

“Emi lokan, Yoruba lokan”: expression of ideologies in Bola Tinubu’s political speech

Matthew Ige¹

¹Department of English, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

*Correspondence: m.doyin@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Beyond the traditional import of language which is for communicative purpose and information sharing, its usefulness cuts across other strands such as for expression of one ideology or others, representation and identification of self and other social groups among others, especially within the political context. Previous linguistic studies on political discourse with emphasis on (intra party) electioneering campaign speeches have invested on the nexus between language and politics. Such studies, however, have not exteriorised expressions of ideologies in Emi lokan, Yoruba lokan campaign slogan of Bola Tinubu in the build-up to 2023 Nigeria’s presidential election. This study, consequently, studies the differing ideologies expressed in the Emi lokan, Yoruba lokan speech made by the All Progressive Congress’ presidential aspirant in the build-to the party’s 2023 presidential primary election. The data for the study is audio-visual of the speech obtained from the YouTube platform, which was rendered in the mixture of English and Yoruba languages, given the nature of the audience where the speech was made. The translated video was transcribed into MS Word. The selected excerpts were subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis, borrowing insight from van Dijk’s (2006) socio-cognitive model. The findings reveal that supremacist, collectivist, welfarist and ethnocentric ideologies are embedded in Bola Tinubu’s emi lokan slogan/speech which are indexed through certain discursive moves.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Published September 23th 2023



KEYWORDS

Bola Tinubu; CDA; *Emi lokan*; Ideologies; Political Speech; *Yoruba Lokan*.

ARTICLE LICENCE

© 2023 Universitas Hasanuddin
Under the license CC BY-SA
4.0



1. Introduction

Beyond the traditional import of language which is for communicative purpose and information sharing, its usefulness cuts across other strands such as for expression of one ideology or others, representation and identification of self and other social groups among others, particularly within the political context. This view was earlier observed by Gee (2001, p. 1) who, in his argument against the general misconception about the notion of one-way performative function of language, which was for communicative purpose (and information sharing), sees language as having functions such as (1) “to scaffold the performance of social activities” and (2) “to scaffold human affiliations within cultures and social groups”. This view about the function of language as noted above situates language within its social relevance; that is, how it is used by people of a particular socio-cultural group and, by extension, political group.

Political speeches are talks that border on social, economic or political issues and are delivered by government officials and their agents or by candidates contesting political posts in a given forum. The major purposes of political speeches include but not limited to informing, convincing, confusing of the opposition party, the general public or the electorates on matters of public concerns (Obiora et al., 2021). As such, political speeches are laden with persuasion, exhibition of power, ideology, emotion, and excitement with the intention to achieving a goal.

Expressions of ideologies are integral parts of political activities just as language is an intrinsic part of politics. A speech delivered by any political actor will arguably be laden with the ideological idiosyncrasy of such a politician, particularly as it has been established by scholars the closely knitted relationship between ideology and discourse, that is, spoken or written communication. This discourse (language use in text and talk)--ideology nexus, sees the former as the domain for the acquisition, exhibition, reproduction and enactment of ideologies (van Dijk, 2006, p. 124). In other words, apart from the aims of political speech in the context of electioneering campaign which is to persuade, sell their views and reshape the views of the electorate (Olorunsogo & Ige, 2022); the speeches are equally replete with ideological beliefs of such political actor delivering the speech (Ezeife & Igwebuike, 2010).

This study is motivated by the pattern and significance of language use in political slogans in any electioneering campaign process. Political slogans are often largely rhetorical and persuasive in nature, where the individual or large group of people relays their collective ideas or opinions with the sole intent to motivate and inspire the electorate (Newsome, 2002). It is in the light of the persuasive and ideological propensity of slogans that this present study studies the Emi Lokan, Yoruba Lokan political speech of the All Progressive presidential candidate, Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the wake of Nigeria's 2023 presidential election.

3.1. Emi Lokan, Yoruba Lokan speech

Emi Lokan, Yoruba Lokan is the electioneering campaign slogan coined by the former governor of Lagos State, Nigeria who also doubled as the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) presidential aspirant in the February 25, 2023 general election in Nigeria. The campaign catchphrase, Emi Lokan, which is loosely translated "It is my turn" (to become the president), formed the theme of the speech he delivered at the town hall meeting he had with the APC members and stakeholders in Abeokuta, Nigeria ahead of the party's presidential primary election.

At the town hall meeting, he informed his audience, among other issues, by highlighting his role on how the APC as a party was formed which led to the defeat of the former incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria by General Muhammadu Buhari. In addition, he boasts about how, without his support, President Buhari would not have emerged the winner in the 2015 presidential after his three failed attempts. The same narrative was also relayed about the incumbent governor of Ogun State, Mr. Dapo Abiodun. Furthermore, he reiterated his selflessness and political sagacity, which has informed how he raised a army of political protégés, conceding his vice presidential ambition when he had the opportunity to become the running to Muhammadu Buhari to another candidate.

All of these historical facts and his political profile (in)formed the basis of the Emi lokan slogan in his political speech, which is his turn to become the president of Nigeria.

The study of political discourse affords one the space to interrogate how language works within the political milieu. Extant studies on political discourse in general and political (campaign) speeches in particular have paid attention to campaign speeches from the aspects of stylistics (Omozuwa & Ezejideaku, 2010) metaphor (Kamalu & Iniworikabo, 2016), lexical features (Mwiinga, 2019), rhetoric (DiS, 2021) critical discourse analysis (Olorunsogo & Ige, 2022), stance and engagement (Amale et al., 2023). The above studies have not sufficiently explored the area of electioneering campaign slogans, particularly emi lokan campaign slogan. The existing linguistics ones on campaign slogans such as Ezeife & Igwebuika (2010), Obisesan & Ibrahim (2021) and Olorunsogo & Ige (2022), (Rahman & Weda, 2019) have not paid attention to the Emi lokan campaign slogan/speech by the All Progressive Congress presidential aspirant.

1.2. Literature Review

Campaign speeches, particularly slogans, are crucial to any electoral processes. This study is therefore domiciled within the empirical studies that have been carried out in the area of political speeches.

Olorunsogo and Ige (2022) studied the significance of the All Progressive Congress' O to ge slogan/rhetoric in the Kwara state 2019 governorship electioneering campaign to end the hegemony of the Saraki dynasty in the state. Using the van Dijk's (2006) approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA), they submit that the negative representation and polarisation of "others" (the Peoples Democratic Party) formed the basis of the O to ge campaign catchphrase which was achieved through certain discursive moves. While this study is relevant to this present study on the import of slogan in electioneering campaign speeches, the scope of the study was however limited to Kwara state while the present study considers the Emi lokan campaign catchphrase of Bola Tinubu that swept through the whole of the Nigeria ahead of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.

Similarly, Obisesan and Ibrahim (2021) explore how ideologies and identities were constructed through the campaign slogans of select 2019 presidential candidates. Borrowing insight from van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of CDA, the study observed that the candidates and their parties ideologically positioned themselves through the slogans as the most credible as against their opponents. While the study is relevant to the present study it term of its consideration of campaign slogans, the scope of the data differs, as this present study focuses on 2023 presidential election slogan of APC, emi lokan.

In the same vein, Amale et al., (2023) examine the various stances embedded in the declaration speeches of select presidential aspirants in the build-up to 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Adopting the hybrid of qualitative and quantitative research designs, the study reveals that self-mention as one of the stance and engagement markers has the

highest number of frequency use. Furthermore, the observed stances in the declaration speeches collected ranges from winning the presidential election is about battle, antecedents and the experience of the aspirants, as well as someone who understands the plight of the masses. The focus of this study is on stance taken by the various presidential aspirants as manifested in their declaration speeches while the present study centers on ideologies encoded in emi lokan campaign slogan.

Ezeife and Igwebuika (2010) carry out a sociolinguistic study of political slogans with a view to understanding the political situation in relation to electioneering process in Nigeria. Specifically, they examine the patterns and the import of political slogans as employed in the Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* in portraying the socio-political activities as related to the Nigerian context. With insight from Dell Hymes' *Ethnography of Communication* as theoretical anchorage to the study, the findings reveal that political slogans as used in the text perform bidirectional function, which are to cajole, satirise, ridicule and to mock the political class, on the one hand, and; how politicians use them to persuade and coax the masses. This literature is relevant to the present study in terms of its consideration of persuasive nature of slogans as used by politicians in gaining the acceptance of the electorate. However, the present study fills the ideological nature of political slogans that was ignored by this literature.

Oyeleye and Osisanwo (2013) argue about the role ideologies play during electioneering period and, such, examine the role media plays in displaying their ideological leanings in their news reportage of 2003 and 2007 general election in Nigeria. It was observed that the discourse patterns where the social actors in the election were reported in the cover stories of TELL and The News were not ideologically neutral. While this study is quite useful to the present study in terms of the expression of ideologies as related to election, the focus of this study is not on the media ideology rather the underlying ideologies expressed in the emi lokan slogan.

On inaugural speech, Sharndam (2015) carried out a study on the inaugural speech of President Muhammadu Buhari. The study found that inaugural speeches are laden with messages delivered to masses by a political actor, which unveil the hope in and the plan as well as the aspiration of the new government. While this study focuses on the already sworn in president, the present study focuses on the speech made by a presidential aspirant.

The above reviewed literature have focused on political speeches, paying attention to the phenomenon from different linguistic angles. However, there seems to be need to expand knowledge on studies as related to electioneering campaign speeches, particularly as related to campaign slogan. This study therefore sets out to explore the underlying ideologies in the emi lokan, Yoruba lokan campaign slogan of the APC presidential aspirant.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

In achieving the aim of this research, this study relies on the socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as proposed by Teun van Dijk, one of the leading figures in the critical study of discourse, with specific emphasis on the study of ideology as domiciled in text and talk. Although there are number of approaches to the study of CDA, the van Dijk's (2006) socio-cognitive model is adopted particularly owing to its emphasis on political discourse, which forms the focus of this study.

According to van Dijk (2006), ideologies are viewed from multidisciplinary point of view that combines the triangulation of cognition, discourse and society; the three-fold cord that informs his socio-cognitive approach to the study of CDA. He proposes the organic interface of discourse and ideology. In other words, the domain of ideology is discourse, that is, any text and talk. He argues that ideologies are acquired, produced, reproduced, and enacted through text and talk.

van Dijk's (2006) framework is stratified into two main discursive strategies of macro-semantic strategy of in-group favouritism, which is positive-self representation and macro-semantic strategy of out-group denigration, which is negative-other representation. These are then in turn indexed through certain discursive strategies.

2. Methodology

The data adopted for this research was qualitative in nature. The audio-visual of the emi lokan speech made in an APC stakeholder town hall meeting in Abeokuta, Nigeria formed the data for the study. It was downloaded from the YouTube platform and transcribed into an MS Word. The speech was made in 2022 prior to 2023 general election. The choice of YouTube as source of data collection was informed by the fact that the platform serves as repository for campaign videos and no ethical approval was required as every content there was open to public consumption.

3. Result and Discussion

In the emi lokan speech given by the All Progressive Congress' (APC) presidential aspirant in the 2023 general election in Nigeria, there are varying underlying ideologies in the speech as signaled by specific linguistic choices in the speech. These ideologies are then projected through certain discursive moves such as actor description, self-glorification, implication, categorisation, evidentiality, example/illustration, number game, presupposition, polarisation and "us/them". The identified ideologies through which the above-mentioned discursive moves are projected are ethnocentric ideology, collectivist ideology, supremacist ideology and welfarist ideology.

3.1. Supremacist Ideology

Supremacism is viewed within the conceptualisation of superiority, which is the belief that a group of people, individuals, race, class, gender, religion and so on believes that they are superior to others. It is a way in which they arrogate power to themselves and this is manifested in self-boasting and positioning in a way that creates a dichotomised power relation. This type of ideology is often used by politicians, political parties or their agents to show their superiority over others. Bola Tinubu's emi lokan speech is laden with supremacist ideology to show his numerous exploits in his political career; this was done through different instances where he has had to support a candidate or a politician to resist their political oppressor. This is evident in the excerpts below:

Excerpt 1

Buhari asked me to be his vice (president). He said because the first time

he contested, he picked Okadigbo, flamboyant, faaji-loving Catholic, but Nigerians didn't vote for him. The second time, he picked another Igbo, Ume-Ezeoke; Nigerians didn't vote for him. He then said if he should bring the Pope from Rome to run as his running mate, Nigerians would still not vote for him. **But YOU, with six governors, never lost an election before, come and be my vice (president).**

Excerpt 2

When Atiku was being politically oppressed in his party (PDP) by Obasanjo, it was me he ran to for help, it is my turn! He (Obasanjo) did the same thing to Nuhu Ribadu, I backed Nuhu and fielded him (presidential candidate).

Excerpt 3

If not for my support for Buhari that said "Okay Buhari, I am behind you," he would never have become the president. He attempted becoming the president the first time, he failed; he tried the second time, he failed, and he also the time. He even wept on national TV and vowed never to contest again. But I met with him in Kaduna and told him that it wasn't about crying but to try again, that with my support, you would win.

Excerpt 4

Even this one seated behind me, Dapo (Abiodun), can he say he could become the Governor without me? Were we not together at the stadium when he was being intimidated? His posters were torn. I personally handed the party flag to him because they didn't want to give him. He knows that he couldn't emerge governor without the help of God and my support.

In the excerpts 1-4 respectively, Bola Tinubi acknowledges his political supremacy and astuteness and thus signals, his supremacist ideology in order to convince his audience that he was the right and best candidate to become the president. In excerpt 1, the supremacist ideology is indexed through the discursive moves actor description, evidentiality and self-glorification, when he recalls an instance where the presidential aspirant Muhammadu Buhari having failed several times in his attempt to become the president acknowledged the fact that he had never lost any election and so he should be his running mate. Similarly in excerpt 2, through the discursive strategy evidentiality and

self-glorification, supremacist ideology is also indexed with reference to how he saved the former Vice President Atiku Abubakar when he was being politically oppressed by his former superior Olusegun Obasanjo in PDP. The same is also said of Nuhu Ribadu. The expression “it was me he ran to” and “I backed Nuhu Ribadu and fielded him (as presidential aspirant) are not ideologically neutral, particularly through the uses of subjective and objective cases of first person pronoun I and me. As noted by Oyeleye and Osisanwo (2013), pronouns are significant in discursive strategies to index ideology. Here, the pronouns as used project supremacist ideology of Bola Tinubu. This is also the case in excerpts 3 and 4.

3.2. Ethnocentric Ideology

Ethnocentric ideology is concerned with the attitude of superiority of one’s own cultural or ethnic group above any other consideration or sentiments. As captured in the speech, Tinubu used it to show his belief in the course of Yoruba nation in being at centre of power even at the expense of his own political ambition. The projection of this ideology was perhaps to front himself as pan-Yoruba, one who would rather allow a Yoruba to become the president than to concede it to another ethnic group. The reference to this instance was to give credence to his candidature. This is evident in excerpts 5 and 6 below:

Excerpt 5

I said that Yoruba must be at the corridor of power, that was why I made my decision of nominating Osinbajo, a Yoruba. We are still in good terms.

Excerpt 6

I met with him (Buhari) in Kaduna and told him it wasn’t about crying but to try

Again, that with my support, you would win, **only that you must not joke with Yoruba nation.**

As seen in the excerpts 5 and 6 above, ethnocentric ideology is evident through the expression “I said that Yoruba must be at the corridor of power” and “only that you must not joke with

Yoruba nation”, which is also suggestive of “us” versus “them” discursive polarisation. Ordinarily, ethnocentrism is hinged on the ethnic superiority and promotion above any other ones. Curiously, this is perhaps another card played by Tinubu to appeal to the ethnic sentiment in his audience in winning their votes. Given that the gathering is a political one and equally pre-election period, Bola Tinubu resulted to ethnocentric card to arouse sense of ethnicity in his audience. This perhaps lends credence to earlier submission made by Berlin (2020) that ability to employ the instrumentation of language by any politician is not enough but the “how” is also significant.

3.3. Welfarist Ideology

Welfarism is a belief or an idea about the promotion of the good and well-being of individuals, which ultimately translates to the good of the society as a whole. In this context, the welfarist ideological posture of Tinubu is precipitated on political godfatherism and capital, where he has raised a lot protégés, with the view to engendering his political prowess. This is used to justify his position that it is his turn to become the president since he has been sacrificial in raising political protégés, defending the politically oppressed and persecuted as well as giving up his mandate to other candidates when he had the opportunity to do so. In addition, the welfarist ideology can also be explained in the light of his ability to provide political cover and succor, especially to the politically persecuted one.

Excerpt 7

When Atiku was being politically oppressed in his party (PDP) by Obasanjo, it was me he ran to for help, it is my turn! He (Obasanjo) did the same thing to Nuhu Ribadu, I backed Nuhu and fielded him (presidential candidate). **It’s been over 25 years since I’ve been serving them.** Even this one behind me, can he say he could become the governor without me?

There is an instance of welfarist ideology in this excerpt 7 and this is achieved through discursive moves self-glorification, illustration, implication, actor description, presupposition and the polarisation of “us” versus “them” representation. Tinubu is boastful here of how he saved Atiku and Nuhu Ribadu from being persecuted by the former

President Olusegun Obasanjo, which is an instance of self-glorification of his formidable political power. Very importantly, this is an instance of “us” versus “them” of positive-self representation of himself as a strong politician while the Atiku (Abubakar) and Nuhu Ribadu are presupposed to be weak ones. Furthermore, the instance of welfarist nature of Tinubu is further foregrounded when he says, “It’s been over 25 years I’ve been serving them”. This is also an instance of positive-self representation, where our/his good is deed is emphasised as seen in the excerpt. Another discursive strategy noticeable here is implication. The implication of “It’s been over 25 years I’ve been serving them” is that, the two politicians are at the mercy of Bola Tinubu, to provide shelter and help for them, politically.

3.4. Collectivist Ideology

Collectivism centres on the principle that the interest of a group is prioritised above the interest or ambition of an individual within that group. The belief in this ideology is a form of loyalty to the course of the party as expressed by Tinubu in the speech to reveal how he once placed the interest of the party above his personal ambition. This is because, if he were to insist on becoming the running to a Muslim presidential aspirant knowing that he is one also, chances are that the party might collapse at the time.

8) Excerpt 8

Excerpt 8

So, I told them and said, “Look, someone who is a Christian that I can nominate, so that this party is not destroyed, and we must not fail.”

Here, Tinubu shows his commitment and loyalty to the good and interest of the party above his own personal ambition, which then made him to give up his vice presidential slot to a Christian. The reference to this by him is strategic, as this act of sportmanship will ultimately appeal to the sense of reasoning of the audience, which will make them vote for him. This is achieved through the discursive means evidentiality and positive-self representation, where his good deed is emphasised and silent about their own good deeds.

4. Conclusion

So far, this study has considered the emi lokan slogan of the APC presidential aspirant, with the study situated within the political discourse. It has further expounded the interface between language and politics, as well as the triangular relationship of politics, language and ideology. Specifically, language use in discourse situation, particularly by political actors, are not ideologically neutral. As it has been established, ideologies are acquired, spread, produced, reproduced and enacted through text and talk. These ideologies are in turn enacted exhibited through discursive strategies.

In this paper, the emi lokan slogan of Bola Tinubu, the All Progressive Congress presidential candidate, that forms the data for the study, is ideologically loaded with differing ideologies which are also indexed through varying discursive moves. The most prominent ideology found in the speech is supremacist ideology, which is marked by boastful expression, in the form of discursive move, self-glorification.

References

- Amale, F. A., Ige, M., & Muopshin, J. (2022). Stance Taking in Some 2023 Presidential Aspirants’ Declaration Speeches. *Vejuh-Veritas Journal of Humanities*, 4(1 & 2).
- Berlin, L.N. (2020). (ed.) Introduction. In *Positioning and Stance in Political Discourse: The individual, the party, and the party line*, Berlin Lawrence N. (ed.). P.vii. Vernon Press: USA.
- DiS, J. V. (2021). *Persuasive strategies in political speech: a contrastive analysis of Barrack Obama’s and Donald Trump’s electoral speeches*. Diploma Thesis. Department of English Language and Literature. Masaryk University. Czech Republic.
- Ezeife, A., & Igwebuikwe, E. (2010). Political slogans in Achebe’s A man of the people. *Studies in Slang and Slogans (LINCOS Studies in Pragmatics)*, 18(1), 299-309.
- Gee, J. P. (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. routledge.
- Kamalu, I., & Iniworikabo, P. B. (2016). Metaphors in selected political speeches of Nigerian democratic presidents. *California Linguistic Notes*, 40(2), 71-84.

- Mwiinga, C. (2019). A discursive analysis of the 2016 election campaign discourse in Zambia. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 139-146.
- Newsome, C. (2002). The use of slogans in political rhetoric. *The Corinthian*, 4(1), 3.
- Obiora, H. C., Aboh, S. C., & Dioka, B. O. (2021). Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Nigerian Political Hate Speeches. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 12(3), 494-500.
- Obisesan, K.A. and Ibrahim, S. (2021). Construction of identities and ideologies in campaign slogans of selected 2019 presidential candidates in Nigeria. *Voices: A Journal of English Studies*, 5, 144-157.
- Olorunsogo, D., & Ige, M. O. (2022). Other Representations in Politics: 'O To Ge'Rhetoric in Nigeria's Election Campaigns. *Journal of Humanistic and Social Studies*, 13(2), 149-162.
- Omozuwa, V. E., & Ezejideaku, E. U. C. (2008). A stylistic analysis of the language of political campaigns in Nigeria: Evidence from the 2007 general elections. *OGIRISI: a New Journal of African Studies*, 5, 40-54.
- Oyeleye, L. and Osisanwo A. (2013). Expressions of ideologies in media accounts of 2003 and 2007 general elections in Nigeria. *Discourse and Society*, 24(6), 763-773.
- Rahman, F., & Weda, S. (2019). Linguistic deviation and the rhetoric figures in Shakespeare's selected plays. *XLanguage" European Scientific Language Journal"*, 12(1), 37-52.
- Sharndam, E.C. (2015). Political discourse: a critical discourse analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's inaugural speech. *European Journal of English Language and Linguistic Research*, 3, 9-21.
- van Dijk, T. (2006). Ideology and discourse analysis. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11(2), 115-140.