
CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELF-GLORIFICATION AND DEROGATION OF OTHERS IN SELECTED INAUGURAL POLITICAL SPEECHES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper takes a critical view of the rhetoric used by Nigerian politicians in projecting “self” and “others” in their political speeches. Critical discourse analysis, a research paradigm which is explicitly judgemental of the various forms of linguistic repressions, including manipulation, dominance, propaganda and hidden agenda, is applied to the analysis of two inaugural political speeches by two past Nigerian civilian leaders. Halliday’s systemic functional grammar model and van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach especially the “macro-propositions” which emphasize global meanings; were integrated into the analytical framework. Our findings revealed register choices which deliberately exaggerate the “faults” of “other” leaders in derogatory terms, while the “goodness” of the present administration is extolled using positive register choices. The generic structure and choices in the Mood system also portray these tenets of self-glorification of “our good” and derogation of “their bad”. In the same way, the bad aspects of the speakers were literally non-existent or they were euphemized just as the good aspects of other past politicians were de-emphasized. The paper recommends to our political leaders more accommodating representation of their political opponents so as not to create room for linguistic representations which could overheat the system.

Key words: derogation, self-glorification, critical discourse analysis, register, genre, over-lexicalization, systemic functional linguistics, global meanings.

Introduction

Discourse has been implicated as a means of propagating social inequities, of projecting dominant ideologies and in representing the truth of those with greater access to societal power. Language has been seen from this perspective as a form of social practice, as a semiotic system embodying the totality of meaning potentials available in a given culture or macro-structure from where language users make meaningful choices to realize their actualized meaning potentials which manifest in the form of texts. Language users construct meanings in texts in accordance with how they are positioned in this macrostructure, using the micro-structure of the lexicogrammar. The driving force in this social positioning is

always how to make our discourses dominate others so that ours become the preferred discourse, how to represent self and others, presenting ‘us’ in favourable terms while ‘they’ are usually diminished or castigated. This polarization in linguistic representation has been termed in this paper, ‘self-glorification’ and ‘derogation’. These terms were adapted from Rahimi and Sahragard’s work (2006). These authors defined “derogation” as “showing a critical attitude towards others, insulting others”. The term “self-glorification” is used in this work to denote the use of hyperboles to exaggerate our good attributes and euphemisms to conceal and deemphasize our faults.

This paper explores this rhetoric of language use in line with van Dijk’s model which he termed ‘positive self and negative other representation’ (van Dijk, 2005). The principal tenets of a research perspective called ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’ was also applied to the study to reveal how the present day Nigerian politicians who are the custodian of societal power, use language for self-glorification, to praise their actions, regimes and programmes while expressing the regimes of their predecessors and political opponents in derogatory or insulting terms. This polarization of ingroup and outgroup is known to characterize most discursive formations that are politically motivated not only among Nigerian politicians but also elsewhere. According to van Dijk, (2005, p.103)

CDA research is often interested in the study of ideologically-biased discourses and the ways these polarize the representation of “us” (in-group) and “them” (out-group). Both at the level of global and local meaning analysis, we thus often witness an overall strategy of positive “self” presentation and negative “other” presentation in which our good things and their bad thing are emphasized and our bad things and their good things are deemphasized.

According to the above author, these biases exist at both global and local meanings. Global meanings, according to him are mentally organized in the form of “topic” –titles, headlines, summaries, abstracts, thematic sentences or conclusions – and we would add, generic structure – which he termed “macro propositions”. He recommends starting the analysis of large corpora by assigning a list of topics to the different parts of the text in order to summarize it. This stance is in line with Bhatia (1993) schematic structuring of text (see also Eggs, 2004). According to Eggs (2004) schematic structuring is credited to Bakhtin who argued that knowledge of the schematic structure is essential in text analysis because “from the beginning we have a sense of the speech (or a text) whole”.

Local meanings on the other hand include the meaning of words, the structures of propositions, coherence and other relations between propositions. They also include indirect or implicit meaning such as presuppositions, allusions, vagueness, implicature and others. These implicit meanings are part of a mental model of the users of a text but not of the text itself. By selecting some socially-shared mental model with negative connotation in a text (such as the use of the word “persecution” in van Dijk’s sample text “A Petition against Persecution of Microsoft”) (in Wodak & Meyer, 2005, p.100), the speaker can represent those responsible for the persecution; “them” as “bad” and “us” as “good”. By exploiting the global and local meanings, speakers and writers emphasize certain meanings, control comprehension and influence the formation of other mental models of their

audiences/readers, their opinions and attitudes, hence they allow for influence and manipulation. In his socio-cognitive approach, van Dijk argues that the semantic macrostructures (global meanings) and semantic microstructures (local meanings) are mentally-organized by language users, and these influence the way meanings are organized in relation to how 'we' and 'others' are represented in the social macro-structure using the resources of the linguistic micro-structure. According to van Dijk, the global and local study of discourse meaning and form provides

... a systematic account of how ideological discourse represents 'us' and 'them'. Thus, speakers or writers may emphasize our good things by topicalising positive meanings, by using positive lexical items in self-descriptions, by providing many details about good actions, and few details about bad actions, by hyperbole and positive metaphors, by leaving implicit our negative properties, or by de-emphasizing our agency of negative acts through passive sentences or nominalizations (pp.107-108).

On the other hand, meanings relating to 'others' may be presented in subtle formal forms that express underlying negative opinions, negative metaphors and arguments leading to the formation of negative impressions about 'them'.

Borrowing from van Dijk's global (macro-propositions) and local (micro-propositions) meanings, and in line with Bhatia's schematic structuring of texts and Halliday's concepts of genre, register and Mood, (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Eggins, 2004), we derive our analytical model for this study. We shall see how the generic/schematic structuring of the selected political speeches and the register choices projected the ideology of positive "self" and negative "other" and how choices in the Mood system portrayed the apparent commitment or detachment of the speakers. The work is focused on the rhetoric of the semantic macro-structures of self-glorification and derogation as applied in two inaugural speeches of Nigerian past civilian leaders, namely, President Shehu Shagari's inaugural speech in 1979 and President Olusegun Obasanjo's inaugural speech of 1999 captioned 'The New Dawn'. The paper explores the various linguistic means by which the macro-strategies of positive self and negative other representation were enacted in the two speeches through self-glorification and derogation of others.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The term 'critical' was said to have been coined by Jacob Mey (in Wodak & Meyer, 2005) in his claim that "every speech situation is distorted by power structures and there is no ideal speech situation." According to Wodak (in Wodak & Kendal Online) "critical" in CDA means "not taking things for-granted", being skeptical about representations in texts and discourse, being self-reflective in deconstructing texts in order to make opaque ideological positions transparent, seeing through the hidden agenda represented in texts, diagnostic reading of texts to separate ideologies from official meaning of linguistic items.

Quoting the Frankfurt school director of the institute of Social Research, Max Horkheimer, Wodak (2005: 9) traced the origin of the term 'critical' to the influence of this school. According to her:

The role of the theorist is that of articulating and helping to develop a latent class consciousness. The tasks of critical theory are to assist in remembering a past that was in danger of being forgotten, to struggle for emancipation, to clarify reasons for a struggle and to define the nature of critical thinking itself.

CDA addresses the prevailing social problems by opposing dominant ideological positions. It chooses the perspectives of those who suffer most and critically analyses those in power, those who are responsible and those who have the means and the opportunity to solve such problems and to improve conditions (Wodak & Meyer, 2005). Critical theories in general and CDA in particular are, therefore, guides to human action; they are aimed at producing both enlightenment and emancipation. They aim at making agents aware of hidden coercion in texts to free them from that coercion and putting them in a situation where they can determine their true interests. They do not only seek to describe and explain but also to root out a particular kind of delusion. CDA proponents share the view that the relationship between language and society is dialectical: that is, discourse is shaped by social structure and at the same time shapes the social structure (Johnstone, 2008). They therefore believe that since discourse is used to establish unequal power relations and various forms of social inequities, discourse through CDA can also be used to subvert them. In this work, perspectives from CDA is applied to addresses the representation of self and others, by those who control the means of communication, that is, the dominant discourse, to glorify self and denigrate others who are less privileged in terms of possession of this means.

The Contextual Dimensions of Genre and Register

According to Halliday (1978), context is the environment in which the text comes to life. Since context is outside language, it means that the grammar of a language ‘has to interface with what goes on outside language: with the happenings and conditions of the world and with the social processes we engage in’ (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). Thus the stratified linguistic system (semantics, lexicogrammar and phonology/graphology) is embedded in context while semantics provides the interface between the linguistic structure and the contextual structure. The product of a sequence of choices is a text and the choices realized in texts are themselves the realization of contextual dimensions. Texts are said to relate to the context in these two ways; namely, **genre** and **register** (Eggins, 2004), and these contextual factors imbue the text with **generic coherence** and **registeral coherence** respectively.

Eggins gave a systemic functional interpretation of a genre as the ‘cultural purpose of texts in addition to its structural and realization patterns. Bhatia (1993) refers to a genre as a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by members of the professional and academic community in which it occurs. Fairclough (1995) refers to genre as language use associated with a particular social activity. Each genre structures the narrow world of experience or reality in a particular way, the implication being that the same experience or reality will require a different way of structuring if one were to operate in a different genre. A text is said to have generic coherence when we can identify a unified purpose motivating the language usually expressed through a predictable generic or schematic structure. Whereas the generic structure

of a text is text-internal –that is, the unique structural patterning which characterizes a particular text type, schematic structure is reader-generated, with the pattern imposed on the text by individual readers. For our purposes, schematic structure/generic structure of the political speeches will be analyzed to determine how the structuring of the moves provide the means of identifying the presentation of ‘self’ and ‘others’, and how these moves were used to paint an idyllic picture of the status quo by making the speakers appear as messianic while their predecessors were presented as demonic.

In Halliday’s SFG, register refers to variations in language according to the contexts of use. According to Halliday (1978: 33), the linguistic situation or the social context differ from one another in three broad respects, namely; what is actually taking place –also called the ‘field’ of discourse, who is taking part – also called the ‘tenor’ of discourse and what part the language is playing –also called the ‘mode’ of discourse. Register variation helps the language user to determine and understand what situational factors govern the choice of linguistic features. Insight from the register theory is invaluable to the present work as it would help to identify the various registers used in the selected political speeches and how these choices help in the presentation of the speakers as ‘good’ and the past leaders as ‘bad’.

Over-lexicalization

This concept is used in this work to refer to the use of certain words which do not contribute much to the meanings of the speeches but simply used to gain ethos. These are in the form of triads and parallel structures. Triads also called ‘three-part statements’ are very powerful rhetorical device of political discourse (Jones & Wareing, 2000). It is a linguistic strategy of referring to things in groups of threes which make the things so referred to aesthetically pleasing. For instance, it sounds more pleasing to the ear to say: ‘The election was free, fair and transparent’ than to simply say that ‘the election was well conducted’. Jones and Wareing gave an example where three-part statements were used by politicians even when they had only one point to make. Parallel structures or parallelisms also perform the same embellishing function as triads except that parallelisms can be more than three or four structures which mirror each other in length and structure and used aesthetically to captivate the audience. These “artistically-motivated deviations” have been termed “foregrounding” in researches in stylistics (Wales, 1989). They are regarded as “deviations” because they violate the normal rules of usage by over-frequency, but speakers exploit them to give prominence to certain opinions and achieve stylistic effects. These linguistic strategies form part of our analysis of the political speeches.

The Mood System

In systemic functional linguistics (SFL) propounded by Halliday, Mood encompasses the interpersonal meaning of roles and relationships, types of clause structure (indicative, imperative), the degree of obligation and certainty expressed (modality), the use of tags (Mood tags), vocatives, epithets, attitudinal words which are either positively or negatively loaded, expressions of intensification and politeness (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The Mood element carries the nub of the argument, the burden of the clause which cannot disappear from the clause when the responding speaker takes up his/her position.

The Mood element, consists of two essential constituents, the Subject – a nominal type element and the Finite – a verbal type element to which could be attached an expression of polarity (Eggs, 2004, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). According to Halliday and Matthiessen, the Subject is regarded as the “anchor” of the proposition or proposal. It supplies what it takes for the proposition or the proposal to be affirmed or denied or to be desirable or undesirable respectively. The success or failure of the proposition or proposal is vested on the Subject. It is the element of the clause that carries the “modal responsibility”. The Subject is also the unmarked Theme in a declarative clause. Modal responsibility implies that the validity or otherwise of the interactive event is vested on the Subject.

The lexicogrammatical resources of Mood and the associated patterns of Modality carry a very considerable semantic load as the expression of interpersonal rhetoric. Our particular area of focus in the Mood structure of the clause in this study is the Subject. In this work, we addressed the use of ‘I’, ‘we’ and ‘others’ in the selected political speeches to see how the strategic use of these pronouns and non-interactant Subjects in subject positions serve the speakers rhetorically in presenting the participants either in good or bad light.

Data Analysis

Generic Structure of the Speeches

The following table gives a sketch of the generic or schematic structuring of the speeches – the macro-propositions which also give insight to the content of the speeches.

Table 1
Summary of the Generic/Schematic Structure of the Speeches

Moves	Speech 1	Speech 2
M ₁	Announcing election to presidency as destiny preordained by God/Establishing common ground	Announcing the birth of second Republic. His election as President. Establishing common ground
M ₂	Accepting office “in all humility”	Assumption of office “as a result of a free, democratic and peaceful election”
M ₃	Appreciating God and the electorate	Appreciating God and the electorate
M ₄	Castigating past administration	Castigating past administration
M ₅	Goodness of this administration/promises of good times ahead	Goodness of this administration/promises of good times ahead
M ₆	Challenges of present administration	Challenges of present administration
M ₇	Call for collective responsibility	Call for collective responsibility
M ₈	Coda	Tributes/Coda

Register Choices in the Speeches

Below are samples of register choices in the schematic structure in the two speeches.

Table 2: Register choices in the two speeches

Generic Structure	Register Choices	
	Speech 1	Speech 2
M₁ Announcing election/establishing common ground	give praise to God, this day specially appointed by God Himself ,you elected me as your President to head a democratic civilian administration	Birth of Second Republic, Free democratic and peaceful election
M₂ Accepting/Assuming office	What God Almighty has ordained .. I accept this destiny in all humility	Formally assumed office as your first executive president
M₃ Appreciation	.. thank you good Nigerians for the confidence reposed in me ... tribute to great and gallant Nigerians who lost their lives in the struggle... .. (INEC) deserve our gratitude, commend Provisional Ruling Council	.. grateful to God Thank all of you for your patience and support
M₄ Castigating past administration	We experienced in the last decade ...persistent deterioration in the quality of our governance ... instability, weakening of all public institutions ... bitter relations... indifferent to propriety of conduct... little commitment... official corruption, recklessness ,bribery ... earned Nigeria bad image at home and abroad, distorted and retrogressed development ... chaos and despair ... Nigerian scene... very bleak, our infrastructure ... allowed to decay and collapse	... sober reflection on the problems of the First Republic ... civil war ... military rule ... problem of creating a national government ...integration of the various ethnic groups... divisive factors
M₅ Goodness of this Administration promises of Good Times ahead	“New Dawn”, genuine Renaissance ... forthright, purposeful, committed, honest and transparent leadership..., significant changes, ... corruption would be tackled head on/stamped out, ... no sacred cows, ... honesty and transparency restored and enforced, ... integrity enforced in public office... better pay and benefits, ... restoration of confidence in government .. salutary changes.	...New constitution, “one nation one destiny”..., national integration ... , dedicated leadership and citizenry imbued with faith..., auspicious circumstances ...,equal treatment to each state regardless of party affiliation ..., enough food, home ownership..., good shelter, loan to build houses...,free education...,more schools, more teachers, more laboratories..., lifting the wage

		freeze, car loans, labour independence, free collective bargaining, improved health facilities, advancement of mankind, building a united, stable and prosperous nation.
M₆ Challenges	Corruption, crime, protection of life and property, crises in the oil producing areas, food supply, food security and agriculture, law and order, armed robbery, cultism in educational institutions, exploration and production of petroleum, education, macro-economic policies – exchange rate, the debt issue, organized fraud called 419 activities, infrastructure: water supply, energy, television, airways, national shipping, Nigerian railways..., resuscitation of manufacturing industries, job creation and creation of conducive environment for investment, poverty alleviation, housing-both civilian and barracks, refurbishment and new construction for the Armed forces and the Police ,ECOMORG, health services, political and constitutional dialogue, women and youth development	Economy, inflation, Agriculture – Green Revolution, Housing, health, industry and the New Federal Capital, translation of the slogan “One nation one destiny” into reality, Cultivation of a wide-spread national feeling for “One Nigeria”
M₇ Call for Collective Responsibility	...call to national service..., dedicated service to humanity..., no more business as usual ..., inter ministerial consultation ..., cohesion..., measures for individual and collective self control..., we must charge our ways of governance and of doing business	... your contribution cooperation and support, ...rededicate ourselves to the service of this great country, Great challenges and opportunity are before us
M₈ Coda-Ending politely	May the Almighty help us	Thank you and Good night

It is evident from the above tables (1 and 2) that the two speeches have almost identical schematic structuring of the subject matter as political discourse. In table 1, all the moves but one deliberately emphasized the speakers’ election to presidency as preordained by God, something every Nigerian should be proud of, a general consensus. In move 4, which was devoted to the previous administrations, the speakers castigated the maladministration and bad governance of their predecessors. They presented an idyllic picture of a glorious future, - “a New Dawn”, “a genuine Renaissance” “more auspicious circumstances”, “Green

Revolution” – about ‘our’ administration, while ‘their’ administration was presented using such register choices as ‘deterioration’, ‘instability’, ‘chaos’, ‘divisive factors’, ‘official corruption’ and so on. This positive “self” and negative “other” presentation is evident in the two speeches.

Furthermore, the register types recorded in the speeches represent catchy lexicalizations, over-lexicalizations in the form of triads and parallel structures which in most cases, were mere embellishments aimed at gaining ethos for the speakers at the detriment of the teeming Nigerian millions. The choice of registers in the two speeches also represents the yearning and expectations of every Nigerian from two democratic governments sandwiched between many years of stifling military regimes. They touched on all areas of need and to the uncritical reader the achievement of these lofty goals and challenges would mean improved living conditions for every Nigerian. However, in the following sections, we see how the choices of processes in the lexicogrammatical structure of Mood positioned the speakers in the attainment of these goals. The tenor of the speeches is on the ‘I’/‘we’, ‘you’ and ‘others’ level and according to Halliday, tenor and Mood are identical, but whereas the former refers to the contextual realization, the latter belongs to the lexicogrammar.

Analysis of the Mood System of the Speeches

Table 3

Summary of the Mood Structure of the Speeches

Mood	Mood Types/Speech Function	Occurrence in the Speeches	
		Speech 1	Speech 2
Subject	“Speaker” (I, my government/administration)	23	18
	“Speaker+” (we, our government/administration)	16	33
	“addressee” (you)	3	4
	Non interactant subjects (others)	136	106
Total		178	161

The Mood system which specifies the interpersonal structure of the clause as an exchange of information/goods and services shows that only a few of the sampled clauses positioned the speakers in Subject positions as the modally-responsible agent in the role relationships of the speeches. There is also an oscillation from the use of “I” to “we” in Subject positions (“we” specified in Table 3 as “Speaker+”) where “we” is non-specific in its reference to the participant so indicated. There is also a high prevalence of non-interactant subjects showing a deliberate attempt to shift modal responsibility away from the speaker’s persona.

Having considered the occurrence of the speaker (I), speaker+ (we) and addressee (you) in subject positions and bearing in mind that the unmarked theme of a declarative clause is its

Subject, we focus on some non-interactant Subjects which were positioned as topical Theme and as marked Theme (Halliday and Matthiessen 71-79).

Samples of topicalized non-interactant subjects and marked Theme representing the ills of past administration – (marked Theme - italicized, topical Theme/Subject - bold)

TEXT 1

Speech 1

- a. *Instead of progress and development which we are entitled to expect from those who governed us, we* experienced in the last decade and half .. persistent deterioration in the quality of our governance
- b. **Government and all its agencies** became thoroughly corrupt and reckless.
- c. **Our infrastructure – NEPA, NITEL, Roads** ...were allowed to decay and collapse.
- d. **One of the greatest tragedies of military rule in recent times** is that corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged and unchecked even when it was glaring for everybody to see.
- e. **The rule and regulation for doing official business** were deliberately ignored, set aside or by passed to facilitate corrupt practices.

Speech 2

- (a) **The problems of creating a national government, a viable economic base and the integration of the various ethnic group**... overwhelmed the First Republic.
- (b) **These problems** are still with us.

The speakers topicalized issues which present their predecessors as bad administrators thereby enabling them to present themselves as the saviour of the people.

Over-lexicalization

Triads (three part statements) and parallel structures (parallelisms) were presented as circumstantial elements (Halliday and Matthiessen 259-280) which at times are simply embellishments which do not add much to the experiential meaning of the texts. Samples of such triads and parallel structures are replete in the two speeches, some of which were exemplified below in italics:

Triads

TEXT 2

Speech 1

...in the course of the struggle for *liberty, democracy and good governance*
 ...total lack of confidence in government arising from *bad faith, deceit and evil actions* of recent administration.
 ... so that society will survive and develop in an *orderly, reasonable and predicabile* way.
 rules and regulations for doing official business were deliberately *ignored, set aside or by passed*

Speech 2

We are assuming office as a result of *free, democratic and peaceful* election

New emphasis will be placed on modern methods of food *storage, distribution and processing*.

Our government is committed to building a *united, stable and prosperous* nation

Now that elections are over we must *act as good sportsmen, set aside differences and harness our energies* to the task of nation building.

Parallel structures

TEXT 3

Speech 1

I will give the *forth right, purposeful, committed, honest and transparent* leadership ...

This we must do to ensure *progress, justice, harmony and unity* and above all rekindle *confidence* amongst our people.

Speech 2

We are dedicated to *building a viable economy* by *fostering broad mass participation* and the *utilization of local resources*.

These circumstantial elements help to embellish the speeches, give them erudite touch and help the speakers to gain ethos (speaker credibility)

Discussion

In our analysis of the contextual dimension of the speeches, we presented the generic structure of the speeches and the various register choices in each move structure in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. It was found that the schematic structuring and register choices of the speeches presented an idyllic picture of the elections which brought the speakers to power, as “free, democratic and peaceful”, as an event preordained “by God Almighty Himself” and which “destiny” they have to “accept in all humility”. The various controversies and irregularities which surrounded these elections were never to be mentioned as what was recorded in history books was a “land slide victory” for the two leaders. The speakers presented themselves as the saviour of the people while presenting the ills and bad governance of their predecessors in office using overlexicalizations in the form of triads and parallelisms to present themselves and their actions in catchy and positive expressions while those of their predecessors were presented in subtle negative expressions. This has been termed positive “self” and negative “other” representation where “their bad and our good are emphasized and their good and our bad are deemphasized”; one of the characteristics of a dominant ideology (van Dijk, 2005). The fact that these two leaders recorded the highest spate of corruption and other fraudulent practices in their purported democratic regimes shows how evil intentions could be concealed in flowery language.

The use of personal pronouns (I, we, you), and possessive (my government/administration, our government/administration) in potential Subject positions is seen as ideologically motivated. As we already noted, the Subject in the Mood structure specifies the responsible element in the proposition or proposal. It is that element on which the validity of the information is made to rest (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004). The choice of Subject by

speakers is guided by two considerations. Firstly, speakers choose as Subject that linguistic element which they would want to assign modal responsibility and secondly, that item which they want to make prominent as Theme, and which they are calling on the listener to acknowledge and verify. Thus the unmarked Theme of a declarative clause is its Subject.

Data from our Table 3 also show a deliberate oscillation in the use of “I” and “we”, “my” and “our” in potential Subject and topical Theme positions. This shift could be interpreted as deliberate manipulation by the speakers aimed at either claiming or disclaiming responsibility depending on the issue at stake. It seems that “we” is used when the speaker is in doubt of the verifiability or acceptability of the proposition or proposal. If the proposition/proposal fails, the speaker would not be totally held modally responsible for the claim. Other participants would share in the responsibility. On the other hand, “I” is used when the speaker is on safer grounds and wants to claim responsibility for positive achievement. This is to support the assertion by Jones & Wareing (2000) on the implication of the shift in the use of personal pronouns – either to take credit for positive achievement or to disguise responsibility.

Yet another explanation to the shift in the use of singular and plural personal pronouns in Subject position could be that “we” is used when the speakers want to adopt a “face-preserving act” (Yule, 1996), when they need the solidarity of their audience, to identify with them as “in-group” and thus win their consent and perpetuate their hegemonies. In that case, the asymmetry in power is attenuated by the use of inclusive “we”. However, when the speakers want to assert authority as those in control, they change to face-threatening acts by the use of singular “I” meaning “I am in charge here”

Conclusion

From our analysis of the contextual, semantic and lexicogrammatical features of the speeches, we can see language use that is ostensibly persuasive but inherently self-glorifying, presenting the speakers as good leaders who were sent ‘by the Almighty Himself’ to redeem the people from ‘chaos’, ‘deterioration’, ‘insecurity’, ‘corruption’, and lead them to better conditions. Other past administrators were presented as villains who institutionalized the contentious social vices. These representations are regarded by the present study as mere distortion of facts, as positive “self” and negative “other” presentation. The language is aimed at the manufacture of consent (hegemony) while dangling the issues which represent the yearnings of the people as bait. This assertion agrees with Mazrui’s view (Mazrui, 1975) that African politicians are mere actors in a political theatre contrived by them. Mazrui sees African politics as synonymous with the dramatic art where reality is in eternal conflict with make-believe. Adopting Wodak’s discourse-historical approach (2005), these speeches represent a counterfeit of what exists in reality. They are, therefore, not true to context.

We recommend that our political leaders should be more realistic in making assertions which present their colleagues in derogatory terms while extolling their own personalities and actions. This begs the question of their modesty and presents them as ego-bloated politicians among their subjects who know better what the true situation is. Our leaders should emulate the virtues of humility and accommodation and desist from language use that is ‘ad hominem’, that denigrates or directly attacks the personalities of their political opponents.

This will help to enhance their credibility and acceptability as mature, emotionally-balanced and capable leaders who do not meddle in the vulgarity of mud-slinging, who do not devote valuable time and resources castigating personalities, but would rather address issues of national importance.

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