

IDEOLOGY AND MODALITY IN ALL PROGRESSIVE GRAND ALLIANCE (APGA) AND LABOUR PARTY(LP) POLITICAL MANIFESTOS

Salamatu Sani

Department of English and Literary Studies,
A.B.U Zaria

Abstract

This study examines the linguistic import of the use of modals and nuanced syntax in the manifesto of political parties in Nigeria. In the paper, there is an argument against the frame that language offers an arsenal from whence political parties borrow divergent lexicon in drafting their manifestos. The paper chooses two marginal political parties, the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and Labour Party (LP) to contend that both mainstream and marginal political parties all rely heavily on the mastery of language in persuading Nigeria's Electoral College to subscribe to their party programs for Nigeria. The choice of these parties is informed by the fact that they are two of the most popular political parties at the margin who have had representations in the National Assembly and have produced four state governors. The study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as theoretical framework to pinpoint the ideological underpinnings of the modals used by both political parties. The study reveals that modals such as 'will', 'shall', 'must', 'speed up', 'as a matter of urgency' etc. are used by the politicians in both manifestos for persuasion, obligation, to make promises, demonstrate political will/commitment, and solicit public support as well as manipulate the electorates. The paper provides insights into the peculiar uses of modals in political contexts and avers that modals are not just linguistic elements, but most importantly, ideological tools as demonstrated by how the representatives of the two political parties choose their words. The

study finds out that the theme of the manifestos of APGA and LP is anchored on double-barreled sentences with the first type discrediting the incumbent government closely followed by what their own government, if voted, will offer.

Keywords: Modality, Ideology, APGA, LP and Manifestos

Introduction

Language and politics are interrelated. Many scholars have considered language as an effective vehicle of expressing political ideologies and interest (Awonuga, 1988; Ayeomoni, 2001, 2005; Ike-Nwafor, 2015 etc). Ali (1975:48) affirms this when he opines that language “is the most important point of entry into habits of thought of a people. It embodies within itself cumulative association derived from the total experience of its people”. This means that language exerts enormous influence on politics and politicians.

In the Nigerian political space, political leaders have, at different times in the country’s political history, used language to say what they mean and mean what they never said. Language has been used as a tool to manipulate, persuade, canvass, lobby and coerce the masses towards a given direction. This practice of using language to achieve or claim power has led to the development of discourses such as ‘political discourse’, and ‘party discourse’. For politician as well as party politicking, language is power. In political discourse, anyone in a political domain who has mastery over language is considered an asset especially during electioneering and political activities.

Language is a powerful tool in the hands of political leaders; they manipulate the tool to suit their purposes. The relationship between is such that politics has become a linguistic issue while language has become a political issue. The support that citizens have for politicians and political parties is, arguably, determined by what they say and how they say what they said. Opeibi (2009) refers to the

relationship between language and politics as symbiotic. Language helps to convey thoughts or plans of a party while politicking offers language opportunities for expansion.

As Beard (2000) notes, no matter how good-intentioned a party's plan or development framework is; no matter how superior political thoughts and ideologies of a political party may be, these can only be expressed and further translated into social actions for social change and social continuity through the facilities provided by language. Thus, language is an arsenal in political discourse especially in the effort to win, control or retain power.

In the political domain, particularly during election periods, political parties contend to sustain or secure political positions and offices. To this end, the voting public is often enveloped with torrents of campaigns, speeches and presentation of political manifestos. Political parties are drawn against each other as divergent alignments take place. During this period, political actors and stakeholders do all within their reach to navigate their way into power. Political programs, therefore, have become part of the political strategy of achieving this aim. These party programs or manifestos are often deftly designed and thoughtfully crafted to convince the electorate for sympathetic political support through the use of language.

Language is used to distinctively to convey party programs and intentions. In view of that, in the political domain, language is used to re/present certain messages, convey promises, reflect beliefs and foreground political ideologies. This study, therefore, assesses the political uses of modals in the selected manifestos of political parties in Nigeria. Due to the prevalent uses of modals in Nigerian political manifestos by political parties seeking public support, this study aims to examine, through CDA, the political and ideological underpinnings underlying these modals. This will help to provide relevant insight to the peculiar uses of modals in political contexts. The paper assesses

the linguistic imports in the party manifestos of two Nigerian political parties, All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) and Labour Party (LP).

The study is premised on the deployment of language by these two political parties in gaining public support and mobilizing members of the public to join-in in their efforts to secure and control political power.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is drawn from Critical Discourse Analysis(CDA) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines the exploitation of language to represent social and ideological realities. “CDA is a critical approach to the analysis of discourse aimed at unfolding critical hidden meanings embedded in texts” (Ehineni, 2014:111). It focuses on uncovering propagandistic language in political discourse. It starts with the assumption that ‘language use is always social’ and that ‘discourse both reflects and constructs the social world’ (Rogers, 2004: 5). Joseph (2006:149) goes further to state that it investigates how language is deployed to mirror the society. For Olagunju (2012), discourses are always socially, politically, racially and economically loaded. As a result, CDA therefore aims at analyzing discourses to account for certain uses of language in both social and political contexts. Patridge (2006: 179) posits critical discourse analysis may include a detailed textual analysis and move from there to an explanation and interpretation of the analysis. He further explains that it deals with tracing underlying ideologies from the linguistic features of a text, unpacking particular biases and ideological presuppositions underlying the text, and relating the text to other texts and to people’s experiences and beliefs. In addition to the critical analysis of ideology, other concerns of CDA include the relations between discourse and power, language and social relations (Fairclough, 1989).

Wodak (in Ehineni 2014) underscores that CDA essentially deals “with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language”. This implies that CDA is concerned with the link between language and society. It views language as a form of social action. It explicates the function of language in foregrounding social relations and beliefs. Olagunju (2012: 13-14) identifies a number of principles for critical discourse analysis described by Fairclough and Wodak (1997) which include the believe that social and political issues are constructed and reflected in discourse; power relations are negotiated and performed through discourse; discourse both reflects and reproduces social relations; and that ideologies are produced and reflected in the use of discourse.

Essentially, as Ehineni (2014) notes, CDA is a critical study of discourses identifying the uses of language to reflect social relations and ideological underpinnings. It is the deconstruction of texts to explore the construction of social realities through language. This paper deploys the CDA in the examination of the manifestos of APGA and LP to identify the ideological uses of the modals by the party. Thus, this study examines how linguistic elements such as modals are used by political party to influence their audience, persuade the electorate and accomplish their political goals.

The Language of Political Discourse

Language use in political discourses including speeches, manifestos and other political texts has been identified to be associated with different rhetoric and figurative strategies like circumlocution, irony, symbolisms, innuendos, euphemisms, and metaphors (Yusuf, 2003; Linfoot-Ham, Kerry. 2005; Carver and Pikalo, 2008). Also, the language used in this discourse is that of indirect language by politicians to gain political and interactional advantage over their opponents (Ehineni, 2014). Thus, use of language

in political texts is distinctively different from other discourses. A few works have examined the use of language in political texts.

Adamu (2018) examines the rhetorics of power, language and social processes deploying Fairclough's (1989) theorization. His thesis explains the role CDA plays in mobilizing people for action in the design and writing of the party manifesto of the All Progressive Congress (APC).

Taiwo (2010) also, examines the use of metaphors in selected Nigerian political discourses deploying Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of conceptual metaphors. He explains that metaphors play a central role in public discourse, most especially, political discourse, which according to him is mostly persuasive and rhetorical in nature. He further stresses that they help to shape the structure of political categorization and argumentation which is instantiated through conceptual mappings. Basically, Taiwo (2010)'s work examines Nigerian political discourses from the view of metaphors and how the politicians realize their political goals and aspirations through the deployment of these metaphors.

While this present study may relate to these works mentioned above in terms of political discourse analysis, it is distinctively different in that it engages modals in Nigerian political discourse vis-à-vis how they reinforce specific aims and themes conditioned by the politicians. This study draws its primary data from the political party manifestos of APGA and LP, two parties that participated in the recently general elections of Nigeria of 2019. CDA is used to unravel the ideological motivations/intentions underlying the use of the modals.

Analysis of the use of Modals and Rhetorics in APGA and LP Manifestoes

Extract A: Ideological Use of the Modal, "Will"

One central word in the manifestos of APGA and LP is the ideological use of the modal, “will” for political will and commitment.

- i. *“APGA **will** promote and expand all bilateral and multi-lateral agreements which **will** strengthen Nigerian democracy and support our economic development.”*
- ii. *APGA **will** strengthen our ties with ECOWAS nations...”*
- iii. *APGA **will** continue to support...”*
- iv. *APGA **will** work for the full realization of the African Union as a platform for African development...”*
- v. *APGA **will** work through the African Union and in concert with other organizations of the Third World to achieve better terms for countries of the Third World in the WTO.*
- vi. *APGA **will** continue to discharge Nigeria’s obligations...*
- vii. *APGA **will** support the establishment of a just peace...*

The modal, ‘will’ runs through the manifesto to persuade the public on their commitment to position the country in the forefront of leadership both in Africa and in the world. Unlike other party manifestos, APGA prefers to use a noun when referring to itself or its organization. The use of the collective pronoun is avoided. In the Extracts above, there is a motif of “APGA will” followed by an assertive statement. For example, *“APGA will make sure that enough money is provided for an upgraded national education which should be free at all levels”*. While this may sound believable, the word, “should” gives it another meaning; an ambivalence which suggests that while education standard may be upgraded, education in itself may not be free. At a surface analysis, one would think that APGA promises free education. APGA uses the modal “will” to reinforce its commitment towards the transformation of the country if voted into power. The modal ‘will’ from (i)-(vii) indicates APGA’s political will and determinism to stand for the country. Throughout the manifesto, the modal ‘will’ is

used to reflect a sense of responsibility they have to the country in terms of transformational agenda.

For Labour Party, the modal, “shall” is dominant. This is because of the party’s futurist ideological leaning where all workers are expected to live in better working conditions.

Extract B: *The use of “Shall” as a Pledge and Persuasion*

- i. “We *shall* embark on developmental programmes”
- ii. “We *shall* embark on policies of transformation”
- iii. “We *shall* embark on aggressive and massive agricultural and maritime projects”
- iv. “Our government *shall* invest in ICT.....”
- v. “We *shall* embark on the construction of more roads both in the urban and rural areas of the state”

The modal ‘shall’ is used in the above utterances in (a) – (e) to make promises to the electorate in terms of the provision of the basic needs of the state. In each of the utterances, ‘shall’ is used by the party to introduce the people to a catalogue of dividends they are set to deliver to the country. Also, the choice of the modal ‘shall’ instead of will is politically significant. It foregrounds some modality implications that accounts for the CERTAINTY and not the PROBABILITY of the promises enumerated in the political manifesto (Quirk & Greenbaun 1973: 48-53). Thus, political party use ‘shall’ to assure the electorate about the certainty of their campaign promises.

Furthermore, the modal ‘shall’ which is futuristic in function (Quirk & Greenbaun, 1973), is used by the party men to inform the electorate about their prospective plans for the country and as a result, indirectly, persuade and cajole the electorate into voting for them. For instance, the utterance in LP manifesto, “we shall embark on aggressive and massive agricultural and maritime projects” is futuristic through the use of “shall” and will only be possible if the candidate is elected into power. Thus, indirectly but persuasively, the

speaker compels the audience into voting for him in the coming elections. Notably, political manifestos are quintessential campaign instruments. Hence, modals like ‘shall’ are used by politicians to persuade the electorate by introducing several barrages of flamboyant promises which are to be achieved if they are elected into power.

Importantly, there is a discursive aspect of the manifesto of APGA, which is to drag the Nigerian workers to its course. The workers are believed, by default, to have affinity with Labour Party but under its labour policy, APGA says “*APGA will set up a permanent Labour Council for discussion of all matter which have to do with workers.*” Here, APGA is riding on the division within the Labour Party and persuading its labour members to join and support APGA. Nevertheless, for the two political parties, there is a common affirmative word use of the word, “Must”

Extract C: The Use of “Must” for Political Obligation and Manipulation

- i. “We **must** all work towards reversing the unfortunate trend.....”
- ii. “The art of governance **must** not be left in the hands of those whose sole purpose in government is crude acquisition of material wealth”

The modal ‘must’ is used in the above utterances to task the electoral college with certain responsibilities. In (i), APGA calls the electorate into a collective responsibility of moving the country forward. The party obligates the electorate to join hands with him in a transformational agenda needed to salvage the state from the perceived debilitating developmental stasis. In (ii), the modal is used to mandate and manipulate the audience into taking urgent action—something Labour Party is known to do.

Extract D: The Use of “Insist”, “Fight” for Resistance and Force

- i. “APGA will **insist** that the Nigerian public...”

- ii. “APGA will *insist* upon a stricter enforcement of foreign exchange controls
- iii. “To *fight* inflation and promote financial discipline in the system

(APGA manifesto, 2018; LP Manifesto 2018)

The modal “Insist” and “fight” is used by the political parties to demonstrate resistance against anything that would stand on their ways in achieving key public good. In the (ii) above, more specifically, the manifesto reveals APGA’s conviction on certain issues in the country. Also, in the first utterance, apart from using ‘insist’ to show resistance, the party uses the modal to appeal to the sensibility of the electorate of its capability in transforming the country. In this case, the modal ‘insist’ and ‘fight’ are used both to resist, convince and to appeal to the electorate to be given a chance to govern the Nigeria.

Extract E: *The Use of Liberal Rhetorics*

The All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and Labour Party (LP) has ideological leanings towards the creed of freedom. As a result, liberal rhetorics is rife in the manifestos of the political parties.

- i. *We will employ every means, diplomatic, political, economic, social and cultural, to advance the image of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as the spiritual home of the black peoples of the world*
- ii. *APGA will make sure that enough money is provided for an upgraded national education which should be free at all levels*
- iii. *All documents that do not have national security implications will be declassified.*
- iv. *Assets declarations will be publicly accessible*
- v. *The laws of defamation and libel will be reviewed in line with the Access to Information Act*

- vi. *The ownership of television stations, radio stations, newspapers, news, magazine, and other news media will be fully deregulated and subject to minimum registration fees in order to give full freedom of information to the people.*

(APGA 2018:27; LP 2018: npag.)

This aspect of the manifesto is flamboyant, exaggerated and appealing to the collective sense of the masses. The use of phrases like “The ownership of television stations, radio stations, news...will be fully deregulated” and “subject to minimum registration fees” attest to this. This liberal and exaggerative style is adopted in order to woo and lure the people into the folds of the political parties and to cajole them into accepting them and their designed programmes.

Extract F: *The Use of “As a Matter of Urgency” and “speed up” for Time and Momentum*

In the party manifestoes of LP and APGA, there is the rich use of the phrase “as a matter of urgency” to show speed at which the political parties will address issues of governance if elected.

- i. *APGA will reduce the Rediscount Rate and the Interest Rate in order to provide opportunities to business for long-term credit to **speed up** the expansion of business and employment opportunities.*
- ii. *To fight oppression and corruption as a matter of **urgency**...*

Knowing the bureaucratic nature in government, one would think that the political party, when voted into power, would think tackle (i) heads-on with so much speed. Nonetheless, addressing the issues stated in (i) and (ii) need time due to legislating. The words “speed up” and “as a matter of urgency” has become rhetoric both in the speech of politicians and in government documents. Nevertheless,

nothing in spite of the use of the words, is done with speed in government.

At some other point, the word, “work for” is used to show collaborative effort that requires urgency. An example is “*We will work for the creation of a national economy that is people centred and private-sector-driven*”. This indirectly suggests procedures that require time to be achieved. The important thing to note however is it calls on the masses to join them in ensuring that they pull their collective resources together to speed up the work for quick results.

Conclusion

It is apparent from this study that language is imperative in expressing the political thoughts and programs of political parties. The study reveals that, language is a weapon which Nigerian political parties use in lobbying the Electoral College to subscribe to their programs by voting them to power. The study discovers that not only the popular dominant political parties have learnt the mastery of language during electioneering. Political parties in the centre of the margins have also developed a robust repository of language which they have deployed in the drafting of their party manifestos. This has been proven evident in the party manifestos of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and the Labour Party (LP).

In the Manifestos of these two parties, modals are effectively used to persuade, convince and to sue the masses to join the bandwagon of progressives. Furthermore, where necessary, the manifestos also attempt to take a firm stand against key issues of national concerns especially in the areas of providing key infrastructures for human and capital development. Words such as “ensure”, “intensify”, “insist” and “as a matter of urgency” have been used to persuade and somewhat coerce the masses into giving them their support.

One central point of reference in the manifestos of APGA and LP is that they discredit the incumbent government by highlighting the failures of the government. The thrust of their manifestos is anchored on a double-barreled sentence with the first discrediting the incumbent government closely followed by what their own government, if voted, will offer.

References

- Adamu, A.A. (2018). *A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Party Manifesto of the All Progressives Congress (APC)*. A Ph.D Dissertation submitted to the Department of English and Literary Studies, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.
- Adkins, M. & Brashers, D.E. (2005). *The Power of Language in Computer- Mediated Groups. Management Communication Quarter*, 8(3), 289-322.
- Ali M. (1975). *The Political Sociology of the English Language*. The Netherlands; Monton and Co.
- Alo, M. (2004). *Lexical choices and values in political manifestoes in Nigeria Ibadan. Journal of English Studies*. p. 229- 243
- Awonuga, C. (1988) *Political Rhetoric: Awolowo's Use of Language in ODU*. A Journal of West African Studies. New Series. No 34.pp150-194.Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Ayeomoni, M.O. (2001), *Style in Nigerian Political Speeches in IFE Studies in EnglishLanguage Journal*, Dept of English, OAU: Ile- Ife, Vol.5, pp 117 – 128
- Ayeomoni, M.O. (2002), *The Role of Stylistics in Literary Studies* ed. Oyeleye L. and lateju, M in *Readings in Language and Literature*: Ile-Ife: OAU Press, pp 177 – 189.
- Beard, A. (2000). *The language of Politics*. London: Routledge
- Dijk eds. *Discourse as Social Interaction*. (p.67 – 97) London: Sage Publications.
- Ehineni, T.O (2014). *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Modals in Nigerian Political Manifestos International Journal of*

Linguistics. Vol. 5, No. 3.

Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and Power*. London: Longman.

Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R (1997). *Critical discourse analysis: an overview* In T.A Van

Joseph, J. E. (2006). *Language and Politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748624522.001.0001>

Linfoot-Ham, Kerry. (2005). *The Linguistics of Euphemism: A Diachronic Study of Euphemism Formation*. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 2(2), 227–263.

Olagunju, T. (2012). *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Soldiers-Corps Members Language Interactions on NYSC Camp Kaduna*. A Master of Arts thesis submitted to the Department of English and Literary Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Opeibi, B.O. (2009). *Discourse, Politics and the 1993 Presidential Election Campaigns in Nigeria*. Lagos: Nouvelle Communications Limited.

Patridge, B. (2006). *Discourse Analysis*. London: MPG Books Ltd.

Taiwo, R. (2009). *Legitimization and Coercion in Political Discourse: A Case Study of Olusegun Obasanjo Address to the PDP Elders and Stakeholders Forum*. *Journal of Political Discourse Analysis*. Vol. 2(2).191-205.

Taiwo, R. (2010). *Conceptual Metaphors in Nigerian Political Discourse*. *A Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Delta State University*, 3(1), 170-185.

Wodak, Ruth. (2001). *What CDA is about – a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments*. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Eds. Ruth Wodak and Micheal Meyer. London: Sage Publications p. 1-3.

Yusuf, Y.K. (2003). *Dysphemism in the language of Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo*. *AILA Review*, 6(1), 104–119. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/aila.16.10yus>