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**A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF FAROOQ KPEROGI'S ARTICLE ON PANTAMI
PROFESSORSHIP SAGA**

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Abstract

Power, control and dominance are prevalent in the political arena, so politicians believe that they can play upon people's emotion and manoeuvre their way, regardless of whether they hurt people's feeling or not. This does not always work, especially when it concerns people from institutionalised community such as education, law, medicine and media, etc. They have their own ideology, principles and beliefs which must be kept no matter their social strata in the society, if not they are liable to be punished. The paper discusses Nigeria's former Minister of Communication Isa Ali Pantami's professorship saga with the intention to expose power relation and control as exhibited by him through the use of language. Fairclough's Socio-cultural theory in Critical Discourse Analysis which draws its premise from Halliday's Systemic Functional Theory is the theoretical underpinning for the analysis of this study. The theory proposes that there is a relationship between discourse and social structure. The article for analysis was obtained from online sources. The study reveals that the use of passive voice is predominant in the text than active to make the reader to focus on the events for clarity. The ideology of dominance and power was used by Pantami to force Mutawalle to send an advertorial to congratulate him in his fraudulent rank of professor. It then implied that Mutawalle was not aware of Pantami's fraudulent act but was forced to do it. On the other hand, not only Pantami was involved but also FUTO ASUU participated in the controversial professorship saga of Pantami. They knew that Pantami was not qualified for the promotion. The study concludes that an ideology of power, control and dominance are prevalent in the political arena for their quest for position.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Social Practice, Language use, Professorship, Transitivity

Introduction

Language use is central to any form of social practices among individuals at all levels. These social practices encompass everyday activities such as writing, schooling, reading and working etc that are typically and habitually performed in our society. Therefore, Chomsky (1957) in Oyeleye (2004) submits that language enables us to influence social practices in great detail and thereby making human cooperation possible. In essence, language is used to express our thoughts, feelings and emotions. It is also a powerful tool used to participate in the social and cultural communities.

Interestingly, it is pertinent to note that there are rules and principles that guide language use which would hinder effective communications among interlocutors.

Consequently, just as rules and principles guide language use, it also applies to social practice and social structure. It is well structured for the smooth running of our society. For example, for an institutionalised community like the educational sector, there are legitimate ways to climb from one ladder of academic career to the next. When one's record does not qualify him/her for a particular appointment, and he/she is promoted to such office, it becomes a problem. This is done for self-aggrandisement which is the major challenge among our self-acclaimed Nigerian politicians. It is against this background that this study critically examines the study of the language use in Pantami's professorship saga in order to unravel the ideology of power, control and dominance.

Empirical Studies

Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) is a field which is multi-disciplinary in nature. It has attracted the interest of other scholars who conduct several works in the area. For example; Olagunju (2016) carries out a study on a critical discourse analysis of language interaction among free readers at newspapers stand in Kaduna metropolis. It looks at the nature of the conversation among these free readers, and to demonstrate that power is linked to language in their utterances.

Abochol and Adebayo (2016) delve into a critical discourse analysis of threat, a case study of Asari Dokubo's utterances. They submit that aspersions and name calling constitute part of the language of threats. There are cases of uses of pronominal to designate distinct individuals and groups with shared and varied ideological views.

Ashipu (2016) conducts a study on a critical discourse analysis of President Goodluck Jonathan's Confab Speech to discover the national ideology implicit in the inauguration. There are deeper meanings embedded in the speech which indicates that the President has a good intention for his country.

Furthermore, Anumudu & Paul (2021) explore a critical discourse analysis of the language of resistance by suspects during police interrogation. They conclude that hegemonic positions such as the ones offered by the police interrogators during interrogation are contested and resisted by suspects through linguistic strategies and this mitigates dominance, power and asymmetry in police interrogation of suspects.

Abaya (2015) investigates a critical political discourse analysis of President Goodluck Jonathan's declaration of state emergency on Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States. The results provide new proofs that political powers are asymmetrical, unequal and empowering to those vested with such powers. All the papers

reviewed above are different from this present study in that this study is a critical discourse analysis of Farooq Kperogi's article on Pantami professorship saga.

The Person of Pantami

Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami was born on 20th October 1972. He is also known as Sheikh Pantami, an Islamic cleric who was a former Minister of Communications and Digital Economy of Nigeria. He was a Director General of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) of Nigeria from 26 September 2016 to 20 August 2019. Pantami was among seven readers (Associate Professors) promoted to Professors by the Governing Council of Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO) at its 186th meeting held on Friday, August 20, 2021.

However, this promotion continues to generate controversy, and has been strongly questioned by intellectuals on allegations that it did not follow the extant due process in professorship appointments in Nigeria academia. One of the columnists who criticized his professorial saga is Professor Farooq Kperogi.

Theoretical Framework

This study hinges on Fairclough's Dialectical – Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This theory draws its premise of M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics which describes the guideline for the analysis of transitivity of clauses. According to Wodak and Meyer (2009), this CDA approach highlights the semiotic reflection of social conflict in discourses, which translate into the author's interest in social structures, practices and events. Fairclough (1989, 1992 and 1995) and Huckin (1997) describe the following underlying assumptions in analysing a text: transitivity, vocabulary, mood/modality, interactional feature control, politeness, implication, presupposition, topicality and ambiguity. Vocabulary involves looking into

how words are used to show ideology, ways things are classified and over worded to show reality. Transitivity has to do with the meanings of clauses that are realised in the structure of a text. For Mood and Modality, the mood has to do with mood enacted and the functions of sentences in the text while modality involves the use of specific words (verbs or prepositional phrases such as may, might, could, will, can, must, it seems to me, without doubt or inclusive and exclusive pronouns) and intonation patterns (speaking hesitantly, for instance) to convey the degree of certainty and authority.

Interactional Control Features include turn-taking (the way in which talking turns are distributed), exchange system (organization of, for instance, interviews in terms of question-answer sequences). Topicality looks at how topics are chosen to fill theme position in the clause (initial position) or which are foregrounded. Politeness deals with how people should be addressed in a speech event which could be either positive face (people want to be liked, understood, and admired) or negative face (people do not want to be impeded by others).

Presuppositions are those presuppositions or assumptions made by a speaker or writers which are not explicitly stated and which authors appear to be taken for granted. Ambiguity involves insinuations or suggestive statements carrying double meanings, so that when the statement is challenged, the author can deny any culpability.

From the foregoing, Wareing and Thomas (1999) argue that politics is concerned with power, the power to make decisions, to control resources, to control other people's behaviour and often control their values; this is what makes it critical.

Therefore, this theory is suitable for this analysis because it accounts for the language use of power and control, dominance and ideology, used in the text.

Methodology

The article written by Farooq Kperogi on Pantami's professorship saga was obtained from online sources, (from Facebook to be precise) as the data for a textual analysis using Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis. The articles titled "Pantami's Fake Professorship Joins Other Intellectual Frauds" found in Today's Saturday Tribune/Peoples Gazette column and "The FUTO ASSU's Fraudulent "clearing" of Pantami's Fraudfessorship" were purposively selected for analysis. The rationale behind the selection was because both contain extracts suitable for this study and the choices of the extracts were done to complement each other. The number of sentences in both selected articles is seventy (70), forty-five (45) for the former and twenty-five (25) for the latter. The excerpts (sample) analysed were eight (8) sentences, three and five sentences respectively. The extracted portions were carefully analysed.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The study adopts Fairclough's textual analysis to examine Pantami's professorship saga, article written in two articles drawn online. The text analysis in this model involves looking into the following; transitivity, mood and modality, vocabulary, interactional control features, topicality, presupposition, vagueness and implication.

Transitivity: Halliday (1976:8) says that transitivity "construe the world of experience into a manageable set of process types". It has to do with language in terms of processes which are realised by the verbal group. The process is what the clause is about and what the participants are involved in...they are the core of the clause from the experiential perspective (Thompson. 2014:92). Transitivity involves the selection of process types which includes; material, mental, verbalised process, behavior, relational and the existential process. The sayer/actor is the producer of speech, the receiver is the entity to which the speech is addressed, the

verbalisation process is the process of saying and the verbiage means that which gets said.

Extract 1

It [actor] emerged [material process] late last week [goal] that Communications and Digital Economy Minister Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami (or his agents) [sayer] possibly instructed [verbal process] Zamfara State governor Bello Muhammad Mutawalle [receiver] to place an advertorial in the Daily Trust [circumstance] to congratulate [verbal process] Pantami [receiver] on his "promotion to the Rank of Full Professor of Cyber security" [circumstance] by an unnamed University [circumstance].

Mood:

The mood of the writer is that of disappointment and dissatisfaction to the Minister, Ali Ibrahim Pantami, for his contentious act of being dubiously promoted to the rank of professor. The first line shows a declarative statement while the second is an imperative statement but a passive one. The subject 'it' signifies the third person singular pronoun referring to an advertorial in the Daily Trust Newspaper. Passive sentences indicate events in the past as reported in the paper, lack originality, and are sometimes vague and wordy. The action always shifts from the subject to the recipients thereby making it difficult to understand who the subject and the recipient are. The event is not centred on the subject Isa Ali Pantami, it applies to the whole proposition that Isa Ali Pantami instructed Mutawalle to place an advertorial to the Daily Trust Newspaper to congratulate him on his promotion.

Vocabulary:

The word 'instructed' is used to show ideology of power and dominance to former Zamfara State Governor Bello Muhammadu Mutawalle. From the excerpt, Pantami persuades and commands the Governor to do exactly what he wants, regardless of the fact that they are associates in the political arena, and this is not relational at all because it is a

superior in the office that commands the subordinate, except on the basis of ideology in religion where Pantami is an Islamic cleric. The clerics are seen as God's representatives on earth, to whom their followers must give an unquestionable submission (Okpeh, 2017).

In addition, he employs the language of 'full professor' as an ideology of power and control to accomplish his contentious act. In Nigeria's milieu, there is no such terms as "half or full professor" anywhere, a professor is simply a professor. It is a deceptive and an intimidating phrase which Abaya (2013:197) says that "the politician persuades everyone that what he wants is what they also want". Pantami uses his position in the religious space to subdue the governor to do his will.

Interactional Control Features: The writer does not lose control but took us back from when Pantami started his academic career as a Graduate Assistant at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU) up to his controversial professorial rank. He diverted a bit to expose other Nigerian politicians who have treaded the same path like Pantami. He summed it up by saying that NUC should sanction the Federal University of Technology, Owerri and Pantami should renounce his contentious professional rank.

Topicality:

This is concerned with what and how of the focus of the text. This excerpt focuses on the contentious act of bestowing the rank of professorship on Isa Ali Pantami. Although, the focus of the text is on "Pantami Professorship Saga", by extension, the writer mentioned other Nigerians 'who have been involved in this heinous act. They are; Ndi Okereke-Onyiuke, who got her PhD and was made a professor of capital market studies in 2007 from the University of Nigeria Nsukka in the exact way Pantami got his own through intellectual legerdemain. The late Dora Akinyili's path to professorship was less controversial than Ndi Okereke-Onyiuke and Pantami's but it was unusual. She left University service to public service but

returned and mysteriously skipped several ranks and became a professor.

The writer is in dismay as he noted in his December 5, 2020 column titled "Ganduje and Fraudulent American 'Professorships' for Nigerian Politicians". He called attention on the growing maddening titular vanity among Nigerian politicians that cause them to want to be known as "professors". The politicians are no longer satisfied with the honorary degree of being called a 'doctor, now moving to the next level which is the buying of 'professorships'. The author feels utmost dismay at how and what the Nigerian politicians have turned our educational system into. A system that is supposed to be the life-wire of every nation has now been turned into fraudulent institutions. . Still in their bid for power and control, Ike Ekweremadu and Ganduje were scammed at a historically black Louisiana University called Southern University till the scammer was unveiled. Their life is an embodiment of deception in which Orwell (1949) in Wareing and Thomas (1999) avers that the political language is largely the defence of the indefensible. That is, the people being defended are prone to be attacked by the same people defending them.

However, since they have failed in their aggrandizement in the institutionalised arena in the international university in collecting the rank of 'Professorship', now Pantami appears to be leading a detour back to home university for the conferral of fraudulent professorship. If not checked this will promote undeserving employees to its highest academic rank. Our leaders whom our youths are supposed to emulate are determined to turn Nigerian universities into contentious institutions that are full of scammers and swindlers who would not promote academics.

Presupposition:

It is the assumptions or the deductions that language users often make as regards some

pieces of information they know or feel they share with the addressees (Emezue, 2011). The common background knowledge between the speaker, Pantami and the hearer, Mutawalle is the academic accomplishments of the latter which they believed would promote Pantami to the rank of professorship. The congratulatory message by Mutawalle indicated that Pantami deserved the honour.

On the other hand, Mutawalle presupposes this background knowledge with the NUC, which is the body responsible for verifying this honour bestowed on Pantami. He assumes the body is aware of Pantami's academic excellence to have bestowed the honour upon him. It is used to justify Mutawalle's action against Pantami's deception.

Vagueness:

There are expressions that are not explicitly stated and do not give enough information or do not say exactly what they are meant to say. Firstly, "the university was unnamed" makes the expression unclear thereby violating the maxim of quantity which says make your contribution as informative as is required. The fact that the university was not mentioned in the congratulatory message makes it look like it lacks enough information. Secondly, the phrase 'full professor' violates the maxim of quantity and quality, which implies that the contribution is more informative than is required and also lacks adequate evidence. In Nigerian milieu, we do not use the terminology 'full professor', because a professor is just a professor. Supporting this, Abaya (2013) submits that the political language depends largely upon ambiguity as it brings about different interpretations to an issue. They need the ability to place their own interpretation on what they have said, to deny the interpretation of others, to change their emphasis without changing their words and to allow their members to hold different interpretations simultaneously without

offending those who hold any other interpretation. Therefore, the information relayed to the academia concerning Pantami's professorship saga is implicitly stated and vague.

Implication:

Grice (1975) in Emezue (2011) posits that implicature accounts for what a speaker can suggest or mean as distinct from what they literally say. It is another form of persuasion that allows the audience to make assumptions that are not clearly stated in the information available in the text. It can be inferred and deduced that Mutawalle, the former Zamfara State Governor is ignorant of Pantami's contentious act of professorship saga; he is not in the academics and does not know the rudiments there. It is seen in the way the university was not mentioned as well as in the use of 'full professor' which is not a terminology in the Nigeria academic setting

Extract 2

In the advertorial **[circumstance]**, Mutawalle **[sayer]** repeated the dishonestly hyperbolised claims **[verbalised process]** Pantami **[receiver]** cherishes and promotes, such as the claims that **[material process]** he **[carrier]** has **[relational process]** over 160 publications which **[circumstance]** don't show up **[material process]** in any scholarly repository – and that **[circumstance]** he **[actor]** was trained **[material process]** at Harvard, MIT, and Oxford even though **[circumstance]** he **[actor]** only attended **[material process]** a few days' workshops there while in government **[goal]**. He **[carrier]** used **[relational process]** the American English "full professor" that the Islamic University of Madinah where **[attribute]** Pantami **[sayer]** taught also uses **[verbal process]** to describe what is called "professor" in British and Nigerian terminology **[circumstance]**. Since Mutawalle **[existing]** isn't **[existential process]** an academic **[existent]**, it's obvious that Pantami **[sayer]** wrote **[verbal process]** the advertorial for him **[receiver]**.

Mood:

The mood of the writer is that of dissatisfaction to the minister. It is a complex sentence. In the second extract, the tone is still that of dismay, frustration and discouragement by the writer for the demeaning attitude displayed by a political leader as well as an Islamic cleric, Pantami. It is a declarative statement in the passive voice. On the passive voice, Abaya (2015) asserts that the passive voice usually refocuses the listener's attention on certain elements, concealing the speaker that is responsible for an action. The active on the other hand foregrounds the speaker that can be held responsible. Passive is predominantly used for the reader or the listener to focus on the events in the text for clarity.

Vocabulary:

In the second extract, the phrases, 'over 160 publications and 'full professor' are over-worded to portray an ideology of power and dominance. By extension, as indicated by the writer his publications do not show up in any scholarly repository which laid bare the falsehood. Therefore, he exaggerated his claims which are over-worded with the use of the word 'hyperbolised'. His vocabulary is simple and straight to the point for a better understanding. The over-wording employed is self-explanatory and understood in its context of use, and is used to reveal what is in his mind for clarity.

Topicality:

In the second extract, the writer unravels Pantami's academic accomplishments which were not explicitly stated. By extension the writer also states how Pantami started his academic career and his last academic position before he became the DG of NITDA in 2016. He was an assistant professor, equivalent to a senior lecturer in the Nigerian system at the Islamic University of Madinah where he taught for two years after his PhD in 2014. Before earning his PhD in UK, he taught at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU) in Bauchi as a junior lecturer and

never taught at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri.

Presupposition:

In the second extract, the common ground for both Pantami and Mutawalle is that the former is a committed fellow and an Islamic cleric who has done well for him to deserve this honour. Both also know that Mutawalle is not an academician. Therefore, he could not have written this congratulatory message in which he used the American English “full professor” which is not a term that is not used in Nigeria.

Vagueness:

In the second extract, the claim that Pantami had over 160 publications was vague and inexplicitly stated. Therefore, it violates the maxim of quantity and quality. The contribution that he had over 160 publications was more informative, there was no proof in any scholarly repository of his publications, and therefore, it lacks adequate evidence. In the statement, Mutawalle repeated the dishonestly hyperbolised claims”, which also violates the maxim of quantity and quality. That is, his contribution was more informative than was required thus it was an exaggeration. Pantami got his PhD in 2014, before then he taught in ATBU in Bauchi as a junior lecturer and also taught at the Islamic University of Madinah for two years before he became the DG of NITDA in 2016. From this, it is obvious that he did not have the time to have written or published in journals much less to have published 160 publications.

Implication:

It implies that Pantami knew he was not qualified to earn the rank of professor; he knew there were not enough publications to earn him that post. He knew that Mutawalle was a novice in this field. He therefore, used Mutawalle’s ignorance to achieve his evil plan. He even knew it would attract the attention of other intellectuals because he acquired it in a contentious manner. It

implied that he perpetuated this act by himself and promoted it through a third party (Mutawalle), and then showed off himself with unabashed hauteur.

Extract 3

This [carrier] is [relational process] quick [attribute], hurried [material process] response [goal]. A friend [sayer] just called [verbal process] my attention]receiver] to a news story in today’s Daily Trust about [circumstance] the FUTO branch of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) [sayer] saying [verbalised process] Ali Ibrahim Pantami’s appointment as “professor of cyber security followed due process [receiver] and that external assessors (whom they didn’t name) [actor] found [material process] his publications to be worthy of promointment (my coinage for promotion and/or appointment since the dolts at FUTO can’t decide what they have done) [goal] to the rank of professor [circumstance].

Mood:

The mood of the writer is that of disappointment at the FUTO branch of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) for the controversial professorship rank bestowed to Isa Ali Pantaimi. The first and the second sentences are simple and compound sentences respectively and both are declarative statements. Both active and passive sentences were used to drive home his point of FUTO’s academic union nonchalant attitude in investigating the contentious act.

Topicality:

The writer is concerned with the ASUU FUTO’s clearing of the contentious promotion to the rank of professor to Pantami. He took us back to Pantami’s articles published in predatory journals which were worthless in all descent schools which could not afford him such an honourable position. The writer was amazed at the agreement of the rubber-

stamped ASUU investigation panel on this issue.

Presupposition:

The common background knowledge for FUTO academic board who bestowed Pantami with the rank of professor and Pantami was that both knew that Pantami was not worthy of the honour. The assessors had checked his journal publications Online and knew that he was not qualified for the post. Therefore, it was a deliberate contentious act by FUTO academics.

Vagueness:

The FUTO board not to mentioning the external assessors in the article assumed to be an intentional act thereby violates the maxim of quantity which says make your contribution as informative as is required and also flouts the maxim of quality for it lacks enough information. It then implied that it was a planned deal for both Pantami and the FUTO academic union.

Extract 4

These guys [carrier] are [relational process] comedians [attribute], only that their comedy [existing] is [existential process] humourless and fraudulent [existent]. Here [carrier] are [relational process] the issues [attribute]. FUTO's registrar [sayer] had told [verbalised process] the Nigerian Tribune {receiver} that Pantami [sayer] told [verbalised process] FUTO [receiver] that he [carrier] was [relational process] an associate "professor" [attribute] at the Islamic University in Madinah before his relocation to Nigeria [circumstance], and that Pantami's promointment to a fraudfessorship in cybersecurity [carrier] was [relational process] a consequence [attribute] of his last academic position [circumstance]. But Pantami [sayer] lied [verbal process], and FUTO [existing] is [existential process] either too feckless or too compromised [existent] to catch his obvious lie [circumstance].

Mood:

The mood of the writer is that of dismay and disappointment to FUTO registrar as narrate the ordeal and prove innocence. The writer is still surprised to find people of this calibre committing such atrocity. The extract comprises of a compound and simple sentences as well as passive and active sentences to state his facts. 'Obvious' is used in the last line of the above extract to show how feckless FUTO branch of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is, to catch up with Pantami's clear-cut lies.

Vocabulary:

The word 'told' by Pantami here shows an ideology of intimidation and dominance. This is because for one to be promoted in the academic cadre, there are due processes to be followed except if this one is an exception. It can be deduced that Pantami cannot bludgeon FUTO into promoting him by mere telling them that he was an associate professor at the Islamic University in Madinah before his relocation to Nigeria, without scrutiny.

Topicality:

The extract focuses on the FUTO ASUU's narration of what transpired between Pantami and them and how they conferred him with the rank of professorship. By extension, the writer mentioned how he wrote to the Islamic University in Madinah twice with no formal response from them which incompetent and compromised ASUU FUTO panel refused to do to confirm his position. The writer also got access to some of Pantami's former colleagues who confirmed that Pantami was not qualified to be promoted to the next rank because he did not meet the minimum requirements.

Presupposition:

It presupposes that ASUU FUTO and Pantami knew that the latter was not qualified for the rank of professor. It is done for self-aggrandisement which is the major challenge

among our self-acclaimed Nigerian politicians. The FUTU panel failed to follow the due process before bestowing such an award.

Vagueness:

The phrase “associate professor” violates the maxim of quality which implies that the contribution is more informative than is required. Pantami says that he was an associate professor before he left the Islamic University of Madinah while he was only an assistant professor which is equivalent to a senior lecturer in the Nigerian system which required at least 5 years to become an associate professor. But he was an assistant professor for only two years, and he needed to be an assistant professor for at least 5 years to be promoted to an associate professor, then professor. In this case, he lied and changed it to associate professor instead of assistant professor which is equivalent to senior lecturer. Even at that, he was not qualified. It then implied that not only Pantami was involved in this saga but also ASSU FUTU had participated in the contentious act. They knew that Pantami was not qualified for the promotion.

Conclusion

This paper examines Pantami’s professorship saga which was published online to unravel the use of language in order to expose the ideology of power, control and dominance prevalent in the political arena. It adopted Fairclough’s relational-dialectal theory as its theoretical framework and analysed it using a textual analysis. The study reveals that the use of passive sentences is more predominant in the text than active sentences to make the reader to focus on the events to clarity. The ideology of dominance and power was used by Pantami to force Mutawalle to send an advertorial to congratulate him in his contentious rank of professor. ASSU FUTU, the Islamic University in Madinah and Pantami are all involved in the professorship saga for they knew that Pantami was not qualified for the post. This can be a fraudulent

act. Consequently, Mutawalle was not aware of Pantami’s contentious act but was forced to do it because it is a planned deal.

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