retention of Spanish, especially among monolingual speakers is largely supported by factors such as immigration, community, and parental influence. The survey done on this research indicated that Hispanic is more widely known and has observed the most popularity amongst other identity concepts or ethnonyms used to refer to people of the Spanish speaking race. She highlights other identity concepts used such as Latino, Chicano, amongst others. Hispanic is defined primarily by language use while Latino is defined by geography, conversely, Chicano is defined by bicultural identity (Mill, 1997; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009; Charon 2010)

Ethnophaulism refers to an ethnic or racial slur, typically caricaturing some identifiable (often physical) feature of the group being derided. Nuessel (2008) views Ethnophaulism as derogatory terms or labels for individuals belonging to an ethnic group. These terms are often derived from visible traits such as skin color, traditional clothing, or other culturally determined practices such as eating and drinking. One form of ethnophaulism according to him is the use of first names that are commonly associated with Italians, French, Irish, Jews, and so on. These names are prevalent within certain cultures that their use can identify someone as a member of that ethnic group.

Creative writers often use such names to indicate a person's ethnicity. Another form of ethnophaulism he highlights is the use of a national or ethnic designation before a noun to denote inferiority or negative quality of the associated noun. Additionally, some ethnophaulisms involve color references that reflect a person's skin colour, implying negative associations based solely on skin pigmentation (Carter, 2004). Ethnophalistic terms are negative heterostereotypes, influences people's or groups perceptions about

others, learned through social norms and media. They reinforce unhealthy generalisations, initiate implicit bias, ethnic racism, misunderstandings, communication breakdowns and conflicts across cultures (Blum, 2004; Lebedko, 2014).

2.2 Strategies in Exonym and Ethnophaulism

Exonyms are not derogatory or pejorative. It simply reflects phonetic adaptation to another language or purely historic or descriptive. Here are few examples of English exonyms in comparison of what they people call themselves:

English call them	They call themselves:
Germany	Deutschland
Dutch	Nederlanders
Munich	München
Greece	Hellas
Nigeria	Nigeria/Naija

The visibility of these groups leading to the creation of symbols and name-calling can be attributed to factors such skin color, eye shape, hair texture, daily habits and methods of social control over other groups. In a constantly evolving cultural landscape, the nicknames given to America's diverse ethnic groups act as "collective representations" that symbolize the group themselves. Carter (2004) suggests that attempts to categorize the many labels applied to American ethnic groups have led into inquiries into their underlying motivations or fundamental concepts. These nicknames according to Carter, also center around food either because the group relies on a particular, food as staple, their economic life revolves around it, or the food is characteristic of their original homeland. For instance,

	People/tribe	Food	Location	Appearance	History
1.	Dutchman,	Butterbox			
2.	Mexican	chili-eater, bean-eaters			
3.	Frenchmen	frog-eaters			
4.	Greek,	Greaseball			
5.	Light Mulatto girl			birds eye maple	
6.	Canadian			blue nose	
7.	German			squarehead	
8.	Whites		Mountaineers		Tynchers
9.	Jews		Ghetto folks		Christ-killers
10.	Mongolians				yellow perils
11.	Swedes				
12.	Scotch		Highlanders		Viking

(*Carter,2004*)

Carter (2004) will serve as a guide to the researchers in classification of the identity terms used by the YIHI languages to refer to themselves. This study contributes to the account for the inter-ethnic identity terms used by the YIHI languages to refer to themselves and how these terms influence how they perceive their linguistic, cultural and ethnic identities.

2.3 Relationship of Symbolic Interactionism in Interpreting Exonyms and Ethnophaulism

Symbolic interactionism, propounded by George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, is a theory that focuses on how individuals create symbols and interpret meaning through social interactions. It is believed within this theory that meaning is not fixed and it identifies man as a product of these interactions (Blumer, 1969; Charon,

2010). This theory best aligns with this study under linguistics because it agrees to the fact that language is the main medium through which symbols like names, labels and insults are interpreted. It also involves the creation of terms based on social interaction which is the foundation for the existence of exonyms and ethnophalism (Nnoli, 1995; Mills, 1997; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009)

3. Research Methodology

The aim of this study is to examine exonym and ethnophaulism in the YIHI ethnic groups using symbolic interactionism theory to evaluate how people come up with such labeling through social interaction. Social symbolic interactionism adopts symbols such as objects, gestures and words as tools of interaction and interpretation of meaning in a society. In this theory, meaning is not fixed but varies depending on how the individual perceives it (Blumer,1969; Charon, 2010). Data were collected through interviews from 5 native speakers, aged 40-70years, from every language selected for the study and 23 tokens of inter-ethnic naming terms were gotten for this study. All tones are marked for accuracy, since this study is on four languages.

4. Exonym and Ethnophaulism in YIHI languages

This section is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data. The aim is to investigate the meanings and etymologies of these concepts that the Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Igala languages (henceforth, the YIHI languages) refer to one another with. The data collected during the course of this study will be presented in this section. The data will also be used to address the research questions which will also be provided in this section.

Table 1: Ethnophaulisms by Yoruba speakers to other YIHI languages

s/n	Name	Gloss	Remark 1: Word source	Remark 2: A calls B = A ⟶ B
1	Àjè òkúta ma mú omi (Ajeokutama mumi)	one who eats stone without drinking water	Yoruba	Yoruba⟶ Igbo
2	Ọmọ àtòhùnrinwa	Someone that comes from there	Yoruba	Yoruba⟶ Igala

Table 2: Ethnophaulisms by Igbo speakers to other YIHI languages

s/n	Name	Gloss	Remark 1: Word source	Remark 2: A calls B = A ⟶ B
1	Ńdí ⁺ná-⁺á⁺kụ́ í⁺sí n ʼàlà / Ńdí àlákụ̀bá	People who hit their heads on the ground	Igbo	Igbo ⟶ Hausa
2	Àbókí.	A stupid person	Hausa	Igbo⟶ Low Class Hausa
3	Ńdí ófé ḿmá⁺nụ́	oily soup people	Igbo	Igbo ⟶ Yoruba
4	Ńdí ọ́nụ́ sèwé sèwé	people of torn mouth	Igbo	Igbo⟶ Yoruba/Igala

Table 3: Ethnophaulisms by Hausa speakers to other YIHI languages

s/n	Name	Gloss	Remark 1: Word origin	Remark 2: A calls B = A ⟶ B
1.	Ìnyámúrái	Igbo people	Igbo	Hausa ⟶ Igbo
2.	Ìnyámúrí	Igbo male	Igbo	Hausa ⟶ Igbo
3.	Ìnyámúrá	Igbo female	Igbo	Hausa ⟶ Igbo

Table 4: Ethnophaulisms by Igala speakers to other YIHI languages

s/n	Name	Gloss	Remark 1: Word source	Remark 2: A calls B = A ⟶ B
1	Àjélábíá nyámúrí	dog meat eater	Igala Igbo	Igala ⟶ Igbo Igala ⟶ Igbo
3	Àkéchi	Speaker of a (strange) language	Igala	Igala ⟶ Hausa

Table 5: Exonyms of YIHI languages

Called → Callers ↓	Yoruba	Igbo	Hausa	Igala
Yoruba	NA	ọ̀mọ̀ íbò ọ̀mọ̀ ńnà Òkóró	NA	--
Igbo	Nwá Yòròbá Nwáànyí Yòròbá Nwóꜛké Yòròbá	NA	Ńdí úgwú Málàm̀/Àlàhá jì	Ńdị̀ ꜛÍgálà Ónyé ꜛÍgálà
Hausa	Yárábáwá Bàyárábè (male) Bàyáràbìyá(female)	Ìnyámúr ái Ìnyámúrí Ìnyámúr á	NA	Gara
Igala	Ìyàji	Ìgbọ̀	---	NA

4.1 Factors that influence formulation of identity terms

Inter-ethnic nicknames are discussed under this section and second objective, addressed. Data was analyzed and grouped under seven categories. These include: event triggered identity terms, dietary habits, cultural extensions, geography, first communication triggers, distorted tribe names and physical appearance.

4.1.1 Event Triggered Identity Terms: Some identity terms originated from significant historical or notable events, which in the

course of this research, are most likely wars. These events often leave long lasting imprints on collective memory and language. A number of inter-ethnic identity terms used in Nigeria originated or emerged from historical events and for the course of this research, we would be looking at the events that triggered nicknames among the YIHI languages.

i. Ìnyámúrái: This is a concept used to refer to the Igbos by the Hausa people*,* a distorted form of *nye m mmiri* which literally translates to 'give me water'. The concept was said, according to the interview, to have been coined from the Igbo phrase of Igbo people in the northern part of Nigeria where source of water is highly dependent on water truck pushers selling water. The *meruwa, as the water sellers are*often called exchanges gallons of water for money. The utterance *nye m mmiri* is used to demand for the services of the *meruwa*; and because of communication barrier, it became a name after all. *Ìnyámúrái* is a generic term used to allude to Igbo people in general, both male and female. This account suggests a sincere means of commnunication and identity which in later years shifted from an ethnonym to be widely perceived ethnophaulism. It is logical to speculate that the name was modified into the Hausa morphology as *Ìnyámúrái* (Igbo people), *Ìnyámúrí* (Igbo male) and *Ìnyámúrá* (Igbo female).

ii. Ìyàji: This term is used by the Igala speaking group to refer to the Yoruba group. The Yoruba and Igala ethnic groups have a long history together and this term dates back to the historical story of the Yoruba group having Igala origins according to documented speculations. After the slave trade and the infiltration of repatriated freed slaves into Lagos-Badagry, they, seemingly increased the number of the Yoruba people giving them numerical strength. It was

rumored that the Yoruba people (descendants of ODUDUWA) were planning to invade Idah, a formidable ground of the Igala group. the response was that 'We are their mothers' (Awa chiyema) 'Iye ajji' (mothers cannot), possibly meaning in a logical sense, mothers cannot *fight them* probably. This is purely an historic based exonym.

4.1.2. Dietary habits
Some identity terms are centered around food either because a group has a unique cuisine or they rely on a particular food as staple or the food is a characteristic of their original homeland. Carter (2004) also classifies dietary habits as a factor or reason for nicknaming other tribes.

i. Àjè òkúta ma mú omi [adʒeokutamamumi]: this term is used by the Yoruba speaking tribe to refer to the Igbo speaking tribe. The term is a phrase that stems from the fact that the Igbo people are said to eat by swallowing molds as hard as stone with little or no water. 'Akpu', a dense dough-like food made with fermented cassava, indigenous to the Igbo speaking group, has a harder texture than the 'amala' which is indigenous to the Yoruba people and is made from yam flour or platain flour. Generally, it is also believe that even the garri molds of Igbo people comes out harder than that of the Yoruba people with a milder consistency. So, in awe of how a person can swallow what they perceive to be that hard without water, birthed the concept- *Ajeokutamamumi*.This term is used merely out of awe or wonder of how the Igbos are able to consume such solid food with little or no water.

ii. Ńdí ófé ḿ⁺má⁺nụ́ / Ónyé ófé ḿ⁺má⁺nụ́
Ńdị̀ and Ónyé are agentive morpheme used by the Igbo people to describe people, occupation, nativity etc. This is employed in

exonym. The phrase *ńdí ófé ḿ⁺má⁺nụ́* is a pluralized term for referring to the Yoruba ethnic group which literally means "people of oily soup". This term is used to refer to the Yoruba by the Igbo because of how oily they claim their soups are. This is a common concept used among the Igbos to refer to the Yoruba speaking group in Nigeria. This term is mostly used by Igbos to talk about the yorubas without them realizing they are being talked about. It is used to sneer or jab at the Yoruba without them knowing.

iii Àjélábíá
The term is used to refer to the Igbos by the Igala which translates to dog meat eaters. This is quite a common saying for tribes in the middle belt to refer to Igbos as the "dog meat eating people" This also perceived as a stereotype because basically, Igbo people do not eat dog meat. This suggests that it is possible that people from Calabar, Uyo and others that share boundaries with the Igbos are all classified as Igbo just like how the Igbo people group the Igala, Idoma, the Gbari people and other ethnic groups in central region as all Hausa people. It could also mean that Igbo people that the Igala meet then probably ate dogs which gave the Igala people this perception. Such Igbo people are likely to be from Imo or Abia state outskirt towns that share boundaries with the Akwa-Ibom people.

4.1.3. Cultural Extension
In the context of culture extension through nicknaming, some ethnic groups, particularly the Yoruba and Igbo infuse elements of the Yoruba culture into nicknaming other tribes. The practice of referring to a person as a child of whomever (ọmọ́), is brought into nicknaming other groups. When they use "ọmọ́ " to nickname individuals from other groups, they often incorporate the traits, or

notable attributes linked to those tribes, or even the name of those tribes. such as;

i. Ọ̀mò Íbò

This generally refers to an Igbo person and literally translates to 'child of Igbo'. While some Igbos, find it provocative and perceive it as a way of creating feelings of exclusion to the referent, some go as far as perceiving it an inter-ethnic slur. This term when used elicits a sense of exclusion. During the course of this research, a respondent reported that the term 'Ọ́mọ́ Íbò' connotes the idea that "you're not one of us." However, the term can be used innocently amongst friends.

ii. Ọ́mọ́ ńnà

Ńnàá and 'Ń⁺né' are terms that Igbo people use to refer to themselves. 'Nna' which means father while 'Nne' means mother, nnaa or nnee are fond versions of the root word connoting tenderliness. More than the meaning as father or pet name, nnaa is also used as a pragmatic filler in communication. This is the most common among Igbo speakers. Yoruba people however adopted the term Nna and blended it with ọmọ́ which means 'child of *nnaa* speakers'. This term has a subtle tone and can pass for a friendly banter unlike its counterpart Ọ̀mọ̀ Íbo.

iii. Òkóró

This is also an extension of the Igbo language of men being referred to as okoro. The Yoruba people have also adopted this word to mean an Igbo man. This is a neutral term that is not perceived as derogatory or stereotypical.

iii. Ọ́mọ́ àtòhùnrinwa
This phrase is a contracted form for the phrase "atohunrinwa" which translates to 'someone that comes from there' and is used to refer to the Igalas by Yorubas. This term also is a derogatory term that signifies that these ones are not one of us.

4.1.4. Geography Triggers
The physical location, environment or regional characteristics of an ethnic group contributes to the development of inter-ethnic identity labels. These terms often highlight aspects like terrain, climate, natural resources or distance from other groups.

i. Ńdí ú⁺gwú
Ńdí ú⁺gwú is used to refer the Hausa or northerners in general and it translates literally as people of the mountains. This is because of the geographical location of the northerners. This is just a neutral term that does not connote any negative meaning or stereotypes.

4.1.5. First Communication Triggers
These communication triggers refer to those identity terms that originate from the initial words, phrases, or greetings commonly used by individuals from a particular ethnic group when they interact with others. These often become shorthand labels that represent the entire group. For example, a term or phrase that is often used by one group when meeting someone new can become the basis of an identity term used by others to label that group. These phrases can be as simple as a common greeting.

i. Aboki
This word which originally translates to "friend" in the Hausa language was used first by the Hausas to beckon on other tribes

when they need them for the first time showing friendliness due to lack of language of communication. That first word was then used to identify the Hausas. However, because the first Hausa migrants who were shoe cobblers, the name lost its meaning gradually and shifted to mean someone with a low IQ.

This development the Hausas find derogatory, a product of a pejorative semantic shift. This phenomenon is also evidenced in the word *Onuku*, an Igala word which means 'friend' and is used by the Igala people to extend friendship to people. It is alleged that Igala women travel down to Onitsha for trade and will always use the word *onuku* to beckon unto passersby to buy their wares. After a while, it became obvious that Igala women sell cheaper than others especially after bargains. The buyers, mainly the Igbo people, saw this act of making less gain when you can make more profit as being stupid. This, they took advantage of, and communicated this in sarcastic response to the women hailing them *onuku!* while actually meaning stupid or senseless.

Today, this word is not used to refer to the Igala people rather it has been perfectly absorbed into the Igbo language for the word 'stupid'. It is not originally an Igbo word and is often used alongside the word *Igala*, the language of origin. Igbo people use the phrase *Onuku Igala (stupid person, not necessarily an Igala person)*, showing a trace of its first use.

iii. Akechi

This is used to refer to the Hausa speaking tribe by the Igala. The term is a concise form for the phrase 'á kà íchí' which translates to speaker of a language but implied to be strange since it is not the language of the people. This term is also a first communication trigger that stems from lack of common language of communication. The Igala people see the Hausas as people who speak a strange

language, hence the term *Akechi.* It still connotes some sense of exclusion given its meaning.

4.1.6. Phonologically Modified Ethnic names
These refer to those identity terms that originate from an ethnic group modifying the name of another ethnic group either has a result of mispronunciation, an attempt of simplification, blending an ethnic name to fit into another language's linguistic preferences or maybe just sheer mischief.

i. Yoruba – Yárábáwá/Yòròbá
These are terms used to refer to the Yoruba people generally, by the Hausa and the Igbo people respectively.
Bàyárábè
This is used to refer to a Yoruba male meaning *from Yoruba* gotten from the words 'baya –from, yarabawa –yoruba and the Hausa masculine gender suffix marker –e'.
Bàyáràbìyá
This is used to refer to a Yoruba female meaning *from Yoruba* gotten from the words 'baya –from, yarabawa –yoruba and the Hausa feminine gender suffix marker –iya'
ii. Igbo – Ìgbọ
This is an altered tribe name designation used by the Igala speaking tribe and even other tribes in the middle belt to refer to the Igbo tribe.
iii. Igala - Gara
 The Hausas as earlier stated, sometimes use adulterated versions of a tribe's original name. This also evident in their referring to the Igala speaking tribe as 'gara'.

4.1.7. Physical Appearance
Inter-ethnic nickname derived from physical appearance is another common way that ethnic groups label one another. These nicknames arise from prominent or uncommon features exhibited by a particular tribe.

i. Ńdí ọ́nụ́ sèwé sèwé
This term is used to refer to the Igala speaking tribe by the Igbos, particularly Igbo people from Enugu Ezike who share borders with the Igala tribe in the west. *Ọ́nụ́ sèwé sèwé* is used to describe the E marks on the cheeks of the Igala people.

5. Semantic Variations of Exonyms
The interviews that generated the data for the research contains the individual responses from native speakers regarding the use of intertribal identity terms by the YIHI languages, inferring their familiarity with intertribal identity terms. The respondents also acknowledged that these terms can vary in meaning based on context, sometimes carrying positive connotations in close knit circles while being perceived as derogatory in more formal or conflictual settings.

The research also highlighted that while some terms may be used playfully or jokingly, they can still perpetuate negative stereotypes. For instance, other ethnic groups refer to the Hausa people as *aboki* a term that means 'friend' but also carries connotations of being stupid or unsophisticated depending on the context. Some participants also shared that while these terms often serve as humorous nicknames among friends, they could also serve as avenue to mock cultural differences. This suggests that although humor is a common justification, these terms frequently act as subtle tools for maintaining ethnic stereotypes.

6.   Pan-ethnic Codes and Generalizations

There is a subtle shift among younger generations towards a more inclusive labeling. While older generations tend to cling to traditional and often stereotypical uses of these terms. The use of identity terms in a derogatory and stereotypical context is most times done by the older generation of native speakers. The younger generation seem to be bound by social media and pop culture. While older ones refer people from different ethnic groups as *Ìnyámúrái, Ìyàji, Àjè òkúta ma mú omi, Ńdí ófé ḿ⁺má⁺nú and others alike,* conscious of where they come from; the younger ones are oblivious of this ethnic-cling and deals more with Pan-codes like *my guy, nwa, ọmọ, baddie, padi, my plug, nnaa men etc.* Penelope (2000) describes this as language marking social identity more than ethnic identity.

There is also a generalization process going on. It is observed in the course of this study that some terms, originally meant for other ethnic groups are used within a group to express a behavior of the said group. The word *aboki* used by the Igbo people to refer to the Hausas, can be used by an Igbo or any other tribe to address another Igbo or any other person (meaning you behave like an Hausa man). While the word *Onuku Igala* is used by Igbo people on themselves and any other person with no reference to the source. Further research in these areas is recommended.

This research underscores the role of language in forming these identity terms, how simple words or phrases carry with them deep cultural and historical significance that affects how the YIHI languages refer to one another.

7. Conclusion

The most important factor that has led to the formation of these identity concept is contact. These languages have been in contact for

some time and by coexisting, they get to learn about each other's ways of life. They experience each other by being in contact and as such are able to adopt terms to identify each other. It is observed that delicacies, dietary manners, looks and first communication barriers largely form ethnophaulistic terms where geography, phonological modifications feed exonymic terms. Historic events feed both.

The conclusion drawn from this research is that language reform, especially in how different ethnic groups refer to one another could be essential towards national unity because these terms carry significant cultural weight and when misused, can perpetuate harmful stereotype and foster division. Positive interethnic dialogue, encouraged by media, educational institutions could help reshape the way Nigerians talk about and understand themselves. While identity terms are deeply embedded in culture, a conscious effort to reframe them towards mutual respect and understanding could significantly reduce interethnic tensions and foster a more inclusive Nigerian identity. It is recommended that the media take responsibility in content regulation. such that media outlets be regulate use of intertribal identity terms, blacklist contents that perpetuate negative stereotypes. In addition, journalists, filmmakers, journalists and social media influencers should promote narratives that celebrate Nigeria's ethnic diversity.

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