

## Linguistic Strategies for Dominance in Political Interviews: A Case Study of Arise TV Morning Show

**Solomon Briska Barkindo**

*Department of General Studies Education  
Federal College of Education, Zaria  
[briskanatere@gmail.com](mailto:briskanatere@gmail.com)  
[+2348066203011](tel:+2348066203011)*

**Suleiman Balarabe Ph.D**

*Department of English  
Federal College of Education, Zaria  
[+2348037025479](tel:+2348037025479)*

### Abstract

*This study employs Norman Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the interaction between Arise TV anchor Rufai Oseni and APC chieftain Jesutega Onokpasa. Purposeful sampling was used to select one interview from 17 available, meeting specific criteria set by the sampling objectives. The paper dissects the conversation through textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, and the analysis reveals how insertions and interruptions shape power relations. Onokpasa's frequent interruptions and condescending tone serve to assert dominance, undermine Oseni's role, and divert the discussion from substantive issues to personal attacks. The live broadcast context heightens the stakes, influencing both participants' behaviour as they navigate their public personas. The broader ideological context reflects ongoing conflicts in Nigerian politics, with Oseni's critical stance on economic policies countered by Onokpasa's defensive posture. The study highlights the struggle for control in public discourse and underscores the role of language in shaping power relations, reflecting deeper cultural norms and expectations regarding respect and hierarchy. Through Fairclough's CDA framework, the analysis demonstrates how conversational strategies are employed to reinforce or challenge existing power structures in media interactions.*

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Power relations, Interruptions, Nigerian politics, Media interactions

### 1.0 Introduction

In contemporary media, the interaction between journalists and political figures often highlights the intricate relations of power and control in public discourse. The televised interview is a potent site for examining these relations, especially in politically charged contexts. This study employs Norman Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore the interaction during the Arise TV morning show of *October, 30th 2023* between Arise TV anchor

Rufai Oseni and APC chieftain Jesutega Onokpasa, focusing on how insertions and interruptions shape power relations.

Fairclough's CDA model involves three key dimensions-(1) textual analysis, (2) discursive practice, and (3) social practice. Textual analysis scrutinizes language features and structures, revealing how interruptions and overlaps serve to assert dominance and control. Discursive practice examines the production, distribution, and consumption of texts, highlighting the influence of the live TV setting on participants' behaviour and the power struggle between them. Social practice considers the broader social and cultural context, including power relations and ideologies, reflecting ideological conflicts in Nigerian politics and cultural norms regarding respect and hierarchy.

Previous studies have extensively explored linguistic strategies in media interactions (Clayman and Heritage 2002; Bull and Mayer 1993; Montgomery 2007; Opeibi 2009). However, there is a notable gap in understanding how these strategies, specifically interruptions, are employed by political figures to assert dominance and control, particularly in the Nigerian political context. This study addresses this gap by examining the linguistic tactics used by Jesutega Onokpasa in his interview with Rufai Oseni. It aims to uncover the specific strategies Onokpasa uses to assert dominance, analyse their influence on the power dynamics between him and Oseni, and contextualize these interactions within the broader ideological and cultural power structures of Nigerian politics. Through this analysis, the research hopes to provide a deeper understanding of how linguistic strategies in political discourse shape and reinforce societal power relations.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Language and Politics**

Language plays a crucial role in politics, serving as a medium for politicians to convey their ideologies, persuade the public, and assert dominance. According to Fairclough (1989), political discourse is a form of social practice that reflects and shapes power relations within society. This perspective emphasizes the importance of analysing language to understand the operations of power in political contexts. Wodak (2009) expands on this by arguing that political language is inherently strategic, used by politicians to gain and maintain power, influence public opinion, and legitimize their actions. She highlights the use of rhetorical devices, such as metaphors, euphemisms, and repetitions, as tools for political persuasion and control.

Chilton (2004) explores the cognitive aspects of political language, suggesting that politicians use linguistic strategies to frame issues in ways that align with their ideological positions. This framing can shape public perception and discourse, reinforcing the politician's agenda. Similarly, Van Dijk (1997) discusses how political elites use language to manipulate public opinion, often through subtle forms of control, such as implicatures, presuppositions, and the management of topical relevance.

## **2.2 Political Media Interviews**

Political media interviews are a unique context where the power relations between politicians and journalists are prominently displayed. Clayman and Heritage (2002) describe these interactions as a "site of struggle" where both parties attempt to control the conversation and influence the audience. They note that politicians often use evasive answers, counter-questions, and topic shifts to avoid direct responses and steer the conversation in their favour.

Bull and Mayer (1993) investigate the techniques used by politicians to handle aggressive questioning, identifying strategies such as repetition, refutation, and recontextualization. These strategies enable politicians to maintain a favourable image while managing the flow of the interview. Montgomery (2007) further elaborates on the performative nature of political interviews, where politicians engage in impression management to project authority and credibility.

In the context of Nigerian political discourse, Opeibi (2009) examines how politicians use language to manoeuvre complex socio-political environment. He highlights the role of code-switching, proverbs, and rhetorical questions as tools for connecting with diverse audiences and asserting dominance in public discourse. This is particularly relevant for understanding the linguistic strategies employed in Nigerian political media interviews.

The interaction between Jesutega Onokpasa and Rufai Oseni on Arise TV's Morning Show exemplifies these relations. Onokpasa's frequent interruptions and attempts to control the narrative illustrate the linguistic strategies used by political figures to assert dominance in media interactions. This case study aligns with the broader literature on language and politics, providing insights into the power relations and argumentative strategies in Nigerian political discourse.

## **2.3 Definitions and Concepts**

Insertions in conversation refer to additional elements or comments inserted by a speaker during an ongoing turn of talk. These can be clarifications, elaborations, or comments that add to the current topic without necessarily interrupting the flow (Bublitz, 1988). Interruptions, on the other hand, occur when one speaker cuts off another, thereby disrupting the ongoing speech (Zimmerman & West, 1975). While both insertions and interruptions can influence the structure and model of conversation, interruptions are often viewed as more intrusive and potentially confrontational.

## **2.4 Types and Functions**

### **2.4.1 Insertions**

Insertions serve various interactional purposes, such as providing additional information, making clarifications, or expressing agreement or disagreement. They can enhance the coherence of discourse by connecting ideas and maintaining thematic continuity (Schegloff, 1982). According to Tannen (1989), insertions can also function as backchannels, signalling active listening and engagement without overtaking the conversational floor.

### **2.4.2 Interruptions**

On the other hand, interruptions can be categorized into several types based on their function and intent as follows:

- 1) Cooperative Interruptions: These are interruptions that support the current speaker, such as completing their sentences or expressing agreement (Goldberg, 1990).
- 2) Competitive Interruptions: These aim to take control of the conversation and redirect the topic, often reflecting underlying power dynamics (James & Clarke, 1993).

## **2.5 Sociolinguistic Perspectives**

### **2.5.1 Sociocultural Context**

The use of interruptions and insertions is influenced by sociocultural context. In some cultures, interruptions are seen as a natural part of lively conversation, whereas in others, they may be considered rude and disruptive (Blum-Kulka, 1997). This cultural variability underscores the importance of context in interpreting the function and appropriateness of interruptions and insertions.

### **2.5.2 Power and Politeness**

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory offer insights into how power relations shape conversational behaviour. They argue that speakers use interruptions and insertions strategically to manage face needs and negotiate social hierarchies. For instance, a higher-status individual might interrupt more freely, reflecting their relative power and lower need to mitigate face-threatening acts.

### **2.6 Interruptions in Institutional Talk**

Studies of institutional talk, such as courtroom interactions and medical consultations, reveal how interruptions function to maintain or challenge institutional authority (Atkinson & Drew, 1979). In these settings, interruptions can be a way for professionals to assert expertise and control the direction of the conversation (Heritage & Clayman, 2010).

#### **2.6.1 Media and Political Discourse**

In media and political discourse, interruptions are often used strategically to manage time, control narratives, and assert dominance (Greatbatch, 1988). Research by Clayman (2002) shows that political interviewers use interruptions to challenge interviewees and steer the conversation, reflecting the adversarial nature of political discourse.

It is worth noting that insertions and interruptions are complex, multifaceted phenomena that play crucial roles in conversational structure. They serve various functions, from managing interactional flow to asserting power and negotiating social relationships. Understanding these elements requires considering factors such as social status, cultural context, and institutional settings.

### **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary approach to studying discourse that views language as a form of social practice. It aims to uncover the ways in which discourse shapes, and is shaped by, power relations, ideologies, and social structures. This overview will discuss CDA from various perspectives, highlighting key theorists and their contributions to the field.

### **2.7.1 Fairclough's Approach**

Norman Fairclough is one of the most prominent figures in CDA. His model involves three interrelated dimensions: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. Textual analysis examines the language features and structures within a text. Discursive practice analyses the production, distribution, and consumption of the text, while social practice considers the broader societal and cultural context, including power relations and ideologies (Fairclough, 1995).

Fairclough emphasizes the role of discourse in constructing social identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge. He argues that discourse is both shaped by and shapes social structures, highlighting the dialectical relationship between language and society (Fairclough, 2001).

### **2.7.2 Van Dijk's Socio-cognitive Approach**

Teun A. van Dijk offers a socio-cognitive perspective on CDA, integrating cognitive theories with social analysis. Van Dijk focuses on the role of mental models and social cognition in discourse production and comprehension. He argues that ideologies are embedded in discourse and influence how individuals process and interpret information (van Dijk, 1998).

Van Dijk's approach examines how power and dominance are reproduced through discourse, particularly in media and political contexts. He highlights the importance of context in understanding discourse, considering factors such as the social and historical background, the participants' knowledge, and the situational context (van Dijk, 2009).

### **2.7.3 Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach**

Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach (DHA) combines historical analysis with discourse analysis. DHA aims to uncover the historical roots of discursive practices and how they evolve over time. Wodak emphasizes the importance of context, including the sociopolitical and historical environment, in shaping discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Wodak's approach is particularly useful for analysing political discourse, as it considers how historical events and processes influence contemporary discourse. DHA involves a systematic analysis of various types of data, including written texts, spoken language, and visual media, to understand how discourses are constructed and maintained (Wodak, 2001).

### **2.7.4 Critical Linguistics**

Critical linguistics, developed by scholars such as Roger Fowler, Robert Hodge, Gunther Kress, and Tony Trew, is a precursor to CDA. This approach focuses on the ways in which language reflects and reinforces social power structures. It analyses the linguistic features of texts to reveal underlying ideologies and power relations (Fowler et al., 1979).

Critical linguistics shares with CDA a commitment to social critique and an interest in the role of language in social life. However, it tends to focus more narrowly on linguistic analysis, whereas CDA incorporates a broader range of social theories and methodologies.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) views discourse as a social practice shaped by power relations, ideologies, and social structures. Key theorists offer various analytical perspectives. Norman Fairclough's approach includes textual analysis (language features), discursive practice (text production and consumption), and social practice (societal context and power relations). Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach examines mental models, social cognition, and how ideologies influence information processing and power reproduction. Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach emphasizes historical roots, sociopolitical context, and systematic analysis of diverse data. Critical Linguistics, developed by scholars like Roger Fowler, focuses on how language reflects and reinforces power structures, revealing underlying ideologies. Fairclough's framework is ideal for analysing the Arise TV Morning Show interview due to its comprehensive approach, enabling a deep understanding of how interruptions and aggressive language reflect power relations and ideologies in Nigerian political discourse.

### **3.0 Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data Collection Method**

The primary data of the study is a televised media interview on the Arise TV Show, aired on October 30, 2023. This interview was selected from a pool of 17 similar interviews using the purposeful sampling technique. Researchers meticulously transcribed the interview by repeatedly playing the video, ensuring an accurate capture of all verbal exchanges, interruptions, and notable linguistic features. Following transcription, the researchers carefully analysed the content to extract detailed insights and linguistic patterns relevant to the study's objectives.

The interaction between Jesutega Onokpasa and the interviewers, particularly Rufai Oseni, is highly relevant for studying interruption and dominance by political figures. Onokpasa frequently interrupts and tries to control the conversation, especially when his views are challenged. His dismissive responses and narrative control illustrate how political figures use

linguistic strategies to assert power in media interactions. This interaction aligns with the research objectives by highlighting power relations in Nigerian public discourse. The interview examines the political landscape following the Nigerian Supreme Court's affirmation of President Bola Ahmad Tinubu's election, covering court ruling implications, political faction reactions, and discussions on policies like fuel subsidy removal.

This study employs Norman Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the interaction. Fairclough's model, which includes textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, is well-suited for exploring the complexities of power relations in discourse (Fairclough, 1995)

#### **4.0 Data Analysis and Discussion**

**Table (1) Textual Analysis**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
Interruptions and Overlaps	"It's okay. How are you?" "Don't raise your voice at me young man."	Frequent interruptions by Onokpasa serve to assert dominance and control over the conversation. These interruptions undermine Oseni's position as the interviewer and disrupt his argument.
Tone and Address	"Don't raise your voice at me young man." "I can't believe this boy."	Onokpasa uses a condescending tone and diminutive terms like "young man" and "boy" to reduce Oseni's status and assert his own authority.
Defensive and Offensive Language	"That is a lie. You are a liar. You are pretending to be a journalist." "...badly brought-up little boy" "How dare you disrespect me... nonsense."	Onokpasa's defensive stance involves accusing Oseni of lying and sensationalism, diverting the conversation from substantive issues to personal attacks in an attempt to discredit Oseni.
Strategic non-response	"I will walk out the studio if you raise your voice at me" "I am not dignifying that insulting question with a response."	Onokpasa avoids answering difficult questions directly, instead critiquing the question itself to evade accountability and shift the focus from the content of the question.

#### 4.1 Discussion on Textual Analysis

The analysis of Onokpasa’s discourse during the interaction reveals several strategic elements used to maintain dominance and control over the conversation. Frequent interruptions and overlaps, such as "It’s okay. How are you?" and "Don't raise your voice at me young man," serve to assert dominance and disrupt Oseni's line of questioning. Additionally, Onokpasa employs a condescending tone and diminutive terms like "young man" and "boy" to undermine Oseni’s status and reinforce his own authority. This hierarchical positioning is further supported by defensive and offensive language, where Onokpasa accuses Oseni of lying and sensationalism ("That is a lie. You are a liar. You are pretending to be a journalist"), thereby diverting the discussion from substantive issues to personal attacks. Furthermore, Onokpasa’s strategic non-response, as exemplified by statements like "I am not dignifying that insulting question with a response," allows him to avoid answering challenging questions directly and shifts the focus from the content of the questions to their perceived propriety, thereby evading accountability. These tactics collectively illustrate a deliberate effort to control the discourse and diminish the interviewer's authority.

**Table (2) Discursive Practice**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
Production and Distribution	The interaction is broadcasted on live TV, which influences the behaviour of both parties.	Oseni, as the anchor, aims to uphold journalistic standards by pressing for answers, while Onokpasa, aware of the audience, seeks to project authority and loyalty to his party (APC).
Power Relations	The power struggle is evident through the use of language and interruption.	Oseni’s role as interviewer is challenged by Onokpasa’s aggressive interruptions and refusal to engage substantively. The live TV setting heightens the stakes, as both individuals are aware of their public personas.
Audience Consumption	Viewers witness a conflict that not only informs them about political issues but also showcases the power relations between media and political figures.	Oseni’s perseverance in questioning juxtaposed with Onokpasa’s evasiveness informs the audience’s perception of both individuals and their respective institutions.

#### 4.2 Discussion on Discursive Analysis

The discursive practice in the interaction between Rufai Oseni and Jesutega Onokpasa, as analysed through Fairclough's model, highlights the complexities of media and political relations. The broadcast on live TV significantly shapes the behaviour of both parties, with Oseni striving to maintain journalistic integrity by persistently seeking answers, while Onokpasa leverages the platform to assert his authority and demonstrate loyalty to his party (APC). This setting intensifies the power struggle, where Onokpasa's aggressive interruptions and avoidance of substantive engagement challenge Oseni's role as the interviewer. The live nature of the interaction amplifies the stakes, making both participants acutely aware of their public personas. For the audience, this exchange provides not only political information but also a vivid display of the power relations between media and political figures. Oseni's determination to extract answers, contrasted with Onokpasa's evasiveness, shapes the viewers' perceptions of both individuals and the institutions they represent, reflecting broader societal and ideological conflicts.

**Table (3) Social Practice**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
Ideological Context	Oseni's questioning represents a critical stance on government policies, while Onokpasa's responses reflect a defensive posture typical of political loyalists.	The conversation reflects broader ideological conflicts in Nigerian politics, particularly regarding economic policies and governance under President Tinubu.
Power Relations	Onokpasa's attempts to dominate the conversation and undermine Oseni's credibility.	The interaction exemplifies the struggle for control in public discourse. Onokpasa's behaviour reflects a hierarchical power dynamic where political figures often attempt to assert dominance over media practitioners.
Cultural Norms and Expectations	"I am your guest; you must respect me." "Don't talk to me rudely" "Talk to me respectfully."	The exchange highlights cultural expectations regarding respect and hierarchy. Onokpasa's insistence on being treated with respect taps into cultural norms that emphasize respect

		for elders and authority figures, which he leverages to his advantage.
--	--	--

### **4.3 Discussion Social Practice**

The interaction between Oseni and Onokpasa, analysed through the lens of social practice, illuminates key ideological and power relations within Nigerian politics. Ideologically, the conversation underscores the broader conflicts over economic policies and governance under President Tinubu, with Oseni's critical questioning reflecting dissent and Onokpasa's defensive responses embodying the loyalty of political adherents. Power relations are starkly evident as Onokpasa's frequent interruptions and attempts to dominate the dialogue serve to undermine Oseni's role as interviewer, highlighting the hierarchical power relations where political figures assert dominance over media practitioners. Furthermore, the exchange reveals cultural norms regarding respect and hierarchy. Onokpasa's insistence on being treated with respect, invoking his status as a guest, leverages cultural expectations that prioritize respect for elders and authority figures, thus bolstering his position and attempting to silence critical inquiry. This interplay of ideological stances, power struggles, and cultural norms provides a rich context for understanding the complex structure of public discourse in Nigerian society.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

The study has analysed Jesutega Onokpasa's linguistic strategies in his interview with Rufai Oseni to assert dominance, assess their impact on the power relation between interviewer and interviewee, and contextualize the interaction within Nigerian politics' broader ideological and cultural framework. Onokpasa utilized frequent interruptions, a condescending tone, offensive language, and strategic non-responses to assert control and deflect substantive questioning. The broadcast's live nature intensified the power struggle, with Oseni striving for journalistic integrity while Onokpasa projected authority and loyalty to the APC. This relation, marked by aggressive interruptions and evasion of substantive engagement, challenged Oseni's role as the interviewer and heightened awareness of their public personas. The conversation reflected ideological conflicts over governance under President Tinubu, with Oseni's questioning representing dissent and Onokpasa's responses embodying political loyalty. Additionally, cultural norms emphasizing respect for authority figures allowed Onokpasa to bolster his

position and stifle critical inquiry. Overall, the interaction provided insight into the intricate structure of public discourse in Nigerian society, where power, ideology, and culture intersect.

## References

- Bayram, F. (2010). Manipulation of ideology in translation of political texts: A critical discourse analysis perspective. *ARECLS*, 7, 23-40.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1997). *Dinner talk: Cultural patterns of sociability and socialization in family discourse*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bloor, M., & Bloor, T. (2007). *The practice of CDA: An introduction*. Hodder Education.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bublitz, W. (1988). *Supportive fellow-speakers and cooperative conversations*. John Benjamins.
- Bull, P., & Mayer, K. (1993). How Not to Answer Questions in Political Interviews. *Political Psychology*, 14(4), 651-666.
- Chilton, P. (1993). *Analyzing political discourse: Theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Clayman, S. (2001). News interview. In N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences* (pp. 10642-10645). Elsevier Science LTD.
- Clayman, S. (2002). Disagreements and third parties: Dilemmas of neutrality in panel news interviews. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34(10-11), 1385-1401
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power* (2nd ed.). Longman.
- Feldman, O. (2016). Televised political interviews: A paradigm for analysis. *Asian Journal for Public Opinion Research*, 3(2), 63-82. <https://doi.org/10.15206/ajpor.2016.3.2.63>
- Fowler, R., Hodge, R., Kress, G., & Trew, T. (1979). *Language and control*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Goldberg, J. A. (1990). Interrupting the discourse on interruptions: An analysis in terms of relationally neutral, power- and rapport-oriented acts. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14(6), 883-903.
- Greatbatch, D. (1988). A turn-taking system for British news interviews. *Language in Society*, 17(3), 401-430.
- Heritage, J. (1985). Analyzing news interviews: Aspects of talk for an overhearing audience. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis* (Vol. 3, pp. 95-119). Academic Press.
- Heritage, J., & Clayman, S. (2010). *Talk in action: Interactions, identities, and institutions*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- James, D., & Clarke, S. (1993). Women, men, and interruptions: A critical review. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Gender and conversational interaction* (pp. 231-280). Oxford University Press.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. Arnold.
- Lakoff, R. (2004). *Language and Woman's Place: Text and Commentaries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lazar, M. M. (2005). *Feminist critical discourse analysis: Gender, power and ideology in discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Montgomery, M. (2007). *The Discourse of Broadcast News: A Linguistic Approach*. Routledge.
- Opeibi, B. O. (2009). *Discourse, politics and the 1993 presidential election campaigns in Nigeria*. Nouvelle Communications Ltd.

- Schegloff, E. A. (1982). Discourse as an interactional achievement: Some uses of "uh huh" and other things that come between sentences. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Analyzing discourse: Text and talk* (pp. 71-93). Georgetown University Press.
- Tannen, D. (1989). *Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tannen, D. (1994). *Gender and discourse*. Oxford University Press.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. Sage.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2009). *Society and discourse: How social contexts influence text and talk*. Cambridge University Press.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1983). Small insults: A study of interruptions in cross-sex conversations between unacquainted persons. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae, & N. Henley (Eds.), *Language, gender, and society* (pp. 102-117). Newbury House.
- Wodak, R. (2001). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 63-94). Sage.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). *Methods for critical discourse analysis* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Zimmerman, D. H., & West, C. (1975). Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation. In B. Thorne & N. Henley (Eds.), *Language and sex: Difference and dominance* (pp. 105-129). Newbury House.