Textual Analysis of Acceptance and Declaration Speeches of Selected 2023 Presidential Candidates in Nigeria

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Abstract

Language remains a great asset to its users; its indispensability in politics is quite remarkable. This study examined how the English language has been utilized by 2023 presidential candidates in Nigeria. The researcher examined the acceptance and declaration speeches of selected 2023 presidential candidates-Ahmed Tinubu of All Progressive Congress (APC), Atiku Abubakar of Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and Peter Obi of Labour Party (LP). The study was anchored on the theoretical framework of cohesion. However, the approach adopted was a comparative study. The researcher compared how the three candidates used the English language in the presentation of their acceptance and declaration speeches to find out the cohesive devices that were employed to assure the people that their multifarious problems would be solved. The researcher identified the grammatical, lexical and clausal relations in consonance with their functions/roles in the political speeches examined. The present research was deemed necessary as the researcher discovered that nobody (as of the time of this study) has done a textual analysis of the acceptance speeches of these presidential candidates. It was found that the three candidates used cohesive devices as their campaign tools. The researcher also found out that clausal relations employed in the texts were internal procedures and interpretations which helped the speakers in achieving both registeral and generic coherence.

Keywords: Political Discourse, Acceptance speeches, Language, Presidential Candidates

Introduction

A text according to Halliday (1978) is a representation of a cultural event embedded in the context of a situation. An acceptance speech is a text that is used within the confines of political discourse. A text is usually encapsulated in a language. Halliday refers to language as social semiotic. Language can be viewed as the most elaborate semiotic system which caters for human social need communication. Language is far from merely reflecting the nature of society; it serves as a primary means of constructing and maintaining that society. Language helps in maintaining social relationships and also aids the signification of group identity, social stratification and social grooming (Ezeife 1). Its existence and development are closely linked with the social attitudes of human beings and to a great extent are affected by their social views and values. A text is a naturally occurring manifestation of language--- that is, as a communicative language in a context. The surface text is the set of expressions used. These expressions make some knowledge explicit while some remain implicit, though still applied during processing (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981:63). An acceptance speech is a political discourse as pointed out above. Fairclough says that discourse is more than just language use; it is language use, whether speech or writing, seen as a type of social practice. Discourse is language use beyond the level of a sentence, the use of language for communication in context.

The speeches analyzed in this study were acceptance speeches of three Nigerian presidential candidates for the 2023 election---

Ahmed Tinubu of All Progressive Congress (APC), Atiku Abubakar of Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP). Textual analysis of their acceptance (after primaries) speeches is pertinent as they were delivered at a time the Nigerian nation was experiencing a serious setback in its security matters, economy, development, etc. Nigerians are in dire need of a vibrant, selfless and dedicated good leader who will salvage the situation. The researcher examined the three political speeches to find out those linguistic terms, words, expressions and usages that are tilted towards liberating and salvaging the country.

Literature Review
The present study falls under the purview of political discourse. According to Paul Chilton, 'analyzing Political Discourse is a must for anyone interested in the way language is used in the world of politics'. The research explores how human beings think and behave politically. Chilton (2004) goes further to buttress that 'the analysis of political discourse is scarcely new. The Western classical tradition of rhetoric was in its various guises a means of codifying the way public orators used language for persuasive and other purposes. The Greco-Roman tradition regarded humans as both creatures that are defined by the ability to speak and creatures defined by their habit of living together in groups. For writers like Cicero, the cultivation of the power of speech was the essence of the citizen's duty. For others, it was the essence of deception and distortion '. Politics is viewed as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it. Some states are conspicuously

based on power struggles; whether democracies are essentially so constituted is disputable. On the other hand, politics is viewed as cooperation, as the practices and institutions that society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, influence, liberty, and the like (Chilton, 3).

Language and Politics

Language and politics are inseparable; political activity does not exist without the use of language. This is because politics is predominantly constituted in language. In the words of Hague et al. cite Miller (1991: 390), the political process typically involves persuasion and bargaining. This line of reasoning leads to the need to explain how the use of language can produce the effects of authority, legitimacy, consensus, and so forth that are recognized as being intrinsic to politics. Aristotle gives his celebrated definition of humans as creatures whose nature is to live in a polis, in almost the same breath he speaks of the uniquely human capacity for speech:

But obviously, man is a political animal [politikon zoon], in a sense in which a bee is not, or any other gregarious animal. Nature, as we say, does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech.

Aristotle's next sentence distinguishes 'speech' from 'voice'. The latter is possessed by all animals; he says and serves to communicate feelings of pleasure and pain. The uniquely human 'speech' is different. Aristotle sees it in teleological terms, or what might in some branches of today's linguistics be called functional terms:

> Speech, on the other hand, serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and what is unjust. The real difference between man and other animals is that humans alone have the perception of good and evil, just and unjust, etc. (The Politics, 1253a7, translated by T. A. Sinclair 1992).

It must be stressed that one of the functions of language is to perform social functions. One of such social functions of language corresponds to what we understand as 'political'. Chilton opines that:

> What is clear is that political activity does not exist without the use of language. … the doing of politics is predominantly constituted in language. Conversely, it is also arguably the case that the need for language (or for the cultural elaboration of the language instinct) arose from the socialization of humans involving the formation of coalitions, the signalling of group boundaries, and all that these developments imply, including the emergence of what is called reciprocal altruism. This is not of course to say that language arises exclusively out of these motives or functions (6).

From the foregoing, it is worthy therefore to say that language is important for political life and that it is worth spending time looking more closely at language from this perspective.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study:
(i) What are the linguistic terms and expressions that portray (are harbingers of) hope for the Nigerian nation?
(ii) What are the cohesive devices found in the speeches?
(iii) In what ways are the three speeches similar or dissimilar?

Theoretical Framework

Cohesion
Halliday and Hasan (1976) initiated the phenomenon of cohesion in texts. Cohesion in texts is the use of some resources of language to tie parts of texts so that each text moves as a semantic entity (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). According to these linguists, cohesive resources are of two types: Grammatical and lexical. Grammatical ties include reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, while lexical ties are of two broad categories: reiteration and collocation. In this framework, as in Halliday and Hasan (1976), lexical cohesion is achieved by the use of items of open class. Lexical cohesion is the type of cohesion created in discourse by the choice of lexical items. It is the cohesive effect achieved by selecting lexical items that are quite related in some ways to others that have previously been used.

While lexical cohesion refers to the lexical resources on the surface of texts that signal relations between the different parts of texts and make sentences/utterances hang together as unified wholes, coherence refers to how the ideas expressed in texts hang together so that the texts become unified semantic units. The phenomenon of coherence in texts goes beyond the surface

connectedness of cohesive devices, but that of the ideas encoded in turns, sentences and paragraphs of texts. We create cohesion at all these levels (word, phrase, sentence and paragraph), to direct our readers' attention to the development of our argument. Cohesion is a very important aspect of academic writing because it affects the tone of your writing. Halliday and Hasan outlined a taxonomy of types of cohesive relationships which can be formally established within a text and bind a text together. They studied cohesion in English and discovered two categories of cohesive devices: grammatical cohesive devices covering reference, ellipsis, substitution and conjunction, and lexical cohesive devices including reiteration and collocation.

Empirical Studies
Osakpolor Emwinromwankhoe et al (2022) did a Textual Analysis and theirs was centred on President Muhammadu Buhari's Address during the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS Protest. The researchers adopted the textual analysis method and applied Van Dijk's (1997) triadic model which includes the macrostructure (thematic), superstructure (schematic) and microstructure (semantic) to bring to the fore critical issues in the President's address. Dijk's model was preferred over other textual analysis models such as Norman Fairclough's three-point model and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach because, as Madkur (2018) notes, Dijk's model is primarily a socio-cognitive one and is characterized by the interaction between cognition, discourse and society.

Esther Anyanwu (2020) investigated two speeches of President Muhammadu Buhari during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic to ascertain how he employed language, the linguistic elements used and the stylistic and pragmatic imports. Using the theoretical framework of stylistics, the researcher found out that Buhari tactfully used words to address Nigerians on Covid-19 and stressed the measures to be taken to contain the spread of the virus. To achieve the pragmatic effect of his speeches, he used lexical devices such as transitional makers, repetition, alliteration, assonance, and pronouns to project the theme/subject matter of the language discourse. It was found out that the speaker used coordination to denote the relationship of grammatical units, show contrast and as a re-statement of what he said earlier. The speaker repeatedly used coordination in his speeches and this is commendable since in language, identical items may be conjoined in an indefinite number of times. The analysis revealed that the president is committed to combating the coronavirus pandemic that is ravaging his nation. The present study is equally a political discourse but the theoretical framework of cohesion is adopted to analyze the speeches of three presidential candidates of the 2023 election in Nigeria.

Bushra Munawar (2018) analyzed President Donald. J. Trump's political discourse (his speech) was delivered at the White House, America on Jan 30, 2018, by discussing it as power discourse. The study focuses on the linguistic and stylistic analysis of the president's political discourse. Hence, the research probes into the detailed analysis of how in his speech Donald has used different sentence structures, repetitions, ellipses, parallelism, political jargon, technical vocabulary, figurative language and many other linguistic features. Furthermore, the researcher analyzed his

speech from the angle of discourse properties his speech exhibits. Since discourses are shaped by power and positioning of the socially conditioned status of the persons, the researcher argues here that his political discourse demonstrates Trump's power position and his ideology as expressed in his speech. Besides, Norman Fairclough's modal of three levels or dimensions of discourse (Description, interpretation and explanation) has been taken as a theoretical framework of this research study to analyze his speech. The research probes into the detailed analysis of how he uses repetitions, ellipses, parallelism, political jargon, and anaphoric and anaphoric references in his speech. This is a qualitative research design and is based on descriptive analysis. The interpretive analysis as a method has also been adopted to interpret Donald's speech in the framework presented by Fairclough. The significance of the research lies in the fact that it contributes to the field of to the body of Stylistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Political and Visionary Discourse and modern literary theory.

Maya Fitriyani (2018) investigated the linguistic and inter-textual aspects as found in Malcolm X's speech. It aims to answer two questions namely: How do the linguistic features constitute the meaning of the speech? How does inter-textuality constitute the meaning of the speech? Therefore, it attempts to reveal power, inequality and ideology's relationship between structures in the discourse of systematic textual analysis. To reveal the meaning of the speech by Malcolm X, this research adopts inter-textual analysis. This study uses a qualitative approach in analyzing systematic textual analysis. For this study, the writer also uses

documents or texts that are taken from videos of YouTube. The writer uses Malcolm X's speech entitled 'Who Taught to hate yourself' as the main data to analyze in this paper. The result of this analysis shows that linguistic analysis containing vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure contributes to meaning construction. The inter-textual aspect contains indirect quotations and mentions of a document or statement types.

Data Collection and Analysis

This section captures vividly the excerpts of speeches of Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP).

The introductory aspect of each speech was centred on the candidate's gratitude to the members of their party in particular and the Nigerian populace at large. Each candidate employed the first-person pronoun. The sentences constructed are made of clauses; there are clausal relations. The first two lines of the three speeches were predominantly anchored on gratitude. These were expressed in the following sentences:

Reference

The three speakers made use of reference to show a semantic relationship among the various items of the texts. Ahmed Tinubu (here, referred to as aspirant 1) made use of personal references such as I, him, and you. While the reference I refer to the speaker himself, 'him' is used to refer to President Buhari while the reference 'you' refers to the audience. Atiku Abubakar (aspirant 2) also made use of references; I, you, we, and they. Peter Obi (aspirant 3) also utilized reference as a cohesive tool and such

words include: I, me, their, you and we. Reference, as one type of cohesion, deals with a kind of semantic relation whereby information needed for the interpretation of one item is found elsewhere in a text. The pronouns used by the three aspirants are personal pronouns and they provide grammatical connections between individual clauses and utterances. They equally serve as inter-sentential links which relate one idea to the other so that they follow logically and make sense to the listeners and readers. The first aspirant, however, used demonstrative reference: 'And I humbly accept the nomination of this convention to be the presidential candidate of our enlightened, humanitarian and great party, the All Progressives Congress. The second aspirant also used personal reference to establish the common need of Nigerians as a nation in his statement: 'You and I know that Nigeria is in dire need of visionary leadership'. To buttress what Atiku said, Peter Obi stresses that: 'the despicable contrast is that those responsible for the mess – those elected to take care of them – have abandoned the national currency and are living in opulence and like kings, spend dollars to buy delegates as well as houses all over the world'. To provide the nation with a visionary leader, Atiku assures them through his utterance: 'I offer myself to rescue the sinking ship'. Pronouns are one class of words that can perform deictic functions. For example, in political discourse, the first person plural (we, us, our) can be used to induce interpreters to conceptualize group identity, coalitions, parties, and the like, either as insiders or as outsiders. The use of this cohesive device by the three aspirants provided anaphoric, cataphoric and exophoric references.

Parallelism

Parallel structures were used in some of the speeches and at varying degrees. Parallelism is a kind of repetition that is achieved when words, phrases, or clauses are arranged in a sentence such that they mirror or echo each in length and structure. The following excerpts are parallel structures:

We will create jobs for our youth from the Zamfara and Osun gold deposits to the vast agricultural lands across the country.
We will create new opportunities in the FINTECH sector, the creative and entertainment industries, digital skills and other areas (Tinubu).

If we get into power, we will increase the welfare of all security forces (Atiku).

In the battle to retake Nigeria, the odds are great and seemingly insurmountable (Obi).

Atiku promises Nigerians through the use of parallelism:

Under my presidency, I want to focus on five key areas: Unity of Nigeria, Security, Economy, Education and devolving more resources and powers to the federating units.
According to the number 3 aspirant (Obi), 'Nigeria shall rise again: and her people will be proud to claim ownership of her patrimony'. Words and clauses as seen above are used to build parallel structures.

Conjunction

A conjunction is a specification of how what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before. It is somewhat different from the other cohesive relations. Conjunctions signal the relationships between grammatical elements or elements of discourse. Conjunctions are used in the three speeches but are mostly found in Obi's speech. They are: 'therefore', however, and, meanwhile, as a result, first. However, such connectives were not many. The type of conjunction mostly used in the speeches is conjunction by extension which implies that one clause extends the meaning of another by adding something new to it. What is added may be just an addition, replacement, or alternative. The only additive conjunctions used were 'and' and 'however'. Causal-conditional conjunctions used are 'as a result' and 'in the end'. It is evident from the above that connectives were used minimally to realize the systematic relationship between sentences or paragraphs in a text.

Reiteration

A reiteration is a form of lexical cohesion which involves the repetition of a lexical item, at one end of the scale, the use of a general word to refer back to a lexical item, at the other end of the scale, many things between the use of a synonym, near-synonym, or superordinate (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p.278). Too many repetitions were made by Tinubu. His speech greatly varies from those of Atiku and Obi as a result of his continuous use of reiteration. He records the highest use of repetitive words: 'Do we dare reform our national economy such that prosperity grows as poverty vanishes? Yes, we dare. Do we dare provide meaningful

education and jobs for our youths so that they may strive for a better future? Yes, we dare. Do we dare feed our nation and provide the farmer with a solid income for his toil? Yes, we dare. Do we dare construct a society where the vulnerable, the weak, the disadvantaged and the elderly are attended to and loved?' Here, the speaker, through the power of language establishes his ability to work. Atiku repeated a few words as can be seen in: 'I do not doubt in my mind that we as Nigerians can do it. We have done it in 1993. We can do it in 2023. We must stand firm, get our PVCs, come out en-masse, cast our votes, and protect it against any manipulation'. The variants of the verb 'do' were repeated. Peter Obi's use of the cohesive tool of repetition is also stylistic and pragmatic: 'History beckons. Nigerians remain hopeful for a national rebirth, which implies returning Nigeria to Nigerians'. He continues by saying: 'I assure you that no region; state, local government or community will be left behind. I also assure you all that the struggle continues' Writers employ such lexical relations to achieve texture. According to Ezeifeka (2018), when words share semantic relations, a relation of reiteration occurs (38). Words like 'grows and vanishes', 'prosperity and 'poverty' in the excerpts above share some semantic relations. Semantic relations of sameness and oppositeness are termed synonymy and antonymy respectively. Worthy of mention is the fact that the repetition of words gives the speeches a unique rhetorical effect. As seen in the three speeches, words can be repeated to achieve cohesion.

Coherence
Discovering the surface links or cohesive devices that make a text stick or hang together is only a preliminary step in text interpretation. Coherence is the feeling that a text hangs together,

that it relates to itself and the context of the situation. Eggins (2004) opines that cohesion is a guide to coherence (23). One of the techniques employed by the candidates to ensure coherence is through the establishment of clausal relations. In the words of Peter Obi, 'those elected to take care of them – have abandoned the national currency and are living in opulence and like kings, spend dollars to buy delegates as well as houses all over the world'. His statement depicts a cause-effect relationship; the effect of abandonment of the national currency is the leaders living in affluence while the masses live in abject poverty. Clausal relations employed in the texts were internal procedures and interpretations which helped the speakers in achieving both registeral and generic coherence.

Findings/Conclusion
Political discourse is somewhat persuasive. Campaign promises are couched in lucid language to make a stylistic and pragmatic effect. The study revealed that the three presidential candidates used language to compose texts that are meaningfully connected in a sequence based on the grammatical rules of language. Candidate 1 adopted the cohesive device of reiteration more than his counterparts. The aim was to press down his point as a leader who would salvage the country. In addition, the three leaders made effective use of anaphoric references. While Atiku predominantly used the personal pronoun I, Obi used more of the plural form 'we'. Coherence in the three speeches was not fully achieved as the cohesive device of conjunction/connectives was used sparingly. Parallelism as a cohesive device was used in the speeches. Words that will bring solace to the Nigerian nation were

used and these form good tools for campaigning. Every Language has lexical and cohesive devices to facilitate it and this symbolizes it, thus indicating that it is a property of language. This study was therefore centred on the practical analysis of political text and talk. Declaration/acceptance of three 2023 presidential candidates in Nigeria. The textual analysis done in the work x-rays the cohesive tools/devices employed by each aspirant. Personal, demonstratives, personal, anaphoric and exophoric, were some of the references made by each speaker. These techniques were employed towards making a persuasive impact on the populace. The speeches analyzed therefore were political discourses aimed at winning over the votes of the listeners.

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