CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI'S SELECTED COVID - 19 PANDEMIC SPEECH IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper is a critical analysis of President Muhammadu's COVID-19 Speech in Nigeria it is an attempt to explore the various discursive practices embodied in the speech, and analyze the power dynamic at play between the president and his audience. The speech was delivered shortly after the confirmation of Nigeria's first case on the 27th February, 2020. The researcher selected a speech as the source of data for the study. A two-level analysis was integrated in examining the critical discourse. The speech was critically analysed using the adapted Norman Furlough's three-dimensional Analytical Models. Following the models, the speech was subjected to description (text), interpretation (processing) and explanation (social practice) analyses. At the second level, in order to determine how President Muhammadu Buhari's frames the core issues in the speech, two strategies of political discourse were employed. These strategies were creativity and Metaphor. The study finds out that President Muhammadu Buhari's uses these strategies competently in terms of employing them to deliver his messages. He also uses the creative expressions to show the reality as it is, such as the current state of affair and the measures taken to contain the potential challenges of COVID-19 in Nigeria. The language of power is evident in the speech, as evidenced by the president assuming the role of a paternal figure in the discourse. Overall, the president's speech is largely characterized by an authoritative, top-down approach, with the president privileging his own voice over that of his audience. Hence this study presents President Muhammadu Buhari's use of power and language in his speech, and provides insights into the communicative behavior of the Nigerian president in time of crisis.

Keywords: discourse, critical discourse analysis, metaphor, creativity, speech, strategies

Background to the Study

The use of language is a potent tool that is essential to human communication. Political leaders rely on language use to interact with society's members. Humans possess a special ability called language that serves as a means of intercommunication for establishing personal bonds, exchanging ideas, and disseminating knowledge. The use of language is a potent tool that is essential to human communication. Political leaders rely on language use to interact with society's members. Humans possess a special ability called language that serves as a means of intercommunication for establishing personal bonds, exchanging ideas, and disseminating knowledge. Therefore, those who hold elected political office, particularly the leader of a nation, are frequently motivated by the desire to persuade audiences about the policies, plans, and practices of their administration and to change their social behaviors and activities. No doubt, the objectives of presenting speeches and COVID-19 speeches in particular, by leaders in the very recent times, are often pursued through ideologically diffused expressions that present social issues, reflecting the common social experiences and activities of discourse participants.

It is sufficient to note that politicians, even presidents of countries, use language as a tool for persuasion. Delivering political speech is one of these media, as evidenced by the findings in the current study. The language put to use by them is

not a genre but a class of it, which is determined by politics as a social domain (Van Dijk, 1998). Political speech, such as the talks on COVID-19 of President Buhari's chosen speech in Nigeria, is one of several genres that fall under the umbrella of politics, along with parliamentary debates, campaign speeches, pre- and post-election speeches, inaugural and acceptance speeches. The personality of the speaker, Muhammadu Buhari was born on December 17, 1942 in Daura, Katsina State, Nigeria. He was Nigerian military leader and politician, who served as Head of State between 1984 and 85, 2015 and 2023 respectively.

Political leadership has been under the spotlight due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, the public messaging that leaders use to address the pandemic (health crisis) have real-world repercussions for fostering trust and a successful response across a nation. The choices made by political leaders undoubtedly have a significant impact on scientific research, the development of vaccines, healthcare delivery and systems, social and economic policy measures to contain the pandemic, and ultimately, on the health, well-being, and lives of citizens. Leadership and language are important in the current chaotic environment; the capacity of heads of nations and global health agencies to openly communicate on the impact of COVID-19 and the steps taken to reduce risks is crucial (Dada, S., Ashworth, H. C., Bewa, M. J., & Dhatt, R. 2021). That is why, perceptions, behaviours and attitudes of citizens are significantly influenced by the type and quality of information they are exposed to. This factor may help to explain why citizens' adherence to social policy is likely to be strongly influenced by the statements made by politicians.

It is similarly important to highlight that the study is concerned with the context of speech, particularly because the president's speeches' surroundings place the subjects discussed in the address. Described by Odebunmi (2016:18) as sited in language function, contexts in this type of political discourse are either common or distinctive. Thus, the common and distinctive issues raised by the president are the representation of convergence of language and society, so that, discursive dimensions such as linguistic, social and cognitive are brought to bear to determine whether or not the implicit meaning of discourses is communicated. The speech's

discussion points are purposefully provided, and they "are naturally aimed in many respects at representing emotion, but also at explaining, understanding, and constructing strategies which are signaled by discourse processes" (Mabayoje 2021).

As far as the researcher is aware, this analysis may not be the first of its sort, but it may be the first to take into account the data used: "the first President Muhammadu Buhari's selected COVID-19 pandemic speech." The simple truth that language has a huge influence in determining and molding reality - including the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic - across the entire world, serves as the study's motivation. This reality is what has been observed in President Muhammadu Buhari speeches. Through his use of language, it is necessary to examine his speech, and the CDA is one of the best linguistic instruments for such a study. This is because, there is a strong relationship between language and discourse. Therefore, the major thrust of this study is to analyse President Muhammadu Buhari's selected COVID-19 pandemic speech from the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective.

In specific terms, the study relies heavily on the cognitive perspective that evoked discursive content and contexts, discursive strategies and ideologies of discourse analysis that are charactarised the speech. Therefore, this study is an attempt, from the socio-cognitive perspective to examine the way language is critically used as a tool for achieving it purpose.

Theoretical Framework
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)
It is possible to think of discourse, discourse analysis, and critical discourse analysis as three disciplines that are primarily employed interchangeably, especially by non-linguists. Discourse and discourse analysis are not the same thing. Discourse Analysis is a method of analyzing communication, although discourse itself is communication (Aziz n.pag.). When a discourse's analysis tries to reveal the hidden ideology that underlies that discourse, then analysis is considered to fall under the purview of critical discourse analysis. Simply put, discourse analysis changes into critical discourse analysis when the hearer or reader generates meaning for the unsaid by using all linguistic features present

in the said material in a way that exposes power and abuse, dominance, inequality, and invested ideologies. In general, dominance structures every discourse, and the ideologies of strong groups legitimize the dominant structures (Wodak and Meyer (ND).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), being context sensitive, acknowledges that real texts are produced and disseminated in real situational contexts. In the view of Ayoola (2005), CDA employs interdisciplinary techniques of text analysis to draw out how texts portray social identities, social relationships and political ideologies. A discourse analyst would be interested in the public statements made by a country's president, such as those made by President Muhammadu Buhari, because political leaders' statements have the performative power to sway or manipulate the populace toward an ideological or anti-ideological course of action (Ayoola, 2005, p. 2). In so doing, the discourse analysts employ their world experience and linguistic tools in carrying out empirical study of political discourse.

In concrete terms, this study drew on an integrative interdisciplinary theory, as well as, methodologies in combining CDA, Socio-cognition, History, Socio-psychology, Political science, and so forth. The discourse analytical approaches prominently recourse to here would be those of the main representatives of CDA, that is, Fairclough's Socio-cultural and socio-economical discourse - Historical approaches to CDA and Norman Furlough's three-dimensional Analytical Models. Following the models, description (text), interpretation (processing) and explanation (social practice) analyses in analysing how President Muhammadu Buhari has effectively used English language to pass his messages to the public during COVID 19 pandemic in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing growth in the study of the Nigerian political speeches from various linguistic fields such as sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociology of language and linguistic anthropology among others, has provided ideas that indicate the relationships between language and society from political perspectives. Studies such as Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2017) have focused on the stylistics studies of

political speeches of leaders, and especially governors and presidents of states and nations, Critical Discourse Analysis of acceptance speeches by political leaders, the structural and functional description of political campaigns and the pragmatic functions in victory speeches of elected presidents have been examined. Other studies of interests have focused on pragmatics and rhetoric in the national addresses of the Nigerian presidents, the pragmatics, pragma-stylistic, sociolinguistic and socio-pragmatic perspectives in the COVID-19 speeches of Nigerian and non-Nigerian presidents, the stylistic patterns and lexico-grammatical choices in COVID-19 speeches.

A number of researches have been carried out on speeches of political leaders, especially, presidential speeches and particularly, President Muhammadu Buhari's selected speeches from the Critical Discourse Analysis point of view. President Muhammadu Buhari skillfully used personal pronouns to present different identities and project different ideologies in both his inaugural speech as a President with executive powers in 2015 and his maiden speech as a Military Head of State in 1984, according to Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2017), who also argued that the President's backgrounds had an impact on his pronominal choices. Hence, the study provided an insight into the influences of the ideological stances from which President Muhammadu Buhari spoke on his choice of language.

Ononye (2017) studies the context components limiting the linguistic structures used in newspaper headlines to reflect the power relations surrounding President Muhammadu Buhari's (PMB) inauguration discourse, while examining language, contexts, and power relations in Nigerian newspaper headlines on the president's inaugural speeches. Data collected were analysed with insights from van Dijk's theory of Critical Discourse Analysis and context. Furthermore, Leonard Koussouhon used critical discourse analysis to provide a systemic functional linguistic and critical discourse analysis of President Buhari's inaugural address. The analysis focuses on recoverable references through the use of personal pronouns throughout the political discourse under review as well as mood, epistemic, and deontic modality choices. The study showed how ideologies that align and

correspond with domestic, sub-regional, and global realities are found in the speeches of political leaders.

From the previous studies reviewed, the researcher observes that none of studies paid particular attention to President Muhammadu Buhari's selected COVID-19 pandemic speeches from the theoretical perception of Critical Discourse Analysis. This is indeed, the gap in knowledge which the present study has come to fill.

Aim and Objective of the Study

Generally, the study aims to carry out a Critical Discourse Analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's selected COVID - 19 pandemic speech in Nigeria.

In specific terms, the study attempts to realise the following objectives:

1. examine the strategies in the speech, and the structural processes that signal them,
2. investigate the lexical structures (medical and economical ideological structures) in the speeches and its relationship to social domains;

Research Questions

1. What are the strategies in the speech and the structural processes that signal them?
2. What are the lexical structures that portray medical and economical ideological structures of the speech and how they relate to the socio-cultural phenomenon?

Methodology and Procedure

President Muhammadu Buhari has delivered many speeches on different occasions. Therefore, the scope of the study was limited to the first President Muhammadu Buhari's selected COVID-19 pandemic speech out of his speeches to Nigerians. This speech was delivered on the Sunday 29th March, 2020. The study is a mixed research where both quantitative and qualitative analyses were employed in carrying out the study. Quantitatively, the speech was examined by identifying various critical and metaphorical expressions. In addition, computational discourse was examined to identified various lexical items that portray the medical and socio-economical ideologies in the speech. The qualitative information received from the speech was analysed qualitatively using Fairclough's critical discourse model.. This is in addition to the linguistics and thematic approach to medical and socio-economic issues raised in the speech.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from the speech: "President Mohammadu Buhari COVID-19 speech" was examined using both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The 65 paragraphs speech was subjected to analysis using quantitative and qualitative approach. The analysis was also guided by Furlough's three-dimensional models - description, interpretation and explanation. The analysis was done according to the structure and content of the speech. Also, the analytical tool of the study depicts the three-dimensional method of discourse analysis, as introduced by Fairclough (1992), namely, the language text, whether spoken or written, discourse practice and the socio-cultural practices. In addition, some strategies of critical discourse (creativity, metaphor and lexical structure as stated by Al-Abed Al-Haq (2011) were also investigated in the selected speech because of its potential in highlighting power and discourse.

Quantitative Analysis

Research Question One: What are the strategies in the speech and the structural processes that signal them?

To answer this research question, frequency and percentage analysis were used to analyse the quantitative data gathered in the speech. Items related to creativity and metaphor as used in the speech is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Quantitative Analysis of Creativity and Metaphor in President Mohammadu Buhari Covid-19 Speech

S/N	Creativity and Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Word-wide emergency/health emergency/ common enemy/ endemic (COVID-19)	30	41.7
2.	Tailored to reflect our local realities/two-way approach	3	4.2
3.	To man/control/measure/ restricted and monitored/confront fight the pandemic/social distancing/Isolation centres/makeshift hospitals (Greatest weapon)	25	34.7
4.	Systematically and professionally/inconveniences	4	5.6
5.	Confirmed cases	8	11.1
6.	Dreadful daily toll of deaths/first fatality	2	2.7
Total		**72**	**100.0**

Table 1 shows the number of creative and metaphorical expressions as revealed in the speech. There are six (6) different creativity and metaphorical expressions in the speech. The table revealed that out of 72 creative and metaphorical items, word-wide emergency/health emergency/ common enemy/endemic (COVID-19) appears 30 times representing 41.7%, followed by Tailored to reflect our local realities/two-way approach with 3 (4.2%) and To man/control/measure/restricted and monitored/confront fight the pandemic/social distancing/Isolation centres/makeshift hospitals (Greatest weapon) with 25 (34.7%). Others include Systematically and professionally/inconveniences, Confirmed cases and Dreadful daily toll of deaths/first fatality with 4 (5.6%), 8 (11.1%) and 2 (2.7%) respectively. Thus, this means that Word-wide emergency/health emergency/ common enemy/ endemic (COVID-19) was the most frequent and highest creativity and metaphorical expression used in the speech, followed by To man/control/measure/ restricted and monitored/confront fight the pandemic/social distancing/Isolation centres/makeshift hospitals (Greatest weapon), while Dreadful daily toll of deaths/first fatality was the least used.

Qualitative Analysis

Creativity and metaphor are unique strategies which are different from one another; but tailored towards the same tool, creative words. Therefore, it is worthy to discuss them altogether in order to shape the findings in a more concise way. As regards metaphor, linguists such as Crystal (1994) state that metaphors involve a semantic mapping from one conceptual domain to another, often using anomalous or deviant language. Creativity plays a significant role in shaping the facts; the speaker wants to deliver, in a way that is accessible for direct or indirect audience. President Muhammadu Buhari's selected COVID - 19 pandemic speech abound with examples of creativity which in turn shape the policy and expectations of the president adopts.

In answering the research question one qualitatively, "What are the strategies in the speech and the structural processes that signal them?", the creativity and metaphor items identified in the speech are word-wide emergency/health emergency/common enemy/endemic (COVID-19), tailored to reflect our local realities/two-way approach, to man/control/measure/restricted and monitored/confront fight the pandemic/social distancing/Isolation centres/makeshift hospitals (Greatest weapon), systematically and professionally/inconveniences, confirmed cases and dreadful daily toll of deaths/first fatality. For the strategies that signaled the use of these items ranging from the perspective of medical, economy and political issues, COVID-19 as a pandemic and the urge for the speaker to present his ideology towards addressing the issue triggered the use of creativity and metaphor that surround the use of expressions like word-wide emergency/health emergency/common enemy/endemic, among others which in one way or the other referred to (COVID-19).

Consider the above extract, the image that, there is a need for a proactive measure over what the president had identified as a world - wide

emergence (a health and economic emergency) is a creative expression, informing that the Federal Government had started planning preventive, containment and curative measures in the event the disease hits Nigeria. This expression implied a call for a concerted effort from all. This expression shapes President Muhammadu Buhari policy to encourage hygienic culture and other medical procedures because there seems to be no cure in site for the pandemic. Depicting the pandemic as a "crises, war and common enemy", President Muhammadu Buhari urges obedience to scientific and medical advice. Generally, this correlate and an attempt to link the social practice of Nigerians who are confronted with the health challenge with the linguistic practice highlighted in the speech. Such a correlation reflects the one stage of the CDA, which is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context. In detail, President Muhammadu Buhari reflects the social context of the pandemic throughout the speech. By doing so, he enhances the measures to be undertaken. This relationship with institutions around the world expresses the explanation stage of political dialogues and speeches. In addition, President Muhammadu Buhari articulates the health challenges and efforts exerted to confront such problem in a very creative way, making his speech very pragmatic and tangible.

More so, paragraph 19 of the speech states that, 'In Nigeria's fight against COVID-19, there is no such thing as an overreaction or an under-reaction.' President Muhammadu Buhari depicts these efforts in a very creative way, using the word "fight" 'overreaction or an under-reaction'. These words implicate best the current circumstances Nigeria is currently facing. Using the word "fight" determines the severity of the socio-economic problems facing Nigeria. Any listener would understand that the economic problem in Nigeria is real. Given that the country depends much on the foreign income which decreases hugely for the crises hitting the whole world. President Muhammadu Buhari sounds progressive in his choice of words "overreaction or an under-reaction". Such a usage reflects the social practice of Nigerian. In reality, this progressive aspect entails many significant messages to the whole world.

Quantitative Analysis

Research Question Two: What are the lexical structures that portray medical and economical ideological structures of the speech and how they relate to the socio-cultural phenomenon?

Items related to lexical structures as used in the speech is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Quantitative Analysis of Lexical Structures that Portray Medical and Economical Ideologies in President Mohammadu Buhari Covid-19 Speech

S/N	Lexical Structures of Medical and Economical ideologies	Frequency	Percentage %
A	**Lexical Structures on Medical Terms**		
1.	Coronavirus, or COVID -19/ epidemic/ pandemic/ outbreak, virus, health emergency	55	44.7
2.	Treatment/containment and curative measures/ develop a vaccine/ regular hygienic and sanitary practices, washing our hands regularly with clean water and soap/control the virus/reduce the virus, medical care,	13	10.6
3.	Fatality/ infected/ death/	4	3.3
4.	Health agencies and health practitioners /Federal Ministry of Health/NCDC (International, National and Local)/ hospital/ isolation centres/ Scientists around the world	25	20.3
B	**Lexical Structures on Economical Terms**		
5.	Economic crisis, interventions, TraderMoni, MarketMoni and FarmerMoni loans, funded loans iss ued by the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture and the Nigeria Export - Import Bank, lending facilities using capital from international and multilateral development partners, financial institutions, borrowers.	26	21.1
Total		**123**	**100.0**

Table 2 shows the number of lexical structures as portrayed in the speech of President Mohammadu Buhari during his COVID-19. The Table shows the lexical items based on medical and economical ideologies presented in the speech. It is revealed that out of 123 lexical structures identified, medical terms cover 97 (78.9%), while economical terms identified were 26 representing (21.1%). This implies that President Mohammadu Buhari's COVID-19 speech focuses more on medical concerns than economic ideologies.

Qualitative Analysis

In response to research question two qualitatively, "What are the lexical structures that portray medical and economical ideological structures of the speech and how they relate to the socio-cultural phenomenon?", the medical and economical Ideologies in President Mohammadu Buhari's Covid-19 Speech items identified in the speech include: Health emergency - Coronavirus, or COVID-19/, Treatment/containment and curative measures - develop a vaccine, Health agencies and health practitioners - International, National and Local, and Interventions - TraderMoni, MarketMoni and FarmerMoni loans, funded loans issued by the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture and the Nigeria Export-Import Bank, lending facilities using capital from international and multilateral development partners, financial institutions, borrowers. It appears that more lexicons medical terms dominated the speech than the economical terms. This implies that President Mohammadu Buhari's COVID-19 speech focused more on medical ideology than economic issues. It can be concluded that President Mohammadu Buhari was more focus on health and medical issues especially, during COVID-19 pandemic than the economic hardship in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of the study was to examine the critical discourse analysis of the first President Muhammadu Buhari's COVID 19 speech which attempted to contribute to the growing trends of socio-cognitive, ideological and discursive approaches to studying political speeches. The study found out that the speech employed creative and metaphorical strategies in conveying his medical, economical and socio-political ideologies. More, so, the lexical structures in the speech portray the medical and economical terms in order to address the issues raised. Based on this findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. Political leaders, speech writers and academics should have insight on the discursive strategies to be deployed, the ideologies and theories to be adopted in socio-political communications.
2. The electorates should be able to interpret and form intellectual judgement on implicit discursive strategies employed by politicians while aiming at influencing their social interests and actions.

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