

Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity in Political Discourse: An Analysis of President Tinubu's Acceptance Speech

Chiagozie Eburuaja
cu.eburuaja@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

The study investigates intertextuality and interdiscursivity in political discourse using President Tinubu's acceptance speech. In the wake of the presidential campaigns in Nigeria, Nigerians raised uproar about the delivery of president Tinubu's speeches, on both the print and social media. He was accused of not being coherent and exhibiting signs of slurred speech. The president's state of mind was even questioned. His sentences were said to be bereft of cohesiveness and coherence, so this study is carried out to analyse the first speech made by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for intertextuality and interdiscursivity, as elements of cohesion and coherence, or the lack thereof. The president's acceptance speech after he was declared the winner of the 2023 presidential election forms the data for the study. Data were collected from the verified online page of Channels Tv, a leading and award winning TV station in Nigeria, and analysed using Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism. Findings reveal that the president's acceptance speech is rich in intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Elements of intertextuality manifest in the speech are citation, references and presupposition. Different discourses also interact with each other in the acceptance speech. The study concludes that the president's acceptance speech is adjudged intertextual and interdiscursive, because it draws on a range of existing texts and discourses. The speech employs intertextuality and interdiscursivity as discursive strategies for inclusivity at a time when the people were quite divided as a result of political affiliations and the result of the election. The president also seizes the opportunity to respond to previous and existing texts on the state of the nation.

Keywords: intertextuality, interdiscursivity, coherence, cohesiveness, dialogism

Introduction

Election, in democratic societies, is the process by which the people choose their leaders or representatives. It is a very important part of the political process. The people exercise their franchise and perform their civic rights and responsibilities by voting for their choice candidates for different offices or positions.

Acceptance speeches are given by politicians that won the electoral race after they must have been officially declared winners by the electoral body. It is their first chance at addressing the public that voted them into office. They utilise the opportunity to express their gratitude to their supporters and voters and also give a blue print of their vision and mission for the people. At this stage, they make their intentions, priorities and values known to the people, hence the language employed in delivering the message receives optimal attention.

Considering the relationship between language and politics, politicians are very intentional about the speeches they churn out, because the speeches are goal oriented. Speech writing is a specialised skill that requires knowledge of rhetoric and good communication skills, so these speeches are usually written by skilled speech writers who ensure that the speeches are not lacking in certain linguistic features/devices that lend cohesiveness and coherence to them.

On 1 March 2023, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu the winner of the presidential election in Nigeria. He was declared the

president-elect after the presidential election that happened on 25 February 2023. Consequent upon that, Bola Ahmed Tinubu had to deliver an acceptance speech to the people of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Ajibiye (2019) Nwaefuna (2022), Ellah (2022) Hernandez-Guerra (2013) are some of the studies done on intertextuality in political discourse. These studies analysed presidential debates, political campaign advertisements, inaugural speech and compared intertextuality and rhetoric in political discourse. In order to fill the existing gap in knowledge, the present study undertakes an analysis of an incumbent president's acceptance speech.

None of these studies was done to analyse a political speech by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Generally, there is a paucity of scholarly research on the speeches of the president as a Nigerian politician, although he has been in office over time as both a governor and senator of the federal republic of Nigeria. Therefore, this study is poised to fill that gap in knowledge.

In the wake of the presidential campaigns in Nigeria, Nigerians raised uproar about the delivery of president Tinubu's speeches on both the print and social media. He was accused of not being coherent and exhibiting signs of slurred speech. The president's state of mind was even questioned. His sentences were said to be bereft of cohesiveness and coherence, so this study is carried out to analyse the first speech made by President Bola Tinubu for intertextuality and interdiscursivity or the lack thereof.

Conceptual Framework

Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity

Aptly put, intertextuality means between two texts or more. According to Kristeva (1986, p.36) intertextuality is "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another." For Gadavani (2002), "intertextuality is most commonly understood to mean the dependency of discourse's meaning on a text which was produced earlier" (p.36).

Mambrol (2016) concurs,

intertextuality is a concept that informs structuralist poststructuralist deliberations in its contention that individual texts are inescapably related to other texts in a matrix of irreducible plural and provisional meanings. The term is used to signify the multiple ways in which any one literary text is made up of other texts, by means of its implicit or explicit allusions, citations, its repetitions and transformations of the formal and substantive features of earlier texts, or simply its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are "always already" in place (para. 3).

The all-encompassing idea in these definitions is that all texts are interconnected and build on each other. In other words, every text is influenced by and references other texts. This means that textual analysis cannot be done by being exclusively dependent on the content of a text, but also by looking at how it relates to other texts. Intertextuality helps discourse analysts understand the context and meaning of a text in a deeper way. Alfaro (1996) concurs:

Intertextuality considers how a text references other texts, leverages on a shared cultural background, and builds on other texts to create new meaning. There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires, therefore, that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures (p.268)

Generally, intertextuality promotes the interconnectivity and relatedness of texts, and discards the notion of textual autonomy especially in the interpretation of texts. The relatedness of texts is also present in interdiscursivity.

According to WU (2011), “Interdiscursivity refers to the mixing of diverse genres, discourses, or styles associated with institutional and social meanings in a single text. This linguistic phenomenon permeates through language use, especially in contemporary institutional settings” (p. 96). Interdiscursivity is a concept that builds on and expands the idea of intertextuality. It is a way of understanding how different discourses interact with each other in a given text. A very good example is the infusion of religious or cultural discourse into a political discourse. The political discourse interacts with the religious and cultural discourse in the text. Suffice it to say that interdiscursivity is the infusion of discourses. These discursive strategies can shape the way texts are understood and the general use of language.

Ezeifeke (2018) asserts:

Intertextuality and interdiscursivity refer to how text producers borrow, refer to and reuse ideas from other disciplines, from already-existing text types and text-producing activities (also called discursive practices). CDA transcends linguistic boundaries into other disciplines, (interdisciplinarity), consults prior texts (intertextuality) and prior discourses (interdiscursivity) to see the relationship they have with the social problem at hand (p.161)

Intertextuality and interdiscursivity manifest in forms of direct quotation, translation, citation, plagiarism, allusion, reference, imitation, collage, parody, pastiche, literary conventions, structural parallelism and all kinds of sources either consciously exploited or unconsciously reflected. By so doing an intertext transforms or reproduces the texts preceding it.

Allusion has been defined as any implicit, indirect or hidden reference and quotation is the exact reproduction of the words said by another person. A quotation is easily distinguishable as there are several means to identify them: quotation marks, commas, some verbs, and so on but in the case of the allusion it is not so straightforward. (Hernandez-Guerra, 2012, p. 60)

Theoretical Framework

The theory for this study is Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism. According to Bakhtin, “all our utterances are filled with others’ words, varying degrees of ‘our-own-ness’...which we assimilate, rework, and reaccentuate” (1986, p. 89). “Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism suggested that an individual’s speech is shaped in continuous interaction with others’ utterances through the experience of assimilating others’ words” (McCarthy, 2004, p.28). Bakhtin opines that all texts are part of a “dialogue” between different voices, both intratextual and in the larger world. The central idea in Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism is the idea of a heteroglossic text that has different voices. He argues that every text responds to, reacts against, and even answers other texts. Suffice it to say that humans combine a variety of voices they have encountered throughout their lifetimes to produce unique texts/utterances.

Dialogism highlights that every utterance is shaped by and in response to other voices and contexts. The theory argues that meaning is not fixed or predetermined, but is constructed through ongoing conversations and exchanges between individuals. He emphasises that understanding texts or discourse requires acknowledging the multiple texts and voices that contribute to its creation. These multiple texts and voices must be put into full consideration in order to fully gain meaning of any discourse/text. Robinson (2011) summarises:

Dialogism in contrast recognises the multiplicity of perspectives and voices. It is also referred to as ‘double-voiced’ or ‘multi-voiced’. It is a ‘principle’ which can become the main referent of a particular aesthetic field. ... Discourse does not logically unfold (as in analytical philosophy), but rather, interacts. This makes dialogical works a lot more ‘objective’ and ‘realistic’ than their monological counterparts, since they don’t subordinate reality to the ideology of the author (para. 14).

Empirical Studies

Previous studies exist on the use of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in political discourse. Some of these studies are reviewed here.

Ajibiye (2019) studied *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Intertextuality in Nigeria’s Inter-Party Presidential Debates (2011 And 2015)*. The study investigated intertextuality as a discursive strategy employed by presidential candidates in political discourse. Fairclough’s concept of intertextuality formed the theoretical framework for the study. Data were collected from the archives of TV stations in Nigeria and transcribed. Findings revealed that presidential candidates employed intertextuality of documented evidence, past shared experiences, (in) direct quotes and Self-quotations in an attempt to lend credence to their discourse.

Intertextuality and the Representation of Identity in Selected Nigerian Political Campaign Advertisements was investigated by Nwaefuna (2022). The study examined the intertextual strategies adopted by the print media in legitimising and delegitimising the two foremost presidential candidates, Muhammadu Buhari and President Goodluck Jonathan, in the 2015 political campaigns in Nigeria. The researcher employed purposive sampling technique to select fifty campaign advertisements, from four national dailies, that were produced between January and April 2015. Critical discourse analysis and intertextuality formed the theoretical framework for the study. Findings revealed that Buhari was represented as a corrupt and violent dictator while Goodluck Jonathan was constructed as a failure, female, and a trickster.

Ellah (2022) investigated *Intertextuality in Political Discourse: A Study of President Mohammadu Buhari’s 2015 Inaugural Speech*. This research examined intertextual references in President Buhari’s inaugural speech. A transcript of the speech was got from The Guardian newspaper online. Data were analysed using the theoretical framework for the study; the concept of intertextuality. Findings revealed that the President conspicuously intertwined political discourse with religious, literary, and historical discourses through manifest intertextuality and interdiscursivity. The study also indicated the President’s positivist, liberalist and religious ideological orientations were brought to the fore. The study concludes that texts are products of several other texts which are used to index the text producer’s ideology.

Textual, Intertextual and Rhetorical Features in Political Discourse: the case of President Obama in Europe was studied by Hernández-Guerra (2013). The aim of the study was to do a comprehensive analysis of the speech uttered by President Obama at Strasbourg, France in a bid to reveal the rhetorical and intertextual contents of the speech. The research found out that the president employed references and citations as intertextual properties in his speech. The study concluded that his references were majorly war or conflict related.

These existing studies on intertextuality and interdiscursivity in text are somewhat different from the present study. The studies analysed presidential debates, political campaign advertisements, inaugural speech and compared intertextuality and rhetorics in political

discourse, but the present study analysed a sitting president's acceptance speech. The extant studies equally adopted the CDA approach and Fairclough's approach to intertextuality as theoretical framework while present study adopted Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in order to fill the existing gap in knowledge.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative research. A transcript of the president's acceptance speech was downloaded from Channels Tv website using a laptop. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was employed to extract sentences that exemplified intertextuality and interdiscursivity from the speech. Textual analysis was adopted as a method of data analysis. Data were analysed in line with the theoretical framework for the study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

INTERTEXTUALITY

Citation

Data 1

"Today, Nigeria stands tall as the giant of Africa".

Nigeria is popularly called the giant of Africa. The phrase 'giant of Africa' has been credited to different personalities. The metaphor has been used over decades to refer to Nigeria probably due to its population size or rich heritage. Here, the president employs a particular phrase, the giant of Africa, and metaphor he has encountered for a lifetime in the production of a new text. Other's voice interacts with the speaker's voice to produce an entirely new text.

Reference

Data 2

"Renewed hope has dawned in Nigeria".

During the election period, the APC presidential candidate, who is currently the president of Nigeria, used 'Renewed Hope' as his campaign slogan. The president makes reference to the slogan and his promises, albeit subtly, and assures the people that he will deliver on his promises to them. The present text responds to and reacts against the speaker's former text in the acceptance speech. An utterance taken from previous texts intersect in this extract and neutralise one another.

Data 3

"Whether you are Batified, Atikulated, Obidient, Kwankwasiyya, or have any other political affiliation, you voted for a better, more hopeful nation and I thank you for your participation and dedication to our democracy".

Batified, Atikulated, Obidient and Kwankwasiyya are the in-group markers or identifiers ascribed to the supporters of the foremost presidential candidates of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria: Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, Peter Obi and Rabiu Kwankwaso. In his speech, the president uses these in group/solidarity markers of the supporters of different presidential candidates to call for national unity and nation building. He employs reference as a discursive strategy here. The president equally makes a subtle reference to the campaign period when there was so much disagreement across party boundaries. He seizes the opportunity to call for peace.

The president reuses ideas garnered from already existing text types in this extract, thereby reproducing preceding texts. It equally references other texts produced during the campaign period in which these supporters of the presidential candidates were given those names. Suffice it to say that the president's acceptance speech is shaped by the repetition of other textual structures, because it is shaped by others' words and a degree of the president's words.

Data 4

“We commend INEC for running a free and fair election. The lapses that did occur were relatively few in number and were immaterial to the final outcome. With each cycle of elections, we steadily perfect this process so vital to our democratic life”.

INEC, the Independent National Electoral Commission, is the electoral body in Nigeria. After the 2023 presidential elections, electorates were outraged at certain events of the day. The malfunctioning of the BVAS (Bimodal Voter Accreditation System) machine on the day of election and violence meted out on voters in some parts of the country are some of the major complaints on that day. The election was said to have been built to be rigged, from the outset, in favour of the ruling party. The president employs reference here to counter what the electorates were saying, especially on social media, about INEC’s mediocrity. Generally, the president makes reference to the election; the challenges faced on the day of election and subtly discredits any idea that the election was rigged in his favour.

In this extract, the president’s acceptance speech responds to, reacts against and answers other texts making the rounds about INEC’s inefficiency in the 2023 elections. Different voices, the accusers of INEC and the president’s, dialogue in this extract.

Data 5

“What is neither right nor defensible is for anybody to resort to violence. Any challenge to the electoral outcome should be made in a court of law, and not in the streets”.

The president makes a subtle reference to the END SARS protest that happened in November, 2020 when the people, especially the youth, took to the streets to protest against police brutality. He uses the opportunity to warn against a repeat of the event and implores dissatisfied candidates to use the ethical route to register their displeasure and challenge the outcome of the election.

Here, the president’s utterance is informed by a previous incident encountered in his lifetime and he produces an utterance/text based on the previous incident. He also uses the opportunity to answer other texts written on the END SARS protest, and probably warns against such incidents during his time in office.

Presupposition

Data 8

Now, to you, the young people of this country, I hear you loud and clear. I understand your pains, your yearnings for good governance, a functional economy and a safe nation that protects you and your future.

Presupposition takes place when a speaker holds an implicit assumption about a certain thing before s/he makes the utterance. In this excerpt, the president presupposes that the people lack good governance and do not have a functional economy. He equally presupposes that the nation has not been safe, because insurgency became rife with the last government of the nation.

The president draws on his knowledge of other texts about the state of the nation, owing to the failings of the previous government, to make these presuppositions. Hence, he references other texts produced on the state of the nation and the effects on the youth. Different voices obviously dialogue in the text.

INTERDISCURSIVITY

Religious Discourse

Data 9

“I am grateful to Almighty God. By His mercy, I was born a son of Nigeria and through His sublime purpose I find myself the victor of this election. May He grant me the wisdom and courage to lead the nation to the greatness He alone has destined for it”.

The president employs religious discourse here. An acceptance speech is originally domiciled in political discourse, but the president employs religious discourse to show his gratitude to the

Almighty God who he believes destined him to be the president of Nigeria. Nigeria is a very religious nation; hence it would be out of place to have the text bereft of gratitude to God. There is an obvious interaction between two voices, religious and political discourses, in this extract. The president leverages on shared religious affiliations in Nigeria, and builds on other texts with a different context to produce a new text.

Legal Discourse

Data 10

“Still, I know some candidates will be hard put to accept the election results. It is your right to seek legal recourse. What is neither right nor defensible is for anybody to resort to violence. Any challenge to the electoral outcome should be made in a court of law, and not in the streets”. In this extract, legal discourse interacts with political discourse to give appropriateness to this extract. Since the president was telling the other candidates to register their displeasure on the outcome of the elections the proper way, it was only right for him to digress to legal discourse. The president seizes the opportunity to respond to, react against and answer other previously produced text on the inconsistencies of the 2023 presidential election results. The acceptance speech is shaped by interacting with and assimilating others’ words/texts.

Findings

Findings reveal that the president’s acceptance speech is replete with intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Elements of intertextuality manifest in the speech are citation, references and presupposition. Different discourses also interact with each other in the acceptance speech, because the president borrowed and reused ideas from already existing text types domiciled in other discourse types and disciplines as is evident in how different discourses (religious and legal discourses) interact with each other in his speech.

Conclusion

The president’s acceptance speech is adjudged intertextual and interdiscursive, because it drew on a range of existing texts and discourses. The study concludes that the speech employs intertextuality and interdiscursivity as discursive strategies for inclusivity at a time when the people were quite divided as a result of political affiliations and the result of the election. The president also seizes the opportunity, using intertextuality and interdiscursivity, to respond to previous and existing texts on the state of the nation. Thus, he employs them as discursive strategies. The use of intertextuality and interdiscursivity also lends coherence and cohesiveness to his political discourse.

References

- Ajibiye, S. (2019) A Critical Discourse Analysis of Intertextuality In Nigeria’s Inter-Party Presidential Debates (2011 And 2015). *The Review of English Studies*, 1(19), 1-20.
- Alfaro, M. (1996). Intertextuality: origins and development of the concept. *Atlantis*, 18(1/2), 268–285.
- Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays*. University of Texas Press
- Ellah, S. (2022) Intertextuality in Political Discourse: A Study of President Muhammadu Buhari’s 2015 Inaugural Speech. *Journal of Languages, Linguistics and Literary Studies (JOLLS)*, 11 (1), 9-17.
- Gadavani, S. (2002). Intertextuality as discourse strategy: the case of no-confidence debates in Thailand. Nelson, D. (ed.) *Leeds Working Papers in Linguistics and Phonetics* 9, pp. 35- 55.
- Hernandez-Guerra, C. (2013). Textual, intertextual and rhetorical features in political discourse: the case of President Obama in Europe. *Revista de Lingüística y Lenguas Aplicadas*, 8(año), 59-65.

- Kristeva, J. (1974). Word, Dialogue, Novel. *The Kristeva reader*. Moi, T. (Ed) C.U.P. 35-61
- McCarthy, S. (2004). Bakhtin's Dialogism in a Preschooler's Talk. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 8(2), 27-62.
- Mambrol, N (2016). *Julia Kristeva: Intertextuality*. <https://literariness.org/2016/03/22/julia-kristeva-intertextuality/>
- Nwaefuna, F. (2022). Intertextuality and the Representation of Identity in Selected Nigerian Political Campaign Advertisements. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, 10(2), 31-42.
- Robinson, A. (2011). **In Theory** Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia. <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-bakhtin-1/>

Appendix

The Acceptance Speech of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

My fellow Nigerians,

I am profoundly humbled that you have elected me to serve as the 16th president of our beloved republic. This is a shining moment in the life of any man and affirmation of our democratic existence. From my heart, I say thank you. Whether you are Batified, Atikulated, Obidient, Kwankwasiyya, or have any other political affiliation, you voted for a better, more hopeful nation and I thank you for your participation and dedication to our democracy. You decided to place your trust in the democratic vision of a Nigeria founded on shared prosperity and one nurtured by the ideals of unity, justice, peace and tolerance. Renewed hope has dawned in Nigeria. We commend INEC for running a free and fair election. The lapses that did occur were relatively few in number and were immaterial to the final outcome. With each cycle of elections, we steadily perfect this process so vital to our democratic life. Today, Nigeria stands tall as the giant of Africa. It shines even brighter as the continent's biggest democracy. I thank all who supported my campaign. From President Buhari who adeptly led my campaign as its chairman, to my Vice Presidential Candidate, Senator Kashim Shettima. To the progressive governors of our party and this nation, to the party leadership, to our loyal party members. I owe you a debt of gratitude. To the entire campaign organization, I thank you sincerely. I thank my loving wife and dear family whose support was ceaseless and inspiring. Without you, this victory would not be possible. I am grateful to Almighty God. By His mercy, I was born a son of Nigeria and through His sublime purpose I find myself the victor of this election. May He grant me the wisdom and courage to lead the nation to the greatness He alone has destined for it. Finally, I thank the Nigerian people for their abiding belief in our democracy. I shall be a fair leader to all Nigerians. I will be in tune with your aspirations, charge up your energies and harness your talents to deliver a nation that we can be proud of. To my fellow candidates, former VP Atiku, former governor Kwankwaso, former governor Obi and all others, I extend the hand of friendship. This was a competitive, high-spirited campaign. You have my utmost respect.

Political competition must now give way to political conciliation and inclusive governance. During the election, you may have been my opponent but you were never my enemy. In my heart, you are my brothers. Still, I know some candidates will be hard put to accept the election results. It is your right to seek legal recourse. What is neither right nor defensible is for anybody to resort to violence. Any challenge to the electoral outcome should be made in a court of law, and not in the streets. I also ask my supporters to let peace reign and tensions fade. We ran a principled, peaceful and progressive campaign. The aftermath of our campaign must be as benign. Yes, there are divisions amongst us that should not exist. Many people are uncertain,

angry and hurt; I reach out to every one of you. Let the better aspects of our humanity step forward at this fateful moment. Let us begin to heal and bring calm to our nation.

Now, to you, the young people of this country, I hear you loud and clear. I understand your pains, your yearnings for good governance, a functional economy and a safe nation that protects you and your future. I am aware that for many of you Nigeria has become a place of abiding challenges limiting your ability to see a bright future for yourselves. Remodeling our precious national home requires the harmonious efforts of all of us, especially the youth. Working together, we shall move this nation as never before. My running mate, Vice President-elect Shettima, and I understand the challenges ahead. More importantly, we also understand and deeply value the talent and innate goodness of you, the Nigerian people. We pledge to listen and to do the difficult things, the big deeds, that put us on the path of irreversible progress. Hold us firmly to account, but please give us a chance first. Together, we shall build a brighter and more productive society for today, tomorrow and for years to come.

Today, you have given me the greatest honor you can bestow on one man. In return, I will give you my utmost as your next president and commander-in-chief. Peace, unity and prosperity shall be the cornerstones of the society we intend to build. When you gaze upon what we shall accomplish in the coming years, you shall speak with pride at being a Nigerian.

I thank you all.

God bless you all.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

<https://www.channelstv.com/2023/03/01/full-text-of-tinubus-acceptance-speech/>