

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CURRENT INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE (IGP)'S MAIDEN SPEECH

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Abstract

This paper critically analysed the maiden speech delivered by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Olukayode Adeolu Egbetokun on 23rd June, 2023. The study employed secondary sources of data collections using qualitative method to unveil the objectives of the study. The theoretical framework adopted for this study was van Dijk (2005) CDA model for political discourse analysis. The findings revealed that van Dijk's discursive devices such as consensus, metaphor, lexicalisation, actor description, authority and polarisation were evident in the maiden speech and the analysis unveiled the hidden messages in the speech. Also the analysis presented the Nigerian Security Agencies, specifically, The Nigeria Police, positively and those that break the law were presented negatively. The study concluded that the IGP's maiden speech operates simultaneously as an instrument of persuasion, authority and institutional ideology. Hence, the inaugural address of the Inspector General of Police is not just an administrative or ceremonial speech but a carefully prepared political discourse which serves both ideological and institutional purposes. Through the use of the discursive devices identified by van Dijk's CDA model, the speech constructs the Nigeria Police Force in a positive and authoritative light while marginalising and negatively representing perceived lawbreakers.

Keywords; Maiden speech, CDA, Ideology, Authority, Metaphor

Introduction

Political speeches are sites where power, ideologies and social cognition intersect. In Nigeria where security agencies struggle with issues of legitimacy, the language of leadership inaugurals is specifically significant. IGP Egbetokun delivered his maiden speech on 23rd June 2023, introducing his leadership agenda and vision for the Nigeria Police Force. Language is not merely a neutral medium of communication; it is a powerful social practice that constructs, sustains and negotiates social relations. In social context, language usually functions ideologically to legitimise authority, establish institutional credibility and shape public perception (Fairclough 2021, Flowerdew & Richardson, 2022). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a theoretical and methodological framework for interrogating such uses of language. It explores how discourse structures reflect, reproduce and sometimes challenge relations of power and dominance within society (Wodak & Meyer, 2020).

CDA examines the relationship between language, power and ideology. Institutional actors usually deploy discourse strategies that present them positively and construct others such as criminals, critics etc negatively. This dual process of positive self-representation and negative other presentation is central to van Dijk's (2005) Socio Cognitive Model of CDA which is employed for this paper. In van Dijk's view, discourse not only

communicates information but also enacts social control by influencing shared mental models and legitimising institutional dominance.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine how the Inspector General of Police uses language in his speech to construct power and unveil hidden ideologies in the speech. The research is out to identify the discursive devices used in the speech, analyse the discursive devices used in the speech and explore how the speech constructs social identities, institutional authority and relationship between the police and the public.

Statement of the Problem

Language functions as a potent instrument for projecting authority, shaping ideologies and cultivating institutional legitimacy. In Nigeria, security institutions, specifically, the Nigeria Police Force, use official speeches to articulate leadership vision, consolidate authority and influence public perception. The IGP's maiden speech, delivered at the beginning of his tenure, is a symbolic discourse event meant to frame the institutional narratives and ideological posture of the new leadership.

A lot of scholars have analysed the speeches of some social actors in Nigeria. For instance, Adegbite & May (2022) investigated how Nigeria Police officers and suspects use code-switching as a socio-pragmatic strategy during interrogations to assert power, credibility and persuasion. Osisanwo (2024) examined ideological polarisation through binary categorisations such as *good*

vs *evil* or *us vs them*, only focused on printed media and failed to address leadership speeches as a form of institutional discourse.

From the various works so far, it has been observed that little attention is given to discursive dimension of leadership communication within law enforcement institution. This study, therefore, addresses the gap by applying CDA, specifically, van Dijk's socio cognitive model to analysis of IGP's maiden speech. The research aims to uncover how ideological beliefs, flag power asymmetries and project institutional self-representation.

Significance of the study

The study contributes to knowledge on language, power and ideology in political and institutional discourse in Nigeria. It provides insights into how Nigerian security agencies, specifically, the Nigeria Police Force use power to construct authority and legitimacy. Also it enhances the understanding of the role of discourse in shaping public perception and trust in security institution. The study can as well serve as a reference point for future researchers on Critical Discourse Analysis.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to discourse analytical research which mainly deals with the way social power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated and resisted by text and talk in the social

and political context (van Dijk, 2001). CDA is set to understand, expose and ultimately challenge social inequality. Hence, CDA may be characterised as a social movement of politically committed discourse analysts. CDA sprang up in the 1970's and was advanced at the University of East Anglia. Prominent scholars that advanced CDA include: Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, van Dijk, Theo Van Leeuwen, Gunther Kress. Fairclough (1992) observes that one element of CDA which differentiates it from other forms of discourse analysis is its attribute of 'critical'. Critical implies showing connections and causes that are hidden; it also implies intervention as it provides resources to those who may be disadvantaged through change.

CDA is essential for describing, interpreting, analysing and critiquing social life reflected in a given text. The major concern of CDA is the interpretation of power, domination and inequality. CDA studies and analyses written texts and spoken words in order to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance and inequality and how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced and transformed with specific social, economic, political and historical contexts. One of the objectives of CDA is to uncover the ideologies that are hidden in the words or written texts.

A critical approach to CDA involves linking the text (micro level) with the underlying power structures in society (macro level) through discursive practice upon which the text was drawn (meso level). CDA makes the connection between the use of language and the exercise of power clearer.

Hence, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) summarise the main tenets of CDA as follows: CDA addresses social problems such as unemployment, inequality, instability, insecurity, corruption and so on. For them, power relations are discursive. In other words, they are complex issues that need to be solved through simple means.

Their point of view is that discourse is made up of society and culture and does ideological work. This implies that all political, social, religious groups have their ideology. Ideologies are sets of ideas and beliefs and it is through them that political groups are identified. Historically, ideology has been in existence since the 1970s and we have early scholars who have worked on discourse. These scholars are also of the opinion that there is a link between the text and society is interdependent. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory in that speeches, texts and materials are analysed to identify the speaker's use of language. Hence, the discourse of many scholars in CDA mostly features such notions as power, dominance, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, race, discrimination, interest, social structure, and social order.

Van Dijk's Approach to CDA

Van Dijk's framework began in the 1980s with his critical analysis of media text where he lays emphasis on portrayal of minorities. The main feature of his framework for media discourse is evident in applying the analytical framework to go beyond the textual and structural analysis. This includes analysis of grammar, phonology, morphology and semantics. It also examines

discourse at production, reception or comprehension levels (Sajjad, 2015). This framework also examines higher level properties such as coherence, overall themes and various topics.

Van Dijk's (1995), Van Dijk (2000), van Dijk, (2009) has at one time or the other worked variously on Political Discourse suggesting various theories for analysis. For this particular study, the critical discourse analysis of IGP's maiden speech, van Dijk (2005) framework will be used. This framework consists of the amalgamation of argumentative, rhetorical, semantic and political strategies at the micro-level of analysis and an ideological dichotomy to reveal the manipulation of language to benefit in-group members and discredit out-group members at the macro-level of analysis. Van Dijk proposes 25 discursive devices for analysing political discourse. These 25 devices alongside their discourse analysis domain are: actor description (meaning), authority (argumentation), burden (topos), categorisation (meaning), comparison (meaning, argumentation), consensus (political strategy), counterfactuals (meaning, argumentation), disclaimers (meaning), euphemism (rhetorical, meaning), evidentiality (meaning, argumentation), example/illustration (argumentation), generalisation (meaning, argumentation), hyperbole (rhetoric), implication (meaning), irony (meaning), lexicalisation (style), metaphor (meaning, rhetoric), national self-glorification (meaning), norm expression (normalisation), number game (rhetoric, argumentation), polarisation (meaning), populism (political

strategy), presupposition (meaning), vagueness (meaning) and victimisation (Dijk, 2005). Out of this twenty-five (25) discursive devices that are for political discourse analysis, five (5) will be considered for this study.

Empirical Review

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has proved to be a robust framework for interrogating the interplay between language, ideology and power in institutional and political discourse. Wodak & Meyer (2020) emphasise that the strength of CDA lies in its interdisciplinary and problem oriented approach. This enables it to interrogate power asymmetries in different contexts. Fairclough (2021) on the other hand reiterates that language is never neutral but always socially invested, hence, functions as a vehicle for ideology. His perspective is similar to van Dijk's (2005) socio-cognitive model which shows how discourse not only reflects but also reproduces shared mental models and societal structures of dominance. Alvaro (2021) applies van Dijk's (2005) CDA to show how European political leaders employ discursive strategies of legitimisation, such as lexicalisation, presupposition and polarisation to construct collective identities and reinforce ideological boundaries. Also, Okorie & Babalola (2022) who worked on Nigerian media, found out that insecurity reports usually relied on discursive devices such as victimisation and hyperbole which dramatised threats and legitimised state interventions. Their findings align with Akinyemi (2024) who used corpus-assisted CDA to explore abduction discourse in Nigeria. He demonstrated how

strategies of repetition, eventuality and polarisation sustain dominant security narratives and reproduce hierarchical state-citizen relations. Onyechi & Adebayo (2023) argue that the Nigeria Police Force who are plagued by issues of trust and legitimacy, usually rely on discursive strategies to project authority and to reassure the public of their reform agenda.

Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research approach. The paper highly relies on secondary source of data where materials are consulted from newspapers, journals, textbooks, library, internet and other publications. IGP'S Maiden Speech is downloaded from the internet. The speech contains about thirteen points but for this paper, some expressions for analysis are picked at random. A descriptive qualitative approach is adopted as the aim of the study is to do a critical discourse analysis of the IGP's maiden speech. van Dijk's (2005) CDA model is used for the analysis because it contains about 25 discursive devices that will be used for the analysis.

The researcher thoroughly examined the IGP's maiden speech in order to find out the appropriateness of van Dijk's (2005) CDA model in the analysis of the speech. The analysis of the discursive devices revealed that the IGP utilised a wide range of these devices in his maiden speech.

Data Analysis

The Selected Discursive Devices in the IGP's Maiden Speech

The IGP's maiden speech contains a good number of the discursive devices in van Dijk's (2005) CDA approach but the following devices will be analysed in this study: consensus, metaphor, lexicalisation, actor description, authority and polarisation.

Consensus

Consensus is a device developed to foster and build solidarity and agreement. It is used to defend a group against external forces. An instance of consensus in IGP's maiden speech is seen in below.

Excerpt 1 *“We cannot afford to be reactive; we must be proactive in our approach by equally collaborating with other security agencies...to strengthen our intelligence network and dismantle criminal enterprises from their core.”*

From the above quotation, it is evident that the Nigeria Police Force wants solidarity and agreement with other security agencies in order to fight criminal activity in the country. In the excerpt, the IGP constructs consensus strategically as a means of ideological alignment and institutional legitimation. The IGP's repeated use of the pronoun “we” functions as a powerful consensus-building device. “We” as used by the IGP, includes the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies. According to van Dijk (2005), such inclusive pronoun encourages audience to perceive security challenges and solutions as collective responsibilities rather than institutional failures. His use of modal expressions “cannot” and “must” construct proactiveness and

collaboration as non-negotiable norms and thereby reinforces institutional authority.

The contrast between reactive and proactive aligns with van Dik's ideological square: emphasising positive actions of "us" (proactiveness) and downplaying past inadequacies without explicit naming failures. The discursive device above allows the IGP to acknowledge systemic challenges implicitly and at the same time projecting reform, competence and foresight and these are the main elements in sustaining public trust and elite's legitimacy.

Metaphor

There is also the use of metaphor in the IGP's maiden speech. Metaphor is a device that shows the similarity between two things by insisting that one thing is another. In the IGP's maiden speech, metaphor is used by the IGP to a great extent to pass on his message. Excerpt 2 is an example of metaphor in the speech.

Excerpt 2

"We must be the guiding light that illuminates the path of righteousness."

This is a metaphor used by the IGP to admonish the police to live an exemplary life. This statement relies on a conceptual metaphor of "light" and "path" to legitimise institutional authority and construct a positive police identity. The metaphor "guiding light" positions the police as a source of illumination, implying superior knowledge, clarity and moral insight. In van

Dijk's terms, this metaphor contributes to positive self-representation of the in-group (the police) by associating them with universally valued qualities such as guidance and enlightenment. The metaphor "*path of righteousness*", conceptualises social other as a linear journey which requires direction and control. Citizens are implicitly presented here as followers that need guidance. On the other hand, the police are presented as navigators, reinforcing hierarchical power relations. This metaphor naturalises institutional dominance. The metaphor "illuminates" suggest the removal of darkness, ignorance or deviance. Darkness stands for crime, disorder and moral failure while the police action and leadership stand for light. According to van Dijk's ideological square, negative attributes are attributed to the "other" (criminals or disorderly citizens) while positive attributes are emphasised for the in-group. The metaphor also obscures structural realities such as accountability deficits, human rights abuses and public distrust of the police. By framing the police as moral illumination, the discourse silences counter-narratives and delegitimises criticism since opposing the police may be interpreted as opposing "righteousness."

Excerpt 3

"It is our duty to reignite that trust, to be the beacon of hope in times of despair"

From, the extract, the metaphor "reignite that trust" frames public trust as a diminished but recoverable resource, implicitly acknowledging

widespread dissatisfaction with policing practices prior to the IGP's assumption of office. However, consistent with van Dijk's notion of ideology, the IGP avoids mentioning the causes of this erosion of trust in his maiden speech. By avoiding explicit reference to past institutional failures, the IGP's use of language performs positive self- presentation and at the same time systematically distances the new leadership from previous shortcomings. The IGP positions the police institution as a moral guide and stabilising force in a society implicitly characterised by insecurity, fear and uncertainty using the metaphor, "beacon of hope in times of despair"

Lexicalisation

In the IGP's maiden speech, there is extensive use of lexicalisation. Lexicalisation is a device used to represent others negatively or legitimise the action of others (van Dijk; 2005). Van Dijk also argues that lexical choices centres on how speakers construct positive self-presentation and negative other presentation. This is done through the selection of negative words to describe the actions of others. The IGP has used lexicalisation for a significant self-representation and to show the negative side of others.

Excerpt 4

"The Nigeria Police under my command, in its quest to stamp out violent crimes and their detrimental and debilitating effects on the security and safety of our society, will forge ahead to tackle the menace of crimes and criminality"

From the above expression, the IGP's use of lexicalisation favours a positive portrayal of the police (in group). For instance, the phrase "*under my command*" lexicalises authority, hierarchy and centralises leadership. The possessive construction foregrounds the IGP as a legitimate power holder and positions the Nigeria police as disciplined and unified under his control. Lexical items such as "*quest*", "*forgo ahead*" and "*tackle*", belong to semantic field of purpose, determination and action. Hence, the police is portrayed as proactive and resolute rather than passive and reactive. The lexical item "*stamp out*" suggests total elimination. This signals institutional strength and moral decisiveness. The above lexical choice ideologically construct the police as capable of absolute control over crime and this aligns with van Dijk's ideological square, particularly, the principle of emphasising our good actions.

On the other hand, "*crime and criminality*" are discursively constructed as a threatening out-group through highly-loaded lexical choices such as violent "*crimes*", "*menace*" and '*criminality*.'" They are used to depersonalise offenders, reducing them to a collective social threat rather than individuals shaped by socio-economic conditions. The lexical items "*detrimental*" and "*debilitating*" intensify the perceived danger of crime which is presented as a force that weakens and harms society.

Excerpt 5

"We shall embrace innovation and technology as powerful allies in our fight against crime."

From the above example IGP further promises that the Nigeria Police will do everything possible to protect the society. “*Our fight against crime*” is a lexical expression used by the IGP to show that the Nigeria Police Force are committed to their service of security and safety of the society.

Excerpt 6

“We must weed out corruption”

This is a lexical item showing the negative attribute of out group members which the Nigeria Police who are the in group members are ready to do away with. “*weed out*” is a lexical item which implies that corruption is an invasive harmful growth which necessitates forceful, deliberate removal and therefore, legitimising strong institutional intervention. Here, “*corruption and power abuse*” are lexically framed as external evils rather than institutionalised practices. In the expression, van Dijk’s ideological square is evident. The pronoun “*we*” constructs a collective institutional identity which aligns with reform, integrity and moral responsibility. “*Corruption and power abuse*” which are abstract entities are depersonalised to avoid attributing it to specific actors within the institution. This lexical strategy allows the IGP to align himself and the police leadership with reform. It also helps the IGP to avoid implicating the institution structurally thereby protecting institutional legitimacy. It should be noted that the abstraction of “*corruption and power abuse*” is a strategic discursive move that minimises institutional culpability, shifts attention from systemic accountability to moral rhetoric. The lexical

item “weed out” activates shared mental models of cleansing and renewal. The expression shapes public cognition to perceive the police as self-correcting and reform driven. This is in line with van Dijk’s view that discourse by powerful institutions influences social cognition and as such guides how the public interpret institutional actions and intentions.

Excerpt 7

“Let us cast aside complacency and confront the demons the tarnish our profession. We must weed out corruption...we must reject the abuse of power.”

The lexical item “*let us*” performs ideological functions. First, it contains shared group membership between the speaker (IGP) and institutional members, reinforcing in-group solidarity. It also diffuses individual blame by framing reform as a collective moral obligation rather than top-down directive. This aligns with positive self –presentation of the in-group in van Dijk’s term. Hence, the police is portrayed as capable of self-reflection and moral correction. The phrase “*cast aside*” is a strong action oriented lexical choice which implies deliberate rejection rather than passive avoidance. The lexical item is framed as an internal flaw rather than an external accusation which allows the institution to acknowledge weakness without delegitimizing itself. This reflects van Dijk’s ideological square: deemphasise our bad actions. The word “*demon*” is a lexical item that personifies corruption, misconduct or abuse as external evil forces. It also shifts responsibility away from individuals and towards abstract moral threats. By lexicalising institutional problems as

“*demons*”, the discourse avoids naming specific actors or practices. It also frames wrongdoings as aberration rather than a systematic issue. In van Dijk’s socio-cognitive model, this supports ideological mitigation, protecting the institution’s collective image while acknowledging misconduct.

Actor Description

This gives the detailed information of an entity such a person, place or thing. It gives information on the manner the entity plays its role in a context, social or political and so on, either positively or negatively (van Dijk, 2005). Here, in group members are described positively while out group members are described negatively. in the IGP’s maiden speech, actor description is used extensively. The Nigeria police Force is portrayed positively while those who deal in the menace that the Police Force attacks are portrayed negatively.

Excerpt 8

“We shall embrace innovation and technology as powerful allies in our fight against crime”

“*We*” in the expression stands for the Nigeria police Force. They are ready to fight against crime which is committed by those who are not members of the Police Force. From the IGP’s speech, there is evidence that some members of the police Force tarnish the image of the profession and the IGP addresses their behaviour as “*demons that tarnish our profession.*” Describing “*innovation and technology*” as allies, the IGP positions the police as part of a strategic coalition rather than a sole enforcer. From CDA perspective, there is a kind of subtle shift of responsibility for effectiveness from human actors

to technological systems which helps legitimise future surveillance, digital policing and resource allocation.

In the phrase “*fight against crime*”, crime is framed as an enemy and policing as warfare. This further constructs the police as defenders or warriors, reinforcing authority and moral superiority while ‘*innovation and technology*’ are presented as tactical support in combat. It should be noted from the expression that there is exclusion and silencing of out-group actors. In other words, criminals are not explicitly described as actors. The absence of a clearly defined out-group shifts attention away from social, economic or institutional contributors to crime. This selective actor description aligns with van Dijk’s principle of ideological square: emphasising our strengths while backgrounding any form of complexities that may challenge institutional legitimacy. From this excerpt, the actor description serves a clear ideological function using van Dijk (2005) CDA model. The police is positively represented as a unified and modern in-group. “*Technology*” as a supportive ally is personified and institutional power is legitimised through a militarised narratives.

Authority

According to van Dijk (2005), authority includes organisation of people who are recognised experts or moral leaders such as the Police. For instance, the IGP, in his maiden speech reminds the Nigeria Police that they

are leaders that people look unto by admonishing them as seen in the example below.

Excerpt 9

“Cast aside complacency...weed out corruption and reject the abuse of power.”

in this extract, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) deploys linguistic strategies which construct and legitimise institutional authority. He also positions himself as a moral regulator within the police institution. The verbs “*cast aside*”, “*weed out*”, and “*reject*” are imperatives and action-oriented. Van Dijk (2005) argues that such imperatives reflect discursive control where powerful speakers regulate the actions and behaviours of subordinate groups. The expressions “*complacency*”, “*corruption*” and “*abuse of power*” are ideologically loaded and they carry strong negative moral evaluations. The IGP names these practices unacceptable and therefore, exercises what van Dijk (2005) terms ideological authority. The IGP wants the Nigeria Police to acknowledge these imperfections that exist within them and desist from them. He further admonishes the Police Force to “*be the guiding light that illuminates the path of righteousness.*”

Polarisation

This is a device used in categorising people into in group and out group members. The in group members are given positive characters while the out group members are given negative characters as seen in the expression below.

Excerpt 10

“We will further leverage cutting-edge tools, data analytics and intelligence network to stay one step ahead of those who seek to disrupt the peace.”

According to van Dijk (2005) ideological square, the extract above foregrounds positive attributes of the in-group while backgrounding or negatively construing the out-group. From the expression above, “we” stand for the Nigeria Police, representing the in group members who are ready to employ all means to fight the out group members whom the IGP described as “those who seek to disrupt the peace.” “The phrase, “leverage cutting-edge tools, data analysis and intelligence network” stands for competence, modernity and preparedness. On the other hand, the phrase, “those who seek to disrupt peace” is indirectly framed as threat actors. their motives are delegitimized and they are denied specificity which reinforces their portrayal as a homogeneous threat. This polarisation reinforces institutional legitimacy and morally disqualifies dissenting or criminal actors.

Discussion

From the analysis of the speech, the IGP employed positive self-representation and negative other representation in the speech. The use of positive self-representation allows institutional leaders to legitimise their policies, ideologies, actions and decisions. The negative representation of others on the other hand serves to delegitimize the criminals or those who are

among the in group members that are working against the group through their behaviour. From the analysis, the IGP used actor description, authority, lexicalisation, metaphor and polarisation.

Lexicalisation is a more prominent device in the IGP's maiden speech. Positive lexicalisation is used to show the Police Force as an institution of authority that safeguards the citizens. Negative lexical items are also used to describe the activities of the criminals or those among the Nigeria Police Force whose character must be rejected.

Conclusion

The study analysed the IGP's maiden speech using van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. The aim was to understand how the IGP utilised discursive strategies to convey his ideology. The analysis focused on the use of consensus, metaphor, lexicalisation, polarisation, actor description and authority from van Dijk's 25 discursive devices and how these devices are used to show positive self-representation and negative other representation in the speech. From the analysis, the IGP promoted the Nigeria Police Force ideologies, associating positive attributes with the in group (the Nigeria Police Force) and negative attributes with the out group (the perceived lawbreakers). The study concluded that the inaugural address of the Inspector General of Police is not just an administrative or ceremonial speech but a carefully prepared political discourse which serves both ideological and institutional purposes. Through the use of discursive devices identified by van

Dijk's CDA model, the the speech constructs the Nigeria Police Force in a positive and authoritative light while marginalising and negatively representing perceived lawbreakers.

Recommendation

From the findings of this study, the following are the recommendations;

The study focused solely on semantic aspect, excluding grammatical and syntactic features. Therefore, future studies can work on the grammatical features and the syntactic features of the speech. The study only analyses the use of lexicalisation, metaphor, actor description, authority, consensus and polarisation, that is six devices out of twenty-five devices. Future studies can use all the twenty-five devices to show a clear understanding of the IGP's maiden speech.

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