A Comparative Appraisal of Selected Campaign Speeches of Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan in the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) and former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ) are both known in Nigerian politics and for their participation in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. Both are incumbent and immediate past Presidents of Nigeria respectively. They are both socially and politically relevant to the socio-political development of Africa's most populous country, a fact that accounted for this analysis of their speeches. This paper adopts the appraisal theory (AT) of Martin and White (2005) to explicate the selected speeches of PMB and GEJ with the view to accounting for their stances and for their reasons for taking such stances. Four political speeches were sampled, and two (one from each speaker) were selected and analysed. The data were downloaded from the website of two national dailies in Nigeria (*The Daily Post* of October 15, 2014, and *The Nation* of November 11, 2014). Both speakers addressed issues that focus on political, economic, and social matters. They deployed appraisal resources of engagement evaluation and denial to achieve their respective communicative intentions. Buhari engaged appraisal resources of concur, proclaim, distance, and hearsay while Jonathan deployed capacity, disclaim and denial to engage their potential readers. They both used adjectives to describe issues and verbs to refer to issues either in the past or present. This paper recommends that politicians should make their campaign speeches relevant to the context of the future election to engage with their potential readers and listeners.

Keywords: appraisal resources, political campaign speeches, presidential election, Muhammadu Buhari, Goodluck Jonathan

1.0 Introduction

In a democratic country where elections are held every four years, such as Nigeria, politicians engage in political campaigns by granting press interviews, attending town hall meetings, and giving speeches at conferences to reach out to the electorates, to persuade and convince them to vote in their favour. In 2015, both Goodluck

Jonathan, incumbent President and presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and Muhammadu Buhari, presidential candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC), spoke extensively on political, economic, and social issues. The presidential election of 2015 was historic in Nigeria as it was the first time an incumbent and member of the ruling party was ousted from power. Hence, the appraisal, in this paper, of the language resources and pragmatic strategies used in the selected political speeches of these two presidential candidates is of practical interest.

Politics originated from the Geek word 'politikos' which means 'of, for, or related to citizens'and it is concerned 'with the power to make a decision, control resources, control people's manner, and at times control their values'. To this end, politics is an important part of human engagement to control both human and natural resources. Politics and language are interwoven; both have long been identified by linguists as essential concepts in human existence. According to Odeleye (2015), 'language is a vehicular expression of politics and a major tool in man's political behavior'. Language is used to persuade, dissuade and enthuse electorates in such a way that they voluntarily vote for the candidate who convinces them. The chance of a politician in an election would be determined by the channels opened up by language and adequately utilized. Adedimeji (2004) opines that language is used to proclaim one's stance or to distance one's self from a particular stance.

1.1 Language and Politics

The number of researchers in the domain of language and politics has greatly increased in recent times. Politics is one of the oldest academic disciplines and political speeches are essential in conducting political debates. According to Okoro (2016), 'language plays a very crucial role for every political action'. Language is the vehicle that drives the political ideology of a political party into the heart of the citizens who care about the socio-political situation of their nation. The synergy between language and politics has for long been recognized. Beard (1984) suggests that studying political discourse is important as it enables us to 'understand how language is used by those who wish to gain power, those who wish to exercise power and those who wish to keep power'.

As people often say, 'Men are political animals'. Akinwotu (2013) asserts that 'language is the most important possession of

man as it differentiates man from other animals'. Language characterizes politics during electioneering campaigns and politicians use it to present their manifestoes to the electorate in order to gain access to political offices through the votes of the people. Norman Fairclough (1984) believes that 'language of politics can misrepresent as well as represent realities, it can weave vision and imagination which can be implemented to change reality and some cases, improve well-being….' Language is the instrument largely deployed by politicians to win a valid election. Language and politics are deployed to convey messages, to inform political participants about government programmes, policies, and administrative strategies. Political office holders use language to sell or test their popularity in the constituencies; they use political language in town hall meetings, on campaign grounds and other public gatherings.

2.0 Existing scholarly contributions

There have been linguistic studies on presidential speeches that have been conducted from stylistic, rhetorical, pragmatic, and other discourse points of view. Adegoju (2005), Krisagbedo (2010), Ayeomoni (2012), and Odebunmi and Oni (2012) have examined political speeches from different perspectives. However, Akinwotu (2018) adopts a combination of stylistic and Micheal Halliday's Stylistic Functional Grammar as approaches to examine the patterns of language used in the inaugural speeches of Governor Olusegun Mimiko of Ondo state. The paper reveals that the speeches are characterised by lexical items (adjectives, adverbs, pronouns) which the speaker creatively deploys to promote his political programmmes and to present himself as a committed, sincere, and responsible leader. Akinwotu and Abubakar (2020) carried out an appraisal analysis of Olusegun Obasanjo's open letters to Presidents Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari. The paper examines the stances taken by the speaker on issues and the reasons why he took the stances. The paper reveals that the speaker engaged appraisal resources to affiliate and disaffiliate with his addressees on some critical issues. This current paper adopts the appraisal theory put forward by James R. Martin in the 1990s and later developed by Martin and White in 2005 to analyse the similarities in the selected campaign speeches of Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

3.0 Methodology

Four political texts from the 2015 campaign speeches in the general election in Nigeria were sampled; because this study is a comparative work, two speeches were selected and analysed. Although over thirty (30) candidates contested the election, the speeches of the two major candidates, Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) were subjected to appraisal analysis based on the candidates' linguistic styles and pragmatic use of language during the electioneering periods. The data were downloaded from the websites of two popular dailies: *The Daily Post* and *The Nation* newspapers. The speeches were analysed because of the pragmatic features identifiable in the texts.

4.0 Theoretical framework

The theory that is adopted for analysis in this paper is the appraisal theory put forward by the cluster of researchers led by Professor James Martin of the University of Sydney in the 1990s and later developed by Martin and White in 2005. According to Thompson & Jiang (2000), appraisal theory (AT) largely focused on the evaluation of meanings in the English language but later developed to engage the descriptive principles that study the theory in other languages and work that may compare and contrast the evaluation of meanings in other languages. Appraisal theory emerged within the Systemic Functional Linguistic theory of Halliday and his colleagues. White (2011) opines that listeners are aware that speakers/writers (as the case may be) adopt stances towards what they hold as the words, observations, beliefs, and stances of other speakers/writers. Halliday (1994) believes that appraisal theory was developed to account for the interpersonal positions, description, and understanding of the aspects of language which a speaker/writer constructs to differentiate himself or herself by the position they hold as against those they address in a text. Therefore, appraisal theory, according to Martin & White (1997), was framed to account for meaning-making in language which defines how language is construed in the world of experience (ideational), how language shows the speaker's/writers' social roles, personal meaning, and relationship with his/her view of language use (interpersonal) and how these ideational and personal meanings are structured into coherent text suitable for a given communicative setting for evaluation.

Appraisal theory presents three major domains of interaction.

Those domains, according to Chang & Liu (2015) in White (2011) are: attitude, engagement, and graduation. This paper focuses on the engagement resources to investigate the data presented for analysis. Engagement refers to how the speaker/writer presents himself/herself as they engage dialogically with the alternative viewpoint of the addressee in the text. According to White (2001), engagement resources are how the speaker/writer adjusts or negotiates the arguability of their proposition and proposals. Miller (2004) explains that engagement can either be monogloss or heterogloss. Engagement is monogloss on the one hand when the speaker/speaker holds as the exceptional standpoint and ignores multiplicity associated with any other utterances in a text. In monogloss, the speaker/writer directly engages the appraisal object. On the other hand, heterogloss addresses diverse issues that are associated with other utterances in the text. Here, the speaker engages other sources to prove a point and to make it more credible.

As proposed by Martin in 2005, heterogloss engagement resources are grouped into dialogic expansion and dialogic contraction. Dialogic expansion is engagement resources deployed by the speaker/writer in the text to rely on sources capable to help further engaged his/her potential audience in a text. The speaker/writer indicates that the current speech is but several possible alternatives and shows that these alternatives are expected and hence dialogically authorized. The dialogic expansion resources are deployed to entertain or give attributes in order to acknowledge or distance self from other sources. Dialogic contraction refers to the resources that are used to close down space for dialogue choice and to further challenge, fend off or restrict actual or potential contrary positions by the speaker/writer. Dialogic contraction resources are either in disclaim type or proclaim type.

White (2001, p.8) opines that disclaim type indicates the resources which previous utterance or dialogic choice openly rejected, replaced, or held as weak. Disclaim is to close space as it acknowledges alternative stances within the dialogistic context. Proclaim types are resources used to allow the dialogic alternative to be challenged or confronted and hence headed off through authorial interruption, prominence, or interference. The resources are: deny, counter (disclaim type), and concur, pronounce, endorse (proclaim type). Dialogic expansion shows resources deployed to open space for dialogic variety and difference. These engagement

resources are deployed for the pragmatic analysis of the data presented in this paper. The appraisal theory of Martin & White (2005) is adopted to evaluate the speakers' intentions in the campaign speeches of PMB and GEJ in 2015. This will account for the contexts of the speeches and the stances the speakers adopted to engage in dialogic positions in the texts.

5.0 Data presentation and analysis

The analysis of this paper is issue-based and the issues presented in the texts are politically, socially, and economically driven. The content-driven issues help to track both the contexts and issues sensitive to the functionality of appraisal resources in the data.

5.1 Political Issues and the Appraisal Resources Deployed to Enact Them

The presentation of data below shows the issues that arose in the data. In excerpts 1,2,3,4 and 5, the following engagement resources are deployed in the data: The use of condemnation, concur, endorsement, evaluation, and hearsay.

Excerpt 1:
But as we all know, Nigeria is battling with many challenges, and if I refer to them, I do so only to impress on our friends in the United Kingdom that we are quite aware of our shortcomings. (Buhari, 2014).

Excerpt 2:
We have plans for employment generation. We know one of the greatest challenges for most governments including Nigeria is to get jobs for our youths but we are not sleeping. (Jonathan, 2014).

Excerpt 3:
We have tried to ensure all processes in our party formation are transparent and credible. These structures will lead to free and fair polls. There is no point in holding [sic] election, if they are not free and fair. (Buhari, 2014).

Excerpt 4:
This is the party (PDP) that is giving political strength to all Nigerians. Already you have been told from intelligence reports that some people are already cloning cards so that voters' card will no longer be relevant. Is that the kind of people you want to take

over government? (Jonathan, 2014).

The communicative strategies are deployed by speakers to acknowledge their common knowledge about the policies of the country (Nigeria). This condemns the policies of the government leading to acceptance of blame of the proposition in excerpts 1 and 2 above. It also shows a shared knowledge of both stance takers about the effects that the Nigerian government faces challenges and shortcomings while the first speaker employs the linguistic items such as *challenges* and shortcomings to condemn and evaluate the government of the country, the latter employs the technique to concur and align with the authorial voice of the former speaker. The speakers share a piece of common knowledge on the trend of political mishaps in the country by using the collective pronoun *we* and the verb *know*, therefore, *we all know* and *we know* foreground the communal expressions of the two speakers. The excerpts below show communicative strategies to endorse and evaluate individual authorial voices as speakers take their various positions on election matters in Nigeria.

The excerpts show alignment and concurrence with the proposition being advanced in the texts in excerpt 3; linguistic items (adjectives) such as *transparent, credible, free, and fair* are authorial voices used to foreground his position as regards election in Nigeria. They are used to evaluate the nature of an election that is expected to yield positive results. In excerpt 4, the speaker endorses a proposition by relying on intelligent reports that the election will be rigged. The excerpt above invokes the content of politics. The phrases, *cloning cards and voters' card*, are used to advance the authorial voice in the text. The imperative statement is an instrument to condemn the actors of the intended action, "*cloning*".

5.2 Economic Issues and Appraisal Resources Deployed to Enact Them

The economic context in the data revolves around all sectors of the economy, its development, growth, and problems that are discussed in the selected speeches. It involves the intended plans of the Nigerian government on youth unemployment, International Monetary Fund, government policy on economic growth, and corruption cases against government agencies and functionaries who are involved in one case or the other due to maladministration and mismanagement of public funds. Chief of these issues

discussed in the data is the issue of alleged mismanagement of oil monies during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Excerpts 7, 8, 9, and 10 present resources deployed by the candidates to engage issues at hand.

Excerpt 7:
Even by official figures, 33.1% of Nigerians live in extreme poverty. That is at almost 60 million, almost the population of the United Kingdom. There is also the unemployment crisis simmering beneath the surface, ready to explode at the slightest stress, with officially 23.9% of our adult population and almost 60% of the youth unemployed. (Buhari, 2014).

Excerpt 8:
They say we have no plans for this country but we established the sovereign wealth fund (SWF) – out of the money that comes into the country we reserve a little so you just don't squander it. (Jonathan, 2014).

Excerpt 9:
They want power by all means and all what they want to use power for is to lock up and imprison their enemies... I have no enemy to fight. (Jonathan, 2014).

Excerpt 10:
But I must emphasize that any war waged on corruption should not be misconstrued as settling old scores or a witch-hunt. I am running for president to lead Nigeria to prosperity and not diversity. (Buhari, 2014).

In excerpt 7, the speaker aligns with the official records about the poverty rate in the country and evaluates it below what the government proclaims. The adverbial headed prepositional phrase: *Even by official figure* is deployed to expand the dialogistic engagement of the speaker to reference what was once said by a body of knowledge. In excerpt 8, the stance taker disclaims and counters the position of the first speaker, the authorial voice was to distance the speaker from the position taken and advanced by the other speaker. It is said "*They say we do not have plans for this country...*" the phrase '*they say*' is used to show the stance of the speaker and the dialogical divergence by expanding the space with the potential reader of the text. For evaluation, the descriptive

adjective *extreme* is used to evaluate the level of poverty rate in the country while the quantitative adjective *a little* is deployed to quantify the amount reserved for use. Stance takers in the excerpts above take different authorial positions to evaluate, condemn and express their opinion of hearsay as they speak on the corruption level in the country. In excerpt 9, the authorial voice confirms the position of the referents '*they'* on how they want to fight corruption. The proposition did not give space for an alternative viewpoint. The speaker makes a monoglossic statement and tries to employ the disclaimant '*no'* to take a position in fighting corruption.

While in excerpt 10, the textual voice contends with the proposition that fighting corruption is *to witch-hunt or settling old scores*. The negation *no*, in the first excerpt, is a strategy to disclaim the position of the speaker while *not*, in the second excerpt, is an instrument of denial in the position of the second speaker to fight corruption in Nigeria. The engagement strategies are used to expand dialogic positioning.

5.3 Social Issues and Appraisal Resources to Enact Them

Social events in this study concern the social issues that are identified in the selected speeches. The social and economic contexts include epileptic power supply, shortage of food production, youth unemployment, poverty rate, insecurity, and many more. The excerpts below are presented and analysed based on the social context identified in the data.

No doubt, the issues above formed the major bulk of dialogic engagement of the speakers whose texts/speeches were selected for the analysis of this research. To reveal the view that the economy remains the basis for the socio-economic development of the country, the following engagement resources are employed by the speakers, namely: counter, proclamation, and denial. Proclamation is used to foreground the textual voice, while counter and denial are deployed to directly reject invoked contrary positions through negation by advancing dialogistic alternative positions.

Excerpt 11:
We cannot go back to the old ways! Our agricultural practices did not benefit our farmers and our people. Fertilizer distribution was a major source of fraud and we were importing food more than our budget can carry. Now we are on our way to self-sufficiency in food production. (Jonathan, 2015)

Excerpt 12:

First I would like, Mr Chairman, if I may pay tribute to Nigerians as a whole who are enduring all sorts of hardships and deprivations on a daily basis. Many millions are grappling with extreme poverty and barely eking out a living. Nearly all are in fear of their lives or safety for themselves and their families due to insurgency by the godless movement called Boko Haram; by marauding murderers in town and villages; by armed robbers on the highways; by kidnappers who have put whole communities to fright and sometimes to flight. (Buhari 2014)

Excerpt 13:

We are equipping the armed forces and developing Special Forces to engage the terrorist and end this senseless war. We must protect our country. We must save our people. I will do everything humanly possible to end this criminal violence in our nation. (Jonathan, 2014)

Excerpt 14:

You all can bear witness to the gallant role of our military in Burma, the Democratic Republic of Congo but in the matter of this insurgency, our soldiers have neither received the necessary support nor the required incentives to tackle this problem. The government has failed in any effort towards a multi-dimensional response to this problem. (Buhari, 2014)

In excerpt 11, there is a clear dialogic engagement with an invoked view that the country's economy has improved compared with the old days. The authorial voice here dismisses the viewpoint being contended that agriculture was a means of improving the economy of the country – "... our agricultural practices did not benefit our farmers and our people". The speaker proclaims that the economy is growing on a positive side. The speaker deploys nouns *fraud and self-sufficiency,* to express his stance about the state of the economy. In excerpt 12, the stancetaker evaluates the level of insecurity in Nigeria by identifying the various forms it takes. The following linguistics items are used to do the evaluation "*hardships, deprivations, grapping and enduring*". The Noun phrase *"godless movement"* is used here to condemn the action of Boko Haram insurgency in the country. The authorial voice intends to identify insecurity as a phenomenon that has enveloped the

entire country. Nouns such as *"armed robbers, kidnappers, marauding murderers, fear"* are used to emphasize the effect of insecurity in the people. The verbal phrases; *to fright and to flight* are signals of cognitive acts to create mental states of the affected people. In excerpt 13, the speaker engages the listener with the efforts made in combating the menace of Boko Haram. The progressive verbs; *equipping* and *deploying* are drive forces used to create an avenue for the intention. The modal verbs *must* and *will* are used to achieve the capacity of the speaker in negotiating his stance in the text. The commisive phrase; *I will do...* further enhances the dialogic position of the speaker. While in excerpt 14: the stancetaker takes a disaffiliating position from the first speaker. Then he acknowledges the ability of the soldiers in fighting war outside the country: '*You all can bear witness to the gallant role of our military in Burma...*' The preceding clause is introduced by the use of negative coordinator *but* counters with the proposition. The stancetaker further denies the efforts being advanced by the former speaker in the last sentence, "*The government has failed in any effort towards....*" The accompaniment concord *neither....nor* is deployed to make the denial of the claim that the Nigerian army was supported by the former speaker.

6.0 Findings

6.1 Similarities in the Use of Appraisal Resources by the Speakers in the Texts

(a) The use of hearsay: This is a proclaim strategy that refers to the resource that actual or possible dialogic alternative positioning emphasizes or relies on upon through some authorial interpolation of the current speaker. Speakers rely on hearsay to accept or reject other sources of information that they believe to be reliable or invalid. While Buhari used the strategy to acknowledge the accuracy of figures on the poverty rate in Nigeria, Jonathan used the same engagement strategy to reject the claim that the position of the nation's economy was poor.

(b) The use of denial: Denial is a disclaim strategy that is used to close down an alternative position that is being directly rejected or replaced; it is used to counter dialogical contrary position. Jonathan deployed verbal contraction *didn't* to douse a proposition but Buhari used connectors *neither...nor* to reject the alternative position of the government on its claim to have equipped the Nigerian Army to combat Boko-Haram.

(c) The use of concur: Concur is a proclaim strategy that involves

speakers' formulation, his/her emphasis on a certain position. It is used to inject personal opinion or belief into a formulation and general view about issues. Buhari and Jonathan deployed the strategy to adjust so that any challenge or question of utterance can be injected.

6.1.1 Differences in the Use of Appraisal Resources in the Texts

The use of capacity and proclaim: Capacity shows the intention of the speaker in executing an ideology, while proclaim is deployed to intensify the speaker's adoption of such ideology. (see excerpts 11 and 13). Buhari used proclaim strategy in the phrase 'fantastic growth figure' to confront the position of the government on the Nigerian economy while Jonathan used capacity which resides in the modal verbs 'will and must' to negotiate capacity on the position of Buhari in his text.

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