JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES (GOSAJOLLCOS)

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
GOMBE STATE UNIVERSITY

MAIDEN EDITION
November, 2020

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MAIDEN EDITION
November, 2020

PUBLISHED BY:
Jos University Press Ltd.,
No. 15, Murtala Mohammed Way,
Jos Plateau State, Nigeria.

COVER DESIGN:
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Critical Discourse Analysis of Clusivity in Bukola Saraki's Declaration-of-intent Speech

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Abstract

There is a large body of work on the different genres of political discourse in Nigeria. However, the explorations of the meanings produced by the use of language in the declaration-of-intent speech genre especially of aspirants who lost the primaries and did not become presidents have received far less attention in Nigerian scholarship. Thus, drawing from Chilton's (2004) legitimization-proximization model, the paper critically analyses the use of clusivity in Bukola Saraki's declaration-of-intent speech for presidency under PDP in 2018. Findings show that through the pronominal choice of "we" and "our," as a strategy to include and exclude, Saraki constructs his identity via certain manipulative discursive strategies like creating a common ground by taking side with his audience in their moments of lack and the binary metaphorical conceptualization of himself as "young", "capable" and "contemporary" and his opponents (including Buhari, Atiku etc) as "old," "failure," and "traditional". Conclusively, the paper observed a transition in declaration-of-intent genre, from constructing "identity" discursively on "personality," as in some of the previous studies on declaration-of-intent (see Kamal and Agangan 2011; Ahmed and Eje, 2015; Ahmed, 2017) to "capability" grounds, foregrounding the theme of age and youthfulness.

Keywords: Clusivity, (De)legitimisation, Political Discourse, Declaration-of-intent, Youthfulness

Introduction

> *Politics is inherently tied to power struggles which…are linked to (discursive and social) practices and strategies of inclusions or exclusions via knowledge management (used in a different sense than in Applied Management) (Wodak, 2009, p. xiii).*

Political discourse analysis has a long tradition beginning from the classical Greek period to contemporary times. According to Chilton and Schäffner (2002), the interest in the relationship between language and politics in the ancient Greek tradition centered on the connection between persuasion, truth, and morality, with a deep suspicion of the power of language in politics. Orwell (1946), is one of the people who popularized the problematic nature of the relationship between language and politics in the 20th Century. In his *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and his essay titled "Politics and the English Language", Orwell focused on the role of language in politics and examined the ways political language is "designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind" (Orwell, 1946, p.10). Although he recognized that the problem of bad English stemmed from the decay of the society because "when the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer" (p. 1), he still demanded a deep change of attitude from the use

of language because to Orwell "one ought to recognize that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and that one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end" (p. 10). Orwell insisted that understanding how political language is used is central and it is the first step towards political regeneration. To him, one can only struggle against the bad use of language when they have the knowledge of how it can be used manipulatively. One of the approaches that have raised critical consciousness about the manipulative use of language in the representation of our social and political world is critical discourse studies (CDS) (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

A critical analysis of the role of language in enacting social injustice started with critical linguistics (CL). The CL movement focused on using linguistic analysis to reveal the structures of power in discourse (see Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979) and aimed at contributing to broader emancipatory projects in the society. Although systemic functional linguistics paid much attention to the use of language in context, the ideological study of language started with the publication of "Language and Ideology" by Hodge and Kress in 1980. The role of ideology and power in language has been influenced by earlier philosophical movements, such as the Frankfurt School, The Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham, and scholars such as M.A.K. Halliday and Michel Foucault, among others. Influenced by these various movements and scholars, CDS is "primarily interested in the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 249).

CDS, as a network, therefore, aims at understanding how language enacts inequality and advocates change based on its findings. Drawing on the notions of hegemony by Gramsci (1973), and Althusser's (1971) concept of ideological struggle, CDS argues that dominant classes within society engage in discourse processes to manufacture popular consent for the unequal distribution of power and wealth. In so doing, they exercise their social and discursive hegemony, which involves, for the most part, defining and upholding social structures and groups. Cap (2019) observes that:

> Our perception of reality and of the character of real objects is mediated entirely by discourse. We, as human beings, enter a world already composed of discourses and cannot conceive of objects outside it. For this reason, the discursive and non-discursive worlds cannot be separated. (p.3)

It is because of this central role of discourse in the perception of reality that CDS's critique usually begins with the analysis of discourse. According to Fairclough (2015), critical discourse studies "combines a **critique** of discourse and **explanation** of how it figures within and contributes to the existing social reality, as a basis for **action** to change that existing reality in particular respect" (p. 6, emphasis in the original). CDS not only identifies various features and types of language use that are

manipulative and hegemonic, but it further seeks to find answers to why discourse is the way it is, and ascertain its role in shaping the way people think of their society and themselves. It is based on this CDS orientation to discourse that the analytical framework of this paper is anchored on.

Given the large body of work on Nigerian presidential discourse (see Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013; Ajilore, 2014; Adegoju & Oyebode, 2015 and Chiluwa & Odebunmi, 2016) there are less works that pay adequate attention to the explorations of the rich linguistic manipulations produced by the use of language in the declaration-of-intent speech genre, especially of aspirants who lost the primaries and did not become presidents. The paper, therefore, attempts to reveal the nature of linguistic strategies and manipulations employed by Bukola Saraki through clusivity to build his identity and achieve his political aim, in his declaration-of-intent speech. The paper aims to investigate how aspirants construct identities (of themselves and their party) in order to achieve their political goal: power. This is because declaration-of-intent speeches are first stages where politicians begin to put forth their ideas, and project to the public their identities in political (discourse) practice. This is built on the hypothesis set up by Chilton (2004), that "identity unfolds in discourse by positioning others on the axes of space, time, and rightness presuming the centrality and fixity of the self" (p. 205). The paper tests this hypothesis to identify how, and in what unique way is the creation of identity carried out and the linguistic strategies employed, so as to discursively understand the strategies of identity formation in Nigerian political discourse.

Declaration-of-Intent Speech

A declaration-of-intent speech is a kind of speech given by aspirants to declare interest to run for an office under a specific party. Declaration-of-intent speech must be before party primaries. It is the speech that determines whether an aspirant could participate in the primary and hence general elections or not. So far, the few works done on the declaration-of-intent speech genre are on those who eventually got their party tickets to fly the party's flag in the general election. One of the handful declaration-of-intent speeches which have received attention is that of the former president of Nigeria; Goodluck Jonathan's declaration-of-intent speeches of 2010 and 2014 (see Kamalu & Agangan, 2011; Ahmed, 2012; Ahmed, 2017). Findings from some of the studies of Goodluck Jonathan's declaration-of-intent speeches have shown that Jonathan used language to prompt "emotional and ideological associations" (Edelman 1997, p. 5). For example, Kamal and Agangan's (2011) findings indicate that Jonathan used diverse rhetorical strategies to appeal to ethno-religious sentiments, taking side with the suffering masses and the reconstruction of childhood experiences, to entreat and manipulate the conscience of his party and other Nigerians.

The present study, however, focuses exclusively on the employment of clusivity (pronominal choice of "we" and "our,") as a strategy for Saraki to include and exclude in order to rhetorically build an identity of himself and gain credibility in

the eyes of Nigerian voters. The main objective of this analysis is not to discover whether Saraki was saying the "truth" or not, but to illustrate how Saraki constructed his identity and how it relates to the context of presidential discourse, especially declaration-of-intent genre.

Clusivity

Clusivity is a term in linguistics that is used to describe different aspects of inclusion and exclusion encoded in language. It is a well exploited linguistic craft utilized by politicians to achieve their political goals. Previous studies on clusivity have focused on such markers of inclusion and exclusion as person-making and pronouns (Cysouw, 2005; Simon, 2005; Johnson & Dowling-Guyer, 1996), honorifics (Cysouw, 2005). Similarly, most of these studies have derived their data from independent languages to understand the general nature and treatment of clusivity in each language as different from another. So, such studies were majorly from the perspectives of syntax, morphology and semantics, and not from discourse analysis; and they were mostly on languages other than English. Very few studies have focused on pragmatics (see singularity and plurality, Levinson 2004; deixis, Brown & Levinson, 1987; Levinson, 2004; Adetunji, 2006, and the imperative, Dobrushina & Goussev 2005.

In the same vein, some have adopted cognitive linguistics and, very few derived their data from the realms of politics. Wieczorek (2013) is one of the few people who studied clusivity in political discourse using a pragmatic-cognitive approach. Another scholar is Chilton (2004) who studied clusivity based on binary polarization of political discourse. According to Chilton, one should note that political discourse intrinsically involves binarization of things and that "the tendency in much political discourse is towards antonymous lexical choices, and other lexical choices that must lead hearers making mental models that are binary in character" (p. 202-3). It is based on this assumption by Chilton that we feel that his theory is appropriate for our analysis as it treats clusivity: association (inclusion) and dissociation (exclusion) in political discourse.

The focus of the paper is on the use of pronouns ("we" and "our") and how they are used as clusivity tools in Saraki's declaration-of-intent speech. Political terrain often accommodates "group identities and boundaries, relationships between members and non-members, belonging and dissociation, as well as distance and proximity" (Wieczorek, 2013, p. 1) which are communicated whenever people interact, both verbally and nonverbally. As part of clusivity, pronouns are great tools; they "are complex words… [that] are politically oriented towards the assignment of positions and the construction of representation of people" (Dadugblor, 2016, p. 36). Thus, discursive projections of positive self-image and negative other image are to be found on virtually "all occasions when the struggle for power is at play, and in electoral discourse in particular" (Wieczorek, 2013, p.1) and in the process of identity formation in politics. So, the paper attempts to explore the nature and strategies of how identity creation manifests especially via clusivity (deictic) tools in

the declaration-of-intent genre using Saraki's speech.

Theoretical Framework: Chilton's (2004) Legitimisation-Proximisation

Chilton (2004) anchored his theory on indexicality, which means that "language-in-use consists of utterances generated and interpreted in relation to the situation in which the utterer(s) and interpreter(s) are positioned" (p. 56). The term "positioned" is understood to be "a spatial metaphor conceptualizing the speaker's and or hearer's relationship to their interlocutor(s), to their physical location, to the point in time of the ongoing utterance, and to where they are in the ongoing discourse" (Chilton 2004, p. 56). This is the proximization and it is where clusivity counts, as politicians dissociate and associate entities in their choice, which may be manipulative.

According to Chilton (2004), in political situations, political actors fix on what is called "legitimization." What this means is that:

> Humans using language politically, seem to feel a strong pressure to justify their actions or proposals for actions in terms of opposition between right and wrong. At the heart of politics is the attempt to get others to 'share a common view' about what is useful-harmful, good-evil, just-unjust. (p. 199). This is a sort of inclusion and association in the space category (or metaphors) that helps in building identities for politicians.

To Chilton (2004), "some components of the subjective experience of individual identity and possibly the whole of that of group identity, depend on communication, largely linguistic communication" (p. 205). And one of the linguistic choices to communicate the identity of self is clusivity (inclusion and exclusion) through which we investigate how Saraki communicated his ideals. And as Chilton (2004) rightly said, "in political discourse, the first person plural pronouns (*we, us, our*) can be used to induce interpreters to conceptualize group identity, coalitions, parties, and the like, either as insiders or as outsiders" (p. 56).So for this paper, Saraki is the self and the political actor who uses the deictic resources (we and our) in order to communicate his ideals. And as Chilton (2004) observes, the use of such deictic resources is to "produce the effects of authority, legitimacy, consensus, and so forth which are recognized as being intrinsic to politics" (p. 4).The objective of the paper is to critically investigate the clusivity strategies employed by Saraki to construct identity and achieve his political goal, in order to make transparent the opaque relationship of power, power abuse and other social inequalities that may result from that.

Methodology

The data for this study is drawn from Bukola Saraki's declaration-of-intent speech delivered on the 30th August, 2018 at Sheraton Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria. The speech is sourced and downloaded from Viable TV which posted it on its YouTube

page. The title of the clip is: "FULL VIDEO: Saraki Declares 2019 Presidential Ambition, Promises Youth Inclusiveness. "The video was transcribed by the authors in order to escape the distortion, omissions and fragmentation cases found in the transcribed version here https://www.latestnigeriannews.com2019: FulltextofSaraki's declarationtorunforpresidency.

Lexical items (*we, our and us*) that show/mark the inclusionary status are underlined, and those with the exclusionary are presented in bold font. The groupings of the excerpts during the analysis are thematically framed. The themes explored include the theme of age and youthfulness, the rhetoric of fear and the legitimization and delegitimization. And the analysis is guided by the intersection axes postulated by Chilton's (2004) theoretical model of space (positioning, here through clusivity), time and modality in a simultaneous manner. The excerpts are numbered in ascending order together with the paragraph number as in the original text. The full speech is accessible here: https://youtube/ces76_KD3kE.

Data Analysis

The Theme of Age and Youthfulness

Saraki started his speech by presenting his main ideas about where the country was, so that he could project what he has to offer. He thus comments that:

1. It's widely acknowledged that **us, our** <u>country</u>, is a relatively <u>young</u> country, boosting with tremendous energy, ability and potential. More than seventy percent of **our** population is under the age of forty (40) (17)
2. Ordinarily, such a <u>young population</u> would be the envy of many western countries that are faced with ageing population. But the diverse state of <u>our</u> affairs tarnishes the <u>youthful</u> advantage that **we** have. (18)

Saraki in excerpt 1 above uses 'us' to refer to Nigerians and 'our' to refer to Nigeria, only to associate them with features of youthfulness ("young," "tremendous energy," "ability and potential") in order to bring or position himself among them, as in the use of 'us". In excerpt 2, there is a contrast between 'young population'& 'youthful' and 'we' & 'our' that include the speaker (Saraki) and the other youths in Nigeria. The inclusive 'we' and 'our' here presuppose that Saraki is a youth as well but during the time he was contesting, Saraki was already 56, which contradicts the definition he himself offered in his speech (that they are under the age of forty). Saraki here uses inclusive deictic ('we', 'us' and 'our') to bring close the audience especially the youth so as to share their 'identity'. And this will conceptually paint him, as one of them, an image of capability, because youth may metaphorically infer agility, fitness, and vivacity that may render Saraki's readiness and capacity distinct as opposed to his opponents. In doing that, he legitimized himself as the unifier that will settle the

"diverse state of... affairs that tarnishes the youthful advantage" that the country has. Such use of 'we' and 'our' can also be seen in the following excerpt:

3. Upon dawn, <u>our country,</u> today; Nigerians are crying out for succor. Many of <u>our children</u> are hungry. Many people are dying of avoidable or otherwise treatable diseases. Many are falling below basic living standards. (19)

The use of 'our' in both instances in excerpt 3 depicts inclusivity where Saraki makes the problem everybody's including himself. Here Saraki is employing clusivity (deictic 'our') to build identity through the axes of modality. Apart from relativizing himself with the public predicament, Saraki uses that advantage to project in their minds polar images of himself who is young, capable, knows the problems and cares as opposed to his opponents. The first sentence in the excerpt indicates the urgency and serious need for the problems mentioned in the excerpt, which is a collective task to seek for "succor". Saraki is projecting the center-space of 'self'(which is himself) to remind the public the "succor" is 'here' young and ready, and 'now' is the time to vote him in order to solve the problems. As Chilton (2004) rightly said, "The self is positioned at the intersection that is conceptualized not only as 'here' and 'now' but also 'right' and 'good'. We could thus understand that, Saraki uses the theme of age and youthfulness not only to recreate his identity (through associating himself with their features), but also to share their problems in order to legitimize himself as the 'right' and 'good' candidate. These are communicated through the deictic resources of clusivity he employed, with which he manipulated the public.

The Rhetoric of Fear
Through the use of clusivity, Saraki evokes the emotion of fear in order to impose in the minds of the public the urgency of voting him and how this is for their good. And he also constructs an identity of himself via the inclusivity deictic 'we' he used as a 'good' candidate on moral grounds that cares and is willing to partake in tackling the problems. This can be seen below:

4. The frontlines of this nation are widening and alarming. <u>**We must do something fast**</u> and <u>**we must**</u> be brave about it. <u>**We must**</u> ensure the security of lives in Nigeria_ **as things stand now,** no one is safe in this country. No one feels truly safe. (27)

The first sentence inflicts fear in the audience's minds, as failure to "do something fast" (which is voting him) may put the whole country into the hands of danger. Saraki quickly brings the audience close to the center-space of the 'self' (i.e. himself) as if to save them, yet, only to trigger them to action (i.e. voting him) which should be the solution for the situation. We know that the government is responsible for

tackling all the problems Saraki mentioned. As such, the statement "as things stand now, no one is safe in this country" foregrounds the failure of the present Buhari administration which will suggest that Nigerians should not vote Buhari again. However, the 'we' suggest Saraki's government and thus excludes the public, because only Saraki if elected will tackle the security issue, as a government entity. Therefore, Saraki is delegitimizing his opponents, even outside his party, by creating fear in the minds of the audience against them. And this strategy has helped Saraki manipulate the audience by taking side with them to share the country's problems which is their problem too. But it is understood that Saraki uses an inclusive deictic 'we 'only to achieve his political goal: power by winning their votes. Such use of 'we' is clear in the following excerpt:

5. <u>We must</u> **pull this country back together** and rebuild block by block with dedication and commitment. You will agree with me that this is an urgent task that requires a concerted effort of <u>every one of us</u>. (29)

Saraki indicates to the audience the necessity to "pull this country back together" (i.e. save it from those who allow it in crisis and danger), and he tags the "task" of doing that as "urgent" and which "requires a concerted effort of every one of us". The 'we' is indeed exclusive of Saraki, because he is the one seeking to be given the opportunity to carry out that, as a government. This implies that the urgent task is that of voting him. Saraki here thus, justifies his action (what he will offer if elected) by projecting binary character in the minds of the audience, thereby positioning his opponents as 'wrong' and failures, and creating an identity of himself as the 'right' candidate. This is done through manipulating them via the strategy of the rhetoric of fear, as he renders the failure to elect him as putting the nation in danger. As Chilton (2004) rightly said, "humans using language politically, seem to feel a strong pressure to justify their actions or proposals for action in terms of opposition between right and wrong. At the heart of politics is the attempt to get others to 'share a common view' about what is useful-harmful, good-evil, just-unjust" (p. 199).

(De) legitimization through Clusivity

6. There is no time to waste. <u>The time is now, to come together, to stimulate growth in Nigeria, especially the national economy.</u> The choice we face in the forthcoming election is either to keep things as they are or make **a radical departure from the old ways**; to fix the problems, or keep compounding the problems. (31)

According to Chilton (2004), "the self [political actor] is positioned at the intersection that is conceptualized… as 'here' and 'now'" (p. 205) in the communication of political discourse. Saraki reminds the public that the problems

Nigeria (Nigerians as well) face need an "urgent task" (i.e. of voting him, see excerpt 5), and therefore, "the time is now…". The coming together Saraki stated is supposed to be inclusive of the audience and Saraki himself, but considering the task (of "stimulating growth…"), proves that it is exclusive of Saraki. This is because his aim is for the public to come together and vote for him, not "to stimulate growth", as it can only be carried out by the government. So making it collective is just a manipulation to make them do the "task" of voting him and take it as a family duty, since he has conceptualized himself and the public as belonging to a group/family. And Chilton (2004) said, inclusivity "can be used to induce interpreters[audience] to conceptualize group identity, coalitions, parties, and the like, either as insiders or as outsiders" (p. 56).

The "choice" he imposes on them is communicated via the inclusive 'we' through legitimization of himself and delegitimization of the opponents in a metaphoric conceptualization he positioned the public minds to assume. "Things as they are" is already made clear that it is bad (see excerpt 4), so choosing to keep them is a 'wrong' choice. The 'wrong' choice here delegitimizes Saraki's opponents (especially Buhari's administration). Moreover, "the old ways" metaphorically delegitimizes the opponents (especially Buhari, Atiku etc. that are old) which may imply weakness, outdatedness, traditional which result in the slow-down and failure in security, economy and other problems he mentioned in the speech. So, making "a radical departure" will imply voting Saraki, which means not keeping the things as they are or "compounding the problems," but fixing the problems. Therefore, it is understood that Saraki delegitimizes his opponent in order to legitimize his candidature, as not only the capable (as seen in the metaphorization he assumes in claiming identity with the youth: as young, able, energetic, see excerpt 1, and contemporary candidate, see excerpt 6), but the 'right' candidate, because, as he made the case, he is the solution. Thus, Saraki constructs his identity via delegitimization, in order to wind the votes of his audience.

Conclusion

The aim of any political speech is to gain power. And to achieve this, language is one of the ready instruments. Saraki using clusivity employs strategies of ideological manipulation. He brings the audience to the center via deictic inclusivity ('we' and 'our') only when it is for the benefit of his aim and even takes side with them, for example, through the recreation of identity via claiming it with the youth, inflicting fear to foregrounds the damage and danger the country is in which he takes advantage of that to stimulate a sense of urgency in voting him and how doing that is for the audience's benefit. Contrarily, he also uses them exclusively for instance, using metaphorical conceptualization to delegitimize his opponents as failure, weak, outdated, and traditional. Saraki manipulatively renders himself as the center that is right, timely, and the only "good" candidate to be elected. This has proven the hypothesis set up by Chilton (2004) that, "identity unfolds in discourse by positioning others on the axes of apace, time, and rightness presuming the centrality

and fixity of the self" (p. 205). Political contexts have been organized largely to favor the elites and this has to be always critically interrogated using critical discourse approaches such as Chilton's (2004) legitimization-proximization approach. The paper thus, recommends a committed indulgence in the critical investigation of the genre of declaration-of-intent.

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