



An Analysis of Political Pronouns and Lexical Items in Late President Muhammadu Buhari's Farewell Speech

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ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of political pronouns and lexical item in late President Muhammadu Buhari's (2023) farewell speech to interrogate the complexity of duplicated personality who first as Soldier and now turned politician from the perspective of Van Dijk's (2006) socio-cognitive theory. The data are generated via online download to identify the personal pronouns used by the politician to convinced audience and which the analysis is presented through a statistical table. Rhetorical lexical items are identified and subjected to semantic interpretation based on the context. The findings show that late President Buhari used political pronouns to achieve rhetorical effect. He also used rhetorical lexical items which were not complex to solve.

Keywords

Political discourse, rhetorical and persuasive strategies, rhetorical lexical and ideology

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1. Introduction

Political discourse analysis (PDA) is based on power, power abuse or domination through political discourse. Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (2006) agree that political discourse analysis (PDA) is above the discursive level as it involves social and political inequality. Every successful politician has to learn how to use persuasive language and rhetoric in order to cajole and win the votes of the citizenry. Late President Muhammadu Buhari was handicapped in the art of oratory because he rose to

the position of General in the Nigerian army in 1961. He served as a military head of state from 1983 – 1985. However, in 2003 he entered politics and attempted the Presidential election but failed. This is not suppressing because he had imbibed too much of soldier life to change to politics this is what made his political life interesting for study because he finally succeeded in 2015 he was elected president after twelve (12) years. He was re-elected again in the 2019 – 2023 after eight (8) years. It is not surprising that his farewell speech was full of political pronouns and rhetorical choices to communicate his message.

2. Objectives of the Study

Identifying the political pronouns and rhetorical lexical items.

Showing their semantic implication.

Drawing a table for qualitative analysis of political pronouns with discussions.

Explaining instances of rhetoric

3. Review of Related Studies

Scholars have researched into theory of ideology and persuasion but their perspective and choice of text differ from this research.

Ehirechi, (2014) critically analysed the ideological uses of models by Nigerian politicians in electioneering campaign. He expunged data from the political manifesto of Barrister Rotimi Akeredolu of the Action Congress of Nigeria.

Dr. Olusegun Mimiko of Labour Party (2012); he used critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the yardstick of analysis. His findings show the modal verbs ‘will’ and ‘have’ have the highest frequency of usage conclusively showing the party manifesto full of promises and pledges. The modals ‘can’, ‘I’, ‘must’ were used to indicate obligations, promises and soliciting for support and manipulation.

Rashidi and Rasti, (2012) researched into the textual modes used by the west to impose its own values and ideologies in its media representations with strong sanctions against Iran. Data was obtained from your news report and the stories taken from the foremost us online paper.

Critical discourse Analysis can be traced down history lane to the Frankfurt school before the Second World War II Agger (1992) and Rasmussen, (1996) however the application of CDA came up from the United Kingdom and Australia towards the end of 1970. CDA has also been liaised with other critical philosophical developments in the field of social sciences (socio-Linguistics). Psychology sociology hence its definition from different perspectives; thus, Ibarez and Iniguez (1997), Singh (1996), Thomas (1993) and Fairclough (2001) see CDA as a form of critical social science thereby

highlighting the problems envisaged by people in their daily social life and how to overcome such problems. CDA also looks at how social power abuse using dominance inequality enacted, reproduced and resisted in the context of socio-political discourse. As an interdisciplinary analytical viewpoint that analyzes authority, dominance and social inequality. While discourse analysis can be applied to all types of research, CDA focuses on social problems primarily the role of discourse in the creation and recreation of power abuse or domination (Van Dijk, 2001). CDA attempts to create a relationship between language and power. Wodak (2021) says CDA is mainly concerned analyzing with transparent and non-transparent structural relationship of dominance, discrimination, power and control as it is inherent in the language. As for CDA Wodak (2001) claims that critical here means an in-depth study/examination thus dogging up the complexities, educationist dogmatism and dichotomies being self reflexist Fairclough and Wodak (1997) enlist eight categories or principles of CDA as:

- i. Social problems.
- ii. Power relations are discursive.
- iii. Discourse constitutes society and culture.
- iv. Discourse does ideological work.
- v. Discourse is historical.
- vi. The link between text and society is mediated.
- vii. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
- viii. Discourse is a form of social action.

CDA is generally used in analyzing texts of politicians in order to reveal their political agenda Cameron, (2001).

4. Political Discourse Analysis (PDA)

Van Dijk (2006) maintains the focus of PDA is on the analysis of political discourse particularly with the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through political discourse.

4.1 Persuasion in Language use

Persuasion is an important device that helps politicians to achieve their goals, it helps to convince people faster than any other devices (Ferrari, 2012). Lakoff (1972) defines persuasion as the moves by a particular group of people/party to change the behaviors, feelings intentions or view point of another group/party. Pishghadam and Rasouli (2011) maintains that persuasion is a direct speech act performed by a speaker with the intention of making listener to perform an action thereby reshaping/changing the listeners feeling, behaviors based on his/her ideology. Gass (2018) maintains that politicians used

persuasion to influence their audience and gain their full support. Persuasion and rhetorics can be used interchangeably as was the practices in ancient Greece with philosophers like Plato, Aristotle etc.

Rhetoric: Partington (2010) claims rhetoric in the art of persuasive discourse. Fairclough (2012) on the other hand states that persuasive language is written to cajole/persuade the audience to buy a product with the believe that it is the best. Van Djik (1997) states that rhetoric is the art or study of persuasive public discourse which employs such Linguistics features as intensifiers, adjectives, lexical items as well as non-linguistic features like metaphor, personification, repetition to make discourse more expressive, persuasive develop an attractive.

4.2 Principle of Persuasion:

Cialdini (2001) postulates six principles

- i. **Reciprocation Principle:** This is based on the law of karma which traditionally is believed that whatever one does to others would be revisited on him thus politicians make big promises in return for the people vote.
- ii. **Principle of Scarcity:** Here the politicians create the impression that he is scarce to come by (that is his likes are not many around). Therefore, he is a messiah.
- iii. **The Principle of authority:** The ranking of the person in the society is what matters here; thus, out of respect for a party leader his words are taken for real and he wins the people votes.
- iv. **The principle of Consistency:** Consistency here refer to what is most liked/prioritized or desired by the people; thus, a constant repetition of such promises creates a sense of commitment.
- v. **The principle of Consensus:** This principle is based on majority carry the vote Cialdini (2001) states that consensus is a principle of human behavior whereby people tend to determine what is correct and what is not by examining the action of others i.e. they assume that an action is correct. If another person agree with it or when they are told that many other person are doing it. Persuaders in political discourse tend to use this principle to project their candidates as consensus candidates who have gained national acceptance.
- vi. **The principle of liking:** Here the politicians gain peoples votes based on their affection for him because they feel he likes them too i.e he identifies with them.

4.3 Rhetorical/Persuasive Strategies

Many linguistic devices are used in discourse to persuade or convince 'the audience' these items are referred to as rhetorical persuasive strategies. (Obeng, 1997; Van Djik, 2011; Thomas et al 2004) have suggested the following persuasive strategies.

- i. **Creativity:** this helps in structuring a political discourse towards a show of truthfulness.
- ii. **Indirectness:** Van Dijk, (2011) claims this is similar to politeness whereby politicians spread negative ideas about their opponents through invendos metaphors, circumlocution etc.
- iii. **Intertextuality:** Genette, (1983) says it is the presence of a text in another text. Fairclough (1992) claims that all texts are intertextual as every text is a constituent of another. Intertextuality is used by politicians to strengthen their speech and reinforce religious, sociocultural and historical context. Kitawa and Ozerova, (2019); Obeng, (1997) claims that intertextuality increases the credibility of a text and attracts the attention of the audience to believe in the speaker's words.

Choice of lexis: the use of certain words highlights the seriousness of the speaker in concerning people (Aman, 2005). Denham and Roy, (2005) claim the choice of vocabulary provides valuable insight into those words which surround or support a concept.

References: personal pronouns play an important role in sending persuasive message by political leader. Thomas et al (2004) says the first person pronoun 'I' is used in emphasizing concept and in declaring some kind of responsibility 'we' a third person pronoun is used to show togetherness, inclusiveness or exclusiveness is exemplified through the use of 'our', 'we', 'us' inclusive while the pronoun 'they', 'their' 'them' is exclusive. Other rhetorical devices are metaphor which is a strong persuasive device representing abstract objects as concrete entities. Personification is when non-human entities are represented as human. Evidence concretizes the speakers claims or statement. Rhetorical questions state the obvious thus they do not need an answer. Analogy creates comparison.

Ideology in politics: from the perspective of CDA Datondji and Amousu, (2019) define ideology as a mental representation of the world with implication in power relation such as those of domination and suppression ideologies are abstract mental system that Dorham (2007) sees ideology as a political term an enlist it different conception thus:

- i. A political believe system
- ii. An action oriented set of political ideas
- iii. The ideas of the ruling class.
- iv. The world view of a particular social class or social group.
- v. Political ideas that embodied or articulate class or social interest.
- vi. Ideas that propagate false consciousness among the exploited or oppressed.
- vii. Ideas that situate the individuals within a social context and generate a sense of collective belonging.

viii. An official sanction set of ideas used to legitimize a political system or regime.

ix. Embracing political doctrine that claim a monopoly of truth.

5. Theoretical Framework

Various theoretical Frameworks have been propounded for the analysis of CDA but the one theory chosen for analysis in this research is Van Djijs Socio-cognitive Approach (2006).

Van Djijs Socio-cognitive theory has two levels of discourse analysis, macro and micro. Macro level refers to power dominance and inequality between social groups while micro is determined by language use, discourse, verbal interaction and communication. Van djik states that ideological Discourse is generally organized by a general strategy of positive self-presentation (boasting) and negatives other presentation (derogation). In fact Van Djik claims that CDA should not limit itself to a study of the relationship between discourse and social structure but language use as discourse always presupposes the intervening mental models, goals and general social representations (knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms, values) of language users. Therefore the study of discourse circulates between society/culture/situation, cognition, Discourse language. Van Djijs socio-cognitive approach tends to make clear ideological dimension of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ and demonstrate the discursive structures and strategies used in exercising the dominant power. Unlike other theories Van Djik maintains that discourse structures and social structures can only be related through the mental representation of language users as individuals and as social members. Ideologies are the product of social institution these group specific ideologies in turn shape the discourse or texts produced by members of such group; the discourse produced by such group members are then used to maintain social interaction.

Additionally the socio-cognitive approach aims to address problems of power abuse, domination and resistance as found in discourse branching into three categories: cognitive, social and discourse components. While the cognitive includes memory, mental (personal cognition of the setting, participants, their identities, roles and relationships action and events) and social cognition (socially shared knowledge, ideologies and opinions), the social components deals with intergroup and intergroup relationships.

Van Djik, (2007) proposes the following in analyzing ideologies:

- i. Emphasize positive-things about us;
- ii. Emphasize negative things about them;
- iii. De-emphasize negative things about us;

iv. De-emphasize positive things about them;

Other ways of emphasizing or de-emphasizing positive and negative descriptions are headlining foregrounding, Topicalization, active structures, examples and illustrations, contrast paragraph order, metaphors, hyperboles, irony and some other rhetorical devices can be used to emphasize positive things about ‘us’ and negative things about ‘them’. De-emphasize negative things about us and negative things about them can be done with passive structures, small letter, euphemism, implicit information, back grounding, hedging, vagueness modality disclaimers, synonym, paraphrasing and low-level description in Van Dijk, (2015).

i. polarization: this concerns representation of the agents i.e the positive representation of the in-group and negative depiction of our group.

ii. The pronouns “we (us, our) and they (them), there are regarded as political pronouns. They are used to represent the actors and their enemies.

iii. Emphasis of positive self-description and negative other descriptions.

iv. Activities; what the ‘in-group’ does and must do are represented

v. Norms and values; what is good or bad depending on the ideologies of the group is depicted as the justification of what is right might not be generally right in the larger society

vi. Interest; it refers to the discourse representation of the groups struggle or interest. While analyzing the linguistic items used as persuasive/rhetorical strategies such as creativity, modality, inter textuality, coherence indirectness, reference among others will be used. Even though these strategies have been explained in the literature review. The ideological implications behind the use of such strategies by the politicians will be revealed.

6. Methodology

Late President Muhammadu Buharis farewell address was downloaded from the internet.

i. political pronouns and rhetorical lexical items were expunged as data.

ii. a qualitative table was drawn for the political pronouns with discussions. Rhetorical lexical items were subjected to semantic interpretation.

iii. findings were made with conclusion.

7. Data Presentation and Analysis

Table of qualitative analysis of political pronouns, S/N represents sentence number

Paragraph Number	Political Pronouns	Frequency of occurrence	Percentage

2, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 15, 16, 17, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 34, 35, 35, 36, 36, 37, 37, 38	I	23	28.0
2, 11, 11, 12, 12, 13, 15, 15, 20, 27, 29, 35	You/Your	12	14.6
3, 4, 5, 5, 9, 9, 18, 21, 24, 25, 26, 31, 36	We	13	15.9
2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 10, 10, 12, 16, 17, 17, 19, 20, 21, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 28, 32	Our	24	29.3
1, 2, 11, 15, 24, 26, 27, 33, 34, 35	My	10	12.2
Total		82	100%

8. Discussion

The political pronouns used in Late President Buhari's farewell address. 'I' is a first person or personal pronoun used by the speaker for emphasis

e.g. ... I address you today ...

... I salute the doggedness ...

... I call on all us ...

Therefore 'I' is used emphatically to indicate domination; it occurred twenty three (23) times with a percentage of 28.0%. 'You' is a second person pronoun while 'Your' shows the possessive aspect.

I congratulate you on the realisation of your dream ...

You have indeed worked for this day and God has crowned your efforts.

'You' in the two citations above does not refer to Nigerian but to Bola Ahmed Tinubu who had waited for ten (10) years for the realisation of dream 'Your' is possessive because it refers to the realised dream of becoming a President, 'You' and 'Your' occurred twelve (12) times with 14.6 percent. 'We' is a third person pronoun but it is speaker inclusive.

... We must as a nation improve and sustain gains we make ...

... We increased the ability ...

... We completed age-long projects and processes ...

'We' is positively inclusive as the president doesn't claim all the achievements alone but as a feat achieved by him and the citizenry 'Our' is a possessive pronoun speaker inclusive

... To ensure that our democracy remains resilient and our elected representatives ...

... The deftness of our response

... Our administration also provided an enabling environment ...

So ‘our’ exhibits positive possessiveness thus ‘... our democracy ...’, ‘... our response ...’ and ‘... our administration ...’ all indicate collective action whose benefits and appreciation is not just for the President but for the generality of the people. ‘Our’ occurred twenty four (24) times with 29.3 percent. ‘My’ is a first person possessive pronouns it has the lowest frequency occurring only ten (10) times with 12.2%.

... To my brother, friend and fellow ...

... My fellow countrymen ...

... members of the national Assembly deserve my appreciation ...

‘My’ above shows a personal relationship between the speaker and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, First person pronoun ‘I’ which has 28.0 percent. It is important note that ‘our’ has the quality of being speaker inclusive (that is a modest way of operating closeness to the audience). The first person pronoun on the other hand refers to the speaker directly. The third person pronoun ‘we’ follows closely with 15.9 percent. Hence the speaker uses it to create a sense of inclusiveness/belonging in the achievements made by the Buhari administration. The second person ‘you’ and the possessive ‘your’ has 14.6 percent. The speaker possessive pronoun ‘my’ is used the least used with a frequency of ten (10) and 12.2 percent.

9. Graphological Analysis

The paragraphs were deliberately numbered thus showing the different ideas discussed in each paragraph. While maintaining intertextuality as all the speech is about the achievements of Buhari’s government during his eight year tenure. His address mode showed a sense of Cordiality:

My fellow Nigerian brother sisters and friends of Nigeria.

Fellow Nigerians, on the strength of your overwhelming support..

Capitalization appeared in the middle of sentences to create importance and emphasis on particular words such as: ‘God’, ‘Nigerian’, ‘Nigeria’, ‘Presidential Election’, ‘Republic’, ‘presidential Candidates’, ‘God-Father’, ‘Efficient’, ‘Productive’, ‘Incorruptible and Citizen-Oriented (EPIC)’, ‘Nigeria Re-Birth’ thus these key words throw high on the important aspect of the farewell speech even though the paragraphs were numbered the grammatical rules of opening sentences were not observed as most sentences opened with conjunctions and prepositions thus stylishly introducing intertextuality as each paragraph is a continuation of the ideas previously earmarked thus giving free-flow.

Rhetorical Lexical Items

Democratically elected...

Well-endowed

Peaceful transition

Entrenched

Redress

Doggedness + resilience

Strength of individual

- dream -

Burning passion

Crowned

Overwhelming support

Political God-Father

Well-resourced

Global economic downturns

Temporary pain

Brigandage and carnage

Unlawful captivity

Patriotism

Progressively

Credible

Revamping economy

Mark and celebrate

Promise

Well resource candidates

Strategies

Despite

Banditry

Terrorist

Arm robbery

Nigeria Re-Birth

I address you today in my last assignment as a democratically elected president.

----- *democratically elected? Are two lexical items which indicate that he was voted into office as president of our well-endowed Nation because Nigeria is bless with natural resources such as crude oil, food stuff etc.*

Hence endowed means gifted by God, hence with a deep sense of gratitude to God, a great deal of application to the Nigerian people and a modest sense of fulfilment. The lexical item gratitude and appreciation of synonyms which shows his recognition of how the high regard Nigerians have for him. **‘Mark’ and ‘celebrate’** thus marking and celebrating the end of one government and beginning of a new government peacefully without any problem. The politics in Nigeria is becoming firmly set rooted, firmly established entrenched as people have a better understanding **‘redress’** where people are allowed to complain and make a case in court if they feel they have been wrongly perceived

Doggedness and resilience; the outgoing president Muhammad Buhari saluted the president aspirants for their unwavering committed and ability to withstand losing at the polls despite all else.

Overwhelming support; unanimous support without tribalism.

Promise; to do the correct things that would make impact on the lives of Nigerians and expectation to get voted into office.

Progressively; moving away from the path of correctness. Progressively here is the diversion the country from the lane/ path of correctness.

Credible; here refers to authenticity of that results of the votes casted because the elections were fair and transparent and rigging had almost been wiped away.

Political God-Father: the new trend highlights poor people wining election through vote and not through Godfathering, king maker or an exchange of money for votes.

Well resource candidates: rich contestants.

Strategies: indicate measures put in place to ensure the economy remained afloat during global world economic crisis.

Revamping economy: Updating/ modernizing the economy which resulted in temporary pain suffering but it yielded positive results to the advantage of citizens.

Banditry, Terrorist, arm robbery and other criminal all acts of robbery by violence, lawlessness, organized crime all became reduced.

Brothers keeper: having a sense of responsibility being answerable for the wellbeing of not just your family but humanity.

Despite: he craving to get rid of corruption in Nigeria

Nigeria Re-birth: is a figurative phrase because it refers to the reawakening to a new beginning where the Nigerian citizens will thrive in peace after undergoing reforms that in at producing an efficient, productive, incorruptible and citizen- oriented federal civil service.

10. Findings

The deliberate choice of the pronouns 'I', 'You', 'Your', 'we', 'our' and 'my' aligns with the ideology of polarization which fits the macro level of analysis propounded by Van Dijk (2006) which is ideological discourse generally organized by a strategy of positive self-presentation (achievements) while presenting the other party negatively. The socio-cognitive approach clarifies the ideology of 'us' versus 'them'. The ideology of 'Political God-Fatherism' and well 'resourced person' exhibits the theory of power dominance and inequality within social groups. Even political brigandage, carnage and unlawful captivity are used to present the ugly activities of the political period mildly.

11. Conclusion

Late President Muhmmadu Buhari had problem aligning his straight personality as a soldier to the personality of full-fledged politician which is full of diplomatic and persuasive, mostly unreliable.

We are already seeing the outcome of this process as it provided an even playing field where persons without any political God-Father or access to money defeated other well-resources candidates.

Thus while believing he won the election without any God-Father, he failed to realise that it wasn't his popularity that voted him into office, he never got to do the correct things as he had wished because the political God-Fathers and well-resourced persons who get him in made the administration unaccountable, unlawful with an increase of insecurity; thus the said:

I had grown tired of watching the country progressively moving away from the path of correctness. He had completely lost control and left the government in the hands of hooligans and thugs. 'Fellow Nigerians' you know how dear the desire in my heart is to rid the country of corrupt practices that had consistently diminished our efforts to be a great country. Buhari failed to realise that ruling a people at gun-point is having the people obey the last command, while ruling as a democratically elected government means the three arms representing the people (house of assembly, representative and senate) have a say in fact even the president has to present bills for their approval.

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