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A Critical Stylistic Analysis of a Channels Television Show, 'Politics Today'

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Abstract

Security and welfare of the citizens are the two primary functions of government but despite their salient relevance, politicians are always not free from selling ideologies in order to evade justice when the two are not provided. Strategies used in achieving this differ but many are not aware. The focus of this study is to uncover the hidden ideologies embedded in political discourse on Channels Television's 'Politics Today' in order to unravel not just the ideologies but also the linguistic tools used in encoding the ideologies. Six of the Jefferies's (2010) 10 toolkits were used with a focus on rhetorical devices embedded in the extracts and how the two metamorphosed into ideologies sold to Nigerians. Two programmes anchored by Seun Okinbaloye were purposely selected for analysis where two Nigerian senators were invited to discuss the welfare and security of the nation. Findings show that politicians, however good they portray themselves, are not devoid of bias, manipulation, favouritism and could also be sympathetic at times. This study concludes that the infusion of rhetorical devices into Jeffries's toolkits could enhance a rigorous understanding of ideologies embedded in political discourse; hence this study enhanced the framework.

Keywords: Politics Today, Critical Stylistic Analysis, Channel Television, Security and welfare in Nigeria

Introduction

Another important thing that information does is to serve as a constraint on political leaders given the power vested in them. Individuals in organized groups and the mass media can collect large amounts of information on issues which confront political leaders and then use that information to criticize political leaders and demand a more responsible stewardship. It is known that when citizens are informed about the issues of political significance and

about the policies of political leaders, the political elite are less likely to become isolated from the interests of their constituents or to succeed in implementing very unpopular policies.

Politics is a veritable forum for decision making, conflict resolution, and the management of power. This accounts for the fact that politics is the most discussed field all over the world. Politics is expected to issue directives with collective good. The need to get to the roots of issues



involved in leadership makes many individuals develop an interest in scrutinizing political leaders and measuring their competence. However, the effective scrutiny in political leadership is achieved only with effective communication. People obtain information about political leaders, impending political changes, and political decisions through communication of various sorts. Such information can give citizens a basic understanding of political life, of politics in their nation, of key political players, and of the political implications of various decisions political leaders make. On this premise lies the necessity for the mass media, as they serve as the mouthpiece for the masses and voice of the voiceless, to interrogate, investigate and examine political leaders' activities, ideologies and policies through their choices of words and argument presentations. Certain political ideologies, for instance, may be associated with certain words or phrases used to communicate those views. Similarly, unique language and vocabulary may be linked with certain theological doctrines. Language usage can reflect and strengthen societal, cultural, and personal opinions (Stewart, 1999).

Despite extensive research on critical stylistic analysis in media discourse, this study has revealed some gaps it plans to fill. Previous studies by many researchers have explored language and style in media discourse. As a result, while considerable research has been done on the style employed in various newspapers, magazines, and editorials, little attention has been

given to the political programmes on television where politicians, analysts and experts are invited to discuss current topical issues in the country. Appreciating the beauty embedded in these programmes, this study aims to undertake a critical stylistic analysis of Channel Television's shows: Politics Today. To make it more elaborate, the study is critical stylistic analysis in order to uncover the stylistic tools used by politicians as aesthetic features of language to cover up their ideologies, power and political agendas. Hence, this study uncovers them.

Literature Review

Critical Stylistics

As a branch of applied linguistics birthed by the marriage of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and stylistics (Jeffries, (2010), critical stylistics focuses on the aesthetic values of language use embedded in diction to communicate ideology, power and social meanings (Layo, 2015). Critical stylistics became a focus of linguists after a work by Jeffries in 2017 on hegemonic discourse in the female body in society and if feminist ideology has been incorporated in the discourse (Riyadh & Lyth, 2018).

Fairclough's main argument revolves around the concept of "discourse," which refers to language's role in expressing meaning. He posits that discourse is shaped by language and ideology and plays a crucial role in constructing social and cultural reality. According to Fairclough, language is not neutral but rather laden with ideology and acts as a site of power and identity



conflict. Language usage reflects and influences our perceptions and interactions with the world. Jeffries (2019) introduced the concept of critical stylistics, which combines stylistic tools analysing language choices in a text with critical discourse analysis examining the text's impact in social and political contexts. Critical stylistics focuses on the connection between language and ideology, emphasizing how language is infused with ideology and shapes social and cultural realities. It particularly highlights how language in literature and other works reflects and reinforces power dynamics, and how critical stylistic analysis can uncover and resist these power dynamics. Additionally, it underscores language's role in shaping our worldview and the communication and support of ideologies. Critical stylistics is a literary analysis method that employs linguistic techniques to investigate how language is utilised to discover its underlying ideologies and values. It is a type of critical analysis that focuses on the language used in a text and how it influences its meaning and impact. In critical stylistics, analysts aim to understand how the writer's or speaker's language usage, decisions, such as word choice, grammar, and structure, contribute to the overall meaning and efficacy of the text. One example is examining how language is used to transmit power relations, express identity, or shape reader or listener perception.

According to Hall (1985), ideology serves as a meaning-making system where ideologies are - frameworks of thinking and

calculation about the world - the ideas which people use to figure out how the social world works, what their place is in it and what they ought to do. Ideologies can be expressed through language and ideas in literature and other media types. By carefully examining the language and ideas in a text, it is possible to discover and comprehend the ideologies that the study reflects or promotes. This includes investigating how a text's language and themes promote or challenge prevalent ideas and how the text's language and themes may disclose the author's or creator's ideologies.

Politics and Media in Nigeria

Nigerian politics and media have a symbiotic as well as a conflictual relationship. Despite the richness that the media has brought to political communication and participation, evils like bad ideologies and injustice from political leaders to the vulnerable groups still persist. Research findings also show that the media - both the conventional and social media - are vital conduits for conveying political messages, communication strategies, and transformations of the populace's sentiments. Ikechukwu et al, (2017), show how radio and television continue to have an impact in the rural and urban areas in political mobilization and voter education. Furthermore, other works done by Ufuophu-Biri (2018) have pointed to some big investigations that gave reforms to the political system and policies. This indicates the kind of effects the media can cause on politics.

'Politics Today' is a programme on Channels Television. The programme regulates current incidents and occurrences in the arena of Nigerian politics and offers an insight into political actors' views on Nigerian issues (Channels Television, n. d. -a). Available research from the Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences shows that Politics Today impacted viewers' political awareness, thought process and action (Quest Journals, 2024). The paper concluded that broadcast media, such as Channels Television, have gone out of their way to effectively inform the Nigerian public on political affairs and any enlightenment necessary (Quest Journals, 2024). 'Politics Today' is well accessible on different devices making its reach wider to impact the intended Nigeria audience. The pronounced impact of the analyzed show on politics in Nigeria can be identified in terms of edutainment, meaning that the spectators of the show can obtain knowledge about specific political issues and stake in these topics.

Theoretical Framework

This paper uses the framework developed by Jeffries (2014) known as the textual-conceptual functions toolkit developed by Jeffries (2014). The framework consists of 10 tools. The description of each tool is discussed below.

1. Naming and Describing: Texts do more than just name entities; they choose words and phrases with specific connotations and construct noun phrases that convey evaluative or ideological information.

Nominalized verbs turn actions into nouns, making it harder to identify who performed the actions. Thus, texts create a meaningful world for readers, where naming choices significantly impact understanding.

2. Representing

Actions/Events/States: The choice of verbs in describing events can shape readers' perceptions. Different verbs can highlight various aspects of an event, such as "telling," "talking," "being close to," or "gossiping," each creating different impressions. Simpson's transitivity pattern framework helps analyze how these choices influence interpretation, showing that verb selection can alter readers' views and sentiments about events.

3. Equating and Contrasting: Texts can create unconventional synonyms and antonyms, as seen in a UK Conservative Party campaign. By juxtaposing "Labour" and "Tory" with "black" and "British," the campaign implicitly suggested a racist ideology while appealing to liberal voters by appearing non-racist. This tactic highlights how texts can convey complex ideological messages.

4. Exemplifying and Enumerating:

The rhetorical tool of a three-part series often symbolizes completeness and is used by politicians. These examples can present a unique worldview, as Jeffries (2010, 2007) explores the ideological implications of listing choices, such as in women's magazines' portrayal of the female body.

5. Prioritizing: The arrangement of information into main and subordinate structures reveals the producer's values and shapes understanding. Reordering these parts can emphasize different aspects of the same information. Jeffries (2010a) explores prioritization, showing how presupposition conveys meaning with ideological weight.

6. Implying and Assuming: Implicature and presupposition shape a worldview reflecting the producer's opinion. Though often seen as interpersonal, they also function ideationally, influencing how information is conveyed and perceived.

7. Negating: Negation can influence readers' ideologies by prompting them to imagine the positive version of a statement. The detail in the negated version affects this visualization. Nahajec's (2012) research shows negation's powerful role in shaping meaning across different text types.

8. Hypothesizing: The Hallidayan modality system represents the producer's viewpoint, allowing suggestions of uncertainty without overconfidence. Simpson (1993) offers a model suitable for critical stylistics, highlighting modality's ideological importance.

9. Presenting Others' Speech and Thoughts: Quoting others' speech and thoughts at the textual level subtly influences meaning. This function allows implicit attribution without legal consequences and

operates across genres, as discussed by Short (2012) and Semino and Short (2004).

10. Representing Time, Space, and Society: Deixis refers to real-world elements, helping build "text worlds" that reflect political realities and ideologies. The development of text world theory illustrates how deictic aspects in texts enable exploration of various "worlds," whether fictional or real.

Methodology

This paper adopted a qualitative study that explores the ideologies embedded in Channels Television's Politics Today analysed through Jeffries's (2014) 10 toolkit model that incorporates work from such authors as Simpson (1993), Halliday (1985) and Short (1996). This provides a critical analysis of contextual meaning within the political discourse. The data were in form of speech transcribed for adequate analysis obtained from the Channels Television's YouTube page. A total of two (2) different programmes anchored by Seun Okinbaloye were purposively selected and used for the data analysis of this study as they are topical and relevant to the security and welfare of Nigerians.

Data

Channels Television as one of the private media houses in Nigeria hosts the programme 'Politics Today' where contemporary political issues are discussed with experts, politicians and political office holders in order to hold the government accountable and

represent the interests of the masses it serves as the mouth of the people.

Two different recorded programmes anchored by Seun Okinbaloye on the two key functions of government (security and welfare of the citizens) were selected as the data for this study. The first data was obtained from the October 25th, 2023 discussion with Senator Sunday Karimi (APC Kogi West Senatorial District representative) on the lawmakers' vehicle controversy where the senators and members, House of Representatives were using 140 million Naira to buy cars while Nigerians were dying of hunger. The second programme is a discussion with Senator Mohammed Ali Ndume (APC Borno South Senatorial District representative) held on the 13th March, 2024 on banditry and rise in kidnapping. These two programmes are selected because they are contemporary and salient to all Nigerians. How political office holders handle it using language is not just a central interest to language enthusiasts but also a topic of major concern to fellow Nigerians.

6. Analysis and Discussion

The data available show that the toolkits employed by political representatives are naming and describing, representing actions/events/states, implying and assuming, negating, representing others' speech and thought and representing time and space. To achieve this, this analysis will demonstrate how the politicians consciously and unconsciously use other linguistic tools such as

rhetorical devices and cohesive tools in discourse.

6.1 Naming and describing

The primary interest of texts is naming and describing things, ideas and realities around (Jeffries, 2014). In these programmes, politicians engaged in naming and describing purposefully to either distinguish between themselves and the government, justify inordination or make claims. These extracts below demonstrate it better:

Extract 1

"In fact, the government cannot even have enough to work on those roads." Here, the senator is seen, after being alleged of callousness and unfair treatment to the masses and how their inadequacies led to the bad roads in Nigeria, he chose to name the government, hence exclude himself from the blame of taking responsibility. Preceding the name 'government' with a definite article makes it more exclusive. Hence, this choice signifies self-purification as part of politicians' ways of buying face.

Extracts 2

"Is it only senators and house of rep members that are using this?"

"Why are you guys picking on Nigerian representatives?"

The use of nouns italicized above shows the ideologies of Nigerian politicians about the citizens. In the first extract here, the senator claims indifferent status from the remaining wealthy Nigerians but unfortunately, labeled Nigerians as 'guys' in the second extract showing his class as one of the law makers. This is a clear

case of bias and insincerity. It connotes how political office holders expect the masses to abjure their incapability while honouring them for taking the position. Using rhetorical questions in the two extracts makes it clearer. As a rhetorical device, it paints the concern of the representatives to safeguard their names and how they feel bothered that Nigerians question their efficiency.

Extracts 3

"Before the coming of Buhari's government..."

"...but these days I drive to Gwoza from Maiduguri..."

"At one time, nobody was taking a position but Mr President has now taken a position."

"Fortunately, this president is responsive."

Politicians are logical in attacking opposition parties and this is well done here. Naming Buhari's government is strategic and intentional by the senator to show how the past PDP government could not ensure security in the state. To make this clear, extending temporal conjunction 'before' is used. The second datum here gives names of high insecurity areas' names with a sense of comfort to illustrate the effectiveness of the strategies the government put in place to ensure the safety of the people. As the region of Boko Haram, Maiduguri has been symbolised as a deathtrap for Nigerians. Relating a hitch-free driving between the locations implied the safety restored in the locations. Datum three has elements of naming and describing with the use of

'nobody' and 'Mr President'. The use of 'nobody' implies the past administration before Tinubu. Describing the government (President Buhari) as nobody shows his rejection of the government. This is understandable because during Buhari's tenure, Ndume was alleged of conniving with the terrorists which almost claimed his life. Also, Buhari did not take any position with regards to the bandits since many claimed they were herdsmen. To make this strong, the speaker uses an indefinite reference to disparage the personality of the past president as irrelevant and attaches an address term, 'Mr' to the present president to demonstrate importance and respect. In datum four of this extract, the senator used 'this president', meaning Tinubu to personalise him, claim him and project his personality to Nigerians. The use of demonstrative reference shows they belong to the same party and share the same vision and ideology.

Extract 4

"Not at night anyways because there are still small small black spots."

The naming of the hideout of the bandits here is euphemistic. Here, the speaker tries to curtail the severe tension of the dens of the criminals so that it won't sound frightening to the audience. The use of repetition in 'small small' also creates the impression of 'many' against the thought of total elimination of the gunmen from the region but it's done in a subtle manner.

6.2 Representing Actions/Events/States

Halliday's (1994) transitivity explains that the choice of verbs can connect or disconnect events, actions and state to different people. As such, the verbs chosen determine the role of the nominal categories in the clause. In political discourse, especially the one under analysis here, it is noticed that verbs are employed to change people's perceptions of things and manipulate them to the speakers' ideologies. This is well portrayed in the extracts below.

Extract 5

"Before coming to the national assembly, I have vehicles that are bigger than that..."

"In fact, the government cannot even have enough to work on those roads."

"It has worked."

In datum one above, the agent uses 'have' as a lexical verb and not auxiliary to mean 'own', 'acquire', 'possess' among other meanings to infer a standard living and dispel the sense of corruption in the minds of Nigerians. To enhance the effect, comparison is set into play. 'Than', a comparative reference, is used to castigate the effectiveness of the huge amount used in purchasing new cars for the representatives to shift attention to his personal wealth and strengthen the fact that his social stratification deserves the vehicles notwithstanding the price. In datum two above, modality is used to denote inability of the government to give the citizens a good road. With the aid of adverbial 'even', emphasis is achieved to create the impression of helplessness by the government.

These are used to achieve bias and manipulate the thoughts of Nigerians on the government activities.

Extracts 6

"To me, I repeat, I have said it severally..."

"To me, I repeat, to me if we have to..."

"I am straight."

"I will continue to recruit more police, train them effectively and deploy..."

The data in these extracts are basically used for self-assertion, conviction and pride. Using these verbs with first person personal pronouns 'I' and 'my' by Ndume, they are employed to express personal views and opinions, showing a sense of dignity, responsibility and personal commitment as a state head, as well as informing Nigerians of his capacity as a leader and the need to trust him. It is in line with Karapetjana (2011) who argued that most of the politicians who have been familiar with the communication strategies and communication techniques, tend to adopt personal pronouns 'I' and 'my' for statements regarding loyalty, integrity, commitment, views and their personal perceptions.

6.3 Implying and Assuming

The term presupposition refers to assumptions that are built into the text. While they are frequently considered semantic rather than pragmatic, they remain ambiguous because they are not stored directly by the text but serve as the foundation upon which it is formed (Jeffries, 2010). It is the core concept of the third toolkit of implying and assuming. Iterative words are used to



trigger logical presuppositions, where some earlier or later occurrence of the process is assumed:

Extracts 7

"If I travel to my constituency now, by the time I go two or three times... you know Nigerian roads..."

"If you look at Nigerian roads all over the federation, we have much problems because nothing much has been done in the last few years. Most of our roads are verily bad."

Aside from the fact that the extracts above are largely rhetorical, they commit the message of implications. For instance, the necessity to purchase expensive vehicles for representatives is built on the assumption that the roads are bad. Thus, argue for the need which implies justification of action. The same thing happens when the same senator claims that he should not be held responsible for bad roads in his constituency since all roads in Nigeria are bad. These are used to indirectly sell ideas of being stainless to Nigerians even when at fault.

Extracts 8

"In the budget of 28trillion, how much is going to security and welfare?"

"The people I represent, do they have police?"

"And also, let us be optimistic and not this pessimistic attitude that we have."

Unlike the first extracts that use presuppositions to completely imply efficiency, extracts two above does not completely dispel the inefficiency of the government. Using rhetorical question, Ndume challenges the

government inability to put in necessary measures to ensure security and welfare of the citizens. However, his persuasive lines in extract three shows he lacks the keen understanding of what makes Nigerians cry. By implication, he believes Nigerians are pessimistic about the betterment of the nation and that is why they cry out without taking into consideration the pains of the victims.

6.4 Presenting Others' Speech and Thoughts

Two ways are used to achieve this and they are the direct and indirect speech. When a person is directly quoted, interpretation is left to the audience to define and the person quoting could be judged as well. Unlike when someone is indirectly quoted, there could be bias and insincerity, in fact, manipulation could ensue. In this programmes, indirect quotations are used. They are:

Extracts 9

"You are talking about money, money, money, that's where the problem is."

"They said, where are we going to train them?"

Positioning of people's speech and thought here is quite manipulative. Soldiers were commanded to train new recruits but they requested for enough resources which brought up the question of the location to train them. Here, it is not about their inability but inefficiency of the government in securing the citizens. With the use of repetition as a rhetorical device, the speakers are trying to convince the masses that

there is no money to cater for the needs of the people.

6.5 Representing Space

In a text, deixis enables a writer to come up with a point of reference that makes readers locate themselves mentally in a context provided by the text as noted by Jeffries (2010). Deixis is a process of employing general words and expressions such as 'tomorrow,' 'there,' and 'they' are used as a pointer to signal a particular time, place or person respectively. These are the words that do not change their semantic meaning while their referents change with time and space.

Extracts 10

"Why don't you train them in all these NYSC camps?"

"But they are going to 10 thousand too."

"Many of it is going to things that are not important."

The lexical items, 'them' and 'they' in the first two data above are person deixis. While 'them' is used to reference the soldiers, they is used to reference both the soldiers and the police. However, in datum three, 'it' is used to reference money (budget). Besides, it noticed that in two above, number game is used to influence people's perceptions about the interest of the government in ensuring security of the citizens.

6.6 Negating

Negating has significant ideological influences that are rarely noticed. Through negating, a speaker can elude the audience and create imaginative circumstances so to win

them to his argument. In this text, it is used to faint ignorance, defect from answering a question or change the topic completely.

Extract 11

"I don't even know the figure."

"We have not gotten there yet."

"Our security agencies are not motivated and not well armed."

"Not at night anyways because there are still small small black spots."

In the above extracts, the use of negation influenced a lot of bias and manipulation. How is it possible to forget the figure of the money you receive if not being cunning? The senator tries to deviate from the question while trying to save his face. In the second and third data above, the speaker is stern and clear on the need to empower the security of the state. This shows his concern for the victims among the military personal and the citizens. The last extract dispels the belief of total eradication of criminals in the state. This shows a tactical way of saying "we have not won the war."

Findings and Conclusion

The above analysed data have significantly showcased different ways politicians use language to promote their ideologies. Through naming, political agendas were passed; in representing actions and events, bias was ensue; implying and assuming, Nigerians are manipulated and faulted; presenting others' speech and thought, self pride and prejudice were presented; representing space, favouring the security was seen and in negating, bias, manipulation and sympathy



were well encoded. Hence, political discourse is not always free of ideologies however little and this is done using many linguistic tools like rhetorical devices, linking devices among other linguistic tools.

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