

## **IDEOLOGICAL THRUSTS OF PRESIDENT BOLA TINUBU'S INAUGURAL SPEECH: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study critically analyses the ideological thrusts in the use of personal pronouns by Nigeria's President, Bola Tinubu, at his inauguration on May 29, 2023. It can be said that world presidents galvanize support from their citizenry at the inauguration using certain classes of words. Beyond the ordinary use of personal pronouns, there are ideological connotations to their use. Particularly, the use of personal pronouns is believed to tie the knot between presidents and the people of a country for a purpose-driven government. Methodologically, the data for this paper is the inaugural speech of the current Nigerian President, Bola Tinubu, at his inauguration. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study pinpoints the ideological underpinnings of personal pronouns used by the President. The study uses Fairclough's three-tier analytical framework of *description*, *interpretation*, and *explanation*. This framework helps in reconstructing the real ideological thrust of a speech, which includes persuasion and motivation for nation-building. The findings reveal that through the use of these personal pronouns in his speech, President Tinubu was able to construct ideologies and identities to promote his political agenda. Significantly, the investigation provides critical insight into the peculiar uses of personal pronouns in speeches. The study concludes that personal pronouns are not just linguistic elements, but most importantly, ideological tools.

**KEYWORDS:** Ideologies, Personal Pronouns, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Political Agenda.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the years, linguists have established the relationship between language and power, and how language becomes a determinant of power, and also how it influences one's political ambition. However, this has triggered so many criticisms

among scholars, which led to the emergence of critical discourse analysis to serve as a standard for analysing such discourse. A critical discourse analyst intends to uncover the excessive inequalities of power using language and to help in achieving a more equitable social order. The most powerful aspect of language used in political discourse is the "personal pronouns". Personal pronouns have the power to include or exclude a person or a group of people in political discourse. It is to this effect that a proper examination of the use of personal pronouns in the inaugural speech of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is carried out. Political discourse has a long history, but linguists began to speak about it as a separate branch of discourse only in the second half of the 20th century. Political discourse is identified by its actors or politicians as there cannot be political discourse without politicians, because their political speech is what interests a political discourse analyst. The study of political discourse is about the written and spoken speeches of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents, prime ministers, and other members of government, parliament, or political parties, both at the local, national, and international levels. Political discourse is concerned with understanding the nature and function of political speeches and with critiquing the role discourse plays in producing, maintaining, abusing, and resisting power in contemporary society.

Everyone has a name, and that name is a noun. When one uses someone else's name, one identifies that person from among other persons around through a lexical category of words known as nouns. Sometimes the speaker may not want to mention the person's name many times in a speech. The use of grammatical categories of words is necessitated to replace the former to avoid repetition. Pronouns are a category of words that can be used in place of one or more nouns. The pronouns "he" and "she" clearly give gender contrast, and the first-person singular "I" and the first-person plural "us" are not morphologically related as they are with nouns, where the plural of "boy" is "boys". According to their classification, pronouns are categorized into nine groups. These include personal pronouns, reflexive pronouns, reciprocal pronouns, possessive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, relative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, universal pronouns, and partitive pronouns. Personal pronouns are used in place of nouns to avoid repetition in a sentence. There is a relationship between personal pronouns and other pronouns because they all perform the same function of replacing nouns for the purpose of avoiding repetition. These pronouns are used as devices to persuade audiences of political speeches. Unlike content words, they do not convey meaning but rather portray the perception of the speaker. Looking deeper into this, personal

pronouns have the power to include or exclude a person or people, and it is crucial to master them, especially in the political context.

Critical discourse analysis has, from the beginning, had a political project, specifically that of altering inequitable distributions of economic and political goods in contemporary societies. The intentions have been to bring a system of excessive inequalities of power into crisis by uncovering its workings and thereby help in achieving a more equitable social order. It is concerned with differentiating the modes of exercising power in discourse in the field of politics. Its interest is in the way discourse produces social domination, that is, power abuse of one group over others, and how dominated groups may discursively resist such abuse. This study limits itself only to the inaugural speech of President Bola Tinubu to unravel the intentions behind the use of personal pronouns in the speech.

Since the field of critical discourse analysis blossomed, political speeches have been analysed by different scholars. However, most of the research done in this area of political discourse has focused mostly on the general discursive devices and not on a specific aspect as such. Hence, the present study attempts to analyse the personal pronouns deployed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in his inaugural speech to ascertain the effect of such pronouns in political discourse.

We live in a society where language has a strong influence on the lives, opinions, and beliefs of the people. Personal pronouns are an integral part of language, and their essence in communication cannot be overemphasized. Personal pronouns in speech or writing can influence or incite people. This study will be beneficial to academics and researchers. More specifically, it will be beneficial to linguists who are interested in discourse analysis, pragmatics, and critical discourse analysis. Secondly, the study will be important to political scientists interested in political communication, ideology, and leadership. Thirdly, communication scholars examining the role of language in shaping public opinion and political discourse stand to benefit. Others include speechwriters tasked with the responsibility of crafting speeches for politicians, as they can gain insights into the strategic use of personal pronouns.

This study aims to build a better understanding of how President Bola Ahmed Tinubu deployed personal pronouns in his inaugural speech and to unravel the power embedded in the use of personal pronouns in political discourse. The objective of the study is to carefully and critically examine the use of personal pronouns in the inaugural speech of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The study has the following sub-objectives:

1. To bring out all the personal pronouns as contained in the inaugural speech.
2. To examine the personal pronouns and their use as tools to achieve set goals.
3. To examine the effect of three discourse markers on the generality of the people.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are those personal pronouns that keep recurring in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's inaugural speech?
2. Why did the President choose to use those personal pronouns?
3. What are the effects of these personal pronouns on the generality of the people?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The data for this study is the inaugural speech as delivered by President Bola Tinubu on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at the Eagle Square, Abuja. The source for the data is as published on [www.PRNigeria.com](http://www.PRNigeria.com), a credible news source by every standard (which informed the decision to rely on it). This study relied on the written speech as it was published. The researcher did not have to engage in any form of transcription, whether manual or automated. By relying on the text as it was published, the researcher did not engage in any form of transcription, thereby eliminating any form of reviewing and editing. The 70-paragraph document contains the data used for the analysis. The researcher only carefully searched for the personal pronouns as contained in the document. The task was not herculean because the font size of the text is large, making it relatively convenient to count. Therefore, the researcher meticulously searched for and counted all the pronouns used from the beginning of the speech to the end. When any was found, it was counted, marked against the category of pronouns, and the total was summed up. All the numbers of personal pronouns counted were captured and recorded against the category/class of personal pronoun, thus indicating the frequency. There was no need to use any software such as Vivo because the document is not large.

This study has adopted the qualitative method for data collection and analysis. The qualitative research method is ideal for the study because it is directed at providing an in-depth and interpretative understanding of the social world with the data that are very detailed, rich in information, and extensive. Furthermore, the

analysis is open to emerging concepts and ideas which may produce detailed descriptions and classifications, identify patterns of association and explanations.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Pronouns in English**

Pronouns are basically a group of words that take the place of nouns in a sentence. Quirk & Greenbaum classify pronouns into nine types: personal pronouns, reflexive pronouns, reciprocal pronouns, possessive pronouns, relative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, universal pronouns, and partitive pronouns.

Reflexive pronouns replace a co-referential noun phrase, usually within the same finite verb clause (Quirk and Greenbaum 51). These are used when the subject and the object of the sentence are the same person. In other words, they are used when the action in the sentence affects the same person. Reflexive pronouns include: “myself,” “yourself,” “himself,” “herself,” “itself,” “ourselves,” “yourselves,” and “themselves.”

Relative pronouns are pronouns that are used to introduce a relative clause - a clause that gives further information about the preceding noun. They are pronouns that introduce words that give more information about the person or the thing spoken about in the sentence (Goodman 51). In other words, relative pronouns provide extra details about a condition or situation surrounding the person or thing being discussed. Relative pronouns include: “who,” “whose,” “whom,” “which,” “that,” and so on.

Demonstrative pronouns are pronouns that point at the persons or things spoken about. Goodman states that they show the reader the exact position of the objects that the sentence describes (53). Quirk and Greenbaum assert that demonstratives can function both as determiners and pronouns (119). Demonstrative pronouns include: “this,” “that,” “these,” and “those.”

Reciprocal pronouns are pronouns that show that one person or a thing acts upon another (Goodman 54). In other words, they show how the action of one affects the other. Quirk and Greenbaum state that there are only two reciprocal pronouns in English. These are “each other” and “one another”. The former is used when two persons or things are involved.

Interrogative pronouns are pronouns that introduce questions. These pronouns make it easier to form questions. They are basically the WH questions that,

once well understood, asking questions of any form becomes easy. Quirk and Greenbaum grouped the interrogatives into personal and non-personal (118). The personal pronouns include: “who,” “whom,” and “whose.” The non-personal pronouns, on the other hand, include: “what” and “which.”

Universal pronouns are pronouns that are all-encompassing. These pronouns include “all,” “each,” and “every.” There is a meaning difference between “each” and “every.” “Each” refers to an individual already specified, whereas “every” does not.

A partitive pronoun is a word or phrase that indicates a part of a whole. Partitive pronouns include “some,” “anyone,” “anybody,” “anything,” and “anywhere.”

### **Personal Pronouns in Political Discourse**

Personal pronouns are used to replace the names of things, people, or ideas (Quirk and Greenbaum 112). Quirk and Greenbaum further state that the personal pronouns have two sets of case forms. The subjective forms are used as subjects of verbs. These subjective forms include: “I,” “You,” “He,” “She,” “We,” “They,” and “It”. Objective forms, on the other hand, are used as objects and as prepositional complements. The objective personal pronouns include: “You,” “Us,” “Him,” “Her,” “It,” and “Them.”

In studying the political speeches of world leaders, Hakansson, in her study on the use of personal pronouns by two American presidents, suggests that the pronominal choices of the presidents do not differ significantly. It also indicates that the pronoun 'I' is used when the speaker wants to speak as an individual rather than as a representative of a group. The pronoun 'We' is used to invoke a sense of collective and shared responsibility. The study also showed that the choice of pronouns and who the pronouns refer to differ greatly depending on the context of the speech (75). The study equally showed that the deployment of the personal pronoun 'I' by the speaker is to convey his opinion and also to show authority. Bramley, cited in Hakansson, says that the most captivating reason for a politician to use the pronoun 'I' is to describe himself positively and highlight personal qualities, such as someone with principles, morals, power, and who is not afraid to take action when necessary (10).

Similarly, Fadzilah et al. carried out a comparison of the functions of personal pronouns used by a Malaysian and an American political leader, and similarities were found in the use of 'We' and 'Us'. Prime Minister Mahathir and

President Trump used 'we' and 'us' to refer to their country and citizens. However, their differences in the use of personal pronouns are in the use of 'I' to express their opinion. President Trump used the pronoun 'I' to highlight his contribution and make promises to his people (72). The study showed how inclusivity and solidarity are strongly portrayed by the use of personal pronouns - 'We' and 'Us' by both speakers. The appropriate use of these personal pronouns is fundamental to the success of a political speech.

In yet another study on Political speeches of world leaders, Stanculete, in studying the use of 'I' versus 'We' first-person pronouns in the political speeches of Romania's Prime Minister, Adrian Nastase, and the United Kingdom's Prime Minister, Tony Blair, found that the preference for using personal pronouns depends on their perception of democracy. The use of each of these first-person personal pronouns has its implications. The study reveals that the predominant use of the pronoun 'I' by the Romanian president proves that he does not totally agree with the idea of democracy. Whereas in the case of the UK prime minister, the constant use of the pronoun 'We' denotes that he strongly supports the idea of democracy (135).

In the same vein, Romadlani examined the first-person pronouns contained in the victory speeches of Obama in 2008 and 2012. He explored the occurrences of first-person pronouns to reveal the form and its discourse function through political speeches. According to Romadlani, Obama exploited singular personal pronouns to convey his deep appreciation, personal experiences, hopes, and commitment as well (120). He states that the use of inclusive 'we' indicates Obama's desire to share responsibility, togetherness, and equality. In addition, by employing 'we', Obama sought to assert his political plans and concerns of reconciliation.

Ekawati studied the Indonesian presidential speech at an international forum. He examined the use of personal pronouns in the political speech of President Susilo Bambang. The study found that the president used 'I', 'we', and 'they'. Ekawati states that the personal pronoun 'I' is used when the president wants to expose his personal qualities, authority, and personal involvement (657). He further stated that 'we' is used to state the collective identity and responsibilities between the speaker and the audience, while 'they' is used when the President is referring to others. The President takes a distance from the use of 'they' in terms of responsibility.

Mykhaylenko reveals that almost all political discourse speeches are intended to exploit in-group and out-group dynamics to the advantage of the speaker and the detriment of their political opponents, and the use of personal pronouns is a highly salient feature of political speech (82). She further argues that personal pronouns in

political discourse reflect the speaker's ethics, communicative skills, education, truth value, and the political culture of the country. Politicians' choice of personal pronouns is always based on presenting themselves in a positive light.

Karapetjana, in his study of the pronominal choice in political interviews, found out that a politician's style of communication is part of his unique idiosyncrasies (43). It further reveals that the achievement of these communication goals is dependent on whether the communicators positively evaluate the use of pronouns, which goes a long way in polishing or destroying the image of such a politician accordingly. The study emphasized that the meaning of personal pronouns is pragmatic in nature because it can be comprehended with reference to co-text or the context in which they are written or spoken.

Kaewrungruang and Yaoharee studied the use of personal pronouns in the political speeches made by Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton in the 2016 US presidential election debates. The findings of the study reveal that as small as a linguistic unit of personal pronouns might be, it can impact the hearers and their decision-making (94). The use of personal pronouns also expresses the speaker's divergent ideologies while convincing the audience. The use of personal pronouns is a strategy for the participants to focus on their relationship with the audience and the unity between candidates. The pronoun 'We' was preferred in the political speeches as a way for the speakers to share their public selves and the country's responsibilities with their audience.

In studying the political speeches of African leaders, Temesas investigated the use of personal pronouns in diplomatic speech by some Cameroonian diplomats. According to Temesas, the first personal pronouns 'We' and 'I' serve a strong linguistic purpose; they give the audience a sense of belonging and help the speakers to portray strong conviction (145).

Addae *et al* carried-out research on a critical discourse analysis of selected speeches of President John Dramani Mahama's use of linguistic expressions that carry the ideologies in his speech, and they discovered that he employed discursive structures such as pronouns, rhetorical questions, metaphors, and modal verbs (1314). Aiafnan and Dishari carried out a critical discourse analysis of Mandela's 'I am prepared to Die' as revealed through the use of language (233). The use of the singular first-person pronoun 'I' demonstrates Mandela's leadership qualities, which include honesty and the courage to speak the truth. The study also highlighted his ability to inspire, influence, and motivate his followers.

In studying the political speeches of Nigerian leaders, Bello carried out a study on the use of personal pronouns by former Nigerian President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (94). The study reveals that pronouns such as 'I' and 'Me' show alignment with positive realities of humility and personal integrity, all as commodities to be exchanged for political endorsement. The use of pronouns in the president's speech creates an identity that fosters his political interest and, at the same time, mystifies the real class and power struggle at the political centre.

Marvis and Destiny's study of personal pronouns in President Muhammadu Buhari's #EndSARS speech observed that the president's deployment of personal pronouns invokes his military background (206). The use of personal pronouns invoked distance and a nonchalant attitude towards the plight of the protesters, especially his personality as a former military ruler.

Goteng in his study of the use of first-person pronouns of two Nigerian presidents revealed that the constant use of the first-person pronoun 'I' shows a self-centred leadership approach whereby decisions are only made by the leader, rather than a collective effort. The study also found that the deployment of the inclusive first-person personal pronoun 'We' fosters a sense of unity and collaboration between the leader and the led (81).

### **Ideology and Politics**

An ideology is the foundation of social representation that is shared by a social group. Over 200 years ago, Destutt de Tracy introduced the term to mean a new discipline that would study ideas or ideologies (Van Dijk 74). In discourse, ideology is defined as constructions of reality that are built into different dimensions of meanings that contribute to the production of relations of domination (Fairclough 87). This means that it is the knowledge of ideas surrounding a participant that allows him to produce relations of domination in his speech, written or spoken. Ideologies have more specifically political functions in the field of politics; they could be called political ideologies (Gee 84). Different politicians use different types of strategies to influence people, and these strategies are influenced by ideologies. The strategies are influenced by the already stored realities in the participant's cognition. These could include the participant's perception, cultural and moral values, and ethics, among others. All these put together become the participant's ideology. Whichever choice of words a politician uses in delivering a political speech, whether biased or unbiased, is influenced by his ideology. Ideology becomes a determinant of power because if a politician manipulates his ideology well, he will gain dominance over the opposite political group.

The reviewed literature has given more insight into the power of language in influencing dominance, especially personal pronouns. The studies have revealed that there is power hidden in one's ability to manipulate language, especially in the political context. They further reveal that the way language is used by political actors is a reflection of their ideologies, and these ideologies could be used to suppress their political opponents. The studies also reveal that personal pronouns have the power to include or exclude a person or a group of people. This goes on to show the power of influencing social dominance that is embedded in personal pronouns.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

The term 'discourse analysis' was first used by Zellig Harris in his article entitled "Discourse Analysis" cited in Kamalu et al (169). According to him, discourse analysis is a method for the analysis of connected speech or writing for continuing descriptive linguistics beyond the limit of a simple sentence at a time. Discourse analysis covers the aspect of the use of language. It is an activity that explains different texts and talks that are used in different contexts.

Ojha states that discourse analysis has become an immediate interest of teachers, students, text linguists, and conversation analysts for explaining the properties of text and interactions of everyday communication (8). It is concerned with the study of language above the sentence level, including meaning and context, and features of interaction of everyday language.

Similarly, Johnstone clarifies that discourse analysis does not regard language as an abstract system but views language as a communicative tool to pool information about memories and feelings (3). Therefore, discourse analysis handles communication by description of the processes involved in it. It is a modern discipline of social science and linguistics. Discourse analysis is a linguistic, cognitive, and social approach. It captures the phonological, situational, and other features, and it has many areas of study within linguistics.

This study is anchored on the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis. It is therefore important to explain the theory of CDA. The origin of the term 'Critical Discourse Analysis' has been attributed to the Lancaster School of Linguistics by the publication of Fairclough's "Language and Power" cited in Wodak and Meyer (15). However, the root of Critical Discourse Analysis is 'Critical Linguistics' developed at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s, and the terms are now used interchangeably. Critical Discourse Analysis specialists include leading scholars like Norman Fairclough, Teun Van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, Paul Clinton, and many other scholars who contributed to the field.

CDA is the study and analysis of texts and talk from a perspective that is politically committed, which focuses on the ways language exercises power in society (Ojha 9). Both written and spoken discourses have power. If such written and spoken discourses are analysed critically, it can be taken as Critical Discourse Analysis. Discourse is meant to be analysed from different perspectives of one's choice.

According to Wodak and Meyer, the terms 'Critical Linguistics' and 'Critical Discourse Analysis' are often used interchangeably (2). Recently, Critical Discourse Analysis seems to have been preferred and is being used to denote the theory that was formerly identified as critical linguistics. The roots of critical discourse analysis lie in text linguistics, socio-psychology, Cognitive Science, and Applied Linguistics. Wodak and Meyer further explain that Critical Discourse Analysis aims at producing and conveying critical knowledge that enables human beings to free themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection. They aim at producing enlightenment and freedom. They seek not only to describe and explain, but also to create awareness in people of their needs and interests. Thus, the defining features of Critical Discourse Analysis are its concern with power as a central condition in social life, and its efforts to develop a theory of language that includes this as its major basis. They summarily defined Critical Discourse Analysis as being fundamentally interested in analysing transparent relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language.

Van Dijk views discourse as a communicative event, a manifestation of different meanings. He emphasizes text linguistics and cognitive linguistics, and also concentrates on evaluating discourse in a social cognitive approach. In terms of cognition, it is not difficult to know that the approach introduces the study of cognition into the analytical studies in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis by creating a relationship between cognitive structure and discourse, and also social structures (98). In other words, it is cognition, society, and discourse that formulate Van Dijk's Social Cognitive Approach. He argues generally that a complete discourse analysis of text and talk, as is often the case in Critical Discourse Analysis, is totally out of the question (99). Another important point by Van Dijk is the focus on the relationship between discourse and context. The relationship between discourse and context is not determined, and there exists a layer of adjustment between these two elements. Dijk believes that it is social representation, such as attitude, knowledge, and ideology, that influences discourse and context. Instead of Critical Discourse Analysis, Dijk chooses to use Critical Discourse Studies. He states

that Critical Discourse Studies combines several methods from linguistics, psychology, and the humanities.

Hailing states that Critical Discourse Analysis might be taken as an outcome of Critical Linguistics that stretches the aspect of criticism within discourse studies (12). Critical Discourse Analysis is a linguistic tool that can be used for the analysis of practical discourse situations. He further states that Critical Discourse Analysis is a critical shape of Critical Linguistics that widens the analytical approach used in discourse analysis from a critical view.

Gee views Critical Discourse Analysis as an approach towards language analysis that considers text as sections of particular social practices which have political inference about problems of solidarity, status, and division of communal power (14). It is an interdisciplinary kind of analysis that deals with inquiring analytical relations that link discourse and some more elements, and the investigation of internal associations about discourse.

Lock, cited in Amoussa and Allagbe, states that the word 'critical' denotes the habit of evaluating an object or situation in accordance with a system of rules, principles, and values, and it should not be understood in the common sense of the word, that is, criticizing or being negative (12). Wodak claims that 'critical' means not taking things for granted, opening difficulties and being self-reflexive in one's research, and through the process making hidden structures of power relations and ideologies manifest (10). Rogers believes that within this framework of 'critical', the analyst intends to uncover power relationships and demonstrate inequalities embedded in society (3).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework for this research is Norman Fairclough's sociocultural approach. This approach is a method of examining social and cultural variables that could be employed in protesting against the power and control of an elite group over other people. Fairclough believes that our language, which shapes our social identities, knowledge system, and beliefs, is also shaped by them in turn. This means that language and these social variables have a complementary relationship because they both shape each other (Fairclough 40). For Fairclough, awareness is the first and basic step towards emancipation. He emphasizes raising the level of people's consciousness about the social impact of what they do or say.

Fairclough's model for critical discourse analysis is made up of three interrelated processes of analysis. These three dimensions are: the object of analysis, which includes verbal and visual text, the process by which the text is produced and received, which includes writing, speaking, listening, or viewing, and finally, the sociocultural conditions that govern these processes. According to Fairclough, each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis. To him, the text analysis requires description, the processing analysis requires interpretation, and the social analysis requires explanation (98).

Fairclough's three-dimensional approach, which includes text analysis, processing, and social analysis, is relevant to this research because it enables the researcher to focus on the specific linguistic selection that makes up the text. The specific linguistic selection for this research is the personal pronouns, and this approach becomes suitable for it because it limits the scope of analysis to the personal pronouns. It also provides different points of analysis. In explaining the relevance of this approach, Jank states that Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis is useful because it provides multiple points of analysis (18). It does not matter which kind of analysis one begins with, if they are all included and are shown to be explanatory. The strength of this approach is that the different dimensions that it offers provide the means for analysing data in clear terms. However, this approach, like any other approach, pursues one common goal of representing the relationship between language, power, and ideology, and the role that language plays in influencing power and social inequalities.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

In delivering his inaugural speech, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu deployed several personal pronouns. All the sentences or phrases that are given in parts illustrate the use of personal pronouns by the current Nigerian President, and they are analysed using Fairclough's socio-cultural three-tier analytical framework. The three dimensions of Fairclough's approach are description, interpretation, and explanation of any given text.

**Table: Descriptive Tier**

| <b>Pronoun</b> | <b>Frequency</b> |
|----------------|------------------|
| 'I'            | 15               |
| 'You'          | 12               |
| 'We'           | 36               |
| 'Us'           | 11               |
| 'They'         | 6                |
| 'It'           | 9                |
| 'Them'         | 2                |

The subjective first-person singular personal pronoun 'I' is the second most occurring pronoun in the inaugural speech of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The occurrence of this word fifteen times is not without political significance. This category of pronouns is captured in the speech as excerpts given (a) *I stand before you, honoured to assume the sacred mandate you have given me.* (b) *I know that His hand shall provide the needed moral strength and clarity of purpose in those instances when we seem to have reached the limits of our human capacity.* Bramley opines that 'I' is a term of self-reference rather than a substitute for a noun (92). He further states that 'I' is the way one refers to oneself in a conversation and not a substitute for one's name. This pronoun stands alone to mark the speaker referring to himself. Beard also states that 'I' shows a vivid sense of personal involvement, which is useful especially in delivering good news (54). In summary, the use of 'I' in this speech underscores the president's appreciation and also his pledges of service to the nation.

'You' is used twelve times. This can be seen in the following examples (a) *Here, permit me to say a few words to my predecessor, President Muhammadu Buhari. Mr President, you have been an honest, patriotic leader who has done his best for the nation you love.* (b) *On a more personal note, you are a worthy partner and friend.* (c) *May History be kind to you* (d). *Our administration shall govern on your behalf but never rule over you.* 'You' is used to refer to the people of Nigeria in general, for the president's supporters, and also to appreciate the former President, Muhammadu Buhari. 'You' in itself has a referential ambiguity because it can refer to one person or many people. The first and second use of 'you' refers to the people who converged at the Eagle Square as witnesses of the president's political victory. 'You' is used to appreciate the former President, Muhammadu Buhari. The other use of 'you' is in reference to the entire people of Nigeria. Reassurances and persuasions are

going on using the pronoun 'you'. The pronoun 'you' has the potential to give the impression that the addressee is bound with the addresser, and politicians are fond of using it to build affinity. Fairclough refers to this tactic as 'synthetic personalization' (52). Fairclough defines it as a compensatory tendency to give the impression of treating each of the people in a mass as an individual. The transposition of interest, where the politician makes his subjects the politician's interest as theirs, is part of the features of political language (Beard 74).

'We' is used thirty-six times. This class of pronouns can be seen as used in the following (a) *As a nation, we have long ago decided to march beyond the dimness of night into the open day of renewed national hope* (b) *We have endured hardships that would have made other societies crumble* (c) *Yet, we have shouldered the heavy burden to arrive at this SUBLIME moment where the prospect of a better future merges with our improved capacity to create that future* (d) *To the surprise of many but not to ourselves, we have more firmly established this land as a democracy in both word and deed* (e) *We have stumbled at times, but our resilience and diversity have kept us going*. For Pennycook, 'we' is used as a pronoun of solidarity and of rejection, of inclusion and exclusion (102). According to Fairclough, when 'we' is used by a leader, it assimilates the leader to the people as a humbling tactic. In the excerpt above, the various dimensions of the pronoun 'we' are brought to political effect in thirty-six occurrences (110). The usage of 'we' indicates the various representations of the referents. Starting from sentence one to fourteen, 'we' is used to refer to the overall Nigerians, including the president, who have all contributed to the growth of the country. In the subsequent sentences, 'we' is represented as two people: President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his Vice President Kashim Shettima respectively (f) *We shall consult and dialogue but never dictate* (g) *We shall reach out to all but never put down a single person for holding views contrary to our own* (h) *We are here to further mend and heal this nation, not tear and injure it*.

The pronoun 'us' occurred eleven times in the President's inaugural speech. It is captured in the following: (a) *Our burdens may make us bend at times, but they shall never break us. In this vein, may I offer a few comments regarding the election that brought us to this juncture* (b) *Let us take the next great step in the journey they began and believed in*. (c) *Today, let us recommit our very selves to placing Nigeria in our hearts as the indispensable home for each and every one of us regardless of creed, ethnicity, or place of birth*. (d) *Our mission is to improve our way of life in a manner that nurtures our humanity, encourages compassion toward one another, and duly rewards our collective effort to resolve the social ills that seek to divide us*.

(e) *Let us develop a shared sense of fairness and equity.* All the occurrences of 'us' represent the overall Nigerians, including the president, as beneficiaries or shareholders of the positive efforts towards the development of the country. With the pronoun 'us', the president reverts to his leadership position as a team work with his cabinet, and all Nigerians as well. This inclusive pronoun is used to give the masses a sense of involvement and participation.

'They' is used six times. 'They' is a pronoun of exclusion. The president used 'they' to refer to his political opponents. He used 'they' to detach himself from the affairs of his political opponents. These can be seen in the following excerpts (a) *They shall forever be my fellow compatriots. And I will treat them as such.* (b) *They represent important constituencies and concerns that wisdom dare not ignore.*

The pronoun 'it' appears nine times in the president's inaugural speech. The president, in all occurrences of 'it', uses it to eulogize his political victory. He stated that (a) *In this vein, may I offer a few comments regarding the election that brought us to this juncture. It was a hard-fought contest.* (b) *And it was also fairly won.*

Lastly, the pronoun 'them' is the least occurring pronoun in the inaugural speech of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. 'Them' is the third person plural personal pronoun. The President uses this pronoun to refer to his political opponents of the Labour Party (LP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), who have taken their concerns over the outcome of the election to seek legal redress. The use of this class of pronoun can be seen in the following sentences: (a) *The outcome reflected the will of the people. However, my victory does not render me any more Nigerian than my opponents. Nor does it render them any less patriotic.* (b) *They shall forever be my fellow compatriots. And I will treat them as such.* These analyses respond to the first research objectives.

## INTERPRETATION

Interpretations are driven by a combination of what is in the text and the interpreter's mental resources. According to Fairclough, the process of interpretation involves situational context and inter-textual contexts (109). The situational context refers to the immediate context under which a discourse takes place. The situational context involves three questions that need to be asked of any text under analysis. These include: What is going on? Who is involved? In what relation? These questions help with the comprehension of the identities constructed in the personal pronouns. The event is a political inauguration of the democratically elected

president of Nigeria of the All Progressives Congress (APC). It is an event that gathers people of different cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds together with the president-elect. The relationship between the producer of the text and the audience is that of the leader and the led. This role of political leadership has influenced the careful choice of pronouns. This can be viewed from the following sentences: (a) *My supporters, I thank you. To those who voted otherwise, I extend my hand across the political divide. I ask you to grasp it in national affinity and brotherhood. For me, political coloration has faded away. All I see are Nigerians.* (b) *May we uphold these fitting and excellent notions as the new Nigerian ideal.* The role of language here is important because it is used by the President to make his political promises and to appreciate the masses for giving him the mantle of leadership. Both the speaker and the listeners are influenced by the context of the message. In the situational context, interpretation is influenced by the physical context that has been mentioned. The analyses above answer the second research question.

## **EXPLANATION**

The explanation stage relates to the analysis of the socio-cultural environment within which the discursive practice takes place and how it may affect it and be affected by it. The basic objective of the explanation stage is to present discourse as part of the societal process and what affects how discourse can impact those structures. This helps in maintaining socio-cultural practices. Fairclough states that there are three things to consider while investigating discourse. These include: social determinants, ideologies, and the effects of the discourse on the generality of the people (84).

In delivering his inaugural speech, the President has drawn on the essence of religion by invoking God. This can be seen in the sentence: *And my faith in God Almighty, absolute.* Religion is paramount in the political affairs of Nigeria. Whatever it is that comes wrapped up in religion is considered to be genuine by the masses. Barnard says that the political affairs of Nigeria are highly influenced by religion, and political leaders use religion to gain people's trust (120). President Bola Ahmed Tinubu invokes God as a political strategy in his inaugural speech. The president mentioned God in four different instances: (a) *May God bless you and May He bless our beloved land.* (b) *And my faith in God Almighty, absolute.* (c) *This handover symbolizes our trust in God, our enduring faith in representative*

*governance and our belief in our ability to reshape this nation into the society it was always meant to be.* This way, the people tend to believe that he is divinely ordained and will lead to the expectations of the masses because of his mention of God.

The President has also used pronouns that identify with the masses. The use of these expressions helps in appealing to class sentiments. This strategy is captured in the following sentences: *(a) I stand before you honoured to assume the sacred mandate you have given me. (b) Our burdens may make us bend at times, but they shall never break us. (c) We are here to further mend and heal this nation, not tear and injure it.* He tries to identify with the masses in his speech by using the pronoun 'we' and also emphasising oneness. He states that *(d) As citizens, we declare as one unified people devoted to one unified national cause.* This appeal to class sentiment is a strategic tactic by political leaders. This appeal constitutes a veil of equality beneath which the real inequalities carry on, on the other hand. This veil of equality covers the inequality and political oppressions that take place in reality (Fairclough 195).

The ideology of the speaker is made manifest where facts are presupposed. One can see the subtle representation of the past regime as weak and unfair, and the representation of the President's potential leadership as favourable to the masses. These are the president's ideological opinions. The speaker states thus, *'we commend the decision of the outgoing administration in phasing out the petrol subsidy, the regime which has increasingly favoured the rich more than the poor'.* This statement presupposes that the past administration was weak because it only favoured the rich instead of favouring all. This subtle negative representation of the past administration and the president's positive self-representation are ideological. The political realities of the past administration are considered unfavourable, and his self-acclaimed eligibility is presented as the way things should be.

The effect of the pronominal choice of the president is that it has served its purpose. The speaker has assumed his office of leadership. But the actual struggles remain essentially covert. The whole speech has drawn upon superficial realities, but it has mystified the obvious realities of class and political struggles and democratic subversion. Also, the social alignment with the masses is meant to be seen as the truth, but actual class realities are meant to be hidden. In critical discourse analysis, what is said is as useful as what is not said. Behind the scenes, politics take place by electoral rigging and so on, but they have essentially been hidden and replaced by superficial realities of classlessness. The analyses above answer the third research question.

## CONCLUSION

From the findings of this research, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu used the personal pronoun 'we' more in his speech. This is part of his strategy to use his power in gaining a positive image from Nigerians in the form of developing a sense of togetherness and belonging of Nigerians to their nation. The personal pronoun 'I' is used by Tinubu to refer to his personal views. He also uses the personal pronoun 'I' to show self-confidence and responsibility before Nigerians. The other pronouns: 'they', 'you', and 'it' are used by the president to refer to certain situations. Critical discourse analysis is one of the best methods that can be adopted to disclose the manipulative use of language by politicians to implicitly incorporate ideology. This way of using language by President Tinubu is not without a political agenda. It is a persuasive strategy by the president to gain domination and also to gain the trust of the people. The effect of the pronominal choice of the president is that it has served its purpose because the speaker has assumed his office of leadership. However, the actual struggles of class remain hidden. The entirety of the speech has drawn upon superficial realities but has mystified the everyday realities of class, democratic subversion, and political struggles. This study is limited to the use of personal pronouns. The researcher recommends further studies of personal pronouns by conducting other models of critical discourse analysis, as they will bring more grounded findings.

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