

Negotiation Strategy in Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s ‘Emilokan’ Presidential Campaign Speech, 2023

Adeagbo, Esther Olajumoke Ph.D.

Ajayi Crowther University,

Department of English,

Faculty of Humanities.

estherolajumoke99atgmail.com. 07035536376

Abstract

Political speeches encompass forms of communication used in persuading people to vote for particular candidates or to persuade people to support particular policies. Previous studies on political discourse in Nigeria have focused on pragmatics, discourse analysis and general stylistic features, with insufficient attention paid to discursive strategies, and lexical resources in Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s campaign speech entitled ‘Emilokan’. This study, therefore, examines negotiation strategies in the political speech delivered by Bola Tinubu titled ‘Emilokan’ to reveal the discourse strategies or resources deployed in the speech. Data were collected via the Punch newspaper and were subjected to discourse analysis. The paper utilized insights from van Dijk’s model of 2Critical Discourse Analysis. Findings reveal that different discursive strategies that are prominent in the political speech delivered by Bola Ahmed Tinubu are: Historical reference and allusions, principles of exclusion and inclusion, techniques of sympathy, superiority and arrogance power-seeking tactics, self-glorification and so on. The paper concludes that language plays an important role in politics, as it is used to express, either implicitly or explicitly, some political viewpoints to negotiate, fight, convince, instruct, promise, uncover, and advise the electorate to vote wisely.

Keywords: *Discourse strategies, Campaign speech, Socio-cognition, CDA, Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s speeches*

Introduction

Politics is one of the major events that pervade every human’s social world, and language is one of the key creators of the social world. This, therefore, means that language and politics are

intimately linked at a fundamental level. According to Chilton (2004: 6), ‘the doing of politics is predominantly constituted in language’. Other scholars have corroborated this close link between language and politics. Awonusi (2008: 10) sees the relationship between language and politics as ‘bidirectional’ – language affects politics and politics affects language. Opeibi (2009) also sees the relationship as ‘symbiotic’. The whole essence of politics as identified by Beard (2000: 2) is the wish to gain power, exercise power and keep power, and language is the major vehicle for achieving these goals.

Scholars from two different disciplines can be identified with the study of language and politics – linguists and political scientists. While each of these disciplines focuses on different issues, they have some meeting points. Politics is concerned with power: the power to make decisions, control resources, control other people’s behaviour, and control their values. As Ayoade, a foremost Nigerian political scientist rightly asserts: ‘language is the conveyor belt of power. It moves people to vote, debate, or revolt. It is therefore a central explanation of political stability or polarization’ (Ayoade, 1982: 724). Critical discourse analysis is the meeting point in the research of language and politics. The critical discourse approach employs the discourse approach to any text that could be termed political. Among other things, texts and talks of professional politicians and political institutions have been studied from these perspectives. These include debates, campaigns, interviews, manifestos, rallies, and so on. These kinds of studies are generally classified under political discourse analysis.

Generally speaking, political discourse is a unique discourse token that reflects the dynamicity of its environment. Numerous scholars have indeed given this aspect of discourse different meanings. According to Wilson (2003: 398), ‘political discourse is concerned with formal and informal political contexts and political actors, politicians, political institutions, governments, political media, and political supporters operating in political environments to achieve political goals’. Alvarez-Cáccamo and PregoVásquez (2003), cited in Ayoola (2008: 160), view public political discourse as ‘a form of appropriation and an inherently asymmetrical tool for power’. However, the consensus definition of this field of research can be said to be succinctly captured by van Dijk (1998) as ‘a class of genres defined by a social domain, namely that of politics’. This definition, therefore, limits the concept of political discourse to the ‘professional’ realm of activities of politicians. A political discourse, according to van Dijk (2001b), is, therefore, one

that ‘accomplishes a political act in a political institution, such as governing, legislation, electoral campaigning, and so on’. van Dijk (2001: 30) notes that:

A study of the topics, coherence, arguments, lexical style, . . . of a political discourse may of course reveal much about the unique character of such a discourse, and also allows inferences about the cognitive, social and especially political functions of such discourse.

From the foregoing discussion on political discourse, it then can be conveniently said that the campaign speech for the Nigerian 2023 Presidential election by Tinubu tagged ‘Emilokan’ which is the focus of this study, constitutes a political discourse.

It is interesting to examine how the signifying practices in the discourse reflect or demonstrate the concerns of critical discourse analysis (CDA) such as power abuse, domination and historical allusions. The objectives of this study are thus to:

- identify the discursive strategies deployed in the speech;
- explain the facets of the ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ in the discourse.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, especially in recent times, political discourse, as an aspect of linguistic enquiry, has enjoyed tremendous attention. Scholars have been, and are still interested in how language is used in the political domain for hortatory purposes. By this, we mean that the peculiar use of language by Nigerian political players and actors to win people to their side has been a subject of interest to linguists. It is imperative for politicians canvassing for the votes of the electorate to communicate their ideas to the people from whom they seek votes. In doing this, they choose different ways that will help them to achieve their ultimate goal of persuasion.

Studies on Nigerian political discourse have focused mainly on speeches of political actors in the country, such as civilians, military rulers and political office aspirants. For instance, Lyubov (2022) investigates expressive speech acts in selected political speeches using a combination of the critical discourse approach and discourse semiotics theory for the analysis. Also, Adegbenro (2022) examines a lexico-thematic analysis of selected speeches of former Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan, using Halliday’s theory of systemic functional grammar. In the same vein, Ndiaye and Ngom (2020) investigate the linguistic and pragmatic features in Yaya Jammeh’s (Gambian Politician and former military officer) Anniversary speech. The critical discourse approach was used as a theoretical framework for the analysis of the speech.

However, sufficient scholarly attention has not been paid to discursive strategies, and lexical resources in Bola Ahmed Tinubu's campaign speeches entitled 'Emilokan', especially from van Dijk's critical discourse approach. This is the vacuum the study intends to fill.

Language and Power

Power is central to the understanding of the dynamics and specifics of control (of action) in modern societies, but it remains mostly invisible. Power relations in society are often manifested in the use of language – text and talk which are the primary media of social control and power. Critical Discourse Analysis sees power as a central condition in social life. When two people are engaged in conversation, each participant is concerned with how to make his viewpoint dominate the others. On the contrary, dominance may be enacted and reproduced by subtle, routine, everyday forms of text and talk that appear natural and quite acceptable ". Hence, CDA also needs to focus on the discursive strategies that legitimate control, or otherwise naturalize" the social order and especially relations of inequality (Fairclough, 2003: 53). It was Louis Althusser who wondered how the vast majority of people had been persuaded to act against their own best interests, since they worked long hours at laborious tasks and lived in poverty, while a very small number of people made enormous amounts of money from their labour and enjoyed lives of luxury. To explain why the impoverished majority did not just refuse to work in this system and overthrow the rich minority, Althusser reasons that "the poor had been persuaded that this state of affairs was natural and nothing could be done to change it".

Language and power are intimately related, as people influence others primarily through what they say and how they communicate. According to Wodak (2008: 11),

Language is entwined in social power in a number of ways: language indexes and expresses power. Language is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power. Power does not derive from language but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter the distribution of power in the short and long term.

In other words, language can also become a deliberate force in the hands of politicians who use them to shape social realities, create new meanings, and exercise power. Linguistic power breeds oppression in various ramifications and may lead to various forms of social inequality.

Historical Background of 'Emilokan' Speech

Early in June 2022, Tinubu, a prominent political figure and the All Progressives Congress (APC's) official presidential candidate, one of Nigeria's two major political parties, delivered a

speech—more of a tirade—to a gathering of APC politicians in Ogun State, the Yoruba nation. The speech was probably intended to be Tinubu's sales pitch for why he should be the APC's presidential nominee in February 2023. Tinubu gave it before the party's presidential primaries, which were held in the same month. It's my turn, (*Emilokan*) means to bring the president to the Yoruba tribe. That's the essence of his speech's unique selling point, which was given on purpose in his home town (Anim, 2022).

Since Bola Ahmed Tinubu was elected a senator for the Lagos West District in 1992, Mr Tinubu has continually held prominent positions in party politics. Since that time, he has served as Lagos' governor for eight years. It was his first time competing for president, whether in the party primary or the general elections, in contrast to his three main rivals, including former governor Rabi'u Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) (Anim, 2022).

The 'emilokan' (it's my turn) campaign slogan of the Nigerian presidential aspirant, hopeful reveals intricate ethnic dynamics and a stalemated democracy. Most reactions—comedy and rumours—reflect Nigerians' practice of democratic citizenship.

In Nigeria, hectic times occur in the months before elections. To get the attention and votes of millions of voters, thousands of candidates from tens of parties are competing. The election season energizes identity politics and feeds narratives and counternarratives among Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious communities. A short phrase, "emi lokan," has emerged above the din of this season. The phrase translates to "it's my turn" in Yoruba, a language primarily spoken by the Yoruba people of South Western Nigeria. Emi lokan is indelibly owed to Bola Ahmed for its status in contemporary political discourse (Anim, 2022). He condensed it to the crux of the matter, emphasizing emi lokan (it's my turn).

Let's start with Tinubu's extensive professional background. That Tinubu has a "lifetime's ambition" to rule Nigeria is an open secret. He sees the presidency as a suitable conclusion to a remarkable political career. This all started with agitation for democracy in opposition to Sani Abacha's despotic dictatorship. Abacha's dictatorship, meanwhile, had limited Tinubu's senatorial tenure, which had started just a year before Abacha took power in 1993. To avoid the frequent executions the tyrant meted out to dissidents, Tinubu engaged in anti-Abacha agitation while living in exile, particularly in the US (Anim, 2022). When Nigeria's democracy was restored in 1999, Tinubu returned to politics as the strong governor of Lagos State, the nation's commercial hub.

Lagos became a functioning governmental institution with the ability to collect taxes during his eight years as governor but with crony capitalism as a garnish. Asiwaju, as he is called, then set his sights on the president by founding a slew of parties that, despite having significant political significance, were unable to unseat the People's Democratic Party (PDP), his once-dominant competitor. After Tinubu put together a strong opposition that allowed the APC to seize control from its previous adversary, this journey of defeats came to an end in 2015. However, Tinubu was banned from running as Muhammadu Buhari's vice president in 2015 due to the informal dynamics of zoning, a practice where parties balance their tickets by selecting candidates from different ethnic, racial, and religious groups. He bases his argument on why it is now his turn to be president on this journey of struggles and setbacks, of giving up now to benefit later. He supports this allegation by citing his support for the political careers of other politicians, including the president in office. (Anim, 2022).

Significance of the Study

The study contributes to linguistic scholarship in () applying the theory of van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The present study is expected to add to the knowledge of the relevance and application of the theory of critical discourse analysis in analysing Bola Ahmed Tinubu's campaign speeches entitled 'Emilokan'. This helps to reveal the discursive strategies and lexical resources that appear in the speeches. The study equally adds to the existing literature in political and media discourses. The study may be of great benefit to teachers, learners and researchers as it advances knowledge on the application of the theory of van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse in linguistic scholarship in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Since there are different approaches to CDA, this study specifically draws on van Dijk's (1995) critical discourse approach (Socio-cognition). Van Dijk asserts that discourse is a spoken language. That is, what is spoken in public is meant to be discourse. He continues by stating that speech is a type of social interaction. Political discourse, dialogues, interviews, diaries, propaganda, meeting letters, talks, legislation, music, poetry and short tales are some of the examples he provides (van Dijk, 1995) As regards the Critical Discourse approach, it deals with language and power. It views language use as a type of social activity to resolve social issues. According to van Dijk, the term Critical discourse analysis now refers to a particular method of critical linguistics, critical semiotics, and oppositional ways of examining language, discourse,

and communication. According to this description, van Dijk (1995) believes that critical discourse is a type of discourse study that examines how texts and speech in the social and political context practice can develop themes like inequality, abuse of social power, and dominance. In other words, CDA is a type of discourse analytical approach that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.

The mental representation of communication events that take place at the microstructure and macrostructure levels is the foundation of van Dijk's paradigm. The macrostructure refers to historical references, cultural realities, and political realities that occur in communicative events, whereas the microstructure is concerned with semantic and syntactic elements that are prominent in a text.

This paper uses van Dijk's CDA model because it favours mental representations that draw sharp lines between "Them" and "Us" which are explained as positive self-representations and negative other representations. The explanation for this positive self-representation and negative other-representation is provided by a variety of discursive techniques including actor description, self-glorification, comparison, allusions, eventuality, victimization, vagueness, self-inclusion and exclusion, polarisation, and so on.

Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative method in the analysis. The qualitative method enhances the content analysis of the data for adequate interpretation, description and presentation of the speech. The methodology adopted fed on van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse analysis. The sampling technique for this study is the purposive sampling technique. Data used in this paper were collected via the Punch Newspaper and were subjected to discourse analysis. The purposive sampling technique is a convenient sampling method that enables researchers to use what is readily available to them and appropriate for their study

Data Presentation and Analysis

Historical References/Allusions

Comprehension of history is vital in politics. Historical references are vital terminologies and ways of fashioning hallucinations or flashbacks in discourse. The speaker ('Tinubu'), the Presidential aspirant for APC) deployed historical allusions in the speech for people to be on the same common grounds with him. For instance:

Extract 1: ‘If not for me that stood behind Buhari, he wouldn’t have become the President. He tried the first time, he failed, the second time, he failed. The third time, he failed’.

The foreground of the expression ‘**if not for me**’ is to strike the readers’ interest and draw their attention to the personality referenced in the text, who is Mohammedu Buhari (The current president of Nigeria). The discursive strategy employed by the speaker signifies the act of belittling and ridiculing a political figure to gain power. The statement ‘**...he tried the first time he failed, second time, he failed and third time he failed**’, is to give historical incidents of how Bola Tinubu supported Buhari when he had nobody and had lost hope in the presidential post. The speaker (Bola Tinubu) slightly takes his audience down memory lane to refresh their minds on the dealings he had had with the referent (Mohammedu Buhari) in the past before the referent became the President to discredit him. This persuasive and informative strategy deployed by the speaker is to seek favour and woo voters to the side of the speaker.

Principles of Exclusion and Inclusion

The strategy of inclusion and exclusion are projected in the speech in terms of the use of the deictic pronouns. The first person pronoun ‘we’, the third person pronoun ‘they’ and the second person pronoun ‘us’ used in the speech project the principles of exclusion and inclusion. For instance:

Extract 2: ‘It is my turn’

The Yoruba phrase ‘emi’lo’kan’ which translates to ‘**it is my turn**’, is a stake on a claim that is not subject to negotiation. It is neither a plea nor a bargain. It amounts to laying down the law and inviting anyone who objects to a dual. It is an offer and readiness to make up the difference right away. It essentially means ‘now’ or ‘never’. This expression ‘*emilokan*’, which reflects throughout the text, in the form of reiteration has an element of audacity and daring tone. The speaker deployed the strategy of inclusion and exclusion in the expression with the use of the personal pronoun *my*. This inferential implicit statement is excluding some parties or political figures who might be competing with the speaker probably in the future. Likewise, he is including himself with the same pronoun ‘my’ so that people will acknowledge that it is the right time for him to be the president.

The strategy of inclusion and exclusion is also used in the following extracts:

Extract 3: ‘...We were at the stadium, they tore all his posters. ...He knew all the calculations then favoured us’

The above pronouns in the speech indicate that both in-group and out-group participants are present in the political process, especially in the text. The purpose of the speech's strategic use of the pronouns 'us' and 'we' was to co-implicate the members of his group, elicit general collective approval from Nigerians, hasten his election as the country's future leader, and highlight the joint efforts that led to Buhari's election. These lexical and structural decisions are primarily intended to assist the electorate in becoming educated and making informed decisions during the approaching election.

Techniques of Sympathy

Sympathy is a means of sharing another person's emotions. It is a technique perhaps used by politicians to key in their interest in the heart of the electorate. Politicians also used this strategy to seek favour, compassion, emotional closeness and pity from voters. For instance, this is reflected in Extract 4 below:

Extract 4: 'He even wept on national television and vowed never to contest again but I went to meet him in Kaduna and told him he will run again, I will stand by you'

The expression '**I went to meet him... and told him he will run again**', graphologically foregrounds sympathy. It suggests that Bola Tinubu pitied the condition of Buhari when he was abandoned and he indirectly too was pleading that people should consider him deservedly to be voted in as the president, using a sympathy technique. This technique is also echoed in the extract below:

Extract 5: 'I surrendered my right to him. ...Even the party flag, they didn't want to hand over it to him. I was the one who brought it'

The effect of sympathy techniques is also evident in the above expressions. In the simple sentence, '**I surrendered my right to him**', Bola Tinubu perhaps wants people to see him as a messiah to Yemi Osinbajo, which means without him, he might not be the Vice President. He is implicitly beseeching Nigerians to consider him as the next president based on the good character he had shown in the past. In the expression, '**I was the one who brought it**', the speaker was referring to the party flag which he handed to Buhari. This depicts that Bola Tinubu pitied the condition of the referent. He made this statement to also seek the favour of the electorate and to portray himself as a good man who deserves the vote or sympathy of Nigerians.

Superiority/ Arrogance - Power Seeking Tactics

One of the strategies used by politicians is superiority tactics and it is meant to seek power. Superiority tactics are behaviour that suggests a person believes they are somehow superior to others. Most of the time this strategy is reflected through the use of imperative, declarative pitch and lexical choices of the speaker. For instance:

Extract 6: I have served enough. I do not want to become history. It is my turn to become president. It is a matter of right to me. ... Bring it on'

With the use of an imperative tone in the expression '**Bring it on**' the speaker used an authoritative tone to direct Nigerians to vote for him at all costs. The interpersonal indication is that of a superior figure allotting a command to the inferior other. The speaker appears to see the presidency as an inheritance in which he must rule at all costs. The commanding tone used suggests that the speaker is exercising dominance over the listeners. Bola Tinubu used superiority power-seeking tactics in the form of seeing himself as a god-father who had helped in ushering in the current president of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari. The expression '**it is my turn to become president. It is a matter of right to me**' depicts that the speaker has authority/power over the people of Nigeria. It is posited here that they have no choice but to vote him in as the next president. This kind of expression reflects superiority and arrogance from the side of the speaker to the electorate.

Self-Glorification Strategy

The political discourse strategy of self-glorification is utilized in the extracts below:

Extract 7: If not for me that stood behind Buhari, he wouldn't have become the president...

Extract 8: Dapo that's sitting down here could he have become Governor without me?

The extracts above obviously illustrate self-glorification. Bola Tinubu projects his image as if without him the referents could not be in the political posts they found themselves. The speaker is indirectly subtly attacking the opponents. The interrogative expression, '**Dapo that's sitting down here could he have become Governor without me?**', depicts that the referent who is Dapo is subject to the speaker. This means that Bola Tinubu has power over Governor Dapo and he glorifies himself over the referent. In the same vein, the clause, '**If not for me that stood behind Buhari, he wouldn't have become the president**', is also threatening and projects power. It is a gross overstatement intended to project the positive image of the speaker. The

speaker said this to show that he has power over President Muhammadu Buhari. This type of opaque political technique is an authentic tool in the hands of Nigerian politicians to deceive the credulous electorate and stir violence.

Conclusion

The paper has attempted a critical examination of the negotiation strategy employed by Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the speech 'emilokan'. The paper utilizes insights from van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis. This paper is an exercise that addresses an academic lacuna in political discourse. Findings reveal those different discursive strategies that are prominent in the political speech delivered by Bola Ahmed Tinubu. These include Historical references and allusions, principles of exclusion and inclusion, techniques of sympathy, superiority and arrogance power-seeking tactics, self-glorification and so on. This is in line with the view of Ndiaye and Ngom (2020) that politicians' speech(es)/language has a specific aim that is linguistically expressed and pragmatically implied through figures of speech, repetition, religious expressions, pro nominalization, and a set of themes such as criticism of foreign politics, economic progress, political program, appeal to citizenship and threat/warning. The paper concludes that language plays an important role in politics, as it is used to express, either implicitly or explicitly, some political viewpoints to negotiate, fight, convince, instruct, promise, uncover, and advise electorates to vote wisely.

References

- Adegbenro. E. J (2022). A lexicon-thematic analysis of selected speeches of former Nigeria President Goodluck Jonathan. *KIU Journal of Humanities*. ISSN:24150844.
- Anim, A (2022). The entitlement of Bola Tinubu. africaascountry.com.
- Awonusi (2008). Linguistic History: The English history of English in Nigeria In A. Awonusi A.B.K. Dadzie (Eds) *Nigerian English Influences and characteristics*. Pp. 46.86.
- Ayoade (1982). *Inter generalization Aspects of Ethnicity Conflict in Africa*.
- Ayoola, R.A (2008). A critical discourse analysis of the reporting of some Niger Delta issues in Nigerian Newspapers. 1999-2000. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife Nigeria. 7(4). 119-125

- Chilton. P (2004). *Analysing Discourse Theory and Practice*. Routledge. *Open Journal of social sciences* vol.5 No 4
- Fairclough N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N (1992). *Critical Discourse Analysis in the critical study of Language*. London: Longman.
- Lyubov, G. (2022). *A Case Analysis of Political Discourse Ambivalence: Between the Truth and Falsity*. Institute of the Humanities and Applied Sciences. ISBN: 978-96-81294-08-6 p-149-158.
- Ndiaye, S & Ngom, D. (2022). *Linguistic and Pragmatic Features in Yaya Jammeh's Political Speech. During the 49th Independence Anniversary: A critical discourse Analysis*. *East African Scholars Journal of Education Humanities, and Literature* ISSN:/2617-72 50. Vol 3.
- Opeibi (2009). *Language politics and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: A sociolinguistic Perspective* *Journal- Issues and Practical discourse analysis* 2(2) ISSN. 1941-7209 pp. 93-109.
- Van Dijk. T. (1995). *Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis*, in *Japanese Discourse*, 1,17-27.
- Wilson. M (2003). *Discovery listening: improving Perceptual processing*. *ELT Journal*, 57, 33-343. *Open journal of social sciences*.
- Wodak, R. (2008). *The Discourse of Politics in Action: Politics as usual*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.