

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE DEBATE AMONG THE GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES IN ANAMBRA STATE 2017 ELECTION

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Abstract

This study examines a Critical Discourse Analysis of the debate among the gubernatorial candidates in Anambra state 2017 election. The role of language in creating and sustaining power relations as well as ideological structures in Anambra State, Nigeria is also being examined. These power relations are formed, enacted and legitimated by the application of certain linguistic devices. The researcher attempts to disentangle hidden meanings and connotations of power in gubernatorial debate speeches in Anambra state. Five aspirants are involved in the debate. The study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Halliday's Systemic Functional Theory. The choice of the above is as a result of the researcher's observation that CDA does not have a unitary theoretical framework. The researcher hopes that the contribution made to scholarship in CDA will help to create awareness on the power of words and utterances in political debate discourse. The study, thus, concludes that in real sense, the texts produced, disseminated and expended in the 2017 gubernatorial electioneering debate in Anambra state of Nigeria

did not only promote unequal power relations, rather they also produced, reproduced, legitimized and maintained social structures that sustain domination.

Keywords: Discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis, Political discourse, Speech (debate)

Introduction

Discourse analysis urges us to move from seeing language as abstract to seeing our words as having meaning in a particular historical, social and political condition. Our words are politicized, even if we are not aware of it, because they carry the power that reflects the interest of those who speak. Discourses can also be used for an assertion of power and knowledge, and they can be used for resistance and critique (Chilton, 2002). One such occasion where discourse can be used to assert, sustain and legitimize power is debates/campaign speeches.

There are different topics and fields which invite CDA to perform its priceless job, however, if there is one social field that is most fitting here, it is that of politics. Essential to the idea of politics are such issues as power, legitimization, persuasion, struggle for dominance, and coercion. In the different kinds of discourse that one can think of as political, such as political debates/speeches, demonstrations, parliaments, broadcast interviews, campaigns, advertisements, manifestos, and so forth, some of these issues clearly manifest and all these are the fields of ideological battles. This is not surprising because, as van Dijk contends, “it is eminently here that different and opposed groups, power, struggle and interests are at stake. In order to be able to compete, political groups need to be ideologically conscious and organized” (11).

One of the important factors that establish the political figures' success in reaching their aspiration and winning the public consensus in this continuous power struggle is their capability to persuade and impress their audience through texts reproduction, power sustenance and unequal power relations. According to Teittinen "the winner is a party whose language, words, terms and symbolic expressions are dominant once reality and the context have been defined" (1). This is where the need for critical listening and reading is felt more than any other time to realize what the reality is and how it is distorted through delicate and skillful use of language.

Language is the key creator of the social world. Politics is one of the major events that pervade every human's social world. This means that to some extent language and politics are intimately linked at a fundamental level. In fact, as Chilton puts it, 'the doing of politics is predominantly constituted in language' (6). Other scholars have corroborated this close link between language and politics. The whole essence of politics as identified by Beard is the wish to gain power, exercise power and keep power, and language is the major vehicle for achieving these goals(2). Awonusi sees the relationship between language and politics as 'bidirectional' – language affects politics and politics affects language (10). Opeibi also sees the relationship as 'symbiotic'. The study of language and politics can be identified by scholars from two different disciplines- 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, to control resources, to control other people's behaviour, and to 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 central explanation of

political stability or polarization' (724). The meeting point in the research of language and politics and their intersection is Critical discourse analysis. The critical discourse approach engages the discourse approaches 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 forth. These kinds of studies are generally classified under political discourse analysis.

From the foregoing discussion of political discourse, it then can be conveniently said that the debate among the gubernatorial candidates in Anambra state in 2017 election, which is the focus in this study, constitute political discourse. Therefore, the motivation for this study hinges on the need to create critical language awareness on the masses and to explore through the works of other researchers in the field of CDA to determine the extent to which the texts produced and consumed in the 2017 Anambra election debate in Nigeria promote or hinder the promotion of asymmetrical power relations, social structures and identities. Significant in the study is the projection of individual and group ideologies through linguistic devices.

In essence the work examines the aspect of power and ideological features that the gubernatorial debate reflect with a view to determining the interpersonal component of linguistic features that instantiate power and how the dominated or oppressed groups may discursively resist such abuse.

Conceptual Review and Theoretical Framework

Studies that apply CDA methods to Nigerian political discourse have increased recently. Some of these studies will be looked at under this heading. In a speech delivered by Obasanjo, the former president of Nigeria addressing PDP elders and

stakeholders forum, Taiwo identifies the strategies he used in legitimizing himself and the party he represents, as well as his coercion and intimidation of opponents, thereby expressing discourse power (Taiwo, 2008:191-205). Using another speech delivered by Obasanjo, Ayoola examines his address to the national assembly in 2005 which analysis was positioned against the socio-political context in which the speech was delivered – that of the speakers’ move to bid for a third term after spending the constitutionally required two terms in office. He notes that Obasanjo’s employment of personal deixis, emotive lexis and structure, the semantic field of war and military syntax helped him to project his message in the speech.(cited in Ademilokun and Taiwo 2013)

In another article, Ayoola argues for the employment of CDA methods for the interpretation of the meanings and elicitation of the discursive strategies in socially- and politically-based text (2008:44). In line with this submission, most studies on CDA ask questions about how discourse structures are deployed in the production of social dominance.(Cited in Ademilokun and Taiwo, 2013:440) This is premised on the fact that words are not ideologically neutral; rather, they betray our social, cultural, political and historical inclinations.

A few scholarly studies on campaign speeches also exist and this will be reviewed in the following paragraphs. In a synchronic stylistic analysis of campaign speeches during the 2007 general elections, Omozuwa and Ezejidiaku (2009) identify the stylistic devices used by the candidates. They observe that campaign speeches are embellished in rhetoric and propaganda. The following also characterized their diction such as: repetition, promise, colloquialism, metaphor, word coinages, pidginized expressions, figurative expressions, exaggeration, abusive and vulgar utterances. Other studies on Nigerian campaigns

corroborate these findings. Taiwo identifies political lampooning of the opposition through newspaper advertisements as one of the major campaign strategies of Nigerian politicians during the 2007 general election in the country. Opeibi provides a structural and functional description of the emerging trends in negative advertising during political campaigns in Nigeria. He observes that Nigerian political campaign discourse is characterized by negative political advertising, particularly in newspapers. In his observation, many of the political office aspirants abandoned positive, issue-focused, image-building advertisements and engaged in rhetorical strategies of direct attacks on their opponents.

Abdullahi-Idiagbon in a critical discourse analytic study of presidential campaign speeches during the 2007 presidential election in Nigeria, investigates the ideological undertones in the campaign speeches of selected presidential candidates. In his findings, he notes the manner in which the aspirants manipulated the linguistic resources to project the messages in their discourse. The styles reveal the use of connotative expressions, topicalization, passivization, persuasion and promises, euphemism and repetition to present their ideological leanings.

It is also important to stress that doctoral dissertations have been written on different aspects of Nigerian political discourse. Notable among these are Oha (1994), which is a stylistic study of speeches of the two notable figures in the Nigerian Civil War, Yakubu Gowon, the then military head of state, and Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the military leader who led the failed secession of the Biafra Republic. Opeibi (2004) did a study on discourse analysis of the 1994 presidential election campaigns in Nigeria. From stylistic and text-linguistic perspectives, Ayeomoni (2007) did a lexical analysis of speeches of selected Nigerian military leaders. The above mentioned studies on

Nigerian political discourse have identified pertinent linguistic features in different kinds of political speeches made by Nigerian political actors. These include their peculiar rhetorical, pragmatic, discursive and stylistic features.

It is clear from all these studies that the Nigerian political class employs different innovative linguistic means during political campaigns to canvas for, assert, maintain and resist power in discourse. Of interest to the present study is political debate, which became about the most popular means of campaigning during the 2017/2018 general election. Prior to that period, most political campaigns were done face- to-face, print media and billboards. A major feature of the political debate is that they are products of careful thought, exploring a possible number of historical and social issues that will persuasively convey their message. In the present study, CDA is brought into action in the realm of political discourse as we examine how the verbal and visual aspects of the political debate demonstrates how politicians engage in power tussle through the mass media during the 2017/2018 elections in Nigeria. This endeavour, for us, is significant in considering the fact that media political debates not exceptional are a major tool with which Nigerian political parties and politicians exercise discursive and social powers. Thus, evident in the discourse is usually the image of ‘Self’ and ‘Others’ consequent upon the goal of the discourse producers, which is to seize power at all costs. Therefore, this study attempts a critical interpretation of Anambra gubernatorial debate among political parties in 2017 elections beyond the codes used in them.

There are many theoretical frameworks presented by CDA practitioners. The prominent and widely used ones as highlighted by Rahimi & Riasati (2011) are Fairclough (2003), van Dijk (1997), Hodge and Kress (1993) and van Leeuwen

(1996). In the words of Rahimi & Riasati (2011), Fairclough is seen to have contributed to the field of CDA significantly. This is so because he was the first to create a theoretical framework that provided guidelines for future CDA research. The thrust of his framework is on the belief that language is a complex part of social life. The dialectic relation between language and social reality is realized through social events (texts), social practices (orders of discourse) and social structures (Fairlough, 2003). Fairclough's method tries to make clear the ideological and power patterns in texts. He provided three-dimensional framework for text analysis which is widely used today in the field of CDA. The three dimensions are: the linguistic description of the formal properties of the text, the interpretation of the relationship between the discursive processes/interaction and the text, where text is the end product of a process of text production and as a resource in the process of text interpretation and lastly the explanation of the relationship between discourse, social and cultural reality.

Fairclough's method of analysis covers not only 'what' (discourse features) but also the 'how' and 'why' which are based on interpretation and explanation of texts. The need to go beyond 'what' in discourse is based on the assumption that there are certain underlying assumptions behind certain selections. These assumptions are never value-free and innocent; rather they are ideologically driven and motivated. He believes in a "hidden agenda" (Rahimi & Riasati 2011). The framework by Hodge and Kress has the dichotomous categorization of "euphemism" and "derogatory" thrust. The main focus of a particular vocabulary item will be on its origin of classification, schemes, and ideologically significant relations such as synonyms, antonyms, and hyponyms, relational values and expressive values. The application of different euphemistic or derogatory terms leads to

different presentations of realities and therefore ideologies (Rahimi & Riasati (2011)).

Van Dijk's framework provided some illustrations of the categories that he believes to be important in doing CDA studies. He asserts that the main point of the analysis is to show how various ideologies are expressed in various kinds of structures. These structures cannot be presented here because there are hundreds of them.

Van Leeuwen's Framework is based on the belief that social actors are influenced by the policies and decisions of powerful organizations which either include or exclude them from the centers of power. He explains the principal ways in which social actors can be represented in discourse. This frame work according to Rahimi and Riasati consists of the following:

1. Exclusion (suppression vs. back grounding)
2. Inclusion (Activation vs. Passivation, generalization vs. specification, individualization, assimilation, indetermination (anonymous), determination, nomination and categorization, Functionalization and identification, impersonalized social actors, abstraction objectivation.

For the purpose of this study, the research integrates elements of Fairclough's and van Dijk's socio- cultural and socio- cognitive approaches to discourse as well as principles from Halliday's SFT. Fairclough's model is adopted because it provides a description and interpretation of discourses in social context and offers an explanation of 'why and how' discourses work. The model attempts to examine both the linguistic features that are explicit- those that can be identified and described in a discourse. The model also offers explanation of the underlying or hidden meanings and ideologies. The choice of the above is as

a result of the researcher's observation that CDA does not have a unitary theoretical framework. The researcher hopes that the contribution made to scholarship in CDA will help to create awareness on the power of words and utterances in political campaign discourse.

Method of Data Analysis

The issue relating to social and political lives of language users cannot be undertaken effectively by employing one theoretical framework or method of analysis. This is the belief of CDA scholars. They adopt a combination of different levels of analysis and analytical tools for political texts which is referred to as 'multi method approach'. Texts are not simply products of a sender but a representation of a complex set of rules and influences which can be visible or not, thus communicated in message form to the intended receiver. For the sender and receiver to explore the text/message therein, they need to be critical. The analyst is critical in observing the invisible relations between people expressed in the language while the reader is critical not only to his subject of investigation but to his own context.

In analysing this study, the works of Fairclough, Van Dijk and Halliday's are basis of its analytical framework. Fairclough's analysis is based on three components - description, interpretation and explanation. He distinguishes between these three different stages of Critical Discourse Analysis. The first stage is description, which is concerned with the formal features of the texts, such as vocabulary and grammar. The second stage is interpretation, where intertextuality and members' resources play a major part. This stage is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction. The third stage, which is

explanation, concerns the relation between the interpretation and social context.

Fairclough attempts to establish a systematic method for exploring the relationship between text and its social context. He did so by stating that all stages are essential to make a thorough Critical Discourse Analysis, that is, the linguistic properties of texts are described (text analysis), the relationship between the productive and interpretative processes of discursive practice and the texts is interpreted and the relationship between discursive practice and social practice is explained. In the process of interpretation also Members' Resources (MR) is drawn upon. MR refers to the background knowledge which is drawn upon to interpret texts. This background knowledge is cognitive because it resides in people's head. MR, which is brought into the process of production and interpretation, is implicit. Such implicitness is usually contained in taken-for-granted background knowledge. To understand how ideologies are produced, it is not enough to analyse texts; the discourse practice (how the texts are interpreted and received and what social effects they have) must also be considered. The analysis focuses on micro and macro level of analysis which are two levels that are obtained in the unpacking of ideologically biased discourse. The micro level is concerned with the analysis of lexical choices in the speeches while the macro level concentrates on the communicative situation and the function(s) the speeches are meant to perform. A critical insight into the lexical choices, mood and modality deployed in the speeches as well as their communicative functions unfolds the power relations hidden in the speeches. Also the mental model representation unravels the role of ideologies within the society which may allow for polarization, influence and manipulation. For a critical discourse analysis to be successful it reveals the

ideological assumptions and power imbalances that shape a text's creation. The features of language which are ideological capitalized include all aspects of meaning: lexical meaning, presuppositions, implicatures, coherence, entailment etc. and formal features of texts.

Systemic Functional Theory approach will be used in analyzing the internal structure of the utterances. Halliday's Model has been considered very adequate because it contains relevant analytical categories like mood and modality as well as their various communicative functions which uncover the power relations in the debate speeches produced during the 2017 gubernatorial elections in Anambra State. In this work, both the meanings produced through the formal linguistic elements and those produced using the background knowledge or information what Fairclough calls Members' Resources are considered complementary for the total description and interpretation of the data. This framework proceeds from identification of lexical choices, the communicative situation and the functions of the speeches including the mental model representation to specific social situations to which they correspond and highlight their functions simultaneously all within the CDA framework.

Findings

The findings produced from the debate captured discourse structures that have implications of power and unequal power relations in terms of power as strategies of domination and mind control/ manipulation and also ideology based on the context of use.

Ideology of Isolation/Personality Profiling: The ideology of isolation / personality profiling is evident in the debate speeches studied in this work. This quality is peculiar in this era of exposure and awareness, masses believing that personality is the

key and not political affiliation. Three extracts were gotten from the debate from three aspirants. “I have a broad platform. I live in the state, I have been in government” the above statements portray the candidate as the right person to be elected because of his involvement in the state’s affairs. (Oseolaka Obaze, PDP aspirant). The governorship aspirant of All Progressive Grand Alliance in the person of Willie Obiano is so full of himself. He believed in his efforts and achievements in the state as stated here “my government is upto date in payment of salary, pension and gratuity”. As the incumbent governor of the state, he believes that he has done so well more than his predecessors that is why he fronts his personality to the audience. The use of language as an instrument of social interaction is clearly conveyed. The candidate is using language to interact with the people by demonstrating the attitude of gratitude and appreciation. Godwin Ezemo, PPA aspirant is not left out in seeking for the support of the electorate through employing Ideology of Isolation/Personality Profiling in his speech *“I have brought investments back to Anambra because I want the best. We are lacking in all fields. I have decided to forgo my comfort zone to sacrifice for the state. I will focus on security, health. Agriculture, education, empowerment and environment”*.

The personality projection arises as a result of exposure and awareness rather than on political parties. This is an era when political party one belongs does not count rather the persons personality and achievement. This premise gives rise to personality racketing in the debate.

Ideology as a weapon of negotiation: The utilization of ideology as a weapon of negotiation between the candidates who are seeking political offices and the electorate were projected in two extracts from the governorship aspirants.

If we can have steady power supply and good roads, our industries will grow, we are going to manufacture more. Most of the power lines in Anambra are 33KVA instead of 330KVA, I will do more on power if am elected governor, I will also work on many roads... (Tony Nwoye, APC aspirant)

The speaker on the extract above highlighted the epileptic situation of power supply and state of roads in our state. This was done to get the attention of the masses to their needs in their daily dealings. He promised to do more on power thereby enhancing the business activities of the state. The speaker B reasoned with the masses to vote for him for that will help him take the education of our children to the next level as seen in this extract “... *Nigeria is a subject of continuous negotiation. Only 13 per cent of our students in JSS are computer literate. The education our children are getting is the education of yesterday, I will take them get the education of tomorrow. (Osita Chidoka, UPP aspirant)*”. The power of negotiation was powerfully employed in the two extracts.

Ideology of positive self-representation of “us” and negative other representation of “them”: Two extracts were showcased. In one of the extracts APGA aspirant projects his own image by attacking the opponents in a subtle manner. The expression: “I am the only guy here that can do that” is intimidating and clearly projects power. He ended up in castigating his opponents for the audience to see how weak they are in other not to vote for them. “Tony doesn’t have the executive capacity; he hasn’t even worked in his entire life”. The statement above is really castigating and taints the image of the opponent in question. For Willie, Tony should not be voted for since he has not been in an executive office in his live and that disqualifies him being the governor of Anambra state.

Speaker B (Obaze Oseloka, PDP aspirant) sees himself and party as serious-minded people while seeing his opponent as unserious as captured here; “I hate to think that we came here to ridicule people, this is serious business”. The above statement was made to disabuse the minds of the electorate in the statement made by the opponent. The speaker further buttresses his point by saying that “they” can fix whatever went wrong during the opponent’s reign, seeing the state to be broken during “their” tenure as the executive governor of Anambra state. A political aspirant tends to present himself/ herself and his or her group in positive terms and other groups in negative terms. He does this by selecting some socially shared mental model with a negative connotation in the text and the essence is to capture different ideological positions. They resorted to attacking their opponents’ character and ability. The essence of this fact- giving strategy is to make the audience reject their opponent and accept the speaker(s). The background information recalled by the speaker is a biased platform to project his own ideology.

Power and Domination: This strategy is used by the political aspirants to show power, authority and supremacy, especially supremacy of a particular view or belief over that of others. The asymmetrical power relations between the speaker and the audience is best revealed in these lexical items, “run”, “built”, “protection”, “stand”. By implication, it is the dominant, the all-powerful governor aspirant who is in-charge and who wants the dominated, the less privileged to see things in the light of his view. As the dominant social group, these politicians have the privilege and the advantage to control what can and should be said and which perspective to foreground in discourse.

Power as liberalism: This is a case of demonstration of power as liberalism which is vigorously pursued by the speakers in the debate. One extract was showcased. “We do not need to import

things we need to generate what we need”. This is just a common sense ideological representation by the speaker to sensitize the people to accept his offer. There are two structures in this extract – “we” and “others” - and the power relation shows the privileged “we” and the less privileged “others”. The question tries to liberalize the power and prompts the audience in order to get their attention in an attempt to chart a common front with the audience. Most of the clauses in the extract, which were declarative, made no specific claim to power relations.

Power as Mind Control/ Manipulation: Under this heading three ideologies were explored; positive ideology of self, which run through the extracts with the declarative item “I”. This expression depicts the speaker as a saint, “I am not campaigning against Peter Obi”. He wants the masses to see him as a saint who is never interested in castigating his opponents. The ideology of personality profiling and negative other representative were also deployed to control the mind of the people. The speakers did not just deploy the ideology of personality profiling, but used it as a tool to influence the people and to control their mind into believing in them. The ideology of negative other representative was also implied to manipulate the people to accept their candidacy. “I am here to offer myself selflessly”. “I have offered myself to assist the less privileged and indigent people”. These expressions are used to influence the electorate, the less privileged into approving his candidature. The use of the expression “Anambra state is wallowing in trouble” is directly pointing at the man on sit and invariably other opponents in the battle of winning the electorates’ heart in electing their governor. The analysis so far shows political speeches that are so expertly constructed to dominate, deceive, manipulate and of course get the electorate to cast their votes in support of the speakers. Whether the promises are fulfilled

eventually is quite a different thing. The politicians usually make such haughty promises to gain the support of the people and this is the main purpose of the speeches. Under this, two extracts were used.

Discussion of Findings

In this study, the researcher has viewed political debate speeches that encode power and dominance with ideological undertone. The work also reveals some hidden meanings and messages that are rooted in the linguistic expressions used. The linguistic and extra-linguistic variables of the communicative event including the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-linguistic indices of the environment which influence the structure and the functions of the political messages were also considered. The researcher has demonstrated that discourse has structure, meaning and action. In Fairclough's opinion, discourse reflects an action. Secondly, there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structures, in which social structures determine and create social process. Efforts have also been made to give a comprehensive account of the structure, hidden meaning and communicative actions and effects of the pieces of discourse used as election debate texts produced during the period.

The application of analytical tools from Fairclough's members' resources, van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and Halliday's system of mood and modality as theoretical bases has enabled the researcher to describe the debate discourse as a strong tool for creating and enacting power and ideological functions. The multi-method approach adopted in this inquiry has helped the researcher to account for the interface between structures of discourse and structures of power involved in the gubernatorial political debate speeches. The method shows the power of

language as strategies for domination, liberalism, mind control (which is a form of manipulation) and ideological projections as instrument for isolation/personality projection, negotiation, positive self and negative other representation.

Moreover, ideology as noted in the study can be used as an instrument of personality projection, self- promotion or what van Dijk calls self- glorification strategy. The purpose is simply to win the support of the populace. So, they try to promote themselves beyond measure in order to achieve the much desired self-glorification.

The study, therefore, concluded that Anambra state gubernatorial aspirants made use of their speeches in the debate as tools not only for gaining support but also for establishing, maintaining and sustaining power and unequal power relations in the 2017 elections.

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