AWKA JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERARY STUDIES (AJELLS)

Volume 12 Number 4
December, 2025

Analysis of Rhetorical Devices in President Tinubu's 1st October, 2024 Independence Day Speech

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Abstract

This study examines the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed by President Tinubu in his 1st October 2024 Independence Day Speech and how it has helped in shaping public perception and national identity. Using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse analysis, textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, and Leech and Short's framework which focuses on analysing literary devices by examining how they are used to convey meaning, and understand speaker's intent, this research explores the power dynamics, ideological underpinnings, and persuasive elements used in the speech. The study also investigates how Tinubu's language choices reflect power dynamics, governance priorities, and efforts to foster national unity. The study uses a qualitative research approach and the methodology involves several steps to systematically analyse the speech and identify the rhetorical devices used by the president in his Independence Day speech. The findings of the study reveal that President Tinubu employed a range of rhetorical devices in his speech, including metaphors, personifications, hyperboles, parallelisms, similes, antitheses, anaphora among others. These rhetorical elements employed in the speech are used by the president to establish trust, inspire hope, outline policy priorities, and promote national unity.

Keywords: Rhetorical Devices, Discourse, Political Discourse, Independence-Day, Speech

Introduction

This study is a critical discourse analysis of President Tinubu's Independence Day Speech. The idea behind critical discourse analysis according to linguists is to investigate and consider the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are totally incorporated, reproduced, and resisted by, say, the text and talk in certain contexts such as social and political contexts. It aims to reveal the power dynamics that are often hidden in language use, and how language is used to maintain social hierarchies, reveal the ways in which language is used to maintain social inequalities, challenge the ideologies and beliefs underlying social inequalities, and enhance critical awareness of language use so that people can think more critically about the language they use and hear in their daily lives. The study adopts a qualitative research approach in planning, collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data, with the researcher as the primary research instrument, and the manuscript that formed the speech as the secondary research instrument.

The study analyses Independence Day speech, which is a efficient means through which political leaders address the citizens on the nation's history, the importance of independence and what it means for the country, achievements throughout the years of independence, and some targeted goals the country plans to achieve in the coming years. Despite its significance, the study observes that there are few scholarly studies on the rhetorical elements in president Tinubu's 2024 Independence Day speech. This is because the speech was made recently. The study fills this gap. The study therefore, identifies, examines, and analyses the rhetorical techniques employed by President Tinubu, during his 1st October, 2024, Independence Day speech with a focus on how he constructs meanings, evoke emotions, and appeals to the citizens' logic and values, and ultimately persuades listeners

towards cooperation and shared goals. Drawing on linguistic and rhetorical theories, this study examines how the president uses of numerous rhetorical devices to communicate his commitment, inspire confidence, and promote national unity.

The term 'Critical Discourse Analysis' (CDA) is first introduced by the significant works of van Dijk (1993) who maintains that CDA is not merely a unified model, but a joint point of view on doing linguistics, semiotics, or even discourse analysis. Further, it is broadly claimed that the one element of CDA by which it is distinguished from other, even if related, fields of discourse analysis is represented in its "critical" feature. It is known as an approach that is based on the union of language studies and social theory (Fairclough, 1992). CDA investigates how social power is misused and how text and talk represent, procreate, and resist dominance and inequality in the social and political context.

The most notable figure in this domain is Norman Fairclough, who has developed a three-dimensional framework for studying discourse. The first stage, description, is concerned with the examination of the formal linguistic features of texts or "discourse fragment" including the visual verbal and visual texts. This stage provides a researcher with an amount of freedom and flexibility of choosing whatever linguistic elements that are suitable and fit for the targeted data as Fairclough himself indicates that this stage is "selective". This stage is used to analyse various key features, one of which is: Metaphors and other rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, personification, alliteration, parallelism, repetition, etc.: How they structure understanding.

Literature Review

This section reviews relevant literature and element surrounding the topic of the research. This review provides a deeper understanding of the work being studied by providing information about aspects that are encompassed in the topic of the research.

This will help in gaining a more nuanced understanding of the work's context.

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Rhetorics and Rhetorical Devices

The word "rhetoric" which means public speaking develops from the ancient Greek word "rhetor" (Zheng Lingling, 2014). In the old times, rhetoric means learning how to be a great speaker. With time going on, its meanings have diversified. Aristotle once described rhetoric in *The Art of Rhetoric* as "instrument of exploring the overall feasible ways to persuade the audience whatever the subject is in relation to". "Rhetoric is the subject that is concerned with the employment of the discourse, whether spoken form or written form, to motivate the hearer, whether the hearer is just s single person or is composed of a group of people." Said Corbett (1971: 3). In the view of John Locke, an English philosopher of the 17th century, rhetoric is "the science of oratory," or "the art of speaking elegantly and forcefully." (Huang Ren, 1999: 1) Being a Chinese famous rhetorician, Liu Yameng (2004: 2) defined rhetoric as "the way of influencing ideas, judgments and actions through symbolic approaches." Rhetoric is recognized as the art of utilizing the language for persuasion effects (Murthy & Ghosal, 2014). It is an effective tool to give information, persuade and motivate the audience for particular purposes in specific situations. Rhetoric can be defined as the art of speaking in an elegant and forceful but hidden way to influence, impress and persuade the audience.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis has been widely defined as an investigation of language in use and which is fundamentally interested in the extra-sentential levels, is all in all regarded as a recent field of linguistics (Brown & Yule, 1983). More specifically, van Dijk (2003) assumes that discourse analysis is best depicted in the so-called relationship between the text and context in which that text is

introduced or generated. Detailing more in this prominent point of view, he adds that the word "discourse" is grasped as a text within context in which data are subjected to empirical investigation. Besides, Fairclough (1989) defines the discourse as a term referring to the whole process of the social interaction of which a text is just part or segment affected by other super-linguistic components such as the speaker, audience, and occasion.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social equality. According to van Dijk (2006:252), critical discourse analysis is primarily interested in and motivated by the endeavour to understand pressing social issues.

Political Discourse

Politicians utilise language as the most vital instrument through which they communicate their ideologies to people. So, language has a crucial role to play in politics (Sarah & Oladayo, 2018). According to Fairclough (1989) the term refers to "the whole process of interaction of which a text is just a part" (Fairclough, 1989:24). Political discourse therefore, can be seen as any well talented or decorated use of language by politicians in any political settings or discussions to present their intents or ideologies in an impressive manner to persuade people.

Empirical Review

This section analyses and evaluates the empirical evidence presented in some particular works of literature. Sharififar and Rahimi (2015) carried out a Critical Discourse Analysis research on Obama's and Rouhani's Speeches. In the paper, they were able

to analyse through the transitivity system and modality, how two presidents' language can incorporate both ideology and power in their political speeches; how they manifest their power, capabilities, and policies through language. They used Halliday's metafunctions: ideational functions, the interpersonal function, and the textual function to analyse their data. Therefore, the basis for their analyses is transitivity. In addition, they were able to illustrate the number of words, sentences and paragraphs used in both the speeches. Use of tenses and use of pronouns in both speeches were also discussed in the paper. However, the paper was not able to detail on the rhetorical devices used in the speeches. The paper also did not present the themes that could be found in the speeches nor did it discuss persuasive techniques as used in the speeches.

Inpon (2019) carried out a research on Flouting of the Parallel Structure in the U.S Presidents' Inaugural Speeches. He discussed in details the syntactic parallelism in the speeches as well as the flouting parallelism. He also touched lexical parallelism, phonological parallelism. Discussed about political inaugural speeches as well as studies of language analyses of presidential speeches. The research reveals that the use of marked parallel structure is common in real communication. This implies that the instruction of the English language could benefit from making the learners aware of such usage. The researcher also suggested that teachers should guide learners to be aware of the use of parallel structures and unparallel structures in their communication.

However, the researcher did not explore rhetorical devices and persuasive elements employed in the speeches, nor did he discuss how language is used in the speech to reflect power dynamics and ideology. Wang's work (2010) researched on Obama's Speeches. He analyses Barack Obama's presidential speeches mainly from the point of transitivity and modality, in which one can learn how language is used to serve ideology and power, thus having a better understanding of the purposes of political speeches. The paper

discussed briefly the metafunctions, tenses and modality, but the paper was not able to give detailed discussions on persuasive elements, rhetorical devices or themes as used in the speech.

Munir (2014) carried out a research on Stylistic devices in Obama's Second Inaugural Address. He deliberated much on the analysis of figurative language used in the speech, lexical items that were used to make such figurative terms and how the speech achieved effectiveness through the use of figurative language. The research explored literary devices as tools for distinguishing style and making meanings in the speech. The researcher suggests that students who are majoring in linguistics have to learn stylistics seriously since every text, discourse or speech has its own style; it also suggests that readers should acknowledge the language phenomena, especially the phenomenon of figurative language in an inaugural address so that readers can recognise that figurative language is not only employed in literary works, but also in a speech. However, the research was limited only to figurative language. It did not discuss language used as an instrument to persuade audiences or rhetorical elements used in the speech.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Fairclough's (1989) and Leech and Short (2007) framework for stylistics and discourse analysis. Fairclough aimed to bring together social and political thought with linguistically-oriented discourse analysis. According to Fairclough's (1995) there are three elements in the critical discourse analysis. The elements are textual analysis, discourse practice analysis and social practice analysis. His goal was to raise awareness of exploitative social relations through language. He believed that discourse has the potential to impact, ensure the continuity of, or change social structure.

Fairclough. The aim of his approach is to reveal any hidden relations between language, power and ideology for the sake of raising of consciousness or awareness of the less lay people of the

hidden ideologies of dominance and power of the powerful people in the society. This will help in raising awareness to the dominated people and will provide tools to refuse and withstand any power abuse by the dominating group.

Leech and Short (2007) framework on the other hand, provides a systematic approach to analysing texts, revealing how language choices shape meaning and interpretation. The framework is used to analyse literary devices by examining how they are utilised to convey meaning, understand speaker's intent and explore how readers interpret texts based on linguistic features. They framework provide a heuristic checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories. According to the checklist, there are four levels for analysing the linguistic data in any given text. These levels include lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, context, and cohesion. The lexical scheme searched in the form of parallelism, anaphora, and lexical repetitions.

Methodology

The researcher adopted descriptive approach. Descriptive research is used to define characteristics of a phenomenon being studied. The purpose of this research is to analyse rhetorical devices which are employed the president Tinubu's Independence Day speech, and how they are used for establishing trust and promoting national unity. The study uses human instrument with the researcher as the primary source research instrument whereas the manuscript of the speech is the secondary instrument which helps the researcher in collecting and analysing the data. The manuscript was obtained from *Punch Newspaper*, published online (internet, punchng.com) on 6th October, 2024.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Analysis of rhetorical devices in president Tinubu's 1st October 2024 Independence Day Speech

The rhetorical devices employed by president Tinubu in his Independence Day speech include:

Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech that compares an abstract thing to a concrete thing, which makes the sentence easy to be understood. Metaphors Identified in the Speech are seen in the following phrases:

i. "*Fading embers of colonialism*" where he said: '*From the fading embers of colonialism, their activism, dedication and leadership gave life to the belief in Nigeria as a sovereign and independent nation*.' Here president Tinubu compared colonialism to dying embers. He suggested that colonialism fell, implying its decline.

ii. "Our bonds are intangible yet strong, invisible yet universal" where he said: "*Yet, our bonds are intangible yet strong, invisible yet universal.*" He described and compared the citizens' bonds to as an unseen but yet powerful force.

iii. "The rule of law remains our guiding light" where he said: *By democratically electing a 7th consecutive civilian government, Nigeria has proven that commitment to democracy and the rule of law remains our guiding light*. In this expression president Tinubu compared law directly to light. He symbolised that rule of law is sole guide in running the government, and it is what will make the county stable.

iv. "We passed a significant milestone in our journey to a better Nigeria" where he said: *This year, we passed a significant milestone in our journey to a better Nigeria* in this phrase, he compared progress to a journey with milestones.

v. "Build their family mansion in the middle of a swamp" where he said: *Those who sought to perpetuate the fuel subsidy and broken foreign exchange policies are people who would build their family mansion in the middle of a swamp.* Poor economic policies are

described as a house built in a swamp. In such a place a house cannot hold firm, just as the economy that will mean prolonging fuel will be unstable and cannot guarantee a bright future for the country.

vi. "I am not a man to erect our national home on a foundation of mud" where he said. *I am not a man to erect our national home on a foundation of mud.* Here, the president compared a weak economy to a house built on mud. *National home* is the economy of the country. Therefore, erecting it on a foundation of mud means weakening the economy.

vii. "To endure, our home must be constructed on safe and pleasant ground" where he said: *To endure, our home must be constructed on safe and pleasant ground.* The president in this phrase compared a strong nation to a well-built house that is firm and stable. He believed that building a strong nation is a collective work that requires all efforts and endurance from the citizens.

viii. "We now carry the costs of reaching a future Nigeria" where he said: *We now carry the costs of reaching a future Nigeria where the abundance and fruits of the nation are fairly shared among all, not hoarded by a select and greedy few.* In this phrase economic sacrifices were compared to a burden carried by all. The use of the pronoun "we" means that it is sacrifices for all and requires much efforts because it is a burden.

Personification

Personification is a figure of speech that gives human qualities or attributes to nonhuman or inanimate objects. Places where personification is used in the speech include the following:

i. Where he said: "From the fading embers of colonialism, their activism, dedication, and leadership gave life to the belief in Nigeria as a sovereign and independent nation." In this statement president Tinubu described colonialism to have "fading embers,"

as if it were a fire. Also the word “Belief” is personified, he fact that belief was given life, as if it were a living being.

ii. "The triumphs that Nigeria has achieved shall define us. The travails we have endured shall strengthen us. “Triumphs” are given the ability to "define" people. Travails (difficulties) are given the power to "strengthen" people. These two terms are abstract entities, and defining and strengthening people is done usually by another human. so the two terms are personified.

iii. "Our bonds are intangible yet strong, invisible yet universal.” The word “strength” shows physical action usually seen in human or animal. Here in this statement, president Tinubu described bonds (connections between people) as strong and universal, as if the bonds have that physical strength.

iv. "The abundance and fruits of the nation are fairly shared among all, not hoarded by a select and greedy few." In this expression the president personified “Abundance and fruits of the nation” and described them as something that can be shared, hoarded, or given to others.

v. "Hunger, poverty, and hardship are pushed into the shadows of an ever-fading past." We can physically push a person or an animal or any other concrete object into a place but not things like hunger and poverty or hardship. The president here gave such human attribute to “Hunger, poverty, and hardship” and treated them as if they can be physically pushed into the shadows.

Anaphora

Anaphora is a rhetorical device that involves the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences. Places anaphora can be identified from the speech are:

i. "Some people have said an independent Nigeria should never have come into existence. Some have said that our country would be torn apart. They are forever mistaken." The expressions *some*

people have said / *some have said* are repeated from which the speaker emphasises opposition and reinforces his rebuttal.

ii. "We can do it. We must do it. We shall do it!!!
Repetition of "We" and "do it" indicates anaphora in these expressions. This builds up momentum to encourage citizens to keep moving positively for national development, and a call to action.

iii. "I said that bold reforms were necessary... I am attuned to the hardships... I have a heart that feels and eyes that see... I wish to explain to you why we must endure this trying moment." Repetition of "I" at the beginning of each sentence shows the use of anaphora. These statements indicate and emphasise president Tinubu's personal commitment.

Antithesis
This is the use of contrasting ideas in parallel structures within a sentence. Antithesis can be seen in the following statements from the speech:

i. "The triumphs that Nigeria has achieved shall define us. The travails we have endured shall strengthen us. The terms "triumphs" which means success and "travails" which means hardships contrast each other in these statements, yet they are used in such way by the president to make some meaning. They are used in this way emphasise that both *triumphs* and *travails* shape and define the nation.

ii. "Our bonds are intangible yet strong, invisible yet universal." In this statement, the word "intangible" which means incapable contrasts with the word "strong" and "invisible" contrasts with the word "universal", but yet the president use such terms to make meanings, that is highlighting the unity of Nigerian citizens despite their differences.

iii. "Some people have said an independent Nigeria should never have come into existence. Some have said that our country would be torn apart. They are forever mistaken. Here, our nation stands and here we shall remain." President Tinubu used these expressing to show resilience, and this is done by contrasting doubt and perseverance,

iv. "Reform may be painful, but it is what greatness and the future require." There is contrast between the word "painful" which means difficulty and the word "greatness" which means success, but these terms are used by the president to reinforce the necessity of reforms in the country.

Parallelism

Parallelism is the repetition of similar grammatical structures in a sentence or multiple sentences to create rhythm and emphasis. It is also called parallel structure. Parallelism can be made up of adjectives, propositional phrases, paralleling phrases and short sentences, together with their one or more equivalents as the paralleling opponents in the phrases

i. "The triumphs that Nigeria has achieved shall define us. The travails we have endured shall strengthen us." Repetition of the expressions *shall define us* and *shall strengthen us* is used to maintain a balanced structure emphasising on the idea endurance to achieve success.

ii. "Our bonds are intangible yet strong, invisible yet universal."
This expression creates parallel structure using the adjectives intangible…strong, invisible…universal, then makes contrast in both clauses. However, such parallel structures are used by the president to create some meanings in his speech, he is highlighting and motivating on the unity of Nigerian citizens despite their differences in culture, background and region.

iii. "We are joined by a common thirst for peace and progress, by the common dream of prosperity and harmony, and by the unifying

ideals of tolerance and justice." Parallelism is created in these statements by repeating such phrase as "by the common..." This enhances the flow of the sentences, and also creates much emphasis on the idea of achieving unity and progress in the country through tolerance and justice.

iv. "We can do it. We must do it. We shall do it." The president uses parallelism in these statement by repeating the word "We" and the phrase. "do it" this is done to create more emphasis as parallelism does, and also for motivation.

Rhetorical Questions

A rhetorical question is a question asked for a purpose other than to obtain information. It is a question asked for effect rather than to receive an actual answer. They are used to provoke thought or emphasise a point. In the speech, the following rhetorical questions can be identified:

i. "Some people have said an independent Nigeria should never have come into existence. Some have said that our country would be torn apart. They are forever mistaken. Here, our nation stands and here we shall remain." Although the statements are not as a direct question, they implicitly challenge the doubters, making it a rhetorical device through questions such as haven't some people said an independent Nigeria should never have come into existence? Haven't some said that our country would be torn apart?

ii. "I wish today's difficulties did not exist. But we must endure if we are to reach the good side of our future." This statement implies a rhetorical question. It is as if the president is asking question such as "Can we reach a better future without endurance?" although this is posed as a question to the entire citizens, it does not require anyone to provide an answer to the question. It is done to create emphasis on the idea of endurance to achieve a bright future for the country.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is an exaggerated statement used for emphasis and not meant to be taken literally. Here are hyperbolic structures used by the president in the speech:

i. "Those who sought to perpetuate the fuel subsidy and broken foreign exchange policies are people who would build their family mansion in the middle of a swamp." This statement is hyperbolic because of the fact that president Tinubu exaggerates the consequences of bad policies (…the fuel subsidy and broken foreign exchange policies…) by comparing such policies to a totally absurd action of (…building a mansion in a swamp). Hyperbole is used in this statement to bright more to light to the citizens the negative effects of such a bad policy of perpetuating the fuel subsidy.

ii. "We now carry the costs of reaching a future Nigeria where the abundance and fruits of the nation are fairly shared among all, not hoarded by a select and greedy few." Using the phrase "abundance and fruits of the nation" by the president is a hyperbolic way, an exaggerated method of saying that economic prosperity should be shared among all citizens.

iii. “A Nigeria where hunger, poverty, and hardship are pushed into the shadows of an ever-fading past.” Wiping out poverty, hunger, and hardship completely is a hyperbolic expression. It is used though they cannot disappear completely for a rhetoric effect to exaggerate the president’s idea of creating Nigeria where hunger, poverty and hardship will be given utmost attention in an attempt to eradicate them. He uses this to persuade and create strong emotional impact on the audience.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of closely connected words. Places where alliteration is used in the speech are:

i. "bold reforms were necessary to place our nation on the path of prosperity and growth." The repetition of the "p" sound in "path of prosperity" creates alliteration.

ii. "the fading embers of colonialism" The repetition of the "f" sound in "fading" and "of" enhances the use of imagery in the speech.

iii. "Sacred rights and individual gifts that God has bestowed on us as a nation and as human beings." The "g" sound in "gifts" and "God" is an example of alliteration.

iv. "a broad and dynamic blend of ethnic groups, religions, traditions and cultures." The "b" sound in "broad", "blend", and "groups" contributes to the rhythm of the statement.

Summary

The analysis of President Tinubu's Independence Day speech reveals several key findings. The speech exhibits a range of rhetorical devices: including alliteration, metaphor, anaphora, antithesis, parallelism, hyperbole, rhetorical question, and personification, which contribute to the realisation of the speaker's intended meaning by making use of such elements. President Tinubu effectively employs linguistic and rhetorical strategies to connect with the audience emotionally, appeal to shared values, and present an optimistic vision for Nigeria's future. The research highlights the importance of studying political speeches to understand the strategies and techniques used by leaders to communicate their vision and mobilise public support. His speech demonstrates the power of language and rhetoric in shaping public perception, fostering unity, and inspiring collective action. The analysis therefore, reveals that his 2024 Independence Day speech encapsulates key linguistic elements that define his vision and policy priorities as the President of Nigeria.

Conclusion

This research has undertaken a critical discourse analysis (CDA) on the rhetorical devices used in President Tinubu's Independence Day speech delivered on 1st October 2024. The research focuses primarily on unpacking the rhetorical strategies that shape public perception and reinforce national identity. Drawing upon Fairclough's three-dimensional model; textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, and integrating it with Leech and Short (2007) framework which is used to analyse literary devices by examining how they are utilised to convey meaning, understand speaker's intent, the study has illuminated how language is wielded as an instrument of power, persuasion, and social cohesion.

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