

# A Discourse Intonation Analysis of the New Nigerian National Anthem, *"Nigeria, We Hail Thee"*

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## Abstract

This study investigates the role of intonation in the communicative effectiveness of the new Nigerian national anthem, "Nigeria, We Hail Thee," using David Brazil's Discourse Intonation Theory as the analytical framework. The primary objectives are to identify the dominant pitch movements in the anthem and to examine how these intonational patterns function to convey meaning, evoke emotion, and enhance cognitive engagement and memory. Methodologically, the anthem was segmented into tone units, and pitch movements were assigned based on natural prosodic boundaries, following Brazil's typology of tone choices—Falling, Rising, Fall-Rise, and Level tones. The analysis reveals a predominance of the Falling Tone (↘), which conveys assertiveness, closure, and patriotic conviction, particularly in references to national identity,

unity, and service. The strategic use of Fall-Rise tones ( $\downarrow\uparrow$ ) introduces emotional nuance and contrast, especially in lines addressing national diversity and commitment. These prosodic choices structure the anthem into discernible rhetorical phases: salutation, unity, and aspiration. The findings demonstrate that intonation is not merely decorative but an essential rhetorical resource that guides interpretation, fosters solidarity, and reinforces national identity. The study concludes that pitch variation in the anthem serves ideological, emotive, and mnemonic functions, making it a powerful tool for constructing and sustaining collective national consciousness and identity.

**Keywords:** Discourse, Identity, intonation, National Anthem, Phonology, Pitch Variation,

### **Introduction**

Language serves as a key marker of cultural heritage, unity, and communication within a nation (Adegbija, 2004). It shows how people perceive themselves and their country, fostering a sense of belonging and collective consciousness. National anthems, mottos, and other documents are often written in a language that embodies the country's values and aspirations. Nations that recognize and promote their linguistic heritage strengthen their collective identity and ensure cultural continuity.

The national anthem, as a ceremonial and ideological symbol, carries profound emotional, patriotic, and identity-building significance (Bohlman, 2004). It functions as more than just a musical composition; it embodies the collective memory, struggles, aspirations, and values of a nation. National anthems are performed during pivotal moments such as independence celebrations, national holidays, international sports events, state functions, and military ceremonies, where they evoke a sense of unity, pride, and belonging among citizens. They also serve to reinforce national ideology by promoting shared narratives of origin, sovereignty, and purpose. According to Bohlman (2004), national anthems are key instruments in constructing

national identity because they are imbued with cultural and historical meanings. They often employ powerful, emotionally charged language and musical elements designed to resonate with the populace, thereby deepening citizens' emotional attachment to the state. Moreover, anthems serve an educative and integrative role—introducing citizens, especially the youth, to national values and ideals through repetition and public performance. In diverse societies, the anthem can also function as a unifying force, symbolically bridging ethnic, linguistic, and regional differences by providing a shared cultural expression that transcends individual identities in favor of a collective national identity.

Intonation plays a central role in shaping how messages represented in the anthems are perceived and remembered. Intonation, the variation of pitch in spoken language, serves as a powerful linguistic and paralinguistic resource that contributes to meaning-making in discourse. In speech, especially in formal and ceremonial genres such as national anthems, intonation works not just at the level of sentence structure but at the discourse level to guide interpretation, shape emotional experience, and construct social relationships (Wennerstrom, 2001; Brazil, 1997).

Discourse analysis, particularly when combined with intonational studies, investigates how spoken language performs communicative functions beyond grammar and lexis. Scholars such as Brown and Yule (1983), Schiffrin (1994), and Halliday (1985) have emphasized the interaction between prosody and discourse structure, with intonation serving as an important cue for focus, coherence, speaker intention, and interpersonal meaning.

This study examines the phonological features employed in the new Nigerian national anthem to enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic qualities of the song. This focuses on how pitch variation contributes to the anthem's musicality, emotional impact, and memorability, making it an effective tool for instilling national pride and unity. Brazil's Discourse Intonation Theory is

employed to explain and justify how pitch variation is used to relate the anthem to its context for intended meaning to be generated and understood. Pitch variation is often employed in anthems to encode and eulogize the nation's values to stimulate and arrest listeners' emotions and interest. Anthems are not haphazardly composed but composed in a gradient fashion to convey meaningful information that stimulates listeners' emotions, attention, and memory. This study explores how pitch variation in the New Nigerian National Anthem aligns with David Brazil's Discourse Intonation Theory to serve rhetorical, emotional, and mnemonic functions.

This research, thus, aims to examine the phonological features employed in the Nigerian national anthem to convey meaningful information that stimulates collective identity and stimulates national pride and unity. It is set out to specifically identify dominant pitch variations in Nigeria's new national anthem and to study how pitch variation in anthems is employed to convey meaningful information in a gradient fashion that stimulates and arrests listeners' emotion, attention, and memory.

### **Review of Literature**

Anthems are patriotic musical compositions that evoke and eulogize the history, traditions, focus, intention, and struggles of a particular group of people, organization, or country, often sung on special occasions. Oluga et al. (2015) describe anthems as songs that are usually carefully worded and practically articulated by the users to specially convey their intended messages to their target audience. Also, Mmiwelle et al. (2019) claim that University anthems are recognised patriotic songs with standard duration and dignity representing the identity of universities that are revered by the people of the University community. He explains further that "singing of the anthems has a key psychological effect upon the listeners in that it reinforces and enhances institutional commitment and values. A good number of linguistic studies have been carried out on

national and institutional anthems. While scholars like Dze-Ngwa (2014) examined Cameroon's National Anthem and the challenges it poses from a historical perspective, Esra (2015) carried out a cognitive study on the semantic framing of nationalism in the national Anthems of Egypt and England. Also, Oyeyemi (2018) looked at the Nigerian national anthem to explore its linguistic elements for optimal understanding and comprehensibility from a linguistic perspective. Sindile (2019) investigated nation-building through the national anthem in Zimbabwe using a sociolinguistic approach. Bankole and Oyebanji (2021) studied the language and meaning of selected Universities in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study revealed that rich but simple lexical items are used to help in the basic comprehension and memorization of the lyrics in the anthem. The result also indicated that lexical devices such as repetition, synonymy, tactical deployment of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and metaphors are used to foreground important ideas in the anthems.

Ayoola (2022) conducted a generic structure analysis of university anthems in Nigeria using a genre-based approach. His findings revealed that institutional anthems follow identifiable structural patterns that reflect the institutions' values and goals. This genre-based understanding complements the present study by providing contextual insight into how anthems, as institutional texts, are structured to achieve ideological and emotional effects. The various studies reviewed showed the extent of research carried out on anthems. While Ayoola's (2022) approach is structural and genre-based, Bankole and Oyebanji's (2021) is also structural but the current study takes a prosodic and discourse perspective, highlighting how pitch variation contributes dynamically to the interpretation and emotional power of national anthems.

Few studies directly analyze intonation in national anthems, but related research on ceremonial speech, political oratory, and public rituals (Chilton, 2004; Fairclough, 2003) suggest

that prosody often functions to: emphasize nationalistic sentiment, guide audience attention, structure content into memorable units, and signal thematic shifts and rhetorical focus.

Studies like Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2020) and Adedimeji (2013) have examined Nigerian national discourses, but rarely with a focus on intonation. This makes the present study a valuable contribution to Nigerian discourse and phonology research. This study intends to look at how pitch variation is often employed in anthems to encode and eulogize organizational values to stimulate and arrest listeners' emotion and interest.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that despite the importance of national anthems as discursive and symbolic texts, studies on Nigerian anthems have mostly focused on linguistic content (lexico-semantic, stylistic, or thematic analysis) (Adegoju, 2005; Osisanwo, 2016). There is a notable paucity of research applying intonation-based discourse theories, particularly Brazil's model, to analyze how prosodic choices function communicatively in these texts. By applying Discourse Intonation Theory, this study offers a new lens for understanding how pitch operates within the anthem to structure meaning, indicate contrast or commitment, and guide listener response in emotional and cognitive terms. It also contributes to the underexplored area of prosody in formal Nigerian public texts.

### **Theoretical framework**

The study will be examined within the purview of David Brazil's Discourse Intonation Theory. The theory was introduced by David Brazil and his colleagues at the University of Birmingham in 1985, who perceive intonation as part of every spoken language. The theory views intonation as a tool for organising spoken discourse. Unlike earlier models that view intonation as a fixed system, Brazil emphasizes intonation as dynamic and context-sensitive, used to manage the information status (given vs. new), indicate speaker commitment, Structure turn-taking, and

highlight communicative focus. David Brazil's Discourse Intonation Theory (1985, 1997) represents a significant shift from traditional phonological views of intonation (such as those of Halliday, 1967; Crystal, 1969), emphasizing intonation as an interactive and interpretive tool within real-time communication. Brazil posits that intonation signals speaker choices that reflect the management of information flow and the negotiation of meaning between speaker and listener.

It is a linguistic approach that studies how pitch variations in speech or songs, particularly intonation patterns, are used to convey meaning within a larger conversation. Discourse Intonation explains that speech that occurs naturally is meant to fulfil a purpose, hence, it is required to go beyond the level of the sentence to describe how intonation functions in the tone units rather than sentences or clauses. It points out that all intonation selections made by speakers are a function of the discourse developing between them. Sadouine(2020:4) avers that the choice of pitch variations is bound to the context in which they occur. This explains how impossible it would be in the discourse approach to separate or isolate a stretch of speech from its context and generate intonational meaning, which is in contrast to the linguistic Universals of grammar-based descriptions. Discourse Intonation theory marks the prominent tone item regardless of being lexical or grammatical in any tone group of speech. Brazil holds that a basic part of the tone unit is the tonic segment, which begins with the first prominent syllable and ends with the last prominent syllable. A prominent syllable is marked with either high, mid, or low pitch in any tone unit, and they are distributed based on what context of interaction the speaker chooses to project. Discourse Intonation is a theory of intonation that relates stress, time, and pitch height to categories of meaning. The Theory is adequate for the study because it attempts to describe how suprasegmental characteristics of speech are systematically manipulated by the speakers to

communicate meanings. Brazil's theory is particularly relevant for analyzing speech genres like national anthems, where intonation carries symbolic, emotional, and ideological weight.

### **Pitch Variation**

Pitch of the voice plays an important part in a speaker's use of language because it is very unusual for one's voice to remain constant and fixed. Intonation is described by Roach (2002,2010) to imply the variations in the pitch of a speaker's voice used to convey meaning. Intonation, as observed by Levis (2013), refers to a combination of acoustic parameters which include duration, intensity, and pitch used to communicate discourse meaning. Pitch is described as the most important parameter of intonation, determined by the fundamental frequency of speech usually measured in hertz (Hz). Intonation contributes to linguistic meaning in different ways, this includes marking juncture between spoken phrases, highlighting, or background particular words or syllables and marking the ends of intonational phrases with movement. It also includes using extremes of pitch range to carry discourse meaning. Intonation serves diverse linguistic and paralinguistic functions in spoken language, ranging from the marking of sentence modality to the expression of emotional, grammatical and attitudinal nuances (Martine and Stefan,2007, Roach, 2010). These functions can be attributed to tunes employed by the speaker. English attests to two intonation patterns; falling and rising tunes. The falling tune is a fall in the voice from a high pitch to a low one and is usually indicated with an arrow pointing downwards. The tune is used for declarative sentences, wh-Questions, imperatives and exclamations to express different meanings such as finality, completeness and reinforcement (Well 2014:218; Atoye et al. 2018:142; Aina 2020:85) The rising intonation involves the rise in the pitch of voice. Roach (2010) explains that this tune, in a variety of ways, conveys an impression that something more is to follow. Rising tune is used for polar questions, polite requests and statement used as questions. Other tunes are;

fall-rise tune, which is used for a tag question or statement that indicate some reservation or hesitation. Rise-fall tune connotes strong feelings of approval, disapproval or surprise. The level tone is employed to express something routine or uninteresting.

The structure of a tone group consists of the following: the pre-head (PH), head (H), tonic syllable (TS), and the tail (T). The pre-head consists of all the unstressed syllables preceding the first stressed syllable in a tone unit. The pre-heads, as observed by Roach (2009:131), usually occur in two environments as exemplified in the following: where there is no stressed syllable preceding the tonic syllable, that is, no heads, as in the example: in a **month** ; when there is a head, as in the example: in a 'little' less than a **month**

The Head (H) is all the part of a tone unit that extends from the first stressed syllable to the syllable preceding the tonic syllable or nucleus. The Tonic syllable (TS) is the last syllable which carries the tone in a tone unit. The tonic syllable has a high degree of prominence usually labelled alternatively as the nucleus, tonic, primary stress or primary accent. It is also an obligatory part of a tone unit because it is the syllable that conveys the message of the tone unit. The Tail (T) entails any syllable (s) which occur after the tonic syllable or nucleus of a tone unit. As earlier indicated, the tonic syllable is the only obligatory component of a tone unit due to its significance to the message of the tone group.

## **Methodology**

This qualitative study adopts a discourse-phonological approach grounded in Brazil's Discourse Intonation Theory. The primary data for this study is the full text of the reinstated Nigerian national anthem, "*Nigeria, We Hail Thee*," which comprises three stanzas with a total of 14 lines. This anthem was originally composed by Frances Berda (lyrics) and Lillian Jean Williams (music), and it served as Nigeria's national anthem from 1960 to 1978. It was officially reinstated

in 2024 by the Nigerian government. The lyrics were sourced from the official website of the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation. The anthem was segmented into tone units for phonological analysis. Each line was segmented into tone units based on natural prosodic breaks. Each unit was analyzed for pitch movement (falling, rising, level, fall-rise). The audio renditions of the anthem by trained choristers were downloaded from YouTube and transcribed. The function of each pitch movement was interpreted based on its role in managing information, signaling commitment, or evoking emotion. Intonational judgments were triangulated with audio renditions of the anthem by trained choristers.

### **Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion**

The audio renditions of the anthem by trained choristers were downloaded from YouTube and transcribed. The lyrics were listened to by the researcher line by line in order to identify the tonic syllables of each verse. Peculiar intonation choices of Nigerians were identified because they were contextually marked.

Nigeria we hail thee

/naɪdʒiriə wi heil ði/ //Nigeria we HEIL the//

The opening verse stresses “hail” as a tonic syllable to ensure that the anthem begins with a bold and inspiring tone. It displays both Referring and Proclaiming tones to emphasize the act of saluting the Nation with praise, admiration, and deep reverence. The verse ends with “thee” presented in a falling tune. The information conveyed in the tone unit was carried by the phrase “hail thee”, to serve as a call to all Nigerians.

Our own dear native land

/aʊə əʊn diə neitiv lænd/ //our own dear Native land//

The emphasis on the word “native” using a Referring tone highlights the deep emotional Nigerians have for their country. It also reminds citizens of their responsibility towards national unity and service. This is to evoke a sense of ownership, heritage, and duty to protect the country. The phrase “dear native” expresses love and attachment, which is a shared knowledge between the writer and the listeners of the anthem. The emphasis on the syllable “NA” strengthens the sentiments and makes the anthem more heartfelt and inspiring.

Though tribe and tongue may differ

/ðəu traib ænd tʌŋg mei di:fə/ //Though tribe and TONGUE may differ//

Referring tone is employed in this verse to reiterate the common knowledge of the multicultural and multilingual nature of the country. The tone unit acknowledges the diverse nature of Nigeria but admonishes tolerance, respect, and peaceful coexistence.

In brotherhood we stand

/in brʌðəhu:d wi stænd/ //In brother HOOD we STAND//

The syllable “hood” in the word “brotherhood” receives an emphasis to signify unity, solidarity, and togetherness among Nigerians despite the diversity. The Referring tone reinforces “hood” and “stand” to express the information that Nigerians are one family despite ethnic and cultural differences. The idea of collective strength, resilience, national unity and patriotism are emphasized through both high and low pitches. The Referring tone ensures the anthem’s message of solidarity is clearly heard and felt by all Nigerians.

Nigerians all, and proud to serve

/naɪdʒɪrɪə ɔl ənd praʊd təu sɜ:v/ //Nigeria ALL and proud to serve//

The emphasis on the word “All” in the verse of the anthem gives information that every Nigerian, regardless of tribe, religion, or background, belongs to the Nation. The high pitch is used

to reinforce a sense of belonging and equally reminds the citizens that Nation-building is a collective responsibility. The word “proud” in the tone unit is to sensitize Nigerians to take pride in their nationality and their duty to the country. This is with a focus that service to the Nation is not just a duty but an honour, shaping national identity. The combination of “ALL and PROUD” creates a balanced rhythmic flow, ensuring that the message is delivered with the conviction and energy required.

Our sovereign motherland

/auə sɔvreɪn mʌðə lænd/ //our sovereign MOTHER LAND//

Emphasis on the word “motherland” carries a deep patriotic significance, symbolizing Nigeria as a nurturing home for its citizens. The Referring tone is used to reiterate this idea of national pride, love and allegiance to one’s country. The low pitch on “land” shifts the listeners focus to the idea of Nigeria as a home to be cherished and defended. It therefore, evokes a sense of collective belonging, reminding citizens of their shared responsibility in building and protecting their country.

Our flag shall be a symbol

/auə fæɪ bi ə sɪmbəl/ //our FLAG shall be a SYMBol//

The proclamation tone extolled “flag” as an object of national unity, identity and values, pride and sovereignty. This is to ensure that the listeners focus on the significance of the “flag” rather than just seeing it as a physical object. It enhances the anthem emotional effect and memorability.

That truth and justice reign

/ðæt truθ ən dʒʌstɪs reɪn/ //that truth and JUSTICE reign//

The emphasis on the syllable “JUS” proclaims “justice” as a fundamental principle of national governance and unity. It therefore reinstates the idea that fairness and equity are essential for Nigeria’s progress. Hence, citizens are to uphold equity and truth in all aspects of national life.

In peace and battle honour’d

/ɪn piːz ən bætl hʌnɔːd/ //in peace and battle HONour’d//

The anthem employed Proclamation tone to emphasized “hon” in the word “honoured”. This is to give information on the importance of respect, dignity and recognition whether in times of peace and war. It reinforces and acknowledges resilience; in times of peace or battle, the Nation must uphold its honour. The word “honour’d” calls for Nigerians commitment to dignity, respect and national patriotism.

And this we count as gain

/ən ðɪs wi kaunt əz geɪn/ //and this WE count as GAIN//

The word “gain” as a tonic syllable is to inspire a sense of national duty and optimism, reinforcing the belief that efforts towards Nigeria’s growth are worthwhile. The use of Proclamation tone is to give the word a resolute and uplifting focus that dedication to Nigeria’s prosperity is a victory and not a loss. The emphasis therefore, is to ensure that the word is interpreted as a declaration of hope by everyone, “WE”, rather than mere obligation.

To hand on to our children

/təʊ hænd ən təʊ əʊə ʃɪldrən/ //to hand to our CHILDREN//

The Proclamation tone is used to give information on the need for good legacy and responsibility. The word “children” symbolizes our future, hence, there is a call for a sense of duty and continuity crucial in patriotic expression to preserve legacy of the country.

A banner without stain

/ə bæənə wiðaut stein/ // a banner wi THOUT STAIN//

The choice of “thout” in the word “without” reinforces the ideal and importance of purity, integrity, and the country’s commitment to justice and equity. The phrase “banner without stain” is a call through Proclamation tone that Nigeria is expected to be free from corruption, injustice and dishonour. This agrees with the anthem’s broader theme of patriotism, unity and national responsibility.

O God of creation

/əʊ gɒd ɔv kri eɪʃən/ //o God of CREA TION//

The rising and falling tones on the word “creation” emphasizes the divine authority of God as the divine guardian. Referring tone is used to acknowledge and reinforce the idea of divine importance and intervention in country’s activities. This message is a shared knowledge between the composer of the anthem and Nigerians.

Grant this our request

/grænt ðis auə ri kwɛst/ //grant this our re QUEST//

Referring tone is employed to present the urgency and sincerity of the Nigerians through the syllable “quest” for divine intervention. The rising tone stresses the plea being made underscoring the Nation’s hope.

Help us to build a nation

/help ʌz tu: bild ə nei ʃən/ //help us to BUILD a Nation//

The word “build” is made prominent to reemphasizes the importance of nation-building as a collective responsibility. It reaffirms the idea that Nigeria’s growth and unity depend on the contribution of its people. Proclamation tone is to inspire a sense of duty, cooperation, and patriotism encouraging citizens to actively contribute to national development.

Where no man is oppressed

/weə nəu mæn iz ɔ prest/ //where no man is op PRESSED//

Proclamation tone is used to pass the message across to the Nigerians the need for freedom and equality. The anthem emphasizes the theme of freedom and justice through the syllable “pressed”. The word “oppressed” carries a deep emotional weight as it represents suffering and inequality. This is to evoke a strong emotional response inspiring patriotism, and the need to fight against oppression, resonating with people who have experienced injustice. It therefore, serves as a call for unity, fairness, national values and aspirations.

And so with peace and plenty

/ænd səu wiθ pi:z ən plenti/ //and so with PEACE and PLENTY//

The emphasis on the words “peace” and “plenty” conveys obedience, sufficiency and national prosperity that freedom and justice might bring. Proclamation tone gives the information of a Nigeria where citizens enjoy a life of comfort, security and progress. It evokes a sense of hope and inspiration, stressing the anthem’s role in motivating citizens to strive for peace and economic abundance that will be felt by its people.

Nigeria may be blessed

/naɪdʒɪriə mei bi blest/ //Nigeria may be BLESSED//

The word “blessed” highlights the hope that Nigeria will flourish under God’s guidance and also re-emphasizes the vision of a nation destined for greatness, peace and abundance. It presents the anthem not just a patriotic song but also a prayer that evokes a strong, emotional and spiritual response from Nigeria, reinforcing their faith in a prosperous future. The tonic syllable on the word “blessed” ensures the anthem ends on a powerful, uplifting tone, leaving a memorable impact on all who sung or heard it.

Based on the analysis, Proclamation tone was more used than Referring tone in the anthem. While proclamation tone gives new information, referring tone projects a contextual common ground marker that sometimes need reactivation. The predominant pitch in the anthem is high pitch, which is employed through a proclamation tone to draw the attention of Nigerians to the importance of unity in diversity. Hence, it makes the anthem more inclusive, clear, and powerful. It also enhances its musical and rhetorical effectiveness in evoking national pride.

### **Interpretation and Discussion**

The anthem employs intonation to structure the message across three discourse phases: *present dedication*, *unified identity*, and *future aspiration*. The proclamation tone (falling tone) dominates the anthem, reinforcing certainty and seriousness. Referring tones (Rising tones) are used sparingly to introduce contrast or incomplete information, while fall-rise tones encode nuanced emotional shifts. This gradient use of pitch serves multiple communicative goals: Emotional stimulation (through pitch contouring of key ideals - hope, unity, sacrifice); Cognitive engagement (listeners are prompted to anticipate, evaluate, and recall); Ideological encoding (intonation supports the projection of shared national values).

### **Intonation as a Gradient Meaning-Maker in the New Nigerian National Anthem**

Intonation in spoken discourse—especially in performative texts such as national anthems—functions not only to convey information but to shape emotion, guide interpretation, and encode ideology. In the newly reinstated Nigerian national anthem, "*Nigeria, We Hail Thee*," pitch movements serve as crucial prosodic devices that structure the anthem into a progression of logical, emotional, and rhetorical phases. This section discusses how pitch (intonation) operates as a gradient meaning-maker, enabling the anthem to move listeners from reflection to resolution, and from recognition to collective aspiration.

## 1. Pitch as a Structuring Device: Thematic Phases and Progression

The anthem unfolds in three stanzas, each corresponding to a distinct thematic phase:

### **Stanza 1:** Greeting and Dedication

The line "*Nigeria, we hail thee*" is typically rendered with a falling tone on "hail thee," signifying finality and seriousness. The downward intonation signals a solemn tribute, reinforcing the ceremonial nature of the anthem. The tone unit division—"*Nigeria / we hail thee ( )*"—sets the emotional baseline, combining national pride with reverence. Similarly, the line "*Though tribe and tongue may differ / In brotherhood we stand*" contrasts a rising tone on "differ" (which introduces variability) with a falling tone on "stand"—asserting unity and resolution. This pattern—rising for challenge, falling for solution—is consistent with David Brazil's model of discourse management and orientation.

### **Stanza 2:** Unity and Service

This stanza strengthens the message of collective identity. The line "*Our flag shall be a symbol / That truth and justice reign*" shows a level or slightly rising tone on "symbol" to sustain attention, followed by a strong falling tone on "reign" to assert moral authority. This contrast exemplifies the use of pitch movement to signal important shifts in focus, from symbolic abstraction (flag) to ideological commitment (truth and justice).

### **Stanza 3:** Hope and Legacy

The final stanza expresses a plea and a future vision. The line "*Help us to build a nation / Where no man is oppressed*" often employs a fall-rise tone on "build a nation" to show a tentative, hopeful outlook. This is followed by a falling tone on "oppressed," which anchors the aspiration in moral seriousness. The fall-rise pattern, as Brazil asserts,

typically signals reservation or openness to development, making it ideal for forward-looking discourse like national prayers or visions.

These tonal patterns are the reflections of the anthem's thematic progression: From present recognition ("*we hail thee*") through national unity and ideals ("*truth and justice reign*") to future aspiration and peace ("*Nigeria may be blessed*").

### **Emphatic Lists and Memory Reinforcement**

A notable technique employed through intonation is the emphatic listing of core national values. For instance, in the line: "*Our pride, our hope, our strength*"

Each item in the list is delivered as a separate tone unit, marked by a clear pitch reset and falling tone. This creates rhythmic balance and syntactic parallelism, but more importantly, it leverages intonational breaks to arrest listeners' attention and enhance retention. This is consistent with Brazil's view of intonation as a real-time marker of discourse structuring and listener engagement.

### **Emotional and Rhetorical Effects of Pitch**

Intonation also facilitates emotional interpretation and rhetorical persuasion by deploying specific tone movements for psychological effect:

Rising tones evoke engagement, openness, and expectation. They prompt listeners to anticipate what comes next, thus emotionally investing them in the unfolding message. In the context of the anthem, this stimulates ideological alignment—readiness to embrace unity despite diversity.

These occur in lines like:

*"Though tribe and tongue may differ (/)"* and

*"Help us to build a nation (/)"*

Falling tones signify conviction, finality, and emotional gravity. They mark the statements as

serious, non-negotiable, and morally significant. Falling tones in such lines reinforce the authority of national ideals and instill a solemn sense of duty. This is found consistently in concluding segments like:

*“Our sovereign motherland ()”* or

*“Where no man is oppressed ()”*

These tones signify conviction, finality, and emotional gravity. They mark the statements as serious, non-negotiable, and morally significant. Falling tones in such lines reinforce the authority of national ideals and instill a solemn sense of duty.

Fall-rise tones convey hope and humility, which is an emotional appeal rather than a firm assertion. This pattern subtly softens the discourse, creating a moment of emotional pause that invites listeners to reflect and align with the speaker. Though the fall-rise tone is less frequent, yet, the fall-rise pattern appears in more prayerful or forward-looking lines, like: *“Grant this our one request (\_/)”*.

The interplay of rising, falling, and fall-rise tones in the new National anthem does more than decorate the surface of the anthem; it creates a sonic architecture that builds emotion, sustains attention, and imprints memory. This is particularly crucial in national anthems, where repetition and ceremony aim to create a ritualistic sense of solidarity. That is, a collective sense of unity and shared identity that emerges from the regular, almost sacred performance of the anthem.

By alternating between tones that invite engagement and those that reinforce commitment, the anthem becomes not only a linguistic expression but a patriotic performance. In doing so, it fulfills its sociopolitical function: to unify, inspire, and bind citizens under shared national values.

## Conclusion

This study has shown that the new Nigerian national anthem, beyond its lexical content, is a phonologically structured text designed to evoke emotion, assert identity, and shape national ideology. Through David Brazil's Discourse Intonation Theory, we have identified how pitch variations function to organize discourse meaning, communicate speaker intent, and engage listeners affectively and cognitively. Through the lens of David Brazil's Discourse Intonation Theory, it is evident that pitch movements are employed in a gradient, purposeful manner that reinforces the anthem's structure and ideological intent. Moreover, intonation serves as a powerful enhancer of memorability and emotional impact, fulfilling the anthem's ceremonial function by fostering solidarity and reinforcing collective identity. This underscores the profound communicative value of pitch variation in crafting texts that aim to inspire, unify, and endure in the public memory.

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