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## **Discursive Strategies in Selected Political Rally Campaigns of 2011 Elections in Southwestern Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This paper discussed the discursive strategies in selected political rally campaigns of the 2011 elections in Southwestern Nigeria with a view to revealing the dynamics of political persuasion and mobilization in contemporary natural political communication in Nigeria. The data for the study were obtained from two political rallies in each of the six Southwestern states in Nigeria, making a total of twelve. The political rallies were purposively selected as the focus was on one rally of each of the two strongest parties in each of the six Southwestern Nigerian states. The data gathered were analyzed using the analytical tools of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The data analysis revealed that the discourse participants deployed discourse strategies such as allusion, propagandistic language, code-switching and code-mixing, requesting, flattery, praise, and provocative language. The study concluded that while the discourse continues to be an effective platform for political struggles and power play, it also highlights the cultural, linguistic, and social factors which had a bearing on the language use of political actors in Southwestern Nigeria.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the 1999 return to civilian administration in Nigeria, different forms of political discourse have received attention relative to their frequency and importance to the nation-building process. Zand-Moghadam and Bikineh (in press) elucidate the importance of political discourse when they remark that by the certain use of linguistic means, politicians may accomplish their own political aims which are to shape people's thought and to convince them to act as they tend. Scholars have researched into genres of Nigerian political discourse such as political speeches, political adverts, political interviews, political debates, and political cartoons (see Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013; Asiyabola, 2009; Ayoola, 2005; Daramola, 2008; Odebunmi, 2009; Opeibi, 2009). However, there has not been any comprehensive and representative study on the Nigerian political rally discourse, especially with focus on the naturally-occurring verbal discourse of the diverse participants in the discourse. While linguistic analyses of political speeches are generally the most popular in political discourse research in Nigeria, natural political rally speeches have not been subjected to detailed analysis. Although Opeibi (2009) researched into political campaign discourse, including speeches, data for the study was not obtained from political rallies but newspapers which did not constitute the natural data of political rallies. Moreover, the study captured a distant time in Nigerian politics and political discourse and the speeches analyzed were only those of the presidential aspirants in the popular 1993 Presidential elections in Nigeria, Chief M. K. O. Abiola and Alhaji Bashir Tofa.

Abdullahi-Idiagbon (2010) studied political campaign speeches of the 2007 elections but the scope of his study was narrow as he used only three presidential campaign speeches as data for his work. Therefore, it is apparent that there is yet not much research that has accounted for the natural dynamic discourse of politicians at political rallies which represents a central part of political mobilization crucial to political stability in Nigeria, hence the need for the present study.

Benoit (2006, p. 10) characterizes political campaign discourse when he remarks that "There can be no question that political campaigns are instrumental means to achieve a particular end (obtaining political office) or functional in nature". Benoit (2006) insists that political campaign discourse seeks to acclaim (tell the public about the good points of the politician), attack, or criticize the opponent and defend the politician against negative criticisms.

In Nigeria, politicians deploy political campaigns for the purposes highlighted above. Often times, Nigerian politicians try to persuade the electorate to vote for them by articulating their future plans and presenting their previous achievements. Also, there are usually open verbal exchanges in the discourse, which many times lead to physical harm or perhaps heat up the polity unnecessarily. Nigerian politicians usually consider campaigns appropriate avenues for them to attack their opponents, commenting on features such as their weaknesses and character with a view to achieving what van Dijk (2006, p. 734) terms "negative other representation".

The 2011 elections reflect to a great extent the dynamics of political maneuvering and personality representations characteristic of political campaign cultures in view of their currency and the fact that in planning and preparing for the elections, politicians had had the privilege of learning from the experiences of three previous general elections (1999, 2003, 2007). This paper therefore seeks to describe and analyze discursive features of the 2011 political rally campaigns in Southwestern Nigeria and relate these to the Nigerian socio-political context.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Perspectives on Nigerian Politics and Political Discourse

The literature on Nigerian politics and political discourse is dense. Scholars have examined the subject from academic traditions such as political science, linguistics, communication, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies to mention a few. Most works on Nigerian politics, for instance, have focused on the

inadequacies of the political order of the country, highlighting the numerous banes of the growth of Nigerian politics (see Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006; Aniekwe & Kushie, 2011; Obiyan, 2010). Some of the issues generally highlighted in those studies as negatively affecting political development in the country include financial corruption, political corruption, general debasement of societal value system, flawed electoral system, and ethnic politics. Many of these topical issues feature in Nigerian political discourse, as aspiring political office holders usually refer to them to present themselves positively while attacking or discrediting their opponents. Therefore, the political discourse of Nigeria's democracy is such that touches on and raises a lot of issues pertaining to the socio-cultural cum political experience of the Nigerian people.

The interesting nature of Nigeria's political discourse flowing from the diversity of issues thrown up in it makes the different genres of the discourse in the country a subject of much scholarly attention. Our focus specifically is on the linguistic perspective to the discourse. A lot of scholarly works have been done on the language of Nigerian politics, ranging from those that focus on political speeches, political advertisements, political debates, political interviews to media representation of politics, political parties, and politicians.

Some of the earliest studies on Nigerian political discourse focus on political speeches of notable political leaders of the country in the first and second Republics (see Akindele, 1989; Awonuga, 1988; Oladeji, 1991). Most recent studies on political speeches in Nigeria have also focused on those of political leaders of the country's fourth Republic such as Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Yar'adua and Goodluck Jonathan (see Abuya, 2012; Awonuga, 2005; Asiyabola, 2009; Ayoola, 2005; Taiwo, 2008). Furthermore, since Nigeria's politics has also experienced military intervention which gave political powers to the military men, there are also studies on the language of erstwhile military leaders in the country (see Ayeomoni, 2007; Daramola, 2008; Oha, 1994).

There is, however, not much research on the natural language of Nigerian politicians at political rallies. The only commendable work in this regard is Opeibi (2004) which actually

focuses on the speeches of only the presidential aspirants in the 1993 presidential elections in Nigeria without accounting for the features of the interjectory remarks by diverse politicians who speak on the podiums at typical Nigerian political rallies. Furthermore, since Opeibi's (2004) study focuses on a distant time in the political history of Nigeria, a study that captures a more recent time will reveal the current discursive features of Nigerian political rally campaigns.

### 3. Methodology

The data was obtained purposively across the six Southwestern states of Nigeria (Osun, Oyo, Ondo, Èkiti, Ogun, and Lagos) in 2011 from twelve political rallies. The political rallies were each one of the strongest two political parties in each of the six states. I focused on the strongest political parties because their rallies represented the contemporary political rally culture in Southwestern Nigeria. The verbal discourse of the rallies was recorded and some television stations were visited for data collection to complement data personally gathered.

The data collected were analyzed within the theoretical purview of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). I considered SFL apt for the analysis of the data because it emphasizes the relationship of language to the social conditions of the environment of its use. According to Fairclough (2003, p. 7), "Systemic Functional Linguistics is concerned with the relationship between language and other elements and aspects of social life, and its approach to the linguistic analysis of texts is always oriented to the social character of texts" (see Halliday, 1985 for more information on SFL). Therefore, the social orientation of the data for the study convinces one that the theory is suitable for the analysis of the discourse.

The analysis covers discursive features such as allusion, propagandistic language, code-switching and code-mixing, requesting, flattery, praise, and provocative language. The above-listed features have been focused on because they represent the most prominent and significant features of the discourse being studied based on my interaction with the data gathered.

## 4. Findings

The analysis of the discursive strategies found in the data is presented in this section. The section presents the communicative value of allusion, propagandistic language, code-switching and code-mixing, requesting, flattery, praise, and provocative language in the political rally campaigns of 2011 elections in Southwestern Nigeria.

### 4.1. Allusion

Allusion is an important discursive strategy used by politicians, especially political candidates to persuade their audience, appeal to their sentiments and convince them on their candidatures. There are various types of allusion in the discourse. In what follows, we shall examine the various forms of allusion in the discourse and their semantic implications.

#### 4.1.1. Religious Allusion

Religious allusion refers to the use of language to reflect certain religious attitudes and commitments by discourse participants. This feature manifests in the discourse owing to the ubiquity of religion in Nigeria and among Nigerians. Religious involvement is high in Nigeria and this reflects in the language use of the people. It is common to hear words such as *walahi* or *Jesus* being used as exclamatory words. Politicians in Nigeria however reflect this propensity for various reasons. Perhaps it can be said that some politicians naturally make such allusions because of their deep religious devotion, some perhaps use them to appeal to sentiments since they are aware that their audience would like to hear such expressions. Thus, for the latter group, reference to religion becomes a dubious means of causing the addressees to perceive them as religious or being godly. Below are instances of religious allusion in the discourse:

#### Extract 1

Solu ala nabiyi kareem  
E yin Olúwa lógo  
Ní orúkọ Jèsù  
Eríwo yà.

#### Translation

Praise be Almighty Allah  
Praise the Lord  
In the name of Jesus  
Salutations to the initiates

#### PDP Rally in Osogbo, 2011

The text above was produced by a political leader at the above indicated rally. Ordinarily, one would not have expected the speaker to produce such a text since the audience was a political one, but the politician chose to use it to appeal to the adherents of the different religions present at the campaign rally. Specifically, this study reveals that some Muslim politicians are in the habit of saying “solu ala nabiyi kareem” anywhere and anytime they mounted the podium to address their audience. Consider the extract below:

#### Extract 2

Ausubillahi mina shaetani rajim  
Bisimilahi rahamoni rohim  
Wakuli amdulilahi lamyalidi waladan  
Wa lam yakun lahu sharikun ful mulik  
Wa lam yakunlahun waliyu minasululli waka  
bisihu takbira

#### Translation

I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Shaytan  
All praise and thanks are Allah's who has not  
begotten  
And who has no partner in his dominion  
Nor is he low to have a Wali (protector)  
And magnify him with all magnificence.

#### ACN Rally in Ilé-Ifẹ̀, 2011

The extract above was produced by a serving Governor. His recitation of the Quran witnessed a rapturous acceptance by the audience as shouts of “Allah” rent the air even though he was going to sing a *fújì* song which completely negates the principles of the religion he professed, as singing *fújì* is forbidden in Islam. Therefore, in as much as one can say that through the recitation by the discourse producer, the speaker shows his love for his religion, he also consciously uses it as a manipulative tool to appeal to his audience who fancy that persons seeking elective offices are religious. After all, a devout Muslim such as the Governor wishes to be seen will not sing a *Fújì* song, which is un-Islamic. Therefore, one can observe that the bulk of religious allusion in the discourse is not exclusively for the stimulation of spirituality but a ritual that appeals to the religious sentiment of the people with a view to ensuring the acceptance of the political speakers.

#### 4.1.2. Social Allusion

The discourse of the 2011 political rallies in Southwestern Nigeria drew largely on social allusion. Social allusion basically concerns reference to certain issues and realities in the society. Such issues may be of past, present or in fact future significance. Political rally discourse contains a lot of social allusions due to the fact that in the discourse, politicians try to provide a lot of factual information to the electorate in order to persuade and convince them. Consider the example below:

##### Extract 3

The problem of youth unemployment must be tackled so as to reduce crime and other anti-social vices in our society.

##### PDP Rally in Ìbàdàn, 2011

The text above makes reference to a major issue in the Nigerian society, youth unemployment, which is frequently discussed. Certain words in the text are significant. The speaker mentioned “problem”, “tackled”, “reduce”, “crime”, “anti-social vices”, and “society”. The above listed words and expressions are central to the social allusion made in the text. The word “problem” indicates that there is a negative reality in the Nigerian society which is a social fact, and that is youth unemployment. “Crime” and “anti-social vices” are lexical items that emphasize or show the effect of the problem made reference to in the speech. Let us consider another instance of social allusion in the discourse:

##### Extract 4

Those who have been stealing notes, we have to stop them.

##### ACN Rally in Abẹ̀òkúta, 2011

In the text above, allusion is made to a social fact in the Nigerian society. The speaker comments on the practice of embezzling money which is rife in the Nigerian society. It is interesting that the speaker, being a former Labor unionist who later became Governor, made allusion to the social fact in the discourse. The tone of the text is seductive, as the intention of the speaker for making such a reference was basically to cause the addressees reflect on the situation of the nation and vote in favor of his party, which he presents as one which does not condone with embezzlement.

#### 4.1.3. Historical Allusion

Since the knowledge of history is important in politics, it therefore becomes important for historical allusion to feature in political discourse. Historical allusion manifests when speakers make reference to historical facts in their speeches to drive home the points being made by them. Historical allusions are basically powerful statements that are used to create flashbacks in discourses. For addressees to understand the points being made through such allusions, they require some knowledge of the contexts of the historical information being provided. Consider the text below:

##### Extract 5

You are welcome here. We are here on the historic hill of Mapo where things have been happening. Mr. President sir, I want to tell you that Shehu Shagari came here in 1979 and he won. I want to tell you also that Umar Yar’Adua came here and he won, and I want to assure you that you are here today, I want to tell you that you have won.

##### PDP Rally in Ìbàdàn, 2011

In the text above, the speaker alluded to the historical fact that presidential candidates who had visited the Mapo Hill for campaigns were victorious. The major message which the speaker wanted to convey was that Dr. Goodluck Jonathan would be victorious in the elections since he had visited the Mapo Hills. But he used the historical allusion to emphasize and authenticate his opinion. Since it is a cliché that “history usually repeats itself”, the speaker assures that the victory of the presidential candidate is assured as was those of his predecessors such as Alhaji Yar’Adua and Alhaji Shagari, who visited Mapo Hills. The lexical item, “historic”, used to describe the Hills is in fact indicative of the historicity being invoked in the text, and it shares some relationship with the expression, “where things have been happening”. Indeed, what can be inferred from the extract is that what makes the place historic is the fact that “things have been happening there”, that is, the venue has proved to be a fertile ground for the aspirations of political candidates. Below is another instance of historical allusion in the discourse:

##### Extract 6

Tí ẹ̀ bá wo ibi tí a wà lónì

Ibí bàì làwọn baba baba wa láti igbà Chief  
Obáfẹmi Awólówò ti bèrè oríre  
Ibí ná ti bèrè sí to gbogbo ilú Nàìjíríà....

#### Translation

If you look at where we are today  
This is where our great fathers from Chief  
Awólówò's time started prospering  
This is where they started developing the whole  
of Nigeria

#### ACN Rally in Ìbàdàn, 2011

The historical allusion in the text above is used to emphasize the deterioration of Ìbàdàn which had been the springboard of development in the whole of Nigeria. The text reminds one of the glorious days of Ìbàdàn when committed leaders were leading the political class. The text is produced to cause the audience reflect on those good days and ask questions on the current deplorable situation of the town, ultimately with the intention of presenting the party of the speaker as a party committed to the restoration of the glory of Ìbàdàn, hence the party to vote for.

#### 4.2. Propagandistic Language

Propaganda is an important feature of political discourse. It can be positive or negative, and in fact, it is an aspect of the language of politics which reveals the manipulative power of language. Since politics usually involves struggle for power, politicians and political parties consciously use language either to castigate their contenders in order to advance their own cause or simply hype up certain facts or ideas about their own activities. These different forms of propaganda are found in the data for this study. Below is an example:

#### Extract 7

A ò dàbí àwọn kan (We are not like some people)  
Who spent eight years in the Senate without  
achieving anything  
We know them or don't we?  
The candidate I am presenting to you is tested  
and trusted.

#### ACN Rally in Ilé-Ifẹ̀, 2011

The extract above is a typical example of negative propaganda at the political rallies of the 2011 elections in Southwestern Nigeria. In the text, a particular politician and his political party are presented in a bad light by the speaker

with a view to obtaining the people's support for his own party and candidate. The speaker used the interrogative, "we know them or don't we?", to emphasize the personality of the politician without supplying the name of the politician. This feature of the discourse is concomitant with the implicit violence generated in political discourse and politics as a whole.

Another example of propagandistic language which is positive but exaggerative is found below:

#### Extract 8

Nothing shall be taken for granted, nothing  
Because we do know that we have work to do  
There are areas in this country today that are  
crying for attention. We will address the areas of  
security, the economy, unemployment,  
corruption and the diseases.

#### PDP Rally in Ìbàdàn, 2011

The above can be said to be a cliché in the discourse of Nigerian politicians. Politicians have always stated with renewed passion and style that they realize that they need to work and that they would work. They have the tendency to identify certain aspects of the life of the society as needing urgent attention, which they would pursue once elected into political offices. However, to the average person who has no attachment to the party of such a speaker, he or she considers it mere propaganda in view of the fact that politicians do not usually fulfill most of those promises when they assume political offices. The utterances almost always serve the immediate purpose of persuading the electorate to vote for a politician or a group of political candidates without any commitment to the locution made.

#### 4.3. Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

The data corpus for this study reveals that code-switching and code-mixing are a feature of the 2011 political rally discourse in Southwestern Nigeria. In line with Opeibi's (2009, p. 264) finding that code-switching and code-mixing are "used not only as a means of reaching the majority of the voters who are barely literate, but it is also a strategy meant to show that the politicians are themselves part of the audience", this study shows that code-mixing and code-switching in the discourse are a conscious

strategy. The speakers at political rallies, especially political leaders or candidates, use them to identify strongly with the electorate whose support they seek. Below is an instance of code-switching in the discourse:

**Extract 9**

We need everybody and I do hope this will be given attention. Let me also say this, *ẹyin ọmọ Yorùbá. Nígba kan rí, ẹyin agbo la wà o.*

**PDP Rally in Ibàdàn, 2011**

The extract above was produced by a political leader at the participation space to consciously identify with all classes of people in the environment (literate or illiterate). Of course, the speaker has competence in the English language but he switched code in order to accommodate persons who likely would find it difficult to process the information provided in English. Another instance of the use of code-switching to identify with the electorate is given below:

**Extract 10**

The wife of the Senate President. *Ẹ káárọ o Lagosians.*

*Sé dáadáa ni? Ìyàwó nkó? PDP nkó?*

**PDP Rally in Ibàdàn, 2011**

The extract above was produced by a non-Yoruba speaking political leader, as a greeting to the people of Ibàdàn who are Yorùbá. The fact that the speaker consciously used Yorùbá even though he was Hausa showed that he recognized the importance of the use of indigenous languages in attracting and appealing to the people who use the language. Below is another example of code-switching in the discourse:

**Extract 11**

*Mo dúpẹ lówọ yín fún àtileyin yin ní gbogbo igbà. Ìfowósowópọ yín ni the last elections, every election that we have done in this place, I know that your heart has always been with us.*

**Labor Party Rally in Ondo, 2011**

The text above was produced by a serving Governor, who in spite of his level of erudition as a qualified medical doctor, could use both the Yorùbá language and the English language at such intersentential levels. This shows that he appreciates the importance of indigenous languages in political communication. He strategically uses the two languages to show

that he is natural, simple and like every other member of the electorate.

Also, there are instances of code-mixing in the discourse where certain Yorùbá words are inserted into sentences constructed in English or vice-versa. Consider the examples below:

**Extract 12**

All our baba, Board of Trustees Chairman, baba Obásanjó, you are welcome Baba.

**PDP Rally in Ibàdàn, 2011**

**Extract 13**

The foundation which Ìrókò has laid in these two years.

**Labor Party Rally in Ondo, 2011**

**Extract 14**

We have here, Chief Àkàndé, baba ọmọ kéékèèké.

**ACN Rally in Abẹ̀òkúta, 2011**

In the extracts above, the Yorùbá words, “baba”, “Ìrókò” and “baba ọmọ kéékèèké” are inserted into English expressions. The expressions are pragmatically used to convey peculiar cultural meanings which the English language may not communicate fully. “Baba” in the first text is used to show full respect to General Obásanjó. The speaker could have used the word “father”, but he realizes that “baba” conveys the reference he wishes to show better than its English equivalent. “Ìrókò” in the second text is the appellation of the person being referred to, the Governor of one of the States. The speaker could have used the term “Governor”, but he preferred “Ìrókò” due to its semantic richness in the Yorùbá worldview. “Ìrókò” is literally the biggest of trees that none can compete with. By referring to the man as “Ìrókò”, and specifically using the expression when he had options, the speaker uses the word to foreground the heights of the governor in the political arena. The Yorùbá expression inserted into the English sentence in the third extract also presents the use of Yorùbá language to colorize or nativize the discourse.

#### 4.4. Requesting

Another significant feature of the political rally discourse of 2011 elections in Southwestern Nigeria is requesting. Politicians, especially political followers, consider the forum a good opportunity to make certain demands of the persons that come to them to seek their votes.

This is a typical way of saying that if you want something from us, we should let you know what we want from you. Below are instances of requests in the discourse:

**Extract 15:**

Mr. President, in all these Federal establishments, the leaders and members of party in the state have not enjoyed much of their patronage. We therefore urge you sir to consider as a matter of priority appointment of Èkìtì State PDP members as Chairman and members of Presidential Implementation Committees of the new Universities, the Airport and other Federal establishments in Èkìtì State.

**PDP Rally in Adó-Èkìtì, 2011**

**Extract 16**

Mr President Sir, it will interest you to note that Èkìtì State has never had two ministers in the current political dispensation since 1999. When you come in in 2011, May 29 by the grace of God, insha Allah please remember Èkìtì for two Ministers.

**PDP Rally in Adó-Èkìtì, 2011**

**Extract 17**

The President has given our women very high positions in the government. By the Minister of Petroleum, the Minister of Aviation. In fact the Ministry of Defense is going to be in our hands too.

**PDP Women's Rally in Lagos, 2011**

In the first two extracts above, the speaker made different requests of the President of the country. There are times that one might consider some of the requests laughable as is the case of the person who wants Èkìtì State to have two Ministers. Such requests are usually motivated by a desire by speakers to benefit from such plans if they ever materialize. In actual fact, most of the persons that get to the podium to talk are people of high status in the parties who nurse ambitions of occupying political offices or have candidates that will benefit them when they get to such positions. This is just a reflection of the height to which politicians lobby to get themselves part of what is popularly referred to as "the national cake". The person who made the request did not state what made the state to merit it, neither did he explain the actual and realistic gains that Èkìtì State and its people would benefit from the

appointments. He is just desirous of Èkìtì State being given two ministerial slots.

Certain lexical items are strategically used in the first extract to reflect the seriousness of the speaker regarding the demands. The word "patronage" in the text shows that the speaker is not shy to indicate that he and his fellow party men are expectant of some juicy offers from the government. Also, the speaker uses the word "urge" to appeal to the addressee, who in this case is the President of the country, to act accordingly. Furthermore, the expression, "consider as a matter of priority", reveals the determination or shyness of the speaker regarding the demand made. The expression is used to convey to the addressee the seriousness of the matter. In the second extract, the speaker decides to educate the President all in a bid to ensure that two ministerial appointments are given to Èkìtì State. The most remarkable linguistic feature of the text is the subtle command issued to the President when the speaker says "please remember Èkìtì for two ministers".

The third extract is from a woman who canvasses for more attention to women. Indeed, the political discourse of women in Nigeria lately has centered on all manner of requests, generally request for better status. The women are strongly of the opinion that they had been relegated to the background for so long a time and would use every available opportunity to make all manner of requests, whether visible or realistic and vice-versa. It is interesting that the request in the third extract is mildly made, as the speaker first cited examples of the request that had been met before pre-empting the President concerning who becomes the Minister of Defense. The expression, "going to be", shows that as at the time of the speech delivery, an official pronouncement had not been made on who becomes the Minister of Defense, but by using the expression, the speaker was trying to influence the President to give the position to a woman.

#### 4.5. Flattery

Flattery also features in the discourse in focus. Since the discourse is essentially political, one can rationalize the presence of flattery in it, as political language is usually tainted with deceptions.



and half-truths. Flattery in the discourse mainly emanates from the political followers to their leaders. Indeed, flattery in Nigerian political discourse is unhelpful and totally un-called for, considering the fact that it is apparent that Nigerian politics presents an ugly picture of affairs as of now. However, through flattery in the discourse, the ugly realities in the Nigerian political system are backgrounded. Consider the extract below:

**Extract 18**

We also have here a man who built the ACN from the scratch;  
The man whose government is the last responsible government in the state, Chief Olúségun Ọ̀sọ̀bà.

**ACN Rally in Abẹ̀òkúta, 2011**

In the extract above, the text producer showered encomiums upon Chief Olúségun Ọ̀sọ̀bà in a manner that suggests that he is a political saint. The choice of the expression, “responsible government”, is significant and pregnant with meaning. Through the expression, the speaker scores Chief Ọ̀sọ̀bà excellent in his governance while portraying subsequent administrations in the state as failures. Without any sentiments however, the question that a serious analyst might want to ask is that if the Chief Ọ̀sọ̀bà-led government was really that responsible, how come they were voted out of office? Or could it be said that the people of the state do not like a responsible government? In as much as I am not interested in telling whether his successor performed better or otherwise, it is apparent that certain remarks are made in the discourse just to massage the ego of the persons addressed. Consider the extract below too:

**Extract 19**

The South-West as the political base center saw the good qualities of Dr. Jonathan and realized that he is the best person for the job.

**PDP Rally in Ìbàdàn, 2011**

The text above contains a public flattery of the President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, who was seeking to be elected as President, after having completed the term of the late President, Umaru Musa Yar’adua. The expression “Southwest as political base center”, is a fallacious statement used to present the region in a positive light. What makes the region the political base center is not articulated in any document or material that one can lay his or her

hands on. Furthermore, the statement, “...he (Jonathan) is the best man for the job”, is equally fallacious, as there is no verifiable information that confirms the man as the best person for the post of the President. However, it is interesting to note that the President had only stayed months in the office when the same people who categorically said he was the best person for the job started criticizing him, showing that a great deal of the excessively positive remarks about politicians are meant to flatter them.

**4.6. Praise**

Praise or praising is another rhetorical element of the 2011 political rally discourse. A lot of adulatory remarks about political leaders and political candidates feature in the discourse. This is so because the political rally environment is one that witnesses a lot of hero-worshipping. Also, politicians consciously use such language either to appeal to political leaders or the political followers in order to brighten their political chances. In many instances, political leaders also use praise to endorse political candidates. Let us consider the text below:

**Extract 20**

Among us here also, we have a man who until recently had a government Osun State never had, we have Chief Bísí Àkàndé.

**ACN Rally in Abẹ̀òkúta, 2011**

The extract above is mainly used to praise the former Governor of Osun State, Chief Bísí Àkàndé. The message being communicated in the text is that Chief Àkàndé is peerless as Governor of Osun State. The expression, “never had” in the text, is used to intensify the exceptional governance of the man. Such remarks are usually made in the discourse when certain respectable persons are being introduced at the rallies. It is almost a norm that when a person is being introduced, he receives a lot of praise in order for the crowd to know his/her worth and to ignite a feeling of appreciation within him or her. Below is another example:

**Extract 21**

Èyàn gidi ni  
Èyàn tá a lè finú tán ni.

**Translation**

He is a good person

He is someone whom we can trust.

#### Labour Party Rally in Ondo, 2011

The extract above was produced by a Governor when he was endorsing the candidature of one of the political candidates of his political party. The speaker considered it necessary to praise the candidate so as to sell him to the people. The word “good” is the lexical item that bears the praise in the first line of the text. “Good” as used in the text encompasses all kinds of positive qualities that a man could have. The expression, “someone whom we can trust” in the second line of the extract, is also highly adulatory, as it conveys the sense that the man is dependable, a quality that is praise-worthy.

#### 4.7. Provocative Language

It is a general notion that Nigerian politics is marked by violence. Language is however a tool for the orchestration of violence in the political arena, as an uncivil use of language can breed violence. Little wonder the Yorùbá say “Òrò ló ñ yò obì lápò; òrò ló ñ yò idà lápó” (Words can produce positive reactions from the addressees and can also provoke the addressee to make use of his/her sword). In the discourse, there are many instances of the use of provocative language. Consider the text below:

##### Extract 22

Èyin Òsun, àbí ẹ tian ni?  
Èyin Òsun, àbí ẹ sùn ni?  
Come April 29, ẹ dií bàmubámú  
È lé wọn dànù.

##### Translation

Osun people, are you not alert?  
Osun people, are you slack?  
On May 29, make sure the ballot boxes are full  
to the brim,  
Chase them away.

#### PDP Rally in Osogbo, 2011

The text above is illustrative of the way in which politicians use language to incite their followers to anger and violence and manipulate them into rigging elections. The italicized words *tian* and *si* are not English but can be said to be slangs which are vulgar. Actually, such foul language use is not expected of a dignified person. The speaker however consciously used it to appeal to the people and impress upon them the fact that if violence was needed by them to achieve their aim at any time, they should draw

on it. A close look at the extract reveals that the speaker deployed incisive interrogatives with parallel structures to arouse his audience and work on their minds to motivate them to act in a manner that would favor his party – PDP. The interrogatives are used to charge the party members at the political rally to give the elections they were preparing for whatever it would take. The speaker also consciously repeated the interrogative to heighten the force of its content.

The use of the word “chase” in the fourth line of the extract shows that the speaker completely defies political civility. The word is a lexical indicator of violence. Chasing the political opponents of the party away as prescribed by the speaker implied that the PDP members were being urged to use force and unlawful means of ensuring victory for their party. Another word in the text that reflects the sense of force being invoked by the speaker is “dominate” in the third line of the extract. In a democracy, there is no reason why any party should seek to dominate the polls; the electorate should be allowed to vote without any kind of intimidation being suggested by the lexical choice of the speaker. Interestingly, the response to such remark is usually great because indeed a great percentage of the political devotees of such speakers are people who yield to such motivations. Below is another instance of provocative language in the discourse:

##### Extract 23

The South-West is too important to be in the hands of rascals. The South-west is too significant, too expensive, too educated to be in the hands of rascals. We must take over the Southwest.

#### PDP Rally in Ìbàdàn, 2011

The text above shows how combative Nigerian politicians can be in their use of language. The use of the intensifier, “too”, in “too important ... too significant, too expensive and too educated”, is a conscious strategy used by the speaker, who interestingly happens to be the President, to drive home his point that the ACN politicians were inadequate to lead the Southwestern region, and to provoke the electorate to reject them. Furthermore, the word “must” in the extract is significant. Through the

word, the President vigorously makes known his desire for his political party to win the Southwestern part of the country at all costs. In consonance with the force expressed in the word “must” is the expression “take over”. The expression reflects the power behind a President’s speech, as it shows that the President wishes to capture the Southwestern part of Nigeria without any reservations. The President also unabashedly refers to members of the opposing political party as rascals, who fall short of leading Southwestern Nigeria. Such remark often generates reprisal attacks as can be seen below:

#### Extract 24

Èyàn kan wá síbí. Ó pe ara rẹ ní Jonathan. Ó ní iṣọba tí àwà n se, ọwọ́ àwọn rascal ló wà. Ah! Ọrò ọmùtí niyẹn o. Ó pé tó yẹ kó ti yé wọn, pé a kí í ẹ rascal, a kí í ẹ ọmọ àlè. Tori èyin ọbí tẹ e bí wa ló wá bú. Ó sọ wí pé àwọn ọbí wa ò kọ wa dáadáa niyẹn. Nígbà wo lólàjú ti ẹ bèrẹ. Igbà wo ni wọn bèrẹ sí kàwé nílú ẹ.

#### Translation

Someone came here. He calls himself Jonathan. He said those of us governing you are rascals. That is the speech of a drunkard. He should have known a long time ago that we are not rascals; we are not bastards. He is indeed insulting you our parents. He said that our parents did not train us well. When did he become a civilized person? When did they start being educated in his town?

#### ACN Rally in Ìbàdàn, 2011

In the text above, the speaker responds to President Jonathan’s name-calling of ACN leaders as rascals. In the comments, the speaker belittled the personality and office of the President of Nigeria by stating that he spoke like a drunkard. The Yorùbá word “omuti” (drunkard) is a derogatory word that is not supposed to be used in regard of any decent or noble man, let alone the President of a country. Thus, through the use of the word, the speaker shows great disrespect to the President. Also, by referring to the President as “someone” in the first sentence of the extract, the speaker had belittled the President, as such language use is considered demeaning. The word was used to trivialize the personality of the President.

It is interesting that the speaker appeals to the sentiments of the old who constitute a huge proportion of the electorate by remarking that they were the ones the President was referring to, when the President never mentioned such.

Thus, the speaker incites the old against the President with the ultimate goal of ensuring that the President and his political party do not obtain any votes from that category of people. This is typical of political rally discourse, or more globally, political discourse in Nigeria, where discourse participants explore any means they can to bring their opponents to disrepute. The last two sentences in the extract are equally significant. The sentences are in the interrogative mood even though they are rhetorical questions. However, the questions are not meant to be answered but only to ridicule the President. The contents of the questions are harsh and undermine the position of the President of Nigeria. No doubt, such questions can trigger violence in the political supporters of the President against the ACN whose member produced the insulting text. Further instances of language use that can incite anger in political followers are found in the text below:

#### Extract 25

Igbálẹ́ tí ó wà lówó yin, igbálẹ́ idúnnú ni. Ẹ máa fí gbá orí burúkú wọn dànù. Ẹ máa fí gba isẹ́ wọn dànù. Ẹ máa fí gbá àrùn wọn dànù.

#### Translation

The broom in your hands is of happiness. Use it to sweep away their bad luck/destiny. Use it to sweep away their poverty. Use it to sweep away their disease.

#### ACN Rally in Ìbàdàn, 2011

The text above is a direct attack on the PDP government and politicians. The choice of words betrays his violent attitude towards the PDP. The speaker consciously used negative words such as “bad luck”, “poverty” and “disease” in referring to the PDP. Among the Yorùbá people of Southwestern Nigeria, poverty, bad luck and disease are negative conditions that are never prayed for, thus describing a person or people with such words or concepts will definitely draw the ire of the person or people thus represented. Therefore, when comments such as the one above are made, there are usually reprisal verbal attacks which could potentially lead to physical assault. At the same political rally, a speaker also remarked that “Ọ̀ǹb̀ur̀ẹ̀l̀à ti fà ya (the umbrella is torn)”. The remark is targeted at inciting PDP politicians to anger since the logo of PDP is an umbrella which stands for all manner of protection for Nigerian citizenry. Thus, by making the remark, the speaker implies that PDP is destroyed, disheveled and hopeless.

Violence is also stipulated in the discourse through name-calling. Consider the example below:

#### Extract 26

Sole Administrator Daniel, now emperor,  
We are going to court to stop all illegalities in  
Ogun State.

We shall not stand for an imperial rule in Ogun.

#### ACN Rally in Abèòkúta, 2011

In the extract above, two lexical items are used by the speaker to disparage the character of Chief Gbenga Daniel who was the then Governor of the state. He was first described as “sole administrator” and then “emperor”. The two words are unbecoming of the Governor of a state in a democratic government but the speaker consciously used them to incite anger in the person being talked about and his political followers. The words, “illegalities” and “imperial rule”, also portray the Governor in a bad light while serving to increase the favorable sentiments of the electorate for the ACN. Such language use usually generates unruly and uncivil verbal and physical attacks between politicians and political followers.

### 5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have subjected political rally campaign discourse in Nigeria to discourse /rhetorical analysis and my findings have shown that the discourse is a platform used by politicians to manipulate, mobilize, persuade and arrest the public's interest in them using various linguistic strategies. The application of Systemic Functional Linguistics for the analysis of the discourse allowed for uncovering of the vital relationship existing between the discourse and the Nigerian socio-cultural environment which produces it. The paper reveals that the discourse participants deployed discourse strategies such as allusion, propagandistic language, appropriation of indigenous languages, code-switching and code-mixing, requesting, flattery, praise and provocative language. The study concludes that while the discourse continues to be an effective platform for political struggles and power play, it also highlights the cultural, linguistic, and social factors which had a bearing on the language use of political actors in Southwestern Nigeria.

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