

## A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Presidential Inauguration Speech of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe

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### **Abstract**

This study aims at investigating the possible problems in Dr Azikiwe's choice of words in his presidential inauguration speech. This study focuses its attention to Dr Azikiwe's use of certain grammatical patterns including linguistic devices, rhetorical strategies and themes. The presidential inauguration speech by Dr Nnamdi Azikwe was chosen and analyzed using Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The findings of the study indicate that Dr Nnamdi Azikwe utilized these linguistic strategies to emphasize concepts like African superiority, national unity, citizen participation, and self-promotion. The use of pronouns like "I" and "we" reveals elements of egoism and exaggeration in Dr Nnamdi Azikwe speeches. The researchers also conclude that the language employed by Dr Nnamdi Azikwe shows his ability to attract Nigerians into his ideology of a better Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Political speech, Critical discourse analysis, Linguistic devices, Rhetorical strategies.

### **1. Introduction**

Language is a tool for communication between people. It is used to achieve many communicative functions. According to Bennett (1976), people communicate to express information or have actions done. Language has two functions: transactional and interactional functions. A transactional function means using language to transmit information, whether factual or propositional. This type is used to develop cultural ideas, literature, laws, etc. An interactional function, on the other hand, is characterized by using language to establish and preserve social relationships. Discourse is the main social manifestation of communication. It refers to all forms of language used by communicators in a society (Fairclough, 1993; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 1997). Discourse is the process of exchanging linguistic sentences between the speaker or writer, on the one hand, and the listener or reader. Van Dijk (1997:2) defines discourse as "the form that people make of language to convey ideas, thoughts, or beliefs within a social context....".

Discourse analysis (DA) is a linguistic field of inquiry that analyzes language at the context level from a grammatical standpoint (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2011). Yule (1997:139) states that DA investigates how language users interpret and understand social and contextual messages communicated in linguistic texts.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) involves approaches that analyze vocal and written use of language related to evaluative procedures. Fairclough (1995) defines CDA as a kind of discourse analysis that investigates the relation between texts and the discursive practices and processes of social and cultural structures filled by the associations of struggles over power and ideology. Besides, Wodak (1995) assumes that CDA is a type of analysis that analyzes

other ambiguous and unambiguous structural relationships of power, discrimination, control, and dominance, which can be found in language.

Among the domains that attract the attention of discourse analysts is presidential speeches. The 1960 inaugural speech by Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first President of Nigeria, has been subject to critical discourse analysis. The analysis of Azikiwe's inaugural speech contributes to our understanding of the political and social context in Nigeria during that time period. These studies shed light on the ways in which Azikiwe used language to shape public perception, garner support, and establish his leadership. Through their analyses, researchers have revealed the strategic use of linguistic devices such as reference, enumeration, pronouns, and stylistic elements like harmony of words and rhetoric in Azikiwe's inaugural speech. These devices contribute to the persuasive impact of Azikiwe's speech and highlight his rhetorical prowess. Overall, the critical discourse analysis of Nnamdi Azikiwe's inaugural speech in 1960 provides valuable insights into his rhetorical strategies, power dynamics, and the ways in which he used language to shape public perception and establish his leadership. Overall, the critical discourse analysis of Nnamdi Azikiwe's 1960 inaugural speech has revealed his strategic use of linguistic devices, rhetorical strategies, and persuasive techniques. These findings highlight the ways in which Azikiwe utilized language to assert his intentions, build rapport with the audience, outline his plans, and shape public perception.

## **2. Literature Review**

Considering the focus of this study, which involves analyzing Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe's presidential inauguration speech on the unity of Nigeria; it is crucial to offer relevant literature on Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis.

According to Van Dijk (1997), discourse is the way people utilize language to express ideas, thoughts, or beliefs within a social context. It is the primary means of communication in society and encompasses all forms of language used by communicators (Fairclough, 1993; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 1997). It involves the exchange of linguistic sentences between the speaker or writer and the listener or reader, and can also be conveyed through text, as mentioned by Brown (1983). It could be only in the form of text, spoken or written. Political discourse is an instance of discourse. It is an interdisciplinary subject in which different fields of study interact, such as politics, sociology, psychology, sociolinguistics, and others. However, it is politics which closely affects the decisions of war, peace, stability or conflict. For this reason, political speeches have attracted the attention of scholars, trying to interpret all message types, whether implicit or explicit, and uncover what they mean in reality (Sheveleva, 2012).

According to Van Dijk (1998), political discourse analysis focuses on the misuse or control of political authority. He sees political discourse as a category of genres that are defined by the field of politics, rather than being a genre on its own. Therefore, political speeches, electoral debates, parliamentary discussions, political programs, and government talks are examples of genres associated with politics. Political discourse is usually spoken. It is delivered by an affective speaker; president, king, deputy parliament, minister...etc. The affective speaker should have the advantage of voice quality which helps him influence listeners. He has to pay attention to what he said and plan the outcomes of the speech. Hence, politicians are looking for the effective speech in order to control and manipulate people minds. They use language to send their messages to achieve their goals. Political language is usually simple because the speaker tries to communicate with people and who can't all understand the complex language.

It is used to convince listeners with the speaker's ideas by using some techniques such as analysis and explanation.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a method of analysis in relation to ideology and power (Fairclough, 2013). It is an approach that examines all aspects of language use in political or social domains. Jorgesen & Philips (2011), state that CDA has supplied methods for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in various social domains. Van Dijk (1998) stated that CDA is a type of discourse analysis that investigates how power, inequality, and social dominance are challenged, reinforced, and enacted through language and communication in political and social settings. In essence, CDA seeks to uncover the underlying meanings in text and to demonstrate how speakers and writers exert power in discourse to influence the thoughts and actions of those in dominant positions. Fairclough (1989) focuses on analyzing the ideological elements present in political discourse using a three-dimensional framework of description, interpretation, and explanation. His approach is rooted in Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistics theory, which explores how language, discourse, and society are interrelated.

According to Fairclough (1989), there exists a close link between discourse and society. This perspective maintains that societal structures influence and are reflected in discourse, which in turn shapes attitudes and principles within society. Essentially, language devices are utilized in discourse to construct and convey ideas about the nature of reality. The main purpose of CDA is then to find how the spoken or written texts are organized, and it investigates the hidden ideological features and power relations by analyzing the characteristics of language and structures in the text. CDA is an approach to discourse analysis that is characterized by its sensitivity and sets itself apart from other approaches. It is a comprehensive process that involves choosing data, observing it, explaining related theoretical concepts, and linking the observations with theory through various methods (Meyer, 2001). CDA's primary goal is to identify the underlying organization of text by analyzing language and other structural features in order to reveal hidden ideological or cultural elements.

Analyzing political speeches under CDA framework attracted the attention of many linguists all over the year. In Ekwati's (2010) study, an analysis was conducted on the use of modal verbs in Indonesian presidential speeches to investigate the connection between language and power. Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA was applied in the study and Ekwati discovered that the president's use of modal verbs contributed to an image of successful leadership. Additionally, the president's language conveyed certain assumptions about social relationships between the audience and his position of authority.

In 2016, Houda conducted an analysis of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign discourse using the framework of critical discourse analysis proposed by Fairclough. The goal of the study was to identify the components of gender references, rhetorical strategies, frames, and intertextuality present in Clinton's speech. The results showed that Clinton's language contained features associated with gender, persuasive tactics, and framing, all of which conveyed aspects of her ideology. This study critically analyses the presidential inaugural speech by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe thus the relevance of this paper.

### **3. Methodology**

The research is qualitative in nature and focused on interpreting the linguistic features in Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe's presidential inauguration speech on the 1st of October 1960. The analysis was conducted using the Fairclough model, which allowed the researchers to identify relevant

linguistic features. The model consists of three linked tactics of analysis related to discourse dimensions; (i) The object of evaluation (including verbal and visual texts). (ii) The processes by which the object is produced and acquired (writing/ speaking/designing and reading/listening/viewing) by human subjects. (iii) The socio-historical conditions which govern these processes.

To achieve the study objectives, the researchers employ several of the Farclough's assets, examining political discourse in the form of sentences and phrases and investigating the word choice and use of personal and plural pronouns "I" and "we" and the structures of necessity modals.

#### **4. Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section analysis the linguistic devices and rhetorical strategies employed in the inaugural speech delivered by the Nigerian president, DR. Nnamdi Azikiwe on 1st October 1960.

##### **4.1 The use of Linguistic Devices in Discourse**

A discourse analysis of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's presidential inauguration speech reveals the strategic use of linguistic devices to convey specific messages and shape the perception of the audience. The usage of linguistic devices in Dr. Azikiwe's inaugural speech highlights his intention to create a persuasive and impactful message.

##### **The use of Rhetorical Questions**

These rhetorical questions serve to engage the audience and prompt them to reflect on the issues being discussed. For example, Dr. Azikiwe asks, "Can we build a nation where peace and unity reign?" This rhetorical question draws attention to the goal of achieving peace and unity in the nation and prompts the audience to contemplate the possibility and importance of this vision. Dr Azikiwe employed rhetorical questions to engage his audience and elicit their active participation in the ideas he presented. He posed question such as "Are we not tired of division and strife?" These rhetorical questions served to evoke introspection and spark a sense of collective responsibility among the listeners.

##### **The use of Metaphor**

Dr Azikiwe employed figurative language in his inaugural speech to create vivid imagery and evoke emotional responses from the audience. For example, he used metaphors like "building a strong foundation" and "soaring to new heights" to symbolize the progress and aspiration of the Nigerian people. These metaphors not only made his speech more engaging and memorable but also appealed to the audience's emotions, instilling a sense of hope and inspiration. Dr Azikiwe uses metaphor to emphasize the importance of unity in moving Nigeria forward and fostering a sense of togetherness among its diverse population. These metaphors serve to create vivid imagery and evoke emotions in the audience. For instance, Dr. Azikiwe states, "Our nation is a ship navigating through stormy waters." This metaphorical language paints a picture of the challenges the nation faces and the need for strong leadership to steer the country towards a safer and more prosperous future.

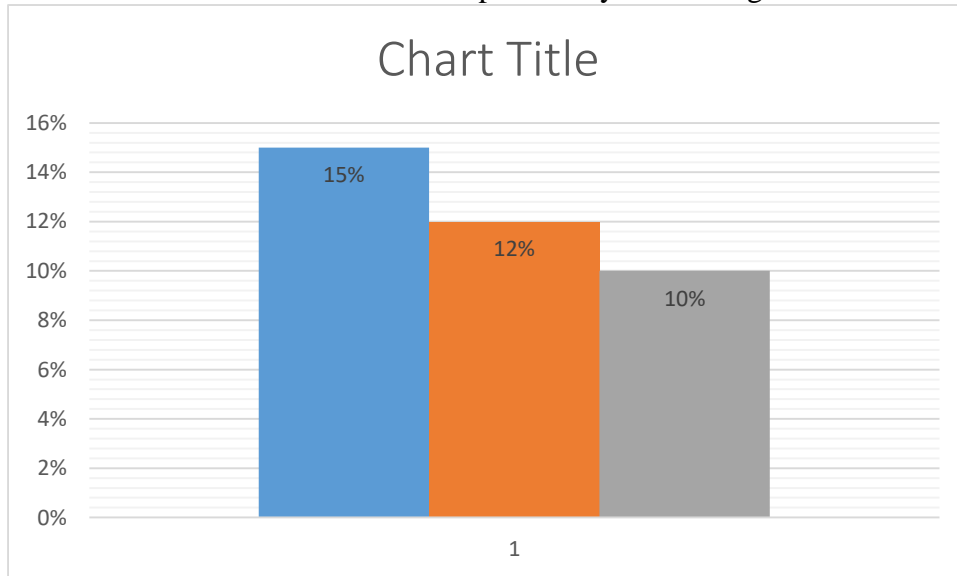
##### **The use of Parallelism**

Dr. Azikiwe's inaugural speech employs the use of parallelism. This rhetorical device involves the repetition of grammatical structures or patterns, which creates a sense of rhythm and emphasizes key points. For example, Dr. Azikiwe states, "We must work together, we must stand united, and we must strive for progress". This parallelism highlights the importance of collaboration, unity, and progress in achieving the vision of the nation.

##### **The use of Lexical Repetition**

Throughout his inaugural address, Dr Azikiwe strategically repeated certain key words and phrases to emphasize his message and create a sense of unity and purpose among the Nigerian

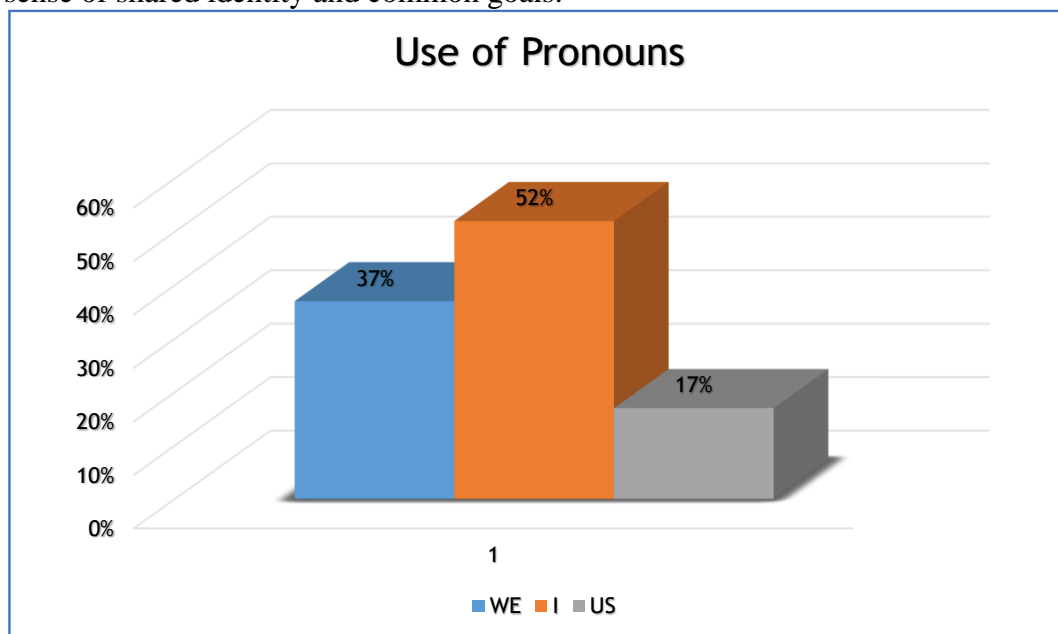
people. For example, Dr Azikiwe repeated words like “unity”, “progress”, and “development” several times in his speech. This repetition served to reinforce the importance of these concepts and to instill a sense of collective responsibility in working towards achieving them.



The chart above shows the percentage of the repeated lexicons in the inaugural speech. "Unity" represented with the blue block covers 15%. "Development" represented with the orange block covers 12% while "Progress" represented with the grey block covers 10%.

#### **The use of Pronouns**

Dr Azikiwe used inclusive language to establish a sense of shared identity and common goals. This linguistic choice helped to bridge the gap between the speakers and the listeners, making them feel seen, heard, and valued. He frequently used pronouns like “we”, “us”, “I” to create a sense of shared identity and common goals.



The chart above shows the percentage of the usage of pronouns 'we, I and us' in the inaugural speech. "WE" represented with the orange block covers 52%. "I" represented with the blue block covers 37% while "US" represented with the grey block covers 17%.

#### **The use of Modality**

Dr. Azikiwe's inaugural speech utilizes the device of modality to add emphasis and conviction to his statements. For example, he stated, "We will not rest until every citizen has access to

quality education." This use of modality demonstrates Dr. Azikiwe's determination and commitment to addressing issues of education and ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens. Moreover, Dr. Azikiwe's inaugural speech incorporates the use of emotive language to appeal to the emotions of the audience and create a sense of urgency and passion. For instance, he states, "We cannot afford to ignore the cries of the unemployed youth, whose hopes for a better future are fading away." This emotive language evokes empathy and a sense of responsibility in the audience, compelling them to take action to address the issue of unemployment. These are just a few examples of the linguistic devices used by Dr. Azikiwe in his presidential inauguration speech.

### **The use of Pragmatic Acts**

The findings of the study highlight the importance of pragmatic acts in political communication and speech analysis. They demonstrate how language choices rhetorical strategies can shape perceptions, elicit emotional responses, and mobilize support. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe's presidential inauguration speech holds great significance in Nigerian history, as it marked a crucial turning point for the nation. Dr Azikiwe's speech was analyzed using the framework of pragmatic acts, which aims to understand the communicative functions and intentions behind the speaker's words.

Pragmatic acts refer to the ways in which speakers use language to perform specific actions or achieve particular goals within a speech. The study of pragmatic acts in Dr Azikiwe's inaugural speech provides valuable insights into the rhetorical strategies and persuasive techniques employed by the president. The analysis revealed several pragmatic acts employed by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe in his inaugural speech. These acts include expressing gratitude and appreciation to the audience, outlining his political agenda and goals, and inspiring hope and unity among the Nigerian people. By utilizing pragmatic acts such as assertive, commissive, expressive, verdictive, and declarative acts, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe was able to effectively convey his message and connect with the Nigerian people.

### **Assertive Acts**

Dr Azikiwe utilized assertive acts, which are speech acts that aim to convey information or make statements. For example, he asserted his commitment to upholding the principles of democracy and ensuring equal rights for all citizens.

### **Commissive Acts**

Dr Azikiwe utilized commissive acts, which are speech acts that commit the speakers to future actions or policies. For instance, he made promises to tackle corruption, promote economic development, and improve the speaker's emotions, attitudes, or beliefs. He expressed his optimism for the future of Nigeria, his determination to bring about positive change, and his belief in the strength and resilience of the Nigerian people.

### **Verdictive Acts**

Dr Azikiwe's speech contained verdictive acts, which are speech acts that express judgements or evaluations. He provided an assessment of Nigeria's current state, highlighting the challenges and acknowledging the need for transformation.

### **Declarative Acts**

Dr Azikiwe's speech contained declarative acts, which are speech acts that state facts or provide information. For instance, he presented statistics and data on the country's socio-economic conditions in the order to emphasize the urgency for change.

In the realm of political discourse, linguistic devices play a crucial role in constructing interpersonal relations and shaping the overall tone and impact of speeches. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, a prominent Nigerian leader, understood the power and importance of language in his presidential inauguration speech. By employing various linguistic devices, Dr Azikiwe aimed to win the attention, support, trust, and loyalty of Nigerians to the ideas he expressed.

Dr Azikiwe's use of linguistic devices in his inaugural speech was not only aimed at constructing interpersonal relations but also at mobilizing and rallying the Nigerian people.

#### **4.2 The use of Rhetorical Strategies in Discourse**

In his inaugural speech, Dr. Azikiwe employed various rhetorical strategies to effectively convey his message and persuade the audience.

Ethos refers to the credibility or trustworthiness of the speaker. Dr. Azikiwe established his ethos by emphasizing his personal and political experiences, highlighting his long-standing commitment to the Nigerian people. For example, he mentioned his years of struggle for independence and his role as a founding member of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons.

Pathos is the appeal to emotion, and Dr. Azikiwe skillfully used emotional language to connect with his audience. For instance, he spoke passionately about the suffering and challenges faced by the Nigerian people, expressing empathy and understanding for their struggles.

He presented well-reasoned arguments and supported his claims with factual evidence. For instance, Dr. Azikiwe discussed the need for economic development and outlined his plans to tackle unemployment, improve infrastructure, and promote agricultural growth. It's used to emphasize key points and create a memorable speech such as "freedom, justice, progress" and "unity in diversity," which served to reinforce his core principles and ideals. According to Bira & Mohammadi's analysis of inaugural speeches, rhetorical figures and rhetorical proofs are common tools of persuasion in political speeches (Li & Li, 2019). Dr Azikiwe's use of rhetorical figures such as ethos, pathos, and logos align with their findings. In addition, Dr Azikiwe used rhetorical schemes, such as repetition and parallelism, to create a sense of rhythm and memorable phrases in his speech.

#### **4.3 The Themes used in Discourse**

The use of themes in Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe's presidential inauguration speech in 1960 was strategically employed to convey key messages and emphasize important ideas to the audience. One prominent theme in Dr Azikiwe's speech was the idea of unity and national cohesion. Through repetition and the use of inclusive language, Dr Azikiwe emphasized the importance of national unity and working together as a cohesive nation. He stated, "We must unite if we are to fulfill the great potential of our nation," highlighting the need for Nigerians to come together despite their diverse backgrounds and political differences.

Another significant theme in Dr Azikiwe's speech was the pursuit of African unity. Dr Azikiwe stressed the importance of collaboration and solidarity with other African nations, stating, "We must join hands with our African brothers and sisters to build a stronger continent." This theme of African unity reflected the broader Pan-African movement happening at the time, with leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, and others advocating for a united Africa. Dr Azikiwe's mention of these leaders in his speech indicates his alignment with the goals and ideals of Pan-Africanism.

### **5. Conclusion**

We investigated the power dynamics, ideologies, and social structures that are embedded in the speech. The linguistic analysis of Dr Azikiwe's inaugural speech revealed several key findings. These findings include: the use of pragmatic acts to reveal intentions and goals: Similar to other Nigerian political leaders' inaugural speeches, Dr Azikiwe's speech contains pragmatic acts that are used to communicate his intentions and goals as the newly elected president (Ugah &

Olaniyan, 2020). These pragmatic acts are aimed at winning the attention, support, trust, and loyalty of Nigerians to the ideas expressed in the speech. The finding also includes the use of linguistic devices to construct interpersonal relations: Dr Azikiwe's speech employs various stylistic elements to construct the interpersonal relations between himself as the president and the Nigerian people. These linguistic devices include the use of inclusive pronouns, such as "we" and "us," which create a sense of unity and togetherness.

These devices are employed to evoke feelings of hope, inspiration, and unity among the Nigerian people. Overall, the discourse analysis of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe's presidential inauguration speech reveals his use of pragmatic acts, linguistic devices, and rhetorical devices to effectively communicate his intentions and goals, construct interpersonal relations with the Nigerian people, address corruption as a problem, and appeal to the emotions of the audience. The findings of the study highlight the importance of pragmatic acts in political communication and speech analysis. They demonstrate how language choices rhetorical strategies can shape perceptions, elicit emotional responses, and mobilize support. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe's presidential inauguration speech holds great significance in Nigerian history, as it marked a crucial turning point for the nation. Dr Azikiwe's speech was analyzed using the framework of pragmatic acts, which aims to understand the communicative functions and intentions behind the speaker's words.

In conclusion, the critical discourse analysis of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe's presidential inauguration speech reveals various linguistic, rhetorical, and pragmatic strategies employed by Dr Azikiwe to construct relations between himself and the audience. These strategies include the use of epistemic strategies and demotic modality to project authority and a sense of responsibility, the use of mood to express intentions and desires, and the use of rhetorical devices to engage and persuade the audience.

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