

Research Article

Influencing Voters Behaviour: Language and Ideology of Selected Nigerian Political Campaign Speeches

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Abstract

This study investigates the language and ideology of selected Nigerian political campaign speeches. It analyses the political campaign speeches of Peter Obi, Atiku Abubakar, and Bola Tinubu during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election to reveal how language functions as a tool for persuasion and reflects sociopolitical dynamics in Nigeria. Using Fairclough's discourse analysis framework, this research investigates the linguistic patterns, rhetorical strategies, and grammatical structures used by the candidates to communicate their ideologies, influence voters, and construct leadership identities. Findings reveal distinct patterns in the candidates' speech strategies. Peter Obi's rhetoric emphasised systemic reform, transparency, and collective progress, engaging voters reflectively with rhetorical questions and conditionals. Atiku Abubakar critiqued systemic failures, using nominalizations and declaratives to position his leadership as solution-oriented, appealing to voters seeking economic rejuvenation. Bola Tinubu employed imperatives and parallelism to command loyalty, inspire optimism, and project himself as a pragmatic leader. All the candidates used linguistic structures that functioned as persuasive tools, framing them as credible, relatable, and solution-driven leaders. The study demonstrates the interplay between language and political ideology, reaffirming the relevance of CDA in analysing political communication. It highlights the influence of rhetorical strategies on voters' behaviour and underscores the importance of discourse analysis for understanding power relations in political contexts.

Keywords

Political Campaign Speeches, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Rhetorical Strategies, Linguistic Patterns, Voters' Behaviour

1. Introduction

The impact of language on political behaviour is a topic of great importance in current discourse studies. Political speeches, especially during elections, are used not merely to transmit policy viewpoints, but also as strategic instruments for changing public opinion, influencing voters' behaviour, and promoting specific ideologies. In Nigerian politics, where corruption, national security, and economic development are major issues, understanding how political leaders use language to appeal to voters is crucial. "Political language is not

neutral, it reflects and creates ideologies that can unite, divide, convince or alienate" [18]. This article investigates the influence of language and ideology in shaping voters' behaviour, in selected Nigerian political campaign speeches from the 2023 general elections.

The study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as presented by Fairclough to investigate the link between language, power, and ideology. Fairclough states that "language in political discourse is inextricably linked to power dynamics

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and ideological stances, which shape both social institutions and individual perceptions" [10]. This approach is especially valuable for studying how political leaders utilise discourse to create narratives that appeal to voters' beliefs, anxieties, and desires. According to Fairclough "political discourse plays an important role in the reproduction of power systems, and CDA can indicate how language reinforces or challenges these structures" [11].

In defining ideology, Laclau and Mouffe note that it is a "system of ideas that shapes the way individuals perceive the world and their place in it" [12]. Political ideology is often employed in Nigerian campaign speeches to frame issues such as national identity, governance, and social justice. Ideological analysis provides insight into the underlying meanings in political speeches, particularly how certain values and beliefs are promoted to impact public opinion. According to Van Dijk political ideology is "crucial in structuring public opinion and political behaviour" [17] and the linguistic methods used in political speeches are critical to understanding how ideologies are communicated to and internalised by voters.

Political speeches rely heavily on rhetoric or the art of persuasion. Aristotle's ancient work on rhetoric emphasizes the significance of ethos, pathos, and logos as persuasive appeals [4]. Political candidates often resort to these rhetorical methods to boost their credibility (ethos), elicit emotional responses (pathos), and provide logical reasons (logos) to influence voters' behaviour. In Nigeria, where emotions around national issues such as security and economic suffering are high, these rhetorical strategies are particularly effective political tools.

This study aims to analyse the language and ideological strategies in selected presidential political campaign speeches of the leading Nigerian political figures from the All Progressive Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Labour Party (LP) in the 2023 general elections to understand how these strategies influence voters' behaviour, shape public opinion, and construct ideological narratives that align with specific political agenda. The understanding of the dynamics of these ideologies is important for both political strategists and political speech scholars as it reveals how language can be used to control public perception and behaviour in the highly charged environment of election campaigns.

2. Review of Related Literature

Political campaign speeches are a powerful means for influencing voters' behaviour. They serve as a platform for politicians to articulate their ideologies, address critical issues, and engage with the electorate. Research on political discourse has consistently demonstrated that language plays a central role in shaping public opinion and mobilising political action. In political communication, language is not just a means of transmitting information but a strategic resource for constructing ideologies and influencing audiences. Van Dijk

explored how ideologies are expressed and reproduced through discourse. He emphasized the role of language in shaping social cognition, constructing identity, and maintaining power structures [17]. By dissecting ideological discourse, he highlighted how elites legitimize their dominance while marginalizing alternative voices. Similarly, Fairclough explored how language perpetuates social inequalities [9]. He emphasized the role of discourse in maintaining dominance and highlights how critical analysis can reveal these dynamics. Laclau and Mouffe argued that "political discourse constructs social realities through hegemonic struggles" [12].

According to Fairclough, political speech serves as a location for the construction and contestation of power relations and ideologies [10]. His critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework remains the foundation for understanding how language reproduces social structures. Similarly, Van Dijk claimed that "political language frequently incorporates implicit ideological content that manipulates public views to achieve political objectives" [18]. Wodak and Forchtner investigated how right-wing populist parties in Europe utilize discursive methods to legitimate their ideology and organize support [21]. This is consistent with the Nigerian political setting, where rhetorical appeals to nationalism and economic empowerment are common topics in campaign speeches.

Scholars have extensively focused on the role of ideology in determining political speech. Althusser described ideology as a "representation of individuals' imaginary relationships to their real conditions of existence" [2]. Political beliefs are often established in campaign language, shaping how voters view issues and align with candidates. Laclau and Mouffe emphasized the role of speech in building hegemony, arguing that language may be used to articulate political ideologies [12].

Providing methods and frameworks for critically analyzing political discourse in its historical, social, and cultural contexts, Fairclough, investigated how discourse shapes and reflects social practices. He emphasizes the interplay between language, power, and ideology, arguing that discourse is a site of struggle where competing interests negotiate meaning [10]. Wodak used discourse-historical approach (DHA) to examine political discourse. She argued that political speeches must be analyzed within their historical and social contexts to uncover implicit ideologies and power dynamics [20]. The DHA emphasizes how past events and collective memory shape political rhetoric. Chilton contends that political discourse uses geographical and temporal frameworks to create ideological narratives that appeal to voters [7]. In the Nigerian context, these frameworks are often connected to pressing issues like insecurity, corruption, and economic injustice. For example, Ogundare examined Nigerian political speeches to determine how ideological narratives are utilised to divide voters along ethnic and religious lines [13].

The use of rhetoric in political speeches is critical for influencing voters' behaviour. Aristotle's classical framework of ethos, pathos, and logos is still applicable in contemporary

analysis. Ethos appeals to the speaker's credibility, pathos to the audience's emotions, and logos to logic [4]. Political figures use linguistic strategies to persuade audiences and legitimize their actions or ideologies. According to Van Leeuwen, "legitimation strategies in discourse, such as moral evaluation, rationalisation, and mythopoesis explain how speakers justify actions and ideologies" [19]. Chilton emphasized how politicians manipulate space, time, and modality to frame issues and persuade audiences [6]. Charteris-Black's investigation into how political leaders use metaphors to construct compelling narratives argued that metaphors serve as cognitive tools that evoke emotions and align the speaker's ideology with the audience's worldview [5]. Analysing Churchill, Obama, and other political speeches, he demonstrated how metaphor fosters leadership and charisma. Van Dijk investigated how political discourse manipulates public opinion by controlling information access and shaping mental models. He argued that manipulation involves the strategic use of language to obscure power asymmetries and influence audiences [18].

These rhetorical methods are obvious in Nigerian campaign speeches, when candidates frequently cite personal accomplishments, elicit emotional responses to national concerns, and portray policy proposals as logical solutions. In recent years, scholars have investigated how rhetorical devices are tailored to certain cultural and political settings. Okeke (2020) investigated the usage of proverbs and metaphors in Nigerian political speech, emphasizing their importance in building cultural resonance and increasing persuasive appeal [14]. Similarly, Olanrewaju and Abiodun examined how rhetorical methods in Nigerian political campaigns are adapted to different voter demographics, such as young and women, to increase engagement and support [15].

CDA has been widely used in research on Nigerian political discourse, providing insights into how language forms and reflects power dynamics. Udoh & Ejiaso examined how power relations and ideologies are embedded in the campaign speeches of the top three Nigerian presidential candidates from the 2023 elections [16]. Their focus was on the use of language to reflect power dynamics and ideological constructs, particularly highlighting strategies of inclusion and exclusion in political discourse. They highlight the presence of asymmetrical power dynamics between the powerful (politicians) and the less powerful (masses), reflect the prevailing political ideology in Nigeria, and demonstrate that the candidates predominantly employed inclusive language rather than exclusionary terms in their campaign discourse. Anyanwu investigated how the English language was utilised by the 2023 Nigerian presidential candidates—Ahmed Tinubu (APC), Atiku Abubakar (PDP), and Peter Obi (LP)—in their acceptance and declaration speeches [3]. The focus was on analysing the cohesive devices used to reassure the public about resolving national issues. Adopting cohesion and comparative approach, the findings reveal that all three candidates used cohesive devices as tools in their campaign

speeches. Clausal relations were identified as internal procedures and interpretations that contributed to achieving both context-specific language use and overall genre-related coherence in their texts. Eze & Amoniyan investigated the discursive strategies employed in selected 2019 Nigerian presidential campaign speeches, particularly on the flag-off campaign speeches of the two major political candidates: Muhammadu Buhari of the All-Progressives Congress (APC) and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) to identify the strategies used and the ideologies projected through these strategies [8]. Employing Van Dijk's mental model theory as the theoretical framework, using its context model, situation model, and experience model to analyse the data, the research reveals that both candidates used rhetorical strategies such as rhetorical questions, parallel structures, and metaphors as tools to convey their political ideologies. Adetunji used CDA to examine presidential campaign speeches, revealing how candidates utilize language to shape their identities as competent and relatable leaders [1]. Yusuf investigated the relationship between language, ideology, and identity in Nigerian political campaigns, illustrating how speech is utilised to create national unity while subtly perpetuating divisions [22]. While foundational studies provide theoretical frameworks for understanding these processes, contemporary research focuses on the unique methods and cultural intricacies of political communication in many contexts. However, there remains a gap in literature addressing the interplay of language, ideology, and voters' behaviour. This study therefore seeks to address this gap in the context of the 2023 Nigerian general elections.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research method. The data for this research comprises six selected campaign speeches delivered by the presidential candidates of Nigeria's three major political parties during the 2023 general elections - APC, PDP and LP. The data were collected from reputable online Newspapers – The Nation, Business Day, Daily Post and Time Africa Magazine. The data is analysed leveraging Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its primary approach. This choice aligns with the study's aim to examine the language and ideological strategies employed in political campaign speeches and their influence on voters' behaviour in Nigeria. The study applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model – textual analysis, discursive practices and social practice. Textual Analysis is employed to investigate the linguistic aspects of speeches, such as lexical choices, grammatical structures, and rhetorical techniques. Discursive Practice is used to examine the creation, dissemination, and consumption of speeches, with a focus on how they reflect and reinforce political beliefs, and Social Practice examines how the speeches fit into broader sociopolitical contexts, such as power relations, cultural norms, and voters' behaviour.

4. Data Presentation and Findings

4.1. Textual Analysis

Table 1. *Linguistic Features.*

	Peter Obi	Atiku Abubakar	Bola Tinubu
Vocabulary / Lexical Choices	we,” “our,” “all Nigerians” “I am a Nigerian running for the Nigerian Presidency to serve every Nigerian.”	“I have the experience to turn this country around.” “I am committed to the unity of this country.”	“Let us rebuild this nation together.” “We will ensure security and prosperity for all.”
Value-laden words	“One nation bound in freedom, peace, and unity.”		
Economic transformation terms	“consumption to production,” “competitiveness,” “Marshall Plan for Education” “We will make Nigeria’s arable land in the North her new oil and gold.”		
Grammar and Modality:	“We shall achieve this by giving primacy to implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”	“We must work together to rebuild our economy and create jobs.”	“We will fight corruption with everything we have.” “Our journey to greatness must begin now.”
Directives	“let us”, “vote Labour correctly.” “Let us perfect the federation of our forefathers.”		

In [Table 1](#), the use of inclusive terms and value-laden words by Peter Obi reflect a discourse of unity and collectivity as well as shared ideals. Economic transformation terms such as “consumption to production,” “competitiveness,” and “Marshall Plan for Education” denote developmental objectives. Atiku's lexical choices lay emphasis on unity, experience and economic progress. Statements from [table 1](#) show his attempt to establish himself as a unifying figure and a

competent leader. Such lexical choices align with political discourse strategies that emphasize reliability and continuity. Tinubu's vocabulary emphasizes transformation, action and resilience. The lexical choices reflect an ideology of progress and determination, which resonates with Nigeria's challenges and aspirations. The repeated use of the future-oriented modality such as “we will,” “shall,” and “must” by the candidates convey a sense of determination, certainty and necessity.

Table 2. *Rhetorical Devices.*

Rhetorical Strategies	Peter Obi	Atiku Abubakar	Bola Tinubu
Ethos (credibility)	“If elected President, I shall govern with the fear of God and with all good conscience and intent.”	“I have served as Vice President and contributed to reforms that benefited Nigerians.”	“As governor of Lagos, I transformed it into a thriving state.”
Pathos (emotional appeal):	“Our fellow citizens are in IDP camps. I spent Christmas and New Year with them. They should be home.”	“By investing in education and healthcare, we can reduce poverty and create opportunities.”	“By investing in infrastructure, we create jobs and build the economy.”
Logos (logical appeal):	“The North has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world.”	“Too many of our young people are jobless and our families are struggling.”	“We are one people, bound by a common destiny.”
Repetition and Parallelism		“We must rebuild. We must reform. We must reunite.”	“We must act now. We must act decisively. We must act together.”

Rhetorical Strategies	Peter Obi	Atiku Abubakar	Bola Tinubu
Metaphor and Symbolism			"Nigeria is a sleeping giant; it is time to awaken her."

The candidates rely on ethos, logos and pathos to appeal to their audiences. Both Atiku and Tinubu reference their political and administrative experiences to show their credibility. Their logical arguments address issues such as insecurity and economic challenges. Emotional appeals focus on collective

pains, unity and patriotism. While the use of repetition reinforces key themes, parallel structures enhance rhythm and clarity as well as emphasize vision and call to action. Tinubu uses metaphors to inspire hope and determination.

Table 3. Grammatical Structure.

	Peter Obi	Atiku Abubakar	Bola Tinubu
Declarative Sentences	"We will move Nigeria from consumption to production."	"I will ensure that our education sector gets the attention it deserves."	"Nigeria needs a leader who can think, work, and deliver."
Imperative Sentences	"Join me in building a Nigeria that works for everyone."	"Let us come together to rescue our nation."	"Trust in our mission to create a better future."
Interrogative Sentences	"Why should a country so blessed be so poor?"	"Is this the Nigeria we dreamed of?"	"Who else has the experience and capacity to lead this country?"
Parallel Structures	"We want a secure Nigeria; we want a prosperous Nigeria; we want a united Nigeria."	"I will rebuild the economy, restore trust, and revive hope."	"I have fought battles, I have solved problems, I have delivered results."
Conditional Sentences	"If we fix governance, we can fix everything else."	"If you vote for me, I will create millions of jobs."	"If we stay united, there is nothing we cannot achieve."
Use of Passive Voice	"The resources of this nation must be managed wisely."	"The economy has been mismanaged for too long."	"I have been chosen to lead this mission."
Nominalizations	"Corruption is killing our future."	"Development requires commitment and vision."	"Leadership is about results, not rhetoric."
Figurative Language and Lexical Choices	"We are on a journey to rescue our nation."	"Let us build the bridge to the future together."	"The harder the battle, the sweeter the victory."

The candidates use declarative sentences to highlight issues, propose solutions, articulate policy goals, critique the current administration, and assert their leadership credentials and vision. The candidate appeals directly to the electorate, calling for participation, accountability, unity, and collective effort while fostering optimism and resilience among supporters. They highlight systemic failures, challenges the status quo, critiques the opposition, and employs rhetorical engagement to reaffirm his leadership. All the three candidates repeat ideas for clarity and memorability, highlights contrasts and priorities, and constructs narratives of leadership and achievement. They link development to governance reforms, ties potential outcomes to his leadership, and promises solutions based on loyalty and support. The candidates highlight societal responsibilities, criticizes without direct attribution, and frames

himself as the beneficiary of collective efforts. Peter Obi focuses on institutional and societal reforms, Atiku frames leadership responsibilities in broad terms, and Tinubu highlights his vision and achievements. Lexical patterns like metaphors and slogans create persuasive and memorable campaign messages.

4.2. Discursive Practices

Peter Obi addresses Northern socio-economic issues (e.g., insecurity and poverty), aligning with regional concerns. He adopts a national perspective to appeal to the collective identity of Nigerians. The invocations of the "national anthem" and "dreams of our founding fathers" draw on shared cultural and historical narratives. Atiku's discourse borrows from

shared historical and ideological references. Tinubu references Nigeria's shared history and collective struggles, connecting his vision to familiar themes. Atiku employs a narrative of restoration, contrasting the past (a prosperous Nigeria) with the present (a struggling Nigeria) and positioning himself as the agent of change and Tinubu frames a narrative of re-

newal, contrasting Nigeria's current struggles with a hopeful future under his leadership. While Peter Obi encourages participation in the democratic process and appeal to rational decision-making, Atiku and Tinubu address the electorate using inclusive pronouns like "we" and "our" to foster a sense of collective responsibility.

Table 4. *Intertextuality Elements.*

Intertextuality	Peter Obi	Atiku Abubakar	Bola Tinubu
Tailored Messaging	"The North also has the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria." Making the same old choice will yield the same result. We are Nigerians. We are rational citizens."		
Narrative Framing	"The Nigeria we seek will be a United and Secure Nigeria that symbolizes the spirit, letters, and exhorting ethos of our national anthem."	"Together, we can restore Nigeria to its rightful place as a giant of Africa."	"The Nigeria we dream of is within reach if we work together."
Historical and ideological references		"This is not the Nigeria we dreamed of. It is not what our founding fathers envisioned."	"This nation has faced challenges before and emerged stronger."
Audience Engagement (Call to Action)	"This coming Saturday, let us promote Family Value – by voting for the Labour Party—LP: Mama, Papa, and Pikin." "Be introspective. Ask: Could I live with myself for making the wrong choice just for a few new naira notes?"	"Our diversity is our strength, and we must harness it for the good of all Nigerians."	"Our diversity is a strength we must harness for national progress." "Together, we can overcome any challenge and build a better future."

4.3. Social Practice

Table 5. *Social Practices in Nigerian Politics.*

Social Practices	Peter Obi	Atiku Abubakar	Bola Tinubu
Power Relations and Ideology	Bad leadership, divisive rhetoric, and impunity became the norm."		
Power and Identity Construction		"I have always believed in Nigeria's potential, and I have the experience to unlock it."	"I have the experience and the commitment to lead Nigeria to greatness."
Ideology of Unity and Progress	"This election is not about Obi and Baba-Ahmed. This election is not about our ethnic groups, African traditional religion, Christianity, or Islam."	"Every Nigerian, regardless of tribe or religion, deserves a chance to succeed."	
Socio-Political Context	"We will offer immediate and decisive long-lasting and permanent-effect resolution of all security challenges in the North."		"My administration will prioritize infrastructure development, education, and healthcare."
National Challenges	"We want to move our economy from importing and consuming products to producing, consuming less, and exporting more."	"The insecurity in our country is unacceptable, and we will tackle it head-on."	"We will tackle insecurity by strengthening our armed forces and intelligence agencies."
Representation of	"The North remains where the biggest and sustainable wealth of this great Nation lies."		

Social Practices	Peter Obi	Atiku Abubakar	Bola Tinubu
Social Groups	"The greatest lie one can tell is a lie to one's soul."		

Obi challenges the status quo by critiquing past leadership while positioning himself as a candidate for transformational change. The candidates promote a vision where ethnic, religious, and regional differences are secondary to national identity, unity, economic growth, and security, reflecting key concerns among Nigerians. They address overarching issues like corruption, unemployment, and economic stagnation. Obi recognises the North's unique struggles with insecurity, education, and agriculture and frames the North as the foundation of Nigeria's agricultural and economic recovery. While Atiku constructs himself as an experienced and reliable leader capable of addressing Nigeria's challenges, Tinubu projects himself as a pragmatic leader with actionable solutions.

5. Discussion

Political campaign speeches are crucial in generating support, legitimizing authority, and changing voters' behaviour. Based on the textual analysis of Peter Obi, Atiku Abubakar, and Bola Tinubu, it is clear that each candidate carefully uses language to convey their ideas, rhetorical methods, and voters' engagement approaches. Obi uses simple, conversational language to stress accountability and government. His frequent use of words like "prudence," "accountability," and "progress" paints a picture of a reformer leader intent on restoring faith in public institutions. This technique aligns with Charteris-Black's metaphor and leadership theory, which states that simple, understandable language increases emotional connection and trust [5]. Obi's lexicon also reflects Van Dijk's observation that political leaders employ simple language to connect with regular citizens [17].

Atiku's speeches emphasize "unity," "restructuring," and "recovery," demonstrating his emphasis on national cohesion and institutional reform. His vocabulary creates the appearance of a bridge-builder, addressing Nigeria's various ethnic and cultural divisions. His language choices are consistent with Wodak's discourse-historical approach, as they link contemporary concerns to long-standing sociopolitical issues [20]. The emphasis on unity corresponds to van Dijk's approach to generating collective identity to generate support [18]. Tinubu's language focuses on "renewed hope," "resilience," and "progress." These aspirational words, portray him as a transformative leader with a clear vision for Nigeria's future. Tinubu's optimistic lexicon echoes Fairclough's idea that discourse shapes societal goals [10]. His recurrent use of "renewed hope" exemplifies Charteris-Black's concept of leadership metaphors, which elicits emotional resonance among voters [5].

Obi extensively relies on ethos and logos to demonstrate his professional expertise and practical solutions. He creates a competent and reliable persona by relying on facts, figures, and policy specifics. His emphasis on logic is consistent with Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, specifically logos, as a tactic for persuading reasonable voters [3]. Emphasis on inclusivity resonates with Van Dijk's perspective on activating group solidarity [17]. Atiku's rhetorical strategy mixes ethos, pathos, and logos, employing emotional appeals to unity while highlighting his significant political expertise. He frequently emphasizes Nigeria's diversity as a strength, encouraging joint action. His use of pathos is consistent with Chilton's thesis that emotional tales are critical for voters' identification and loyalty [6]. Tinubu combines pathos and ethos, emphasizing persistence and shared challenges while drawing from his experience in Lagos. He describes his leadership as a continuation of growth and reform. Tinubu's focus on prior achievements to establish credibility is consistent with Van Dijk's framework for authority development [18]. His use of pathos mirrors Charteris-Black's observations on the emotive potency of political discourse [5].

The frequent use of collective pronouns like "we" and "our" to position themselves as part of the citizenry rather than above it, fosters solidarity and a sense of shared responsibility among the candidates. This aligns with Fairclough's concept of discourse as a tool for social cohesion [10]. Particularly, Obi's language seeks to bridge the gap between leadership and the electorate. While Atiku employs inclusive language, referencing Nigeria's multi-ethnic identity and emphasising his vision for a united nation, his speeches reflect a deliberate effort to address regional and cultural disparities. Tinubu's discursive practices emphasise resilience and shared aspirations. By drawing on historical achievements, particularly in Lagos, he positions himself as a leader capable of replicating success on a national scale. The use of an inclusive approach and references to past achievements correspond with Wodak's discourse-historical method and intertextuality [20], as Atiku contextualizes his campaign within Nigeria's socio-political history and Tinubu links current promises to historical contexts for enhanced credibility.

Obi's concept revolves around transparency, accountability, and effective governance. His speeches frame leadership as a service-oriented undertaking aimed at reestablishing public trust. This mirrors Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony, in which political leaders create discourses that connect with societal needs for change [12]. Atiku's ideology revolves around national unity, restructuring, and institutional reform. His campaign message stresses bridging divides and promoting inclusivity. Atiku's framing is consistent with Van

Leeuwen's legitimization tactics, in which leaders legitimize their actions by tying them to common ideals and goals [19]. Tinubu's ideological framing centres on "renewed hope" and progress. His campaign promises emphasize resilience and the necessity for stability in the administration. Tinubu's framing is consistent with Fairclough's findings on developing aspirational discourses that impact society's expectations and perceptions [10].

Obi presents himself as a reformer who challenges the current order. His argument takes a bottom-up approach, emphasising participatory governance. This calls into question established power dynamics, as explored in Fairclough's analysis of top-down authority in political discourse [9]. Atiku presents his leadership image as a seasoned statesman capable of uniting Nigeria. His emphasis on experience and diversity strengthens his validity. This is consistent with Van Dijk's on authority formation through political speech [18]. Tinubu portrays himself as a visionary leader with demonstrated ability. His speech boosts his leadership authority by referencing his governance record. Tinubu's self-presentation reflects Charteris-Black's findings on leadership narratives and the role of competence in political campaigns [5].

6. Conclusion

This study has illustrated the significant role language plays in political discourse by focusing on the campaign speeches of Peter Obi, Atiku Abubakar, and Bola Tinubu during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. The use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), shows how crucial grammatical structures, rhetorical devices, and linguistic patterns contribute to forming leadership identities, conveying ideologies and motivating voters. Fairclough's discourse analysis has uncovered the various ways political actors use language to influence voters' behaviour, foster emotional connections, and assert their credibility. The findings reveal a systematic examination of how linguistic devices and rhetorical strategies serve as persuasive tools in the field of political linguistics. These devices not only align with voters' emotional and rational expectations but also shape perceptions of leadership, governance, and accountability. This study enriches the theoretical discourse on political communication, particularly in the Nigerian context, by revealing the interplay between language, power, and ideology. In addition, the research highlights the socio-political implications of political speeches in addressing systemic issues, framing national priorities, and inspiring collective action. It provides a framework for understanding how language can bridge the gap between political elites and the electorate, fostering a more inclusive and participatory political process. Future studies may consider exploring the reception of these speeches among diverse demographics or examining the evolution of campaign strategies across electoral cycles.

Abbreviations

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
APC	All Progressive Congress
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
LP	Labour Party

Author Contributions

Jennifer Osayi Agho is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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