

## Persuasion And Connection of Words: Discursive Strategies and Interpersonal Resources in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech of May 29, 2023

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**Received: 02/07/2023**

**Accepted: 07/07/2023**

**Published: 15/07/2023**

### **Abstract**

Political speeches serve as a platform for communicating policy agendas, motivating collective action, and nurturing a sense of unity among the citizens. Specifically, this paper focuses on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's inaugural speech, examining the discursive strategies and interpersonal resources, to provide insights into the intricate interplay of language and power dynamics, contributing to our understanding of political communication and its implications for leadership and public engagement. Drawing on van Dijk's ideology stance and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, the study explores the ideological and social functions of his speech. The findings reveal topicalization and actor/situation descriptions within his speech, highlighting key themes, ideas, and the polarization of "us" versus "them", which reinforces his ideological stance. Furthermore, the speech showcases lexicalization techniques, including synonyms, collocations, repetition, parallelism, and metaphors to enhance clarity, impact, and rhetorical effectiveness, while also conveying nuanced meanings within his speech. Modal verbs in the speech demonstrate the utilization of epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modality, with deontic and dynamic modality emphasizing President Tinubu's strong commitments, obligations, and proactive engagement, while epistemic modality suggests a lesser emphasis on expressing uncertainties. Moreover, the deployment of personal pronouns reflects his perspective and attitude toward the audience. The inclusive/exclusive use of "we" fosters a sense of unity, shared responsibility, and emphasizes his connection with the people. The analysis offers valuable insights into the intricate interplay of language and rhetorical strategies, contributing to a deeper understanding of political communication and its impact on leadership and public engagement.

**Keywords:** Discursive strategies, Interpersonal resources, Persuasion and connection, President Tinubu's Inaugural speech

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## 1. Introduction

The power of persuasive language and its ability to establish connections with an audience is a timeless art employed by skilled orators throughout history. In the realm of politics, leaders, and politicians employ various means to achieve their political goals. While the use of power is often perceived as the most effective approach, there exists a more nuanced and influential method: the utilization of persuasive and rhetorical strategies to persuade people to act in specific ways and align with their intentions. Also, the use of discursive strategies and interpersonal resources holds particular significance, as leaders seek to convey their vision, inspire collective action, and foster a sense of unity among the citizenry. Consequently, leaders and politicians have always been concerned with using language effectively in their communication with societies. However, the properties of language employed by them differ from those used by others due to their distinct objectives. When leaders and politicians interact with their target communities, they employ various techniques to convince people of their desired outcomes, leveraging specific characteristics of language. Whether in democratic or totalitarian regimes, leaders and politicians must possess communication skills to inform, persuade, advertise, and implement their policies, rules, legislations, and regulations.

The speeches delivered by political leaders are central to political discourse and hold significant importance for linguists. Political discourse, whether written or spoken, primarily focuses on persuading individuals to take specific political actions or make crucial political decisions (Edelman, 1977; Gadalla, 2012). The understanding of these discursive and persuasive strategies employed by leaders is vital for analyzing political discourse and shedding light on the broader implications for leadership, public engagement, and the art of persuasion.

This scholarly analysis delves into the inaugural speech delivered by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on May 29, 2023, examining the intricate web of discursive techniques and the artful interplay of words that shape his address. The inaugural speech serves as a platform for him to not only articulate his policy agenda but also to engage the hearts and minds of the Nigerian people. Through a careful analysis of his use of discursive strategies, this study aims to shed light on the discursive and interpersonal resources employed by President Tinubu and how they contribute to the overall effectiveness of his message. By exploring the intricate interplay of words through linguistic resources, we can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of his communication style and how he seeks to inspire and connect with the Nigerian populace. These insights further our understanding of the art of persuasion in political discourse and its broader implications for leadership and public engagement. Therefore, the objectives of the study include uncovering the discursive strategies, linguistic features, and interpersonal resources employed in shaping President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's inaugural speech delivered on May 29, 2023. Additionally, the study aims to examine the effectiveness of President Tinubu's communication style and persuasive strategies, as well as explore how he engages with and influences the Nigerian populace through his speech.

## 2. Literature Review

The study of political discourse focuses on the analysis of language structure and its specific political functions. It can be considered an interdisciplinary field situated between linguistics and political science, with an emphasis on a wide range of linguistic aspects from lexical issues to semiotics (Wodak, 2011). However, it is important to note that linguistic analysis serves as a tool for understanding and explaining the operation of political discourse, rather than an end in itself. In the realm of politics, speeches are of particular importance as they are the means through which politicians, described as "sovereign masters," communicate their ideas and messages. The effectiveness of a politician's speech lies in their ability to convey their intended message through the strategic use of language and aims to persuade and influence public opinion. It also explores the power dynamics inherent in political communication and the role of language in framing and guiding beliefs and interpretations. Numerous scholarly inquiries have been undertaken to shed light on the intricate mechanisms employed by politicians in the construction of their distinctive individual and political group identities.

Within the Nigerian context, Kamalu and Agangan (2011) conducted a comprehensive investigation into the political rhetoric employed by President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) government. Their study revealed a deliberate utilization of various rhetorical strategies by the President to articulate an alternative ideology for Nigeria. These strategies included appeals to ethnoreligious sentiments, alignment with the suffering majority of the country, and the reconstruction of childhood experiences. The intention was to engage and manipulate the conscience of his party and the Nigerian populace. In a similar vein, Alo (2012) conducted a study on the political rhetoric of African leaders, uncovering their acknowledgment of the socioeconomic problems in Africa and the imperative for change. From the analysis, four dominant ideological preoccupations emerged, namely: economic growth and independence in Africa, national unity and nationalism, globalism, and self-reliance. The recurring persuasive strategies employed by these leaders encompassed greetings, the use of pronouns, modalities, and contrasts. However, Alo (2012) noted a lack of attention to the practical means of achieving socioeconomic independence and recovery. Also, Emeka Nwobia (2015) investigated President Olusegun Obasanjo's inaugural speeches in 1999 and 2003 using Fairclough's three-tier analytical approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Isa and Abaya (2019) also examined selected campaign speeches of President Buhari and Jonathan during the 2011 elections in Nigeria, employing a combination of Fairclough and Van Dijk's approaches. These studies aimed to explore the rhetorical devices employed in the speeches to persuade the masses. The findings revealed the pervasive use of repetition, parallelism, metaphor, rhetorical questions, and pronouns to elicit support from the electorate. Furthermore, within the field of pragmatics, Okoro (2016) analyzed selected speeches of President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) using Speech Act Theory (SAT) to identify the predominant speech acts employed. The study

revealed the pervasive use of assertive and commissive acts in speeches to instill hope in the masses and gain their support. Enyi (2016) conducted a comparative study of PMB's Maiden Coup Address in 1984 and his inaugural speech in 2015, also using SAT.

In the domain of stylistics and Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), Agbo, Ngwoke, and Ijem (2018) examined the transitivity structures in President Buhari's 2015 campaign speech, titled "My Covenant with Nigerians," using Halliday's SFG. Their study aimed to uncover the process types used in the speech, their frequency, and their ideological functions. Ademilokun (2015) focused on aspects of attitudinal meaning in PMB's inauguration speech, employing the Appraisal Theory of Martin and White (2005). Medubi and Amuda (2016) conducted a socio-pragmatic analysis of PMB's inaugural address, aiming to elucidate the meanings encoded in the speech and their functions within the actual context of use. Other similar studies include Okafor and Issife's (2017) examination of the choice of mood and modality in PMB's inaugural speech to determine their functional significance, Ugoala's (2017) investigation of semantic and textual cohesive devices in PMB's directive to Service Chiefs regarding the quashing of the Boko Haram menace, and Akinseye's (2015) assessment of President Muhammadu Buhari's inaugural speech delivered on May 29, 2015. Akinseye's study focused on providing insights into Buhari's interpersonal styles through an analysis of his choice of modality, mood, and pronouns. Also, in the study conducted by Ogungbe (2021), an analysis was conducted on the lexico-syntactic expressiveness observed in President Muhammadu Buhari's 1983 and 2015 inaugural speeches. The findings revealed that President Muhammadu Buhari employed various stylistic devices, including references, collocation (harmony of words), enumeration, and pronouns, to capture the attention, garner support, establish trust, and foster loyalty among Nigerians towards the ideas conveyed in the speeches. Finally, Ellah (2022) conducted a discourse-pragmatic analysis to observe President Muhammadu Buhari's 2015 inaugural speech, with a specific interest in the incorporation and inculcation of other texts within the speech.

This present study seeks to address a gap in the existing literature identified in the previous research, which primarily focuses on the analysis of inaugural speeches by President Muhammadu Buhari. While the previous studies explore various aspects of linguistic analysis, discourse-pragmatics, pragmatics, and stylistics in the study of political speeches, it lacks a specific investigation of the discursive strategies and linguistic resources employed in the inaugural speech of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu delivered on May 29, 2023. Therefore, it aims to fill this research gap by conducting a detailed linguistic analysis of President Tinubu's inaugural speech, aiming to uncover the intricate web of discursive techniques and interpersonal resources utilized in shaping the speech. The study intends to shed light on the effectiveness of President Tinubu's communication style, his persuasive strategies, and how he engages with and influences the Nigerian populace through his speech. This research enhances our comprehension of political discourse, persuasion, and leadership within the framework of inaugural speeches by utilizing a linguistic and academic methodology.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

In the field of discourse analysis, linguists shift their focus away from language as an abstract system and instead direct their attention toward how people employ their knowledge of language in practice (Jaradat, 2022). Discourse analysis aims to uncover the underlying motivations behind a text by closely examining the functions and forms of language, whether it is used in oral or written communication. By deconstructing the text, discourse analysis provides a valuable approach to understanding problems or situations. Rather than treating language as a static entity, discourse analysis delves into the dynamic nature of communication. Linguists explore how language functions within a specific context, considering the social, cultural, and ideological aspects that influence its use. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how language shapes and reflects social interactions, power dynamics, and the construction of meaning. By examining the use of language functions and forms, discourse analysis seeks to uncover the hidden meanings and intentions within a text. It goes beyond surface-level interpretations and investigates the subtle nuances, rhetorical strategies, and persuasive techniques employed by speakers or writers. Through this analytical process, discourse analysis provides insights into the power dynamics, ideologies, and social constructions embedded within a given discourse.

Scholars such as van Dijk (2006), Fairclough (2006), and Wodak (2012) have contributed to the development of discourse analysis by emphasizing the importance of deconstructing texts to reveal the underlying structures and motivations. Fairclough's Socio-Cultural Approach shares similarities with Halliday's functional analysis (1994, 2004, 2014). Fairclough's discourse analysis framework encompasses three dimensions, viewing discourse as: (i) a text (spoken or written, including visual images), (ii) a discourse practice involving the production, consumption, and distribution of the text, and (iii) a socio-cultural practice. Consequently, Fairclough presents a three-dimensional framework for analyzing text and discourse: (a) linguistic description, which examines the formal properties of the text; (b) interpretation, which explores the relationship between discursive processes/interaction and the text; and (c) explanation, which elucidates the relationship between discourse and social and cultural reality.

Also, the Discourse Historical Approach constitutes another approach mentioned by linguist Blommaert (2005, p. 28), who credits Wodak and her followers with establishing this approach. The Discourse Historical Approach primarily focuses on analyzing how discourse changes over time. Wodak and Ludwig (1999, p. 12-13) propose three key aspects of the discourse historical approach: 1) discourses are not independent of power and ideology; 2) discourses are historically situated, and interconnected with other communicative events; and 3) individuals' background knowledge, information, and positions can lead to different interpretations of the same communicative event.

In contrast, the Socio-Cognitive Approach proposed by Van Dijk, aligning with Fairclough's critical approach, views discourse as a form of social practice. However, it diverges by focusing on social cognition as the mediating factor between text and society. Van Dijk argues that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) should account for various forms of socially shared cognition among collectivities such as groups, organizations, and institutions. Social cognition encompasses socially shared representations of societal arrangements, groups, and relations, as well as mental operations like interpretation, thinking, arguing, inferencing, and learning. Van Dijk further distinguishes two levels of analysis: macro and micro. The micro level encompasses language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication, while the macro level pertains to power, dominance, and inequality among social groups. He further emphasizes that understanding how texts are socially constructed necessitates linking textual structures to social cognition and social cognition to social structures (Van Dijk, 1993b, p. 280). Furthermore, Van Dijk's analysis of discursive strategies encompasses a total of twenty-seven (27) approaches, demonstrating the diverse ways in which the ideological square can be expressed in discourse (van Dijk, 2000, 2006). These strategies play a crucial role in shaping the meaning and persuasive impact of discourse. One set of strategies includes topicalization, actor description, situation description, level or degree of description, synonymy, and example and illustration. Topicalization involves encapsulating the essential information within a given discourse. Actor description focuses on how discourse actors are portrayed, whether individually, collectively, positively, negatively, or neutrally. Situation description aims to describe actions, situations, and experiences surrounding events, helping to understand their causes and consequences. The level or degree of the description refers to the language user's choice to describe an event in abstract, general, or specific terms. Synonymy entails the semantic relation of total or partial sameness in the meaning of propositions. Finally, examples and illustrations serve the functional purpose of providing concrete evidence and proof in support of an argument.

In addition to these, other discursive strategies come into play. Lexicalization involves expressing concepts and beliefs using specialized lexical items. Polarisation categorically divides people into ingroups (US) and outgroups (THEM). Positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation strategies depict the overall approach of portraying ingroup members positively while casting outgroup members in a negative light. Victimization focuses on systematically representing real victims in situation descriptions of events. Argumentation is a situation where a participant strives to make their standpoint more credible and acceptable. Evidentiality involves presenting written or spoken evidence to establish the validity of an argument. Topoi refers to the use of self-evident premises in support of an argument, while authority involves mentioning morally superior authorities to lend support to an argument or proposition. Euphemism refers to the use of semantic mitigation to soften the impact of certain expressions (van Dijk, 2000, p.68). Metaphor invokes a direct similarity between two objects, and number games deploy numbers and statistics to enhance credibility and objectivity in argumentation.

Since discourse analysis plays a crucial role in the examination of political texts, aiming to unravel power dynamics and understand the reasoning behind a politician's choice of specific words within a given context, these discursive strategies collectively contribute to the construction of meaning, persuasion, and the framing of discourse within a specific ideological framework. Understanding and analyzing these strategies enable researchers to delve deeper into the intricacies of political and social communication, shedding light on how language is employed to shape beliefs, attitudes, and power dynamics. In essence, discourses extend beyond mere linguistic expressions, encompassing social and ideological practices that shape individuals' thoughts, speech, interactions, writing, and behavior (van Dijk, 2006; Rezaei & Nourali, 2016; Ngozi, 2016; Yaser et al., 2020; Jaradat, 2022). Thus, the adoption of Van Dijk's model allows for a nuanced examination of how President Tinubu's speech influences and engages the Nigerian populace. By considering the shared representations, interpretations, and cognitive processes that underlie social groups' responses to political discourse, this approach helps uncover the deeper motivations, power dynamics, and ideological dimensions embedded within the speech.

On the other hand, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) considers language as a system for making meaning and emphasizes the relationship between language structures and their communicative functions. Language is analyzed in terms of three main metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction deals with the representation of experience and the expression of content and meaning. The textual metafunction examines the organization and coherence of language in discourse. The interpersonal metafunction, which is the focus of this paper, focuses on the interaction between speakers and listeners, including aspects such as mood, modality, and pronouns that reflect social relationships and power dynamics. SFG provides a framework for analyzing the grammatical choices and structures in language to uncover how they serve different communicative functions in different contexts. It helps reveal how language is used to express meaning, create social relations, and achieve specific communicative goals. Within the context of this paper, Systemic Functional Grammar helps uncover the underlying structures and patterns in language that contribute to the persuasive and ideological dimensions of the speech.

#### **4. Methodology**

This study employs a comprehensive methodology to analyze the inaugural speech delivered by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on May 29, 2023, focusing on the persuasive strategies and interpersonal resources employed through language. To conduct the analysis, a mixed qualitative and quantitative research approach is adopted. The paper adheres to descriptive statistics to compute the frequency of occurrences of each interpersonal resource and its subcategories. This quantitative analysis allows for a systematic examination of the distribution and usage patterns of these resources. The qualitative analysis involves careful transcription of

the speech, followed by close reading and analysis of the linguistic features and rhetorical devices used.

The analysis is guided by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis as espoused in van Dijk's (2006) ideological square and the Interpersonal Metafunctions of the Systemic Functional Grammar by Halliday. The findings are organized thematically, highlighting patterns and trends in the use of discourse strategies, modality, and pronouns. This comprehensive methodology provides a robust framework for examining the persuasive techniques and interpersonal resources employed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, shedding light on the communicative strategies used to influence and engage the audience during this significant political event.

## Analysis

This section provides a comprehensive and methodical examination of the discursive strategies employed in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's speech. The analysis draws on the theoretical framework of ideological discursive strategies proposed by van Dijk (2000, 2006). To facilitate a clear understanding, the strategies are categorized, while relevant examples from the speech data are cited to illustrate the ideological functions associated with these discursive strategies.

### Topicalization in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech

Topicalization is a linguistic phenomenon that plays a significant role in communication and discourse. In the context of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's inaugural speech, we will investigate the phenomenon of topicalization, which involves the highlighting and foregrounding of specific themes or ideas through their linguistic features and positioning within the text.

Sample One:

**...As a nation**, we have long ago decided to march beyond the dimness of night into the open day of renewed national hope... We have endured hardships that would have made other societies crumble... 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... For many years, Nigeria's critics have trafficked the rumour that our nation will break apart, even perish. Yet here we are... We are here to further mend and heal this nation, not tear and injure it....

In the provided passage, the phrase "As a nation" serves as the topicalization on the topic of national unity and healing. By starting the sentence with this phrase, it draws attention to the collective identity of Nigeria as a unified country and sets the tone for the subsequent statements. The use of topicalization in this passage helps to frame the subsequent statements within the context of the nation's history, struggles, and resilience. By acknowledging the struggles faced by the country, the excerpt instills a sense of collective pride and unity among its citizens. Furthermore, the use of the words "mend" and "heal" suggests a process of repairing and

restoring the social, political, and cultural fabric of the country. These two words reflect a commitment to reconciliation and unity, acknowledging that there may be fractures and grievances that need to be addressed and stating further that the aim is not to tear and injure the nation, but a strong desire to avoid actions or policies that could further divide or harm the country's unity.

Sample Two:

**...Our administration shall govern on your behalf but never rule over you.** We shall consult and dialogue but never dictate. We shall reach out to all but never put down a single person for holding views contrary to our own.... **Nigeria will be impartially governed according to the constitution and the rule of law....**

The two highlighted sentences above present the complexity of leadership and governance. Upon closer examination, it appears that the two are contradictory or at least present a potential tension. One statement focuses on consultation and dialogue rather than dictating decisions, indicating a desire for inclusive decision-making processes, while the second emphasizes impartial governance according to the Constitution and the rule of law, suggesting a commitment to upholding established legal principles. It suggests that while impartiality and adherence to the rule of law are crucial, they must be complemented by consultation and dialogue to ensure that governance is responsive to the diverse needs and aspirations of the people. The apparent contradiction between the statements raises questions about the coherence of leadership and governance principles outlined in the text. However, a closer analysis reveals a potential reconciliation between these seemingly conflicting ideas, pointing to the complexity and nuanced nature of effective governance.

Sample Three:

**...We shall defend the nation from terror** and all forms of criminality that threaten the peace and stability of our country and our subregion... Security shall be the top priority of our administration because neither prosperity nor justice can prevail amidst insecurity and violence. To effectively tackle this menace, we shall reform both our security DOCTRINE and its ARCHITECTURE. We shall invest more in our security personnel, and this means more than an increase in number. We shall provide, better training, equipment, pay and firepower....

Nigeria has faced significant security challenges over the years, stemming from various factors such as terrorism, insurgencies, farmer-herders conflicts, and other criminal activities. The first sentence of the passage serves as the topicalization by introducing the objective of the

new administration regarding security. This sentence captures the reader's attention and sets the context for the subsequent sentences. It establishes the administration's primary goal, which is to address security challenges and protect the well-being of the nation and its citizens. The following sentences then elaborate on how the administration plans to tackle these security concerns. It mentions that security will be the top priority, as prosperity and justice cannot flourish in an environment plagued by insecurity and violence. The administration intends to implement reforms in both the security doctrine and architecture, indicating a comprehensive approach to enhance the effectiveness of security measures.

Sample Four:

...**On the economy**, we target a higher GDP growth and to significantly reduce unemployment. We intend to accomplish this by taking the following steps: First, budgetary reform stimulating the economy without engendering inflation will be instituted. Second, industrial policy will utilize the full range of fiscal measures to promote domestic manufacturing and lessen import dependency. Third, electricity will become more accessible and affordable to businesses and homes alike. We will encourage states to develop local sources as well. I have a message for our investors, local and foreign: our government shall review all their complaints about multiple taxations and various anti-investment inhibitions....

The topicalization in the passage, "On the economy," serves as the introductory phrase that sets the central theme and focus of the subsequent sentences. The phrase indicates that the following sentences will revolve around the administration's plans, strategies, and goals concerning Nigeria's economy. It suggests that the discussion will primarily center on economic matters and the steps the administration intends to take to improve the economic situation. By topicalizing the economy, the passage highlights the significance and priority that the administration places on economic development and improvement. It states that the administration recognizes the importance of a strong and vibrant economy for the overall well-being of the nation. Throughout the passage, the administration outlines specific measures and actions it intends to take to achieve its economic goals.

Sample Five:

...**My administration must create meaningful opportunities for our youth**. We shall honour our campaign commitment of one million new jobs in the digital economy. Our government also shall work with the National Assembly to fashion an omnibus Jobs and Prosperity bill. This bill will give our administration the policy space to embark on labour-intensive infrastructural improvements, encourage light industry and provide improved social services for the poor, elderly and vulnerable....

Nigeria has been grappling with high unemployment rates, particularly among the youth population. According to Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data, the youth unemployment rate stood at 34.9% in the third quarter of 2020. Thus, from the excerpt above, the topicalization "My administration must create meaningful opportunities for our youth," serves as the focal point which highlights the administration's dedication to addressing youth unemployment and generating job opportunities. By starting with this statement, President Tinubu emphasizes the importance placed on the youth population and their role in the country's economic development. It underscores the administration's commitment to creating a favorable environment where young individuals can find meaningful employment and contribute to the growth of the nation. The following sentences expand on the administration's strategies and plans to fulfill this commitment. Furthermore, he mentions the intention to work with the National Assembly to develop an omnibus Jobs and Prosperity bill, which is aimed at providing the administration with the necessary policy framework to undertake labor-intensive infrastructural improvements, promote the light industry, and enhance social services for marginalized groups such as the poor, elderly, and vulnerable.

Sample Six:

**...Rural incomes shall be secured** by commodity exchange boards guaranteeing minimal prices for certain crops and animal products. A nationwide program for storage and other facilities to reduce spoilage and waste will be undertaken. Agricultural hubs will be created throughout the nation to increase production and engage in value-added processing....

Rural communities in Nigeria are often faced with challenges related to income generation, agricultural productivity, market access, and infrastructure. The topicalization above sets the theme for the subsequent sentences and highlights the administration's commitment to addressing agriculture and the economic well-being of rural communities in Nigeria. By starting with this statement, President Tinubu emphasizes the importance of rural incomes and the need to ensure their stability and improvement. His speech suggests that the new administration recognizes the challenges faced by rural communities in generating sufficient income and later states his intention to take specific actions to address this issue. The subsequent sentences mention the establishment of commodity exchange boards that guarantee minimal prices for certain crops and animal products. This measure aims to protect farmers from price fluctuations and provide them with a reliable income source by ensuring fair compensation for their produce. Additionally, his speech highlights the implementation of a nationwide program that focuses on storage and other facilities to reduce spoilage and waste. By addressing these issues, President Tinubu's administration aims to enhance the efficiency of agricultural production and enable farmers to maximize their income potential.

Sample Seven:

**...We shall continue the efforts of the Buhari administration on infrastructure.** Progress toward national networks of roads, rail and ports shall get priority attention....

By starting with this statement, President Tinubu acknowledges the infrastructure development efforts made by the previous administration under President Muhammadu Buhari. It further states the new administration intends to build upon the progress achieved and continue the momentum in addressing Nigeria's infrastructure needs. According to the new President, continuing the efforts of the Buhari administration on infrastructure demonstrates the administration's recognition of the long-term nature of infrastructure projects and the need for sustained commitment to achieve tangible results.

Sample Eight:

**...We commend the decision of the outgoing administration in phasing out the petrol subsidy regime which has increasingly favoured the rich more than the poor.** Subsidy can no longer justify its ever-increasing costs in the wake of drying resources. We shall instead re-channel the funds into better investment in public infrastructure, education, health care and jobs that will materially improve the lives of millions....

In the above, the decision to phase out the petrol subsidy regime is presented as the topic of discussion and is given prominence by being placed at the beginning of the sentence. By topicalizing this decision, President Tinubu emphasizes its significance and positions it as a commendable action taken by the outgoing administration. The purpose of topicalizing this decision is to draw attention to the issue of petrol subsidies and highlight the perceived shortcomings of the previous system. By employing this discourse strategy, he seeks to persuade the audience, garner support, and demonstrate his commitment to addressing socioeconomic inequalities and improving the lives of the Nigerian people. Following the topicalized statement, he introduces the alternative course of action, stating that the funds previously allocated to subsidies will be redirected towards investments in public infrastructure, education, healthcare, and job creation.

Sample Nine:

**...Given the world in which we reside, please permit a few comments regarding foreign policy.** The crisis in Sudan and the turn from democracy by several nations in our immediate neighbourhood are of pressing concern. As such, my primary foreign policy objective must be the peace and stability of the West African subregion and the African continent....

President Tinubu acknowledges the global context in which the administration operates and the need to address the theme on foreign policy as indicated in the first sentence. The rest of the sentences expand on the objectives by identifying the crisis in Sudan and the turn from democracy in neighbouring nations as pressing concerns. The statements suggest that the new administration is aware of the regional challenges and the need for active engagement in addressing these issues. Furthermore, his statement on the administration's primary foreign policy objective, which is to ensure peace and stability in the West African sub-region and the African continent suggests a commitment to regional security and the promotion of stability as a foundation for development and prosperity.

### **Actor Descriptions, Polarisation, Positive-self Presentation and Negative other-Presentation in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech**

Within discourse analysis, actor description refers to how discourse actors are depicted or portrayed in a given text or discourse. In ideological discourse, actor description often revolves around the dichotomy of "us" versus "them." It reflects the polarization of discourse actors into ingroup (the "us" or "we") and outgroup (the "them" or "others"). This division serves to establish positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, reinforcing the ideological stance of the discourse. The portrayal of discourse actors can vary in terms of positive, negative, or neutral attributes assigned to them.

Sample One:

...Our administration shall govern on your behalf but never rule over you. We shall consult and dialogue but never dictate. We shall reach out to all but never put down a single person for holding views contrary to our own....

In the provided text, the actor's description focuses on the administration and its relationship with the people. In the first statement, the administration is described as acting on behalf of the people, emphasizing a sense of representation, and working in the interest of the people (ingroup). The administration is contrasted with ruling over the people (outgroup), indicating a positive self-presentation. In the second sentence, President Tinubu portrays the administration as engaging in consultation and dialogue, highlighting a collaborative approach and involving the people (ingroup). The use of "never dictate" contrasts the administration's behavior with dictatorial tendencies (outgroup), reinforcing a positive self-presentation. In the last sentence, President Tinubu's administration is described as inclusive, reaching out to all individuals (ingroup). Here, the contrast is drawn between reaching out to all and not putting down anyone, even if their views differ from the administration's (outgroup). This emphasizes an open-minded and respectful approach, presenting the administration in a positive light.

### Sample Two:

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. They shall forever be my fellow compatriots. And I will treat them as such. They represent important constituencies and concerns that wisdom dare not ignore. They have taken their concerns to court. Seeking legal redress is their right and I fully defend their exercise of this right. This is the essence of the rule of law... 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 colouration has faded away. All I see are Nigerians....

In the provided text, the actor's description focuses on President Tinubu's relationship with his opponents and the broader population. By stating that the outcome reflected the will of the people in the first sentence, He positions himself as a representative of the collective (ingroup) and emphasizes his legitimacy and connection to the broader population. However, in the second sentence, he seeks to establish equality and fairness by stating that his victory does not elevate his sense of national identity (ingroup) nor diminish the patriotism of the opponents (outgroup). This portrays him as inclusive and respectful of his opponents' dedication to their country. In sentences three and four, President Tinubu reinforces the sense of unity by referring to their opponents as fellow compatriots (ingroup) and expressing a commitment to treating them with respect and equality. This language reinforces a positive self-presentation while highlighting the speaker's inclusive and collaborative approach. By acknowledging his opponents, he recognizes the value and legitimacy of different perspectives. Furthermore, in sentences six and seven, there is the use of the "they versus us" dichotomy. The use of "they" refers to a specific group of individuals who have chosen to address their concerns through legal means. This establishes a separation between the speaker (ingroup) and the individuals taking legal action (outgroup). Here, President Tinubu acknowledges and supports the right of the individuals (outgroup) to seek legal redress. Also, in the last few sentences, there is an emphasis on bridging the divide between President Tinubu's supporters (ingroup) and those who voted differently (outgroup).

### Sample Three:

The South must not only seek good for itself but must understand that its interests are served when good comes to the North. The North must see the South likewise. Whether from the winding creeks of the Niger Delta, the vastness of the northern savannah, the boardrooms of Lagos, the bustling capital of Abuja, or the busy markets of Onitsha, you are all my people. As your president, I shall serve with prejudice toward none but compassion and amity towards all.

In the sample above, there is an emphasis on the President's inclusive approach toward different regions (South and North) of the country. President Tinubu acknowledges the distinct interests and needs of both the South and the North. By using the pronouns 'its' and 'the North', he refers to these regions as separate entities. However, the statement also emphasizes the interconnectedness and mutual benefit between the two regions. The President encourages the South to understand that its well-being is intertwined with the well-being of the North, and vice versa, thereby implying a sense of shared interests and cooperation.

Also, his sentence "*Whether from the winding creeks of the Niger Delta, the vastness of the northern savannah, the boardrooms of Lagos, the bustling capital of Abuja, or the busy markets of Onitsha, you are all my people*", addresses the diverse regions and locations within the country. By using the pronoun "you," he includes and identifies himself as part of the others (them). The statement reinforces a sense of unity and belonging by acknowledging the people from various regions as "my people," suggesting a shared identity and commonality, while the use of "all" emphasizes inclusiveness and extends beyond any regional or group boundaries. In sum, the analysis reveals a discourse that highlights the interconnectedness of different regions and the President's inclusive approach. While the statement initially acknowledges the distinct interests of the South (us) and the North (them), it emphasizes the shared benefits and mutual understanding between these regions. He further extends this inclusiveness to encompass all people within the country, emphasizing a collective identity.

### **Degree of Description and Situation Description**

Degree of description refers to the extent to which a discourse provides detailed information or evaluations about a particular subject or actor. It involves the use of language that highlights specific qualities, attributes, or actions to convey a particular perspective or evaluation. On the other hand, Situation Description refers to the linguistic and discursive strategies used to provide context and background information about the setting, circumstances, or events surrounding the discourse.

...Mr President, you have been an honest, patriotic leader who has done his best for the nation you love. On a more personal note, you are a worthy partner and friend. May History be kind to you. For many years, Nigeria's critics have trafficked the rumour that our nation will break apart, even perish. Yet here we are. We have stumbled at times, but our resilience and diversity have kept us going. Our burdens may make us bend at times, but they shall never break us. Instead, we stand forth as Africa's most populous nation and as the best hope and strongest champion of the Black Race.

In sentences one to three above, President Tinubu employs the degree of description strategy by offering a detailed and positive evaluation of President Muhammadu Buhari. He goes beyond a general acknowledgment and provides specific qualities to support his assessment. He describes President Buhari as an *'honest, patriotic leader who has done his best for the nation you love'* and as a *'worthy partner and friend.'* These statements provide a high degree of description by highlighting specific virtues and personal qualities attributed to President Buhari. By employing the degree of description strategy, President Tinubu aims to enhance President Buhari's image and reputation. He used positive and laudatory language to depict him as a competent and dedicated leader, emphasizing his commitment to the nation and his personal qualities as a partner and friend. This strategy is intended to create a favorable perception of President Buhari and to strengthen his credibility and likability in the eyes of the audience. In other words, the President seeks to influence the audience's perception of President Buhari and shape his opinions. This strategy is often employed in political discourse to generate support, enhance credibility, and build a positive narrative around a particular individual or group. Regarding the sample above, he describes President Muhammadu Buhari as an honest and patriotic leader and a worthy partner who has done his best for the nation. The inclusion of the phrase *'a more personal note'* further strengthens the positive depiction of President Buhari, suggesting a strong partnership and friendship between President Tinubu and his predecessor, President Buhari.

On the other hand, the subsequent sentences, that is, sentences four to eight can be categorized as a situation description. It describes the longstanding criticism and rumors about Nigeria's potential disintegration or demise. The sentences highlight the external perceptions and criticisms that have been directed toward Nigeria over the years. By acknowledging these criticisms, President Tinubu sets the stage for discussing the current state of the nation and countering those negative perceptions. Furthermore, the President's sentence *'Our burdens may make us bend at times, but they shall never break us'* is a metaphorical illustration or an example of resilience. It emphasizes that despite facing challenges, Nigeria will remain strong and unbroken. By utilizing the discourse strategy of situational description, the speech provides a contextual backdrop for the discourse, addresses existing criticisms, and portrays Nigeria in a positive light. This discourse strategy, as used above allows the President to shape the audience's perception of the nation's current situation, highlighting its strengths and resilience, while countering negative narratives.

### **Lexicalization i: Synonyms as Discourse Strategy in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech**

The use of synonyms as a discourse strategy involves employing alternative words or phrases with similar meanings to enhance communication. It contributes to clarity by providing additional context or explanations, avoiding repetition, and amplifying the meaning of a word or concept. They are used in conveying precision or nuance and creating stylistic variation in discourse.

Endured / Shouldered; Crumble / Bend; Journey / Path:  
Consult / Dialogue; Unwavering/absolute; Shadow / Darkness:  
Destiny / Fate; Jobs / opportunity; Mend/heal  
tear/injure

The use of synonyms as discourse strategies by President Tinubu serves several purposes. Firstly, they enhance the rhetorical impact of his speech by adding depth and richness to the language used. The choice of each synonym helps to create a vivid and evocative narrative that resonates with the audience, making the message more memorable and emotionally engaging. Also, those synonyms convey nuanced meanings and evoke specific associations, allowing him to shape the perception of the issues at hand. For instance, by choosing words like "endured" and "shouldered," he emphasizes the resilience and strength of the Nigerian people, instilling a sense of unity and pride. Similarly, the use of "crumble" and "bend" acknowledges the existence of hardships but highlights the determination and unbreakable spirit of society. Furthermore, the choice of certain synonyms above enables him to frame the discourse in a positive and aspirational manner. For example, by employing "journey" and "path," he emphasizes the significance of the nation's history and the collective prayers that have shaped it while evoking the image of a torch illuminating a path of compassion, brotherhood, and peace. Additionally, the use of synonyms such as "consult" and "dialogue" reflects his commitment to inclusive decision-making processes and shared governance. Moreover, the synonyms such as "fairness" and "equity," appeal to principles of social justice and equal opportunities. They highlight his emphasis on creating a just and equal society, resonating with the audience's desire for a fair and inclusive nation.

### **Lexicalisation ii: Collocation as Discourse Strategy in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech**

Collocation involves the deliberate pairing or grouping of words that frequently occur together in a particular language or context. It refers to the habitual association of certain words, where their combined usage conveys a specific meaning or invokes a particular discourse pattern.

Sacred mandate; Unwavering confidence; Absolute faith; Moral strength; Clarity of purpose; Reach the limits; Renewed national hope; Retreat into the shadows; Rob ourselves; Finest destiny; Peaceful transition; Enduring faith; Collective sacrifices; Sublime moment; Worthwhile partner; populous nation; Best hope and strongest champion; Indispensable home; good governance; infrastructural improvements.

President Tinubu strategically utilizes collocations in his speech to achieve precision in meaning. Through collocations like "sacred mandate," "unwavering confidence," and "absolute faith," he effectively communicates his ideas with clarity and impact. Furthermore, collocations play a crucial role in creating rhetorical impact. For instance, the combination of words in phrases like "moral strength" and "clarity of purpose" resonates with the audience, appealing to their sense of ethics and righteousness. Also, collocations evoke symbolism and imagery, enhancing the emotional impact of his speech. For instance, the collocation "retreat into the shadows" paints a vivid picture of avoiding progress and hiding from challenges. Similarly, "peaceful transition" signifies a smooth and harmonious transfer of power. By employing such collocations, he engages the listeners' imagination and creates a visual representation of the ideas he is conveying, making his speech more evocative and compelling. In addition, through collocations like "good governance," "infrastructural improvements," and "populous nation," he establishes a consistent discourse pattern that aligns with his policy priorities. This consistency reinforces his message, ensures clarity, and aids in the overall understanding of his agenda.

### **Lexicalisation iii: Parallelism as Discourse Strategy in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech**

Parallelism, also known as parallel structure or parallel construction, is a rhetorical device that involves using similar grammatical structures, phrases, or patterns to express ideas of equal importance. It creates a sense of balance, rhythm, and clarity in writing or speech. Here are a few instances of parallelism in President Tinubu's inaugural speech:

1. My love for this nation is abiding. My confidence in its people is unwavering. And my faith in God Almighty is absolute.
2. We are here to further mend and heal this nation, not tear and injure it.
3. We shall consult and dialogue but never dictate. We shall reach out to all but never put down a single person for holding views contrary to our own.

The syntactic pattern in the given examples above follows the structure:

*NP (noun phrase) + PP (prepositional phrase) + (copular verb) + Adjective*

This pattern creates parallelism and repetition in the sentences, emphasizing President Tinubu's emotions and beliefs. However note that after the prepositional phrases in the last two sentences above, the copular verb "is" is omitted but implied. This is a common construction in which the verb is understood but not explicitly stated. The adjective following the ellipsed copular verb

describes or attributes a quality to the noun phrase. The ellipsis of the copular verb allows for a more concise and streamlined expression of the speaker's thoughts, while still conveying the intended meaning. Additionally, by stating that his love for the nation is "abiding" in the first sentence, he conveys a sense of steadfastness and commitment; and the repetition of the adjective "unwavering" to his confidence in the nation's people reinforces the idea that their trust remains firm and unshaken, while his faith in God Almighty is described as "absolute," emphasizing the strength and unwavering nature of their religious belief.

Also, in the second sentence, the coordinated verb phrases "mend and heal" and "tear and injure" form a parallel structure. The pattern "to (infinitive) + verb +and+ verb indicates the President's intentions and goals. The parallel construction creates a clear contrast between the positive actions of mending and healing and in contrast, the negative actions of tearing and injuring. This parallelism serves as a discourse strategy to highlight his intended approach and to draw attention to their commitment to unity and progress. The use of parallelism in this example not only enhances the clarity and impact of the message but also creates a memorable contrast between positive and negative actions.

Furthermore, the last example utilizes parallelism through the structure "We shall +verb+ but never +verb" pattern. By stating "We shall consult and dialogue," President Tinubu highlights his willingness to seek input and engage in conversations with others, while the second part structure continues with the statement "but never dictate", which emphasizes a rejection of autocratic approaches. This contrast reinforces the speaker's commitment to democratic principles and respect for differing opinions. The other parallel structure in the last example underscores his dedication to inclusivity and tolerance. It demonstrates a willingness to engage with diverse perspectives and a commitment to fostering a respectful and constructive environment for dialogue.

### **Lexicalisation iii : Repetition as Discourse Strategy in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech**

Repetition refers to the deliberate and strategic repetition of words, phrases, or ideas within a speech or written text. It is employed to achieve various rhetorical effects and enhance the impact of the message being conveyed. Repetition can serve several purposes in discourse such as emphasis, reinforcement, and memorability. It further helps to enhance clarity, emphasize key points, engage the audience, and make the message more memorable and persuasive. It is a discourse tool used by speakers and writers to effectively communicate their ideas and leave a lasting impression. The only recognizable repetition in the speech is :

" Nigerian ideal"

The above emphasizes a core concept and vision that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu aims to promote and achieve throughout his presidency. This repetition helps to reinforce the significance and importance of this ideal within the context of his message to the people of Nigeria. By repeating the "Nigerian ideal," he underscores the idea that there is a collective vision and aspiration for the nation. He acknowledges that while economic growth and development are important, they alone cannot capture the essence of the Nigerian story or fulfill the nation's potential. Instead, he presents "the Nigerian ideal" as something broader and more profound. Furthermore, the repetition of "the Nigerian ideal" also serves to inspire and unite the people. By repeatedly invoking this concept, he aims to rally the citizens around a common purpose, urging them to join him in making Nigeria a more perfect nation and democracy.

### **Metaphors in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech**

1. "This day is bold and majestic yet bright and full of spirit".
2. "We have long ago decided to march beyond the dimness of night into the open day of renewed national hope.
3. "Retreat into the shadows of our unmet potential."
4. "Arrive at this SUBLIME moment where the prospect of a better future merges with our improved capacity to create that future.
5. "We have stumbled at times, but our resilience and diversity have kept us going.
6. "Our burdens may make us bend at times, but they shall never break us.
7. "We stand forth as Africa's most populous nation and as the best hope and strongest champion of the Black Race.
8. "We hold this beam aloft because it lights our path with compassion, brotherhood, and peace. May this great light never EXTINGUISH

The first metaphor used by President Tinubu above combines the ideas of boldness, majesty, brightness, and spirit to create an atmosphere of significance and optimism. It portrays the present day as a momentous occasion filled with positive energy and great potential. The second metaphor represents a collective decision to move forward and leave behind challenging times. It signifies progress and the determination to embrace a brighter future filled with renewed hope for the nation. Also, he used the third metaphor as imagery of retreating into shadows to symbolize untapped potential and missed opportunities. It suggests that not fully utilizing one's capabilities is akin to remaining hidden and unexplored, urging individuals or the nation to step into the light and unlock their potential, while the fourth combines the hopeful prospects of a better future with the increased ability to shape and realize that future. This metaphor underscores the importance of embracing the present moment and actively participating in creating a brighter future.

Also, the next metaphor emphasizes the ability to persevere and overcome through resilience and diversity. It highlights the strength and determination that has enabled progress and kept the nation moving forward. Similarly, President Tinubu used the sixth metaphor to signify the challenges and pressures that individuals or the nation may face. However, it emphasizes the resilience and strength to withstand those burdens without breaking. It conveys a sense of unwavering resolve in the face of adversity. Furthermore, the seventh metaphor positions Nigeria as a prominent and influential nation within Africa, highlighting its role as a leader and advocate for the Black Race. It conveys a sense of national pride and responsibility, emphasizing Nigeria's potential to be a positive force for the advancement of the Black Race. The last metaphor represents the embodiment of compassion, brotherhood, and peace. It symbolizes the guiding principles that illuminate the path forward for the nation. The metaphor calls for the preservation of these values and serves as a reminder of the importance of unity, empathy, and harmony in society

### **Topoi**

Topoi refers to a concept in rhetoric and argumentation theory that involves the use of common or conventional lines of reasoning or argumentative strategies. Topoi are not self-evident premises, but rather commonplaces or general topics that can be used to develop arguments.

In rhetoric, topoi are often used as a way to find or generate arguments in a given context. They provide a set of common ideas, themes, or strategies that can be employed to support a particular point of view or persuade an audience. The purpose of using topoi is to draw upon familiar or accepted lines of thought to make an argument more persuasive or effective. They are considered common or widely recognized patterns of thought that can help to shape and structure persuasive discourse. Examples from the speech include:

Appeal to faith:

“And my faith in God Almighty, absolute”

This quote expresses the President’s faith in God and appeals to the audience's religious beliefs and values. By expressing a strong faith in God, the speaker aims to evoke a sense of trust, guidance, and moral grounding.

Appeal to patriotism:

"My love for this nation is abiding."

This aims to evoke a sense of love, pride, and loyalty towards one's country. By expressing their abiding love for the nation, the speaker appeals to the audience's sense of national identity and encourages a shared commitment to the country's well-being.

Appeal to history and tradition:

"The peaceful transition from one government to another is now our political tradition."

The above relies on the importance of continuity, stability, and respect for established practices. By referring to the peaceful transition of power as a political tradition, the speaker appeals to the audience's appreciation for historical precedents and encourages the preservation of established norms.

Appeal to resilience:

"We have endured hardships that would have made other societies crumble."

This acknowledges the hardships the nation has faced and emphasizes its ability to withstand and overcome challenges. It reflects the appeal to resilience by highlighting the nation's strength in the face of adversity.

Appeal to unity and inclusivity:

"We are here to further mend and heal this nation, not tear and injure it."

This quote emphasizes the President's commitment to unity and inclusivity, highlighting the importance of working together to heal and strengthen the nation. It appeals to the audience's sense of unity and cooperation for the betterment of the country.

### **Modality as Interpersonal Resources in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech**

Modality encompasses the speaker's subjective perspective and conceptualization of a proposition, enabling individuals to convey notions of actuality, potentiality, possibility, and desirability. In Hallidayan linguistics, modality is an integral aspect of the interpersonal function of language, serving to articulate the speaker's attitudes, evaluations, and the dynamics between the speaker and the hearer. Within the context of this paper, the employment of modal language allows President Tinubu to articulate his attitudes, and evaluations, and establish a dynamic relationship between himself as the speaker and the audience as the hearers. The modals are categorized into three: epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modality.

### Epistemic modality

Epistemic modality deals with expressing the speaker's judgment, certainty, or possibility regarding the truth of a statement. It is used to indicate the likelihood or probability of an event or situation. Epistemic modality allows speakers to convey their subjective assessment or belief about the information they are expressing. Let's consider some examples from the inaugural speech:

Excerpt 1:

...In this vein, **may** I offer a few comments regarding the election that brought us to this juncture....

Excerpt 2:

...We lift high this torch so that it **might** shine on every household and in every heart that calls itself Nigerian....

In excerpt 1 above, the use of "may" indicates the President's permission or possibility to offer comments. It suggests that he is seeking or requesting permission to share his thoughts or observations about the election that led to the current situation. The expression of epistemic modality in this sentence also reflects his subjective judgment or willingness to contribute his thought, valuable insights, or opinions about the election. The use of "may" indicates that the President recognizes his comments are not obligatory but rather an optional contribution to the present discourse.

In excerpt 2, the use of "might" suggests the possibility or potential for the torch to shine on every household and in every heart that identifies as Nigerian. It conveys the speaker's subjective judgment or belief that there is a chance or likelihood for the desired outcome to occur. The use of "might," by the President is not guaranteed or certain, instead, it expresses an optimistic perspective, indicating that the speaker believes the torch can have the intended impact. This modal reflects President Tinubu's subjective judgment, willingness, and perception of the value he can bring to the discussion about the election.

### Deontic Modality

Deontic modality focuses on expressing the speaker's attitudes or obligations regarding permission, necessity, or duty. It deals with what is allowed, required, or prohibited. Deontic modality allows speakers to convey their directives, mandates, or recommendations to others.

Excerpt Three:

...We **must** never allow the labor of those who came before us to wither in vain but to blossom and bring forth a better reality... We **must** work harder at bringing these noble documents to life by strengthening the bonds of economic collaboration, social cohesion, and cultural understanding... The South **must** not only seek good for itself but **must** understand that its interests are served when good comes to the North....

Excerpt Four:

... Power generation **should** nearly double and transmission and distribution networks improved....

Excerpt Five:

...Interest rates **need to** be reduced to increase investment and consumer purchasing in ways that sustain the economy at a higher level....

Excerpt Six:

...**May** History be kind to you... **May** this great light never extinguish... **May** we uphold these fitting and excellent notions as the new Nigerian ideal...**May** God bless you and **may** He bless our beloved land....

Excerpt Seven:

...Our administration **shall** govern on your behalf but never rule over you. We **shall** consult and dialogue but never dictate. We **shall** reach out to all but never put down a single person for holding views contrary to our own....

In excerpt three above, the highlighted modals convey a strong sense of deontic modality, reflecting various obligations and responsibilities. For instance, it emphasizes the duty to honor and nurture the efforts of previous generations, ensuring that their labor does not go in vain but instead flourishes to create a better reality. Also, it underscores the obligation to work diligently towards bringing important documents to life by strengthening economic collaboration, social cohesion, and cultural understanding. Furthermore, it highlights the urgent need to put in more effort to realize the noble aspirations contained within these documents. Lastly, it addresses the interconnectedness of regions, stressing the imperative for the South and the North to recognize and pursue each other's well-being. These deontic modals as exemplified convey a sense of duty, obligation, and responsibility across various contexts, illustrating President Tinubu's commitment to upholding and pursuing certain goals for the betterment of society, regions, and future generations.

In excerpt four, the use of "should" states President Tinubu's expectation or anticipation of power generation. The modality of expectation is deployed here because the statement reflects his anticipation or belief that power generation should significantly increase and the transmission and distribution networks should be improved to meet certain standards or requirements. It conveys the idea that these actions are not just desirable but expected or demanded to address

current needs or future demands in the power sector. Apart from it being used as an expectation, it will further create a sense of obligation or duty to work towards achieving this outcome.

Furthermore, excerpt five expresses the deontic modality of obligation or necessity. The use of "need to" indicates that it is essential for interest rates to be reduced to achieve certain outcomes. The president is emphasizing that reducing interest rates is not merely a suggestion or preference but a requirement or obligation. It suggests that it is crucial or mandated to take action to promote investment, consumer purchasing, and overall economic sustainability. The deontic modality is used to convey his belief in the obligation or necessity of reducing interest rates. It implies that it is not just beneficial or advisable, but imperative or expected to lower interest rates to stimulate economic growth.

Also in six, the sentences exemplify the deontic modality by expressing desires and wishes. In the first statement, "May History be kind to you," the use of "may" conveys a wish or expectation that History treats the addressed person favorably. In the second, the President expresses a desire or hope that the mentioned "great light" continues to shine indefinitely. By using "may," the speaker emphasizes the importance of preserving and protecting this light, implying a sense of obligation to ensure its perpetuity. The third sentence states a shared responsibility and expectation for individuals to embrace and maintain the mentioned ideals. Lastly, in the statement, the president expresses a request or desire for God's blessings upon the addressed person and the land. It implies a sense of obligation or expectation for these blessings to be bestowed, highlighting the belief in Divine favor and the importance of receiving God's blessings.

The last excerpt exemplifies the deontic modality "shall" by expressing commitments, obligations, and assurances that emphasize the President's approach to governance. Each sentence conveys a sense of obligation, responsibility, and expectation for his actions and behaviors. The use of "shall" indicates a firm commitment and obligation to govern in a representative manner, expresses a commitment to participatory decision-making and inclusivity, and emphasizes a commitment to respect and tolerance. In sum, President Tinubu used the deontic modality to express a strong sense of obligation, responsibility, and expectation of actions and conduct. The usage implies a firm commitment to certain principles and behaviors, highlighting the underlying obligations to govern on behalf of the people, engage in dialogue, and respect differing perspectives.

## Dynamic modality

Dynamic modality refers to expressing the capacity, ability, or potential of the subject to act. It deals with the notion of what is possible or feasible. Dynamic modality allows speakers to convey information about capabilities, skills, or potential actions.

Excerpt eight:

...For many years, Nigeria's critics have trafficked the rumour that our nation **will** break apart, even perish...In the coming days and weeks, my team **will** publicly detail key aspects of our programme... The principles that **will** guide our administration are simple... Nigeria **will** be impartially governed according to the constitution and the rule of law....

Excerpt nine:

...These things are important; but they **can** never convey the fullness of our story..."Security shall be the top priority of our administration because neither prosperity nor justice **can** prevail amidst insecurity and violence... Subsidy **can** no longer justify its ever-increasing costs in the wake of drying resources."

In excerpt eight above, President Tinubu used the dynamic modality to express actions, plans, and intentions for the future. They convey a sense of dynamism, movement, and proactive engagement in bringing about change or implementing specific measures. First, the President states that Nigeria's critics have spread rumors about the nation's potential disintegration. Here, the usage of "will" signifies the anticipated outcome. Also, the President intends to publicly disclose key aspects of his program in the coming days and weeks, underscoring a proactive engagement with the public. The principles that will guide the administration are characterized as simple, emphasizing his intention to adhere to them in a future-oriented manner. Furthermore, he envisions Nigeria being impartially governed based on the constitution and the rule of law, reflecting his proactive commitment to the ongoing implementation of these principles. On the other hand, excerpt nine expresses ability. In the first sentence, the modal verb "can" suggests the potential or ability of these things to convey the story. However, it is negated by the word "never," indicating that despite their importance, these things are ultimately unable to fully capture the complete essence of the story. Similarly, in the second sentence, "can" highlights the inability of prosperity and justice to prevail in the presence of insecurity and violence. It indicates that these negative conditions hinder the potential for prosperity and justice to exist and flourish. Finally, in the last sentence, the modal verb indicates the diminishing ability of subsidy to justify its increasing costs. It suggests that as resources become scarce or depleted (drying resources), the justifiability of the subsidy diminishes.

Table 1. *Distribution of Modality types in the speech*

Modality types	Modals	Frequency	Percentage
Epistemic	May	3	4.6
	Should	1	1.5
	might	1	1.5
Deontic	need to	1	1.5
	must	8	12.3
	shall	28	43.1
	may	4	6.1
Dynamic	will	16	24.6
	can	3	4.6
Total		65	100

These results imply that the text predominantly contains deontic and dynamic modalities, with significant usage of "shall" and "will" as modal verbs. Moreover, the modal "shall" appears prominently in the data. This implies that President Tinubu's speech emphasizes strong commitments, commands, or intentions toward various actions and responsibilities. The occurrence of "must" indicates a sense of necessity or requirement in the speech. The presence of "will" and "can" in the dynamic modality suggest discussions about future plans, possibilities, or abilities. On the other hand, the occurrence of epistemic modality is relatively limited, with "may," "should," and "might" appearing sporadically. This indicates a lesser focus on expressing possibilities or uncertainties.

### **Personal Pronouns as Interpersonal Resources in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech**

The use of personal pronouns as a viable interpersonal resource serves various functions in communication. Personal pronouns serve multiple functions in discourse. Firstly, they enhance conciseness and fluency by avoiding repetitive and cumbersome repetition, ensuring continuity and coherence in communication. Secondly, they act as linguistic markers, reflecting the subjective perspective and involvement of the speaker or writer. Thirdly, they address specific individuals or groups, establishing direct connections and inclusiveness. Their usage can include or exclude certain entities, revealing the dynamics of addressivity and inclusiveness within discourse. Lastly, personal pronouns reflect power dynamics and social relationships.

## The Interactivity of Personal Pronouns in President Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech

In this study, the interactivity of pronouns refers to their role in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships between participants in a communicative event. Pronouns are interactive resources that enable speakers and writers to position themselves and their audience within the discourse. They contribute to the negotiation of roles, identities, and social dynamics between the speaker/writer and the listener/reader. Furthermore, interactivity is achieved through the use of personal pronouns, such as "I," "you," "he," "she," "we," and "they," which directly engage with specific participants in the discourse. These pronouns serve as tools for establishing reference, addressing individuals or groups, and indicating power relationships. Let's consider some examples from President Tinubu's speech on May 29, 2023:

### I/ME/MY

...**I** stand before you honoured to assume the sacred mandate you have given **me**... may **I** offer a few comments regarding the election that brought us to this juncture... However, **my** victory does not render **me** any more Nigerian than **my** opponents... And **I** will treat them as such... **I** fully defend their exercise of this right... **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....

The choice of the personal pronouns above reflects the president's stance, perspective, and attitude toward the audience in the discourse. The use of "I" and its variants position the speaker as the agent or experiencer, expressing their involvement and subjectivity. Furthermore, President Tinubu's consistent use of personal pronouns such as "I," "me," and "my" throughout his speech serves multiple rhetorical purposes. Firstly, it establishes a direct and personal connection with the audience, conveying his authenticity and sincerity. Secondly, he takes personal responsibility for his words and actions, emphasizing his leadership and authority as the President of Nigeria, and lastly, his use of personal pronouns also highlights his unwavering dedication and commitment to the nation. Through the use of "I," Tinubu asserts himself as a significant social actor in the context of Nigerian politics and governance.

### We/us/our

In this analysis, the personal pronouns 'we/us/our' convey inclusiveness or exclusiveness. The use of inclusive pronouns like "we" or "us" emphasizes shared identities and a sense of unity within a group or community. In contrast, exclusive pronouns can emphasize differences and create a sense of separation. Examples include:

Inclusivity of "we/us/our"

When **we** seem to have reached the limits of **our** human capacity...As a nation, **we** have long ago decided to march beyond the dimness of night into the open day of renewed national hope...The question **we** now ask ourselves is whether to remain faithful to the work inherent in building a better society or retreat into the shadows of **our** unmet potential...**We** are too great a nation and too grounded as a people to rob ourselves of **our** finest destiny...**We** have endured hardships that would have made other societies crumble...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...To the surprise of many but not to ourselves, **we** have more firmly established this land as a democracy in both word and deed...Yet here **we** are. **We** have stumbled at times, but **our** resilience and diversity have kept **us** going...Instead, **we** stand forth as Africa's most populous nation and as the best hope and strongest champion of the Black Race...As citizens, **we** declare as one unified people devoted to one unified national cause, that as long as this world exists, NIGERIA SHALL EXIST...Today, Fate and Destiny join together to place the torch of human progress in **our** very hands. **We** dare not let it slip...**We** must never allow the labor of those who came before **us** to wither in vain but to blossom and bring forth a better reality....

In the text from the speech above, the pronoun "we" is used inclusively to represent a collective social actor that includes both President Tinubu and the citizens of Nigeria, emphasizing that they are all in this together. The inclusive "we" implies that the President, as a leader, is positioning himself as part of the same group as the citizens, emphasizing a sense of unity and shared responsibility. The usage of the inclusive pronoun "we" in President Tinubu's speech serves significant functions within the context of fostering collective engagement and shared responsibility. Firstly, the inclusion of "we" implies a sense of shared goals and aspirations between the president and the citizens, indicating a mutual commitment to advancing the nation towards a more desirable future. This inclusive language promotes a sense of unity and reinforces the notion of a collective endeavor. Secondly, the utilization of "we" suggests a participatory approach to decision-making, emphasizing the involvement of both President Tinubu and the citizens in shaping the nation's trajectory. By employing inclusive pronouns, the speech underscores the significance of inclusivity and democratic governance, highlighting the shared responsibility that citizens have in the decision-making processes. This linguistic strategy fosters a sense of ownership and involvement among the populace, enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance efforts.

## Exclusivity of “we”

**We** lift high this torch so that it might shine on every household and in every heart that calls itself Nigerian... **We** hold this beam aloft because it lights our path with compassion, brotherhood, and peace... **We** shall reach out to all but never put down a single person for holding views contrary to our own... **We** are here to further mend and heal this nation, not tear and injure it... **We** shall defend the nation from terror and all forms of criminality that threaten the peace and stability of our country and our subregion... **We** shall remodel our economy to bring about growth and development through job creation, food security and an end of extreme poverty... To effectively tackle this menace, **we** shall reform both our security DOCTRINE and its ARCHITECTURE... **We** shall invest more in our security personnel, and this means more than an increase in number. **We** shall provide, better training, equipment, pay and firepower... On the economy, **we** target a higher GDP growth and to significantly reduce unemployment... **We** intend to accomplish this by taking the following steps:... **We** will encourage states to develop local sources as well

The excerpt above contains instances where the pronoun "we" is used exclusively, encompassing President Tinubu and his cabinet or administration while excluding the citizens. It emphasizes the authority and leadership of the president and his administration and by deploying the exclusive pronouns, President Tinubu positions himself and his team as the primary agents responsible for initiating and implementing actions. This exclusive "we" highlights their role in decision-making and underscores their commitment to taking charge of crucial matters affecting the nation. In the context of the speech, the exclusivity of "we" implies that the president and his administration will take charge of important matters such as national security, economic reforms, infrastructure development, and foreign policy. It suggests that these responsibilities will be shouldered by the government rather than relying solely on the citizens' involvement. This exclusivity aligns with the notion that the administration, as the elected governing body, holds the authority and capability to implement necessary changes and improvements.

However note that the use of the variants of exclusive "we" (such as "us" and "our") referring to the citizens rather than the cabinet members in President Tinubu's speech can be attributed to a rhetorical technique known as inclusive language, which aims to create a sense of unity and shared responsibility among the citizens by including them in the narrative and aligning them with the goals and vision of the administration.

Table 2: *Distribution of Personal Pronoun “we” in President Tinubu’s speech:*

Pronoun “we”	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
“We” inclusive	16	45.7
“We” exclusive	19	54.3
TOTAL	35	100

The analysis of the frequency and percentage breakdown reveals that the usage of the exclusive form of the pronoun "we" surpasses that of the inclusive form. While the inclusive use of "we" suggests that the speaker perceives themselves as an integral component of the collective being addressed, the exclusive use of "we" connotes a differentiation between President Tinubu and his cabinet, specifically concerning roles, perspectives, or responsibilities.

### **Pronouns “ they/their/them”**

...Our burdens may make us bend at times, but **they** shall never break us... These things are important; but **they** can never convey the fullness of our story... **They** shall forever be my fellow compatriots. And I will treat **them** as such. **They** represent important constituencies and concerns that wisdom dare not ignore... **They** have taken their concerns to court. Seeking legal redress is their right and I fully defend **their** exercise of this right. This is the essence of the rule of law. Nigerian than my opponents. Nor does it render **them** any less patriotic... These things are important; but **they** can never convey the fullness of our story....

The interpersonal function of the pronouns "they," "their," and "them" in the speech given by President Tinubu serves to create a distinction between the government and other things or groups being referred to. These pronouns are used to refer to external actors, organizations, or challenges that are separate from the President, his cabinet, and the citizens. For instance, in the first, his usage indicates that the challenges and aspirations mentioned in the speech are shared by all. Then secondly, he acknowledges the existence and significance of other political parties in the Nigerian political landscape. He recognizes their role as competitors and representatives of different constituencies and concerns. The pronoun "they" reflects a respect for the democratic process and the right of other political parties to participate in the political arena. He acknowledges their patriotic commitment, emphasizing that his victory does not make him more Nigerian than his opponents. The possessive forms used by him recognize the importance of pluralism and diverse political views in a democracy. He implies that the concerns and perspectives raised by other political parties should not be disregarded but should be considered essential elements of a democratic society; thus, other political parties have taken their concerns

to court, emphasizing their right to seek legal redress. This demonstrates a commitment to the rule of law and the fair resolution of political disputes through legal channels.

### **Pronouns: “you/your”**

...I stand before **you** honoured to assume the sacred mandate **you** have given me...Mr President, **you** have been an honest, patriotic leader who has done his best for the nation **you** love. On a more personal note, **you** are a worthy partner and friend. May History be kind to **you**.... Our administration shall govern on **your** behalf but never rule over **you**... My supporters, I thank **you**... I ask **you** to grasp it in national affinity and brotherhood... **you** are all my people. As **your** president, I shall serve with prejudice toward none but compassion and amity towards all... It belongs to **you**, the people of Nigeria... May God bless **you**....

The pronouns "you" and "your" serve a crucial role in establishing a direct and personal address to the audience, particularly the Nigerian people in this context. This choice of pronouns fosters a sense of connection and engagement, heightening the relatability and impact of the speech. Additionally, through the use of "you" and "your," presents his predecessor, President Buhari, as not only an honest and patriotic leader but also as a friend and partner. This choice of pronouns emphasizes a personal bond and camaraderie between him and his predecessor. Moreover, the pronouns "you" and "your" are employed to express gratitude and appreciation towards the supporters of the speaker. By addressing them directly, the speaker acknowledges their trust and support, recognizing their significant role in his victory. This utilization of pronouns highlights the collective contribution of the supporters and reinforces their importance in the speaker's political journey.

Table 3: *Distribution of Personal Pronouns in the speech:*

Personal Pronouns (Subject/object/possession)	Frequency	Percentage
i/me/my	37	22.98
we/us/our	98	60.87
you/your	13	8.07
they/their/them	13	8.07
Total	161	100

In the table above, there is the predominantly usage of personal pronouns in the first-person plural form. This implies that President Tinubu is presenting himself as part of a larger group or community, highlighting his alignment with the collective interests and actions. Furthermore, the use of first-person singular pronouns indicates that he also acknowledges his individual role and

perspective within the broader context. This balance between first-person singular and plural pronouns suggests that while he recognizes his own agency and contributions, he also emphasizes the importance of collective collaboration and joint efforts. In addition, the occurrence of second-person pronouns ("you/your") and third-person pronouns ("they/their/them") is relatively lower, representing 8.07% each. This indicates that he primarily focuses on addressing the collective audience rather than specific individuals or smaller groups in the larger society.

#### **4. Discussion**

The present study uncovers the discursive strategies, linguistic features, and interpersonal resources employed in shaping President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's inaugural speech delivered on May 29, 2023. The findings reveal the presence of topicalization and actor description, highlighting key themes and ideas while polarizing the discourse between "us" and "them." This discursive strategy contributes to President Tinubu's positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, effectively reinforcing his ideological stance. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates the strategic use of various lexicalization techniques, such as synonyms, collocations, repetition, parallelism, metaphors, and topoi. Just like previous researchers on past Presidents (Kamalu & Agangan, 2011; Alo, 2012; Emeka Nwobia, 2015; Isa & Abaya, 2019), the deployment of these linguistic tools enhances the clarity, impact, and rhetorical effectiveness of Presidential speeches, allowing for nuanced meanings, shaping perceptions, and emphasizing core beliefs.

Regarding President Tinubu's interpersonal style, the findings of this study reveal a strategic deployment of personal pronouns, notably through the inclusive and exclusive use of "we," aimed at cultivating a sense of unity and shared responsibility among the Nigerian populace. Building upon the insights offered by Ogungbe (2021), who examined pronoun usage in a similar context, it is suggested that the deployment of personal pronouns serves to garner support, establish trust, and foster loyalty among Nigerians towards the ideas conveyed in President Tinubu's speeches. By employing personal pronouns, President Tinubu reinforces the authenticity of his connection with the audience, effectively engaging and exerting influence over them.

Furthermore, the analyses reveal the proficient employment of modal verbs, encompassing epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modality. Similar to earlier research such as Okafor and Issife (2017) and Akinseye (2015), the functional implications of modality shed light on President Tinubu's unwavering commitments, sense of duty, and proactive involvement, thereby aligning with his communication objectives. Notably, the limited use of epistemic modality indicates a diminished emphasis on articulating uncertainties, accentuating President Tinubu's confident and assertive communication style.

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of President Tinubu's inaugural speech and its impact on the Nigerian populace. By uncovering the discursive strategies, linguistic features, and interpersonal resources employed in shaping the speech, we gain valuable insights into President Tinubu's communication style and persuasive strategies. The strategic use of language allows President Tinubu to effectively engage and influence the Nigerian populace, aligning with his objectives as a political leader. These findings enhance our knowledge of political discourse, persuasion, and leadership in the context of inaugural speeches, providing a foundation for further research.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the comprehensive analysis of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's inaugural speech reveals the effective use of various discourse strategies, linguistic devices, modal verbs, and personal pronouns to shape the discourse, convey key messages, engage the audience, and emphasize the administration's priorities. The analysis demonstrates the strategic use of topicalization and actor description strategies, highlighting important themes such as national unity, governance, security, economic development, and more. The discourse is structured to capture the audience's attention and establish these subjects as central pillars of the administration's agenda. Additionally, the polarization of discourse actors into ingroup and outgroup reinforces positive self-presentation for President Tinubu's administration while attributing challenges and issues to the outgroup. President Tinubu's skillful deployment of lexicalization techniques, such as synonyms, collocations, repetition, parallelism, metaphors, topoi, and modality, enhances the clarity, impact, and rhetorical effectiveness of the speech. These linguistic devices add depth, create rhetorical impact, evoke imagery, appeal to shared beliefs, and establish a dynamic relationship with the audience. Furthermore, the analysis highlights the effective use of modal verbs, including epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modality, to convey judgment, obligation, commitment, and future-oriented actions. President Tinubu's usage of modal verbs demonstrates his strong commitment, responsibilities, and proactive engagement in various aspects of governance. The strategic deployment of personal pronouns reflects President Tinubu's stance, perspective, and attitude toward the audience. The inclusive pronouns foster a sense of unity and shared responsibility, while the exclusive pronouns highlight authority and leadership. The use of personal pronouns establishes a direct and personal connection, acknowledges external actors, and creates a sense of connection and engagement with the audience.

### **About the Author**

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