



ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND THE ACQUISITION OF POLITICAL POWER IN NIGERIA: THE 2015 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

Language and politics contract a special relationship; language is specific to man and so is politics which man uses to control and dominate his environment. Language has always been a significant factor in Nigerian politics because of its role in critical domains of politics like electioneering campaigns. Language is an instrument used to shape or influence political institutions such as the legislature. The executive as well as the judiciary which are also very important political institutions have benefitted greatly from the inputs of language. Consequently this paper was premised on the assumption that language, particularly, English played a significant role in the acquisition of political power in Nigeria. This is against the backdrop of the victory of the opposition party in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. The corpus generated for this study consisted of excerpts from the media exchange between the spokespersons of the two dominant political parties at the time of the elections in 2015; Olisa Metuh of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Lai Mohammed of the All Progressive Party (APC). The excerpts were analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a research tool. The findings revealed that although language, particularly English played a significant role in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria, such role did not significantly affect the outcome of the election.

Keywords: language, politics, power, manipulation, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

1. Introduction

A strong bond exists between language and politics. Aristotle amplifies this relationship when he asserts that "*Man is by nature a political animal*" (cited in Joseph, 1). Aristotle's contention is indicative of the fact that politics is specie specific to man and so is speech which is expressed through language. Therefore, language is a very powerful and influential instrument for man. It is the tool with which he responds to his environment and shapes it in a manner that benefits him. It is in the light of this that Halliday (14) describes language as "*synonymous with man's quest for self and group affirmation*" while Adekunle describes it as a "*mystery*". In his words, "*the*

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mystification characteristics of language has drawn many people with different academic and scientific backgrounds as well as experts with varying technological knowhow into the arena of linguistics research" (239).

Politics relates to power and its acquisition, and one of the many ways through which power is acquired is democracy. Democracy generally is a concept which views the people as the fulcrum or pivot of its operations. In an ideal democracy, power resides with the people; the power to choose their representatives or leaders who in turn will be subordinating to them. Therefore if the people are to judiciously exercise their powers in democracy, they need a deeper understanding of what it entails. It is perhaps on this account that Oluwole (420) avers that *"democracy adequately understood is a theory that sets some basic principles according to which a good government, whatever its form must run"*. Oluwole's position is a clear indication that although democracy is anchored on the people, the people themselves must have a clear understanding of its values and operations. This cannot be achieved without the cooperation of language and that has made language an essential or inseparable component of democracy. It is perhaps in the light of this assertion that Habermas cited by Hague and Harrop (105) describe democracy as *"...a forum of communication in which citizens inform, educate and become reconciled to each other in the process of reaching collective agreement"*.

The concepts of democracy highlighted above do not only show the link between language and politics but also justifies Aristotle's argument that *"man is a political animal"*. The position which Joseph takes further by his claim that, *"man is a political animal but some take it to extreme by becoming politicians"* (11). This position illustrates or distinguishes two levels of involvement of man in politics; active and passive. Passive on account that politics is innate or species-specific to man and active because some activate this innate tendency by becoming politicians. Politics is about the acquisition of power and politicians acquire power with the view to control resources; human and material. According to Marfo and Aminu (3), *"...politics provide a platform that enables veto-like decision making, control of resources and control of other people's behavior even to the extent of controlling their values"*. They further state that *"it is the desire for this power to control that makes politics and political power attractive to many, if not mankind in general"*. They add that *"it is this attraction that drives the desire to seek and to use the tool that enables the acquisition of political power"*. This tool according to Lamming (2002) is language.

Therefore if language is such an important component of politics, then how has it influenced, shaped or reinforced political events in Nigeria? This question becomes pertinent because Nigeria is a multilingual nation (where language issues are a potential source of conflict) and her democracy or politics is fraught with inconsistencies and therefore a far cry from ideal democracy (Ihua, 2008). While adducing reasons for the flaws in Nigeria politics or democracy, Dzugba (33) submits that *"Nigerian voters are illiterates and ignorant about political affairs"*. Again the influence of language on politics becomes manifest. This is because *"Language selection often relates to political goal functioning to create and reinforce boundaries in order to unify speakers as members of a single speech community and exclude outsiders from intra group communication"* (Saville-Troike, 12-13). This position is clarified and reinforced by Bamgbose (86) who maintains that *"language is a very powerful instrument of identification and classification; but... it can be manipulated for participation and exclusion"*. Oha (294) supports this argument

when he asserts that *“language ... has become not just a political weapon or instrument, but the real politics in the multilingual and multicultural Nigerian society”*. Arguing further, he states, *“in both cases, language enables the reconstruction of roles and spaces for individuals and groups, and is thus tied into processes of inclusion, exclusion...”* Consequently, language could serve the purpose of participation and exclusion in Nigeria but the question is what group or category of people suffers exclusion or marginalization from political process in Nigeria? In responding to this question, Oyelaran (20) states that, *“...the vast majority of Nigeria’s population is becoming increasingly marginalized, excluded ... from participation in the productive life of the nation”*. To clarify Oyelaran’s assumption, Bamgbose argued that the vast majority of Nigerians are excluded from participation because of their inability to access the language of politics/government which is English (2003, 2004, 2008 and 2011).

Therefore in attempting to define the appropriateness of language use within Nigeria’s political domain, the contentious debate between English and Nigeria’s indigenous languages will always recur. While some hold the view that the English language is an instrument of marginalization and exclusion (Bamgbose 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2008 & 2011; Emenanjo 1990; Elugbe 1990 Oyelaran 1980, 1983 & 1990 and Ker, 2002) others are of the view that English provides the basis for the sustainability of Nigeria’s democracy (Awonusi 1990 & 2004; Ominiya 2004; Orisawayi 2004 and Udofot 2010). However the focus of this study is not to explore or sustain this argument per se but to evaluate the actors in the 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria with the view to determining the role relationship amongst them and establish the place of language, especially English in the dethronement of the ruling party. This is particularly of interest because it is the first time in the political history of Nigeria that an opposition party defeated an incumbent President/ ruling party in a Presidential election.

In attempting to establish the important role that language plays in the acquisition of power in Nigeria, particularly in the 2015 Presidential election, this paper focuses on the political actors and the role relationship among them and how language especially English shaped or influenced such roles. In defining the actors, it is imperative to restate both Aristotle’s and Joseph’s claim that *“man is a political animal”* and *“some take it to extreme by becoming politicians”*. From these claims, the political actors in Nigeria can be classified into two categories belonging to two extreme poles. The first pole (Pole 1) has the politicians while the second pole (pole 2) has the populist.

The Politicians (in pole 1) refer to the political class; they constitute all Nigerians who seek or and have acquired political power and influence. In Nigeria, the political class is considered to be a dominating and exploitative class. In the words of Oha (295), *“...what we have in Nigeria at the moment appears simply to be the manipulation and exploitation of linguistic differences in the process of securing political power”*. He also maintains that *“...whereas democratic politics promises the protection of individual and group rights, political manipulation on the part of those who win power ... does not allow for the realization of such democratic goals”*. The politician also maximizes the influence of English as the language of political expression in Nigeria to further exclude majority of Nigerians who are unable to use English (Bamgbose, 2003, 2004, 2008 and 2011).

The Populist (in pole 2) constitutes the general public. In this group (pole 2) is both the literate and illiterate population. The literate group constitutes a critical group in Nigeria's democracy because on one hand they could serve as a bridge between the illiterate group and the politicians to influence votes and policies and on the other hand they could align with the illiterate group to undermine the politicians. In the same vein, they could also align with the politicians to undermine the illiterate group and by extension, the entire nation. The source of power for the literate group is their access to both the language of political expression (English) and general language of access (indigenous languages) for the illiterate population. This access allows them further access to the politicians and their activities as well as the illiterate group. Therefore on the strength of their linguistics influence, it remains to be seen whether the literate group played a pivotal role in the outcome of the Presidential election in 2015.

Since the 2015 Presidential election is pivotal to this study, it is imperative to review the two dominant political parties that were at the heart of the election; the All Progressive Party (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

2. Synopsis of the All Progressive Congress (APC)

The All Progressives Congress (APC) metamorphosed into a political party on February 6 2013. The crystallization process began with the merger of some prominent political parties prior to the 2015 elections in Nigeria. The parties were, Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN); Congress for Progressive Change (CPC); All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and a faction of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). The announcement of the birth of the party was made by Tom Ikimi, the Chairman of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) merger committee who told journalists in Abuja that "*At no time in our life has radical change become more urgent*". And to meet the challenge of that change, we the following progressive political parties, namely, Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN); Congress for Progressive Change (CPC); All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and a faction of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) have resolved to merge forthwith and become the All Progressives Congress (APC). The party was granted the approval to become a political party by the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC; Nigeria's electoral umpire on July 31, 2013. Resulting from this approval, the operating licenses of the three merging parties (the ACN, CPC and ANPP) were withdrawn.

Shortly after the merger the new party was confronted by myriad of challenges. The first was its acronym, APC which was also claimed or adopted by two other political associations; African People's Congress and All Patriotic Citizens. No sooner was that resolved than the party became embroiled in a wave of defection. Prominent among those who defected from the party to the PDP were some of its pioneer members who played key roles in the merger or formation of the party. Among them were Tom Ikimi, Ibrahim Shekarau and Annie Okonkwo; all were Chairmen or their erstwhile parties' merger committees.

After these initial crises, the party was a beneficiary of massive defections from the PDP to it. The first set of political "heavy weights" to decamp were five serving PDP governors, Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State, Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso of Kano State, Aliyu Wamako of Sokoto State, Murtala Nyako of Adamawa State and Abdulfatah Ahmed of Kwara State. The

exit of these governors was followed by those of forty nine (49) legislators from the lower arm of parliament, the House of Representative. The defection brought the total number of APC legislators at the lower chambers to one hundred and seventy nine (179) as at January 25, 2015. With that number, APC secured the majority in the House; a situation which allowed its Speaker (Aminu Musa Tambuwal) the constitutional mandate to continue as the head of the lower Chamber following his defection from the PDP to the APC. Following on the heels of their colleagues from the Green Chambers (the House of Representative), eleven (11) Senators defected to the party from the PDP.

All of these defections placed the party at a strategic advantage in the buildup to the 2015 general elections where it performed creditably well (winning the Presidency, securing the majority in the federal parliament, both at the Senate and House of Representatives and securing majority of the governorship seat).

3. Synopsis of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)

The political association that metamorphosed into the political party known today as the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was initially known as G-18 which later transformed into G-38. The PDP became a registered political party in Nigeria in August 1998. Its membership was drawn from diverse professionals across the nation including retired military officers among who was Olusegun Obasanjo (who contested elections as a presidential candidate under its platform and won, becoming the first president of the fourth republic, in 1999). Apart from winning the presidency, the PDP also secured the majority in the federal parliament comprising the Senate and House of Representatives. At the states level it also performed creditably winning most of the gubernatorial seats and constituting the majority in states where they were governors.

If the performance of the PDP at the 1999 polls was impressive, then that of the 2003 elections was outstanding because it won the Presidency and more seat at the federal parliament and more gubernatorial seats. However, the elections were said to be fraught with irregularities, leading litigation on the part of those who lost. The PDP again won the Presidency in the 2007 elections and also had majority in parliament. However the circumstances of the victory were considered to be controversial owing to purported massive electoral fraud. Upon assuming office in May, 2007, President Yar'Adua admitted that the elections which brought him to power were flawed and promised to reform the electoral laws. However he did not live to fulfil his promise as he died midway into his term leaving his Vice, Goodluck Jonathan to become the acting President and latter President to complete Yar'Adua's tenure. Goodluck Jonathan himself contested elections in 2011 (under PDP) and won but his victory created a rift amongst party faithful as his emergence was said to be in breach of the party's rotational policy which favoured the north. Although the party consolidated its power base at the centre and across most states of the federation, it nonetheless was beset by myriad of crises due largely to what some consider as lack of internal democracy. In the build-up to the 2015 elections the crises deepened leading to mass defection from the PDP to the newly formed

party, the All Progressive Congress (APC). Perhaps the mass defections amongst other factors were responsible for the loss the PDP suffered at the polls in 2015.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the analytical tool for the analyses of its corpus and the approach of CDA adopted for this inquiry is that of van Dijk. van Dijk sees CDA as a type of discourse analytical research that primarily “*studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context*” (1998:352). He establishes some of the prominent notions in CDA to include among others, power, dominance, inequality, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, race, discrimination, and labels them macro level of analyses. However he asserts that the micro level of social order involves language use, discourse, verbal transaction and communication. Consequently, Critical Discourse Analysis attempts to bridge the gap between the micro and macro levels. In effect, power is rooted in manipulation as van Dijk (2006) asserts. He sees manipulation as not only involving power but its abuse, stressing that manipulation can involve the exercise of a form of influence over another by means of text. Van Dijk conceives manipulation to be “*a communicative and interactional practice in which a manipulator exercises control over other people, usually against their will or against their best interests*” (360). He further offered a triangulated approach to manipulation where he sees it “*as a form of social power abuse, cognitive mind control and discursive interaction*” (359). He further expounded this triangulated approach thus;

“Socially, manipulation is defined as illegitimate domination confirming social inequality. Cognitively, manipulation as mind control involves interference with process of understanding, formation of biased mental models and social representations such as knowledge and ideologies. Discursively, manipulation generally involves the usual forms and formats of ideological discourse such as emphasising Our good things and emphasising Their bad things”. (359).

In effect, text and talk control the minds of people and as a result discourse may influence the actions of people whether directly or indirectly by the means of persuasion and manipulation. Therefore political discourse is thought to manifest manipulation as politicians use it as a strategy or device to perpetuate domination, inequality and power. Consequently, van Dijk (2006) establishes certain attributes of manipulation which he applied to the analysis of Tony Blair’s address to the British Parliament in 2003, legitimising the war in Iraq. These features are already outlined in Chapter Three of this work and may not be repeated in this Chapter. These features provided the bases upon which the texts of the spokes persons of APC (Lai Mohammed) and PDP (Olisa Metuh) were analysed.

5. Methodology

The main objective of the study is to investigate the role of English in the acquisition of political power in Nigeria, particularly as it relates to the ascension to power of an opposition party in the 2015 Presidential polls. This is with the view to determining whether English played an influential role in such acquisition of power, especially that it is the first time an opposition party would defeat a sitting President and the ruling party. Therefore the corpus for this study consists of excerpts from the media exchange (press releases, statements and interviews) between the spokespersons of the two dominant political parties at time; Olisa Metuh of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Lai Mohammed of the All Progressive Party (APC). The choice of these individuals is informed by the fact that the two were constantly in the news, in the buildup to the 2015 general elections, defending the positions of their various parties as well as candidates. These excerpts are analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

5.1 Data Presentation and Analyses

This paper attempts to establish the relationship between language and politics and in doing that, the 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria is used as the reference point. Consequently, excerpts of the media exchanges between the spokespersons of the two dominant political parties, Olisa Metuh of the PDP and Lai Mohammed of the APC were extracted for analysis using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The excerpts highlighted below are examined for manipulation which is the hallmark of politics according to Orwellian perspective. The excerpts for this paper are taken from *The Daily Trust* and *The Nation Newspaper*. The excerpts are labeled Texts 1 – 4.

Text 1: Olisa Metuh

Subject Matter: Stop insulting Jonathan, PDP tells APC

Source: Daily Trust, Tuesday, May 24, 2014

1. *“the National Chairman and the National Working Committee of the PDP find it*
2. *very disturbing that the APC leadership made up of elderly persons who ordinarily*
3. *should have a sense of self-respect and decorum, could condescend so low and resort to*
4. *use of uncouth language against the office and person of the President out of sheer*
5. *frustration, bitterness and envy. They have continued to show themselves as extremely*
6. *unpatriotic elements blinded by narrow pursuit of power for very ignoble reasons for*
7. *which they have contracted foreigners to undermine the government of their own nation*
8. *using negative paid write-ups and advertorials to dish out lies and vituperations against*
9. *the Federal Government ... by constantly criticising every strategy adopted by the*
10. *President in the war against terrorism, the APC has not only confirmed its preference for*
11. *insurgency but also exposed its underlining design to distract the government and*
12. *frustrate the overall anti-terrorism effort. Let it be known to the APC that power belongs*
13. *only to God and that those who denigrate and disrespect authority at any level will never*
14. *be entrusted with it.”*

Analysis 1

The press statement was released by Olisa Metuh, the Publicity Secretary of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on May 24, 2014, following what the party perceived as an unrelenting attack on the President who was also the PDP's Presidential candidate. The opposition APC had launched sustained media attack against the President, accusing it of underperforming in all spheres of national life- from the economy to security and the issue of corruption amongst others.

Metuh begins the press statement by referring to the National Chairman and the National Working Committee of the PDP; the two most powerful organs of the party. The reference to these powerful organs of the party suggests that Metuh is pledging his unalloyed loyalty to the party and its organs with the overall implication of preserving his position as the National Publicity Secretary of his Party, a manipulative effect of self-preservation and by extension, positive-presentation. The reference to these powerful organs of the party also suggests that Metuh is emphasising his power, authority and legitimacy to make the release which is a manipulative strategy of positive self-presentation.

Another manipulative strategy employed in this text is that of negative other presentation where Metuh in lines 1-4 admits that the PDP finds it *"very disturbing that the APC leadership made up of elderly persons who ordinarily should have a sense of self-respect and decorum, could condescend so low and resort to use of uncouth language"*. This suggests that the APC leadership though made up of elderly people are irresponsible, a situation which smears their image as well as that of the party. The strategy is to attack the personality of the party hierarchy with the view to cause public rejection. This manipulative strategy of negative other representation continued with Metuh in line 4 suggesting that the leadership of the APC is made up of individuals who are frustrated, bitter and envious; the reason behind their verbal attack against a sitting President. This move is further sustained by another ideological move, namely that of patriotism when he (Metuh) describes the APC leadership as *"extremely unpatriotic elements"* by casting aspersion on a sitting President using foreigners to undermine the government of their nation. Similarly, accusing the opposition APC of frustrating the war against terrorism and that APC should realise that power belongs to God. PDP admit that the APC leadership is made up of elderly persons which ordinarily should have have conferred on the party some sort of advantage as the party of reasonable and responsible individuals. However, it denigrates the leadership as lacking *"self-respect and decorum"* by resorting to the use of *"uncouth language against the office and person of the President"*.

In the same vein by stating that their action was *"out of sheer frustration, bitterness and envy"*, it projects the leadership of the APC *"made up of elderly persons"* as frustrated, bitter and envious people who *"have continued to show themselves as extremely unpatriotic elements blinded by narrow pursuit of power for ignoble very reasons"*. In effect the statement is a smear campaign intended to whip up sentiments against the APC and its leadership by describing them as extremely unpatriotic elements.

2014 was a period or year that the activity of the terrorist group, "Boko haram" was at its peak. The group did only continue to acquire territories in the north-east but continued to unleash terror across the northern part of Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory.

Therefore this provided a strong campaign material for the opposition who saw the government as not doing enough to fight insurgency. This stand of the opposition was strengthened by news of soldiers running away (abdicating) from the battle field in the north-east for lack ammunition and other military hardware. This accusation was a huge indictment of the government and as characteristics of politics and political campaign, the government/PDP in this statement turned the heat back on the opposition by describing it (the APC) as frustrating the government's fight against terror and consequently supporting insurgency. Again this is another attempt at manipulating the electorates by seeking to win their sympathy and in the process demonising the opposition. This insinuation underlies an implicit fallacious argument that is peculiar to manipulation which involves associating recipients (opposition APC) with the enemy (Boko haram) thereby portraying the opposition as traitors. This move also construes another ideological position (which is also a component of manipulation) of polarised opposition between Us (government/PDP fighting insurgency) and Them (opposition APC) thereby politically implying that the opposition is supporting insurgency, an attempt to deface them (APC) and pitch them against the electorates. The overall effect of this argument is to paint a negative image of the party (APC) with the view to render it (APC) unattractive to the electorates and consequently, attracting sympathy for the government and PDP.

The reference of power belonging to God in the text is an attempt to emotionalise the argument and that in itself constitutes manipulation. It is a common religious norm and belief that power belongs to God. The attempt by Metuh to remind the APC on that subject is an attempt to score a huge political advantage over their political opponent. This is particularly instructive knowing that the Nigerian society is a highly religious one (though not necessarily Godly) with followers of the two dominant religions (Islam and Christianity) ardently protecting their faiths. This is evident in the religious crises that the nation grapples with. Therefore politicians exploit the religious situation in order to attract the sympathy of the electorates. Consequently, although the need to remind the opposition might seem needless, it is nonetheless a huge action in politics. This is because in politics every situation is exploited in order to maximise political advantage. It is therefore not surprising that politicians take their campaigns to Mosques and Churches.

Another manipulative effect deserving of mentioning is the reminder that "*... those who denigrate and disrespect authority will never be entrusted with it*". This is an attempt to moralise the issue which is another manipulative strategy. Metuh perhaps considers that it is not enough to remind the opposition and by extension Nigerians that "*power belongs only to God*", it is also imperative to instruct that "*... those who denigrate and disrespect authority will never be entrusted with it*". It is like reminding the opposition APC that they cannot attain power by "*denigrating and disrespecting*" those in authority because God (who owns power) will not entrust them with it. It is instructive to note that although the immediate recipient of the message is the APC, the content is overall intended for the electorates. Therefore the attempt to moralise the issue is an attempt to manipulate the electorates. This is to the effect that as politicians, Metuh and the PDP know that the APC will not believe this "*brotherly advice*" but the public or electorates might take the bait. Therefore the text "*Let it be known to the APC that power belongs only to God*

and those who denigrate and disrespect authority will never be entrusted with it” is an attempt to emotionalise/moralise the argument and that constitutes an attempt to manipulate the audience or electorates.

Text 2 – Olisa Metuh

Subject Matter: Emergence of Osinbajo as Buhari’s running mate

Source: The Nation, Sunday, December 14, 2014

1. *“Who is Osinbajo? He was an ordinary Commissioner and we have hundreds of*
2. *commissioners in the country. The APC Vice-Presidential candidate is an unknown*
3. *individual in politics. He is not a threat to PDP. One thing I know is that if it comes to*
4. *issues and performance, we will win the 2015 Presidential election but if it comes to*
5. *throwing anarchy and chaos, the APC will have upper hand.”*

Analysis 2

This extract was Metuh’s response to the emergence of Yemi Osinbajo as the Vice Presidential candidate of the APC. It is instructive to note that the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari as the Presidential candidate of the APC was said to be a worrisome development for the ruling PDP not only because he (Muhammadu Buhari) enjoyed a ‘cult’ like followership in the northern part of Nigeria, but because the emergence of Jonathan as the Presidential flag bearer of the PDP was thought to violate the rotational principle between the north and the south. The assumption/political calculation was that the PDP might lose some grounds in the north because of the failure to observe this rotational principles. Therefore the PDP had hoped to capitalise on any wrong political move by the APC to inflict an electoral blow/defeat on the party had they (APC) made the wrong choice of a running mate. The calculation or expectation was that the APC might name a frontline politician and chieftain of the party, Bola Tinubu as Buhari’s running mate. Had that happened, the PDP would have been justified to label the APC an Islamic party for fielding a Muslim – Muslim candidate. However, the emergence of Yemi Osinbajo, a Professor of Law and son-in-law of the late sage and political icon Obafemi Awolowo (who is revered especially in the south western part of Nigeria) was thought to have put the APC in poles position to give the PDP a tough fight in the presidential election. Therefore the emergence was thought to have jostled the PDP and forced it into another political calculation/move.

Metuh began on a manipulative note using a manipulative strategy of “*questioning*”. The question, “*Who is Osinbajo?*” is expected to activate the minds of the electorates on the subject (Osinbajo) with contempt, in an attempt to ridicule him as a politically inconsequential figure. This is part of what van Dijk (359) describes as “*cognitive mind control*”. Describing Osinbajo as “*... ordinary commissioner*” implied that he (Osinbajo) is an unknown figure in politics and his choice has rendered the opposition as a politically naïve party. In this manipulative strategy, the intention is not only to manipulate the general public but the political class as well into believing that the choice of the party embodies the thinking and capacity of the party as a mediocre party. This is a move designed to portray the APC in a negative light and give the PDPD the political momentum as a much more superior party with their candidates as

President and Vice President as against an ordinary Commissioner as the Vice Presidential Candidate.

Metuh also stated that *“One thing I know is that if it comes to issues and performance, we will win the 2015 Presidential election but if it comes to throwing anarchy and chaos, the APC will have upper hand”*. As the government in power, the PDP believed it had performed creditably by delivering on their electoral promises. So in terms of campaign issues it had so much to talk about as against the opposition APC that is was desperate to acquire power. By stating that *“if it comes to throwing anarchy and chaos, the APC will have upper hand”*, Metuh and the PDP perceive the APC as the party whose trade mark is instituting *“anarchy and chaos”*. Perhaps the reason for this accusation stems from the fact that the flag bearer of the party, Muhammadu Buhari it was claimed threatened violence if the 2015 polls were rigged by the government/party in power, PDP. It is also particularly instructive to note that Muhammadu Buhari contested the 2011 presidential election under a political party he had formed, Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), (CPC was one of the political parties that merged or fused into APC). After the election in 2011 which Buhari contested and lost, his supporters were said to have taken to the streets in some northern parts of Nigeria to protest his loss. The violence that ensued claimed lives and properties, and Buhari was blamed for it. Similarly leaders of the APC were also said to have made inflammatory statements capable of engendering violence. Perhaps it is on the basis of this background that Metuh made that statement. In effect Metuh relied on damaging the reputation of the APC, a manipulative strategy of negative other presentation.

In this text, the APC is generally painted as a party that uses violence as an instrument to achieve political advantage. Therefore by associating the party with violence politically implies that the APC is both an enemy of democracy as well as an enemy of Nigeria; a fallacious argument quite common in manipulation.

Generalisation is another manipulative strategy employed in the text. van Dijk (370) describes generalisation as a discourse strategy that typically influence socially shared beliefs. He explained further that in generalisation, *“a concrete specific example that has made an impact on people’s mental models, is generalised to a more general knowledge or attitudes, or even fundamental ideologies”*. For instance, at the time that Metuh made the statement, Boko Haram insurgents had claimed certain parts of Nigerian territory in the north east and unleashing terror on other parts of the nation, especially in the north-east, part of north west and the federal capital. Therefore Nigerians were already grappling with the fear of terrorism or insurgency which constitutes a *“mental model”* for them. Associating the APC with chaos and anarchy amounts to generalisation of that mental model (fear of terrorism or insurgency) to a more general knowledge (associating APC with chaos and anarchy).

In this brief comment the manipulative strategy employed in the text are questioning, positive self-representation and negative other representation including generalisation.

Lai Mohammed

Subject Matter: PDP is paranoid over opinion poll:

Source: The Nation, Wednesday January 7, 2015

"[The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is a victim of self-inflicted paranoia following its panic reaction to a yet-to-be conducted opinion poll [APC's National Publicity Secretary Alhaji Lai Mohammed, who said this in Abuja, added that the PDP had only succeeded in committing an unforced error by its alleged frenzied reaction. The statement however noted that that the PDP's reaction was understandable]..."

1. *considering the fact that the party is being pounded from all sides by both seen and*
2. *unseen forces ... the PDP is behaving like a punch-drunk boxer who started flailing at*
3. *everything and everyone, but his opponent, having been disoriented by a staccato of body*
4. *blows. Had it not been so, a party that is urging a focus on serious campaign issues would*
5. *not have picked on the imagery outcome of a public opinion poll ... It is said that he must*
6. *come to equity must come with clean hands. It is apparent that this dictum is lost on the*
7. *petrified PDP. This is a party that has been celebrating the outcome of the regular polls*
8. *by the NOI poll, when it is glaring that the brain behind this poll is a key minister of the*
9. *Federal Republic of Nigeria. NOI stands for the initials of this minister and discerning*
10. *Nigerians are aware of this. Because the NOI polls have been doctored to achieve pre-*
11. *determined end, the PDP made itself to believe it was doing well all along; when indeed*
12. *it was leading Nigerian to a dark alley of economic and infrastructural collapse, massive*
13. *unemployment as well as pervasive and unprecedented insecurity. Now that the die is*
14. *cast and even the most ardent supporters of the PDP have realised that the game is up and*
15. *are jumping off its sinking ship, the party has come to realise its folly. How can such a*
16. *party advise another party on how to conduct a public opinion poll? Even without any*
17. *poll, Nigerians have come to realise that the presidential candidate of the APC, Gen.*
18. *Muhammadu Buhari stands head and shoulders above his PDP counterpart. Not only*
19. *physically, but in terms of integrity, capability, vision, achievements and antecedents.*
20. *Since these are the issues that will count during the forthcoming polls, the PDP can as*
21. *well start learning how to be in the opposition ... The PDP has consistently shown*
22. *nothing but disdain for the media which was at the forefront of the fight for the*
23. *democracy that the do-nothing folks at the PDP are now enjoying undeservedly. If the*
24. *media was easy to compromise, it would have been compromised a long time ago and*
25. *perhaps Nigeria would not have benefitted from its selfless battle against military*
26. *dictatorship ... Our honest advice to those who did nothing when the epic battle to install*
27. *this democracy ... was going on, but are now pretending to be its custodians, is that they*
28. *should not crash it on the altar of carelessness, inciting and offensive statements."*

Analysis 3

This press statement is Lai Mohammed's response to the release by the PDP over what it (PDP) called a "kangaroo opinion rating" conducted by the APC. The PDP in their press release gave graphic detail of how it thought the opinion ratings were executed to favour the APC and its presidential candidate. It accused the APC of using the opinion rating to manipulate public perception in their favour. It also accused the APC of compromising a section of the media to publicise what it termed a compromised polls results. The PDP press release finally advised the APC to focus on real campaign issues and not play to the gallery.

The APC in their response through their Publicity Secretary, Lai Mohammed described the PDP as paranoiac by responding in the manner they did to opinion poll. Mohammed also noted that it was understandable that the PDP acted the way they did, *"considering the fact that the party is being pounded from all sides by both seen and unseen forces"*. The use of the expression typifies a military operation. The expression *"pounded from all sides"* reflects the fact that politics is war and politicians regard elections as battle for the souls of the electorates who guarantee them power through the ballot. In this battle politicians deploy their best weaponry to the battle field with the view to winning the war (which is the election). In this circumstance, the most effective weapon usually deployed in an electioneering campaign is language. Therefore describing the PDP as *"being pounded from all sides"* suggests that the PDP had come under serious attack by both the political elites and the citizenry that it (the PDP) had become so confused that they were unable to think clearly. What Lai Mohammed has done is to grossly exaggerate the situation which amounts to the use of hyperbole and hyperbole is an instrument of manipulation. The effect of this is to present the PDP as a confused and unstable party that should not be trusted with another mandate. The implication is that the APC is the messiah and this presents the party (APC) in a positive light; positive self-presentation which is another device in manipulation.

Apart from the use of war terminology, Lai Mohammed also resorted to the use of sports terminology, specifically boxing. This could also suggest that politics is a contest, a fierce contest between or amongst opponents on one hand and on the other hand, a contest for the soul of the electorates. Consequently the APC recognises the PDP as an opponent in the battle to win the support of the electorates, in a bid to acquire or seize power from the PDP. In effect, describing the PDP as *"behaving like a punch-drunk boxer"* is associating the party (PDP) with *"a punch-drunk boxer"*. A *"punch-drunk boxer"* is a boxer who has been saturated with barrage of punches and has become 'disoriented' from the effects of the blows. This implies that the PDP is in a state of confusion, confusion occasioned by vituperation against it. The use of simile (behaving like a punch-drunk boxer) is a manipulative device intended to project or present the PDP in a negative light (negative other representation) as a disoriented party.

The APC also suggests that the PDP had no moral standing to advise anyone let alone it (the APC) on the conduct of an opinion poll, having itself relied on 'doctored' polls in the past to 'achieve pre-determined end'. What perhaps makes this claim interesting is the way it was said; aligning it with the dictum *"It is said that he must come to equity must come with clean hands. It is apparent that this dictum is lost on the petrified PDP"*. The manipulative effect in this alignment lies with the suggestion that the PDP cannot advise them (APC) on the same thing that it (PDP) is guilty of. Describing it (PDP) as 'petrified' is a strategic move of negative other representation.

Another manipulative strategy is in the use of contrast. In the contrast, the APC claimed that their presidential candidates, *"Muhammadu Buhari stands head and shoulders above his PDP counterpart. Not only physically, but in terms of integrity, capability, vision, achievements and antecedents"* and that since these are the issues that would shape the election *"the PDP can as well start learning how to be in the opposition"* What is of interest here is that the PDP had always claimed that if the election was based on the issues that the APC claimed would shape the

election (integrity, capability, vision, achievements and antecedents) it (the PDP) will win. It is important to note that politics itself is a game of manipulation, and in this game, it is the public or electorates that are being manipulated. Therefore, the claim and counter claim by the ruling PDP and opposition APC about issues that will win elections in their favour amount to manipulation.

Regarding the claim by Metuh/PDP that the APC leaders were *"intensifying efforts to compromise some sections of the media"*, Mohammed's response that *"The PDP has consistently shown nothing but disdain for the media"* typifies manipulation, especially by associating the media with the birth and sustenance of Nigeria's contemporary democracy. By describing the media as having engaged in a *"selfless battle against military dictatorship"* is to recognise the importance of the media in their attempt to wrestle power from the ruling party, the PDP and so attempts to win its favour. This is a strategic move of positive self-presentation and negative other representation. Referring to the PDP as showing 'disdain' for the media has presented the party in a bad light before the media and by describing them as *"do-nothing folks"* present them (the PDP) as opportunist. While describing the PDP using these negative terms project the party in negative light, the reverse effect project the APC in a positive light; as a media friendly party. The APC's *"honest advice to those who did nothing when the epic battle to install this democracy was going on, but are now pretending to be its custodians, is that they should not crash it on the altar of carelessness, inciting and offensive statements"* might not have mentioned PDP, but it is indirect referent to the it, the PDP. This statement is more of an indictment than an advice, consequently painting the PDP in a negative light.

Text 4: Lai Mohammed

Subject Matter: Reaction to DSS Report on "APC hacking into INEC data base"

Source: The Nation Newspaper, (Thursday January 8, 2015)

1. *"First the DSS and the PDP said the APC was cloning Permanent Voters Card at the*
2. *raided office , without a shred of evidence. Now after a "painstaking" investigation, the*
3. *DSS has found out that the APC was only planning to inflate its membership data and*
4. *then hack into INEC's database. And this is the outcome of its massive months-long*
5. *investigations? ... with these kind of findings, one can now understand why Boko Haram*
6. *has continued to strike at times and places of its own choosing without any prior*
7. *knowledge by our all-powerful DSS. Even the presentation of the report by a poorly*
8. *trained and highly politicised spokesperson of the DSS worsened the so called findings.*
9. *Why would the spokesperson of a national agency sound like a megaphone for the ruling*
10. *party? ... why does she have to go personal in presenting a report that supposedly is in*
11. *the national interest? We have always warned that our democracy is in clear and present*
12. *danger, not just from desperate politicians, but also from institutions of state that have*
13. *compromised in their roles and resorted to crass lawlessness. The DSS' 'findings' today*
14. *have given us another reason to repeat this warning."*

Analysis 4

The Department of States Services (DSS) had on the January 7, 2015 in a press conference addressed by its spokesperson accused the APC of attempting to hack into the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) data base with the intention of disrupting the electoral process of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria.

Lai Mohammed in this press release described as *"disingenuous, flimsy, premeditated, partisan and an irritant"* the DSS report linking APC with the hacking of INEC data base. The manipulative effect here lies with the presentation of the APC as victim of state suppression and oppression. In playing the victim, the APC cries out to the public to share in their plight by presenting graphic detail of the brutalisation of their supporters in the hands of the DSS. By presenting the conduct of the DSS as unprofessional and their spokesperson as *"poorly trained and highly politicised"*, the APC did not only play the victim card but also presents the PDP as relying or depending on apparatus of state for help to weaken the opposition in order to enhance their performance at elections.

In order to attract further public sympathy and polish its image, the APC reminded Nigerians that it had always warned that its (Nigeria's) democracy was in *"clear and present danger not only from desperate politicians but also from institutions of state that have compromised in their roles"*. The statement mentioned 'desperate politicians' but did not say who these politicians were; however, it is indirectly referring to the PDP. In effect by associating the PDP with the DSS report, the APC implied both to be enemies of democracy, a strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation. The APC also resorted to the use of sarcasm which is an ingredient of manipulation when it suggested that *"with these kind of findings, one can now understand why Boko Haram has continued to strike at times and places of its own choosing without any prior knowledge by our all-powerful DSS"*. This is intended to ridicule the DSS. It is instructive to note that at the time of this press statement, Boko Haram did not only control territories in the northeast of Nigeria, but carried out bombings in other parts of the north including Abuja. The effect of this was to rubbish the organisation (DSS) as an ineffective organisation that left very important national matters, yet colluding with the ruling party to suppress the opposition.

Another manipulative device employed in this press statement is the rhetorical question; *"And this is the outcome of its massive months-long investigations?" "Why would the spokesperson of a national agency sound like a megaphone for the ruling party?" " ... why does she [the spokesperson of DSS] have to go personal in presenting a report that supposedly is in the national interest?"* All these questions were not meant to elicit any response but to create effects which portray the DSS and their principal (the government and the party in power PDP) as enemies of democracy and the Nigerian state.

6. Conclusion

The paper examined the critical role of language, especially English in the acquisition of power in Nigerian politics. In examining this role, it (the paper) applied van Dijk's approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytical tool. The findings showed that beyond

rhetoric and propaganda, power is central to politics and in the quest for power, politician deploy all manner of antics from deception, distortion, blackmail and the propagation of falsehood; all of which are properties of manipulation as defined van Dijk. This finds support with the Orwellian claim that “*Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind*”. Therefore on the basis of the corpus presented and their analysis, this study concluded that although language, particularly English played a significant role in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria, such role did not significantly affect the outcome of the election.

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