

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Rejoinders to Political Press Releases in Selected Nigerian Newspapers

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Abstract

This paper presents a Critical Discourse Analysis of rejoinders to political press releases in selected Nigerian Newspapers. The study examined the linguistic and discursive features, power relations and ideological positioning, and the contributions of rejoinders in shaping political narratives and public opinion. The analyses were based on Fairclough's three dimensional approach to CDA. The framework identified three approaches to CDA, namely: texts, discourse practice and sociocultural context. The approach paved way for systematic analysis of the data, and also help in arriving at the findings of the study. Data for the study comprises of ten (10) rejoinders from the selected Nigerian newspapers.

The selected Nigerian newspapers are: Punch Newspaper, Vanguard Newspaper, The Guardian Newspaper, The Blueprints Newspaper, TheCable Newspaper, DailyTrust Newspaper. Rejoinders analyzed are those from June 2022 to June 2023. Data were purposefully chosen on a specific genre of rejoinders to political press releases, such as statements from political parties, government officials, or opposition groups, providing a focused perspective. Furthermore, the criteria for selecting the sample of rejoinders, includes; relevance to political issues, diversity of perspectives, and prominence of the author. This approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of linguistic features, power dynamics, and ideological positioning within political rejoinders.

The findings of this study reveals the strategic use of language in political rejoinders, covering vocabulary precision, power relations, ideological positioning, and rhetorical strategies.

In conclusion, this research contributes valuable insights to the field of CDA, emphasizing intertextuality, transparency, and accountability in political discourse. It serves as a valuable resource for academics and provides practical insights for enhancing political communication strategies.

Keywords: Discourse, Analysis, Critical discourse analysis, Rejoinders, Press Releases

Introduction

The term "discourse" has several definitions, particularly within the field of language study, referring to speech patterns, language usage, dialects, and acceptable statements within a speech community. While, Analysis is the process of evaluating things by breaking them down into pieces, which plays a crucial role in understanding discourse.

Discourse analysis, thus, is the linguistic study of spoken and written communication, with a primary focus on language usage in social contexts. This analysis is pivotal in unveiling the intricate language interplays, social power relations, dominance, ideologies, are enacted, reproduced, and resisted through discourse production and political contexts.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary and specialised research approach within discourse analysis that explicitly seeks to understand, expose, and resist social practices. CDA, examining language within institutional and political discourses, uncovers overt or covert inequalities in social relationships. Language use in rejoinders, seen as a social practice, establishes a dialectical relationship between discursive events and the situations, institutions, and social structures that frame them. Moreover, Critical Discourse Analysis reveals the nexus between power and ideology, delving not only into what language is but also why it is. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) succinctly summarise the main tenets of CDA, addressing social problems, acknowledging the discursive nature of power relations, and emphasizing the constitutive role of discourse in soci-

ety and culture. Discourses wield significant influence, projecting issues such as unequal social relations, leadership failures, and hypocrisy.

Despite the significance of rejoinders to political press releases in shaping public opinions and influencing socio-political discourse, there is a lack of in-depth analysis regarding the linguistic & discursive strategies, power relations, and ideological positioning employed by political actors in Nigeria. Existing studies on political discourse in Nigerian newspapers have primarily focused on editorials and news articles, neglecting the critical exploration of rejoinders to political press releases. This study, therefore, aims to address this gap by conducting a critical discourse analysis of rejoinders to political press releases in selected Nigerian newspapers.

The specific objectives of this study are primarily to examine the linguistic and discursive features employed on these rejoinders; to explore the power relations and ideological positioning embedded in the language rhetoric of political rejoinders; to explore ways rejoinders contributes to the construction of political narratives and shape public opinion in Nigeria. This approach will hinder our understanding on how political actors engage in discursive practices and manipulate language to further their interests, maintain power, and shape public perceptions.

Rejoinder: A rejoinder is a response or reply, especially in the context of a debate, argument, or discussion. It is a formal or official answer to a question, statement, or criticism made by someone else. A rejoinder typically follows an initial statement or argument and offers a counterargument, clarification, or rebuttal. It is intended to address and engage with the points raised by the other party, often in a point-by-point manner. In a political context, a rejoinder refers to a response or counterargument made by a political figure or party in reaction to a statement, accusation, policy proposal, or action put forth by another political entity.

It can occur during debates, press conferences, interviews, or in written form such as articles, speeches, or official statements. In politics, a rejoinder aims to address and refute the claims, criticisms, or proposals of opponents, to defend one's own position, to clarify misunderstandings, or to present an alternative viewpoint. It is an essential element of political discourse and democratic dialogue, allowing for the exchange of ideas and the exploration of different perspectives on political issues [1].

Statement of the Problem

Despite the importance of analyzing rejoinders to political press releases in shaping public opinion and influencing socio-political discourse, there is a dearth of comprehensive examination regarding the linguistic and discursive features, power dynamics, and ideological stances utilized by political figures in Nigeria. Recent research on political discourse in Nigerian newspapers has predominantly centered on editorials and news articles, overlooking the crucial investigation of responses to political press releases. This gap in research impedes our comprehension of how political figures employ discursive strategies and linguistic manipulation to advance their agendas, uphold authority, and mold public perspectives.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study, is to conduct a critical discourse analysis of rejoinders to political press releases in selected Nigerian newspapers.

The following are the specific objectives:

1. To examine linguistic and discursive features employed in rejoinders to political releases in selected Nigerian newspapers.
2. To explore power relations and ideological positioning embedded in the language and rhetoric of political rejoinders.
3. To explore ways in which rejoinders contributes to the construction of political narratives and shape public opinion in selected Nigerian newspapers.

Research Questions

1. What are the linguistic and discursive features employed in rejoinders to political press releases in selected Nigerian newspapers?
2. What are the power relations manifest in the language and rhetoric of political rejoinders?
3. How does rejoinders contributes to the construction of political narratives and shape public opinion in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

This research adopts a theoretical framework based on critical discourse analysis (CDA) with a specific emphasis on Fairclough's three dimensional approach to CDA serves as a robust method for unraveling language representations in discourses, power and ideology. Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to CDA serves as a methodological cornerstone. This approach provides a structured framework for analyzing the linguistic, social, and political dimensions of discourse within the context of political press releases and their rejoinders.

Firstly, within the dimension of description, this approach involves a meticulous examination of the linguistic features and structures present in both the political press releases and their corresponding rejoinders. This includes an in-depth analysis of vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and rhetorical strategies employed by the authors. By describing these linguistic elements, we can discern the specific linguistic tactics used to construct arguments, shape narratives, and convey ideological positions within the discourse [2].

Secondly, the interpretive dimension delves deeper into understanding the meaning and significance of these linguistic features within their broader socio-political contexts. Here, we explore how language is utilized to negotiate power relations, construct social identities, and frame political agendas within the discourse of political press releases and their rejoinders. By interpreting the discourse in relation to prevailing social norms, political ideologies, and institutional practices, we aim to uncover the underlying messages, power dynamics, and ideological positions embedded within the texts.

Lastly, the explanatory dimension seeks to elucidate the underlying socio-political processes and structures that shape the production and interpretation of discourse in political press releases and their rejoinders. This involves identifying the socio-political

forces, institutional practices, and discursive strategies that influence language use and discourse patterns within the political sphere. Through critical explanation, it aims to reveal how language functions as a site of political contestation, negotiation, and hegemony, ultimately shedding light on the broader socio-political dynamics at play in the discourse of political press releases and their rejoinders.

By employing Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to CDA in the analysis of rejoinders to political press releases in selected Nigerian newspapers, this researcher aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic, social, and political dimensions of political discourse, thereby contributing valuable insights to the study of political communication and discourse analysis [3].

Review

Political discourse, particularly in the context of rejoinders to press releases, plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing socio-political landscape within Nigeria. These rejoinders serve as a platform for political actors to engage in dialogue, present alternative perspectives, and contest prevailing narratives propagated through official press releases. While existing literature extensively examines the role of media and language in political communication (Ademikokun, 2015; Kalu, 2017; Nwagbara, 2017), there remains a significant gap in the analysis of rejoinders within the Nigerian context.

The theoretical framework of Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a robust methodology for examining the intricate interplay between language, power, and ideology within political discourse (Fairclough, 1995). This approach provides a nuanced understanding of how linguistic and discursive features in rejoinders are strategically employed to construct meaning, negotiate power relations, and advance particular ideological agendas [4].

There are a range of studies that focus on political discourse and have contributed valuable insights into various aspects of language use and communication strategies. For example, Adeyemi (2012) investigated how Nigerian newspapers serve as vital conduits for disseminating political messages to the public, shaping public discourse and opinion. Abdullahi (2015) explored how media discourse contributes to the formation of public opinion on political matters through media discourse in Nigeria. Fajuyigbe (2019) focused on the semiotics of political communication within Nigerian newspapers, analyzing symbols, signs, and visual elements that contribute to conveying political meanings. These studies provide foundational knowledge and serve as important reference points for understanding the complexities of political communication within the Nigerian media landscape. However, there exists a dearth of research specifically focusing on the analysis of rejoinders to political press releases in Nigerian newspapers using Fairclough's theoretical framework. This research gap underscores the critical importance of conducting a systematic analysis of rejoinders within the Nigerian media landscape.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by applying Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to CDA to critically analyze rejoinders to political press releases in selected Nigerian

newspapers. By examining the linguistic features, discursive strategies, and ideological underpinnings employed in these rejoinders, the research aims to unravel the complexities of political communication and discourse dynamics within Nigeria. Through this analysis, the study endeavors to contribute new insights into the role of media in shaping public opinion, political narratives, and democratic processes in the Nigerian context [5].

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative research design, specifically, a case study approach to conduct a critical discourse analysis of rejoinders to political press releases in selected Nigerian newspapers. The rationale for choosing this approach lies in its capacity to provide a nuanced examination of the linguistic and discursive features employed in the rejoinders, offering a comprehensive understanding of power relations and ideological positioning embedded in the rejoinders, and highlighting how rejoinders contribute to the construction of political narratives and shape public opinion in Nigeria.

The selection of data is based on a specific genre of rejoinder, such as statements from political parties, government officials, or opposition groups, providing a focused perspective. Furthermore, the criteria for selecting the sample of rejoinders includes; relevance to political issues, diversity of perspectives, and prominence of the author. By focusing on these specific genres of rejoinder, the research aims for an in-depth analysis while ensuring a comprehensive examination of political authors' linguistic choices and discursive strategies [7].

This study is confined to the analysis of five rejoinders, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings on rejoinders to political press releases. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the research may result in a systematic exploration of the language dynamics interplay. The chosen methodology serves the research purpose by offering a detailed and insightful exploration of selected rejoinders through the lens of critical discourse analysis.

Data Analysis

Linguistic and discursive features employed in the rejoinders:

1. Lexical Choices:

The analysis revealed a strategic use of lexical elements including nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives, each contributing to shaping the narrative and conveying the authors' perspectives.

- **Common Nouns:** Common nouns such as "dog," "endorsement" were utilized to name and shame individuals, highlighting key aspects of criticism and examination.

For instance, in Rejoinder 1, Festus Keyamo is criticized for assuming the role of an attack "dog" within the APC's campaign, with derogatory terms like "rural bumpkin" and "lap dog" questioning his competence.

Another example is from Rejoinder 2, where the common noun "endorsement" is used to challenge Olusegun Obasanjo's support for Peter Obi, questioning the fairness of the endorsement without a comparative analysis of other candidates.

- **Legal and Political Nouns:** Legal nouns like "constitutionality," "judiciary," were employed to guide discussions surrounding legal matters, while political nouns like "president" and "democracy" framed the discourse within the

realm of governance.

In Rejoinder 3, concerns were raised about the “constitutional-ity” of President Buhari’s comments regarding Nnamdi Kanu’s bail, while in Rejoinder 2, the focus was on the legality of the election outcome and the role of the “judiciary” in resolving electoral matters.

- **Verbs:** The analysis identified the use of action verbs and political action verbs to shape the discourse, critique opposing views, provide evidence, and engage with the topics discussed.
- **Action Verbs:** Verbs such as “berated,” “wrote,” and “retracting” were employed to actively contribute to the attainment of the goals in each rejoinder. For instance, in Rejoinder 4, Senator Amosun is “berated” for claiming that Governor Abiodun won through “rigging,” with specific accusations mentioned. Another example is from Rejoinder 2, where individuals were called upon to retract false claims, contributing to discrediting misinformation.
- **Political Action Verbs:** Political action verbs like “propose,” “commend,” played a crucial role in responding to inaccuracies, discrediting false claims, and adopting an ideal approach to the discourse. In Rejoinder 7, individuals were urged to propose real solutions and engage in substantive discussion over baseless attacks, while in Rejoinder 3, the party commended the current governor’s achievements to counterbalance negative narratives.
- **Adverbs and Adjectives:** The analysis highlighted the strategic use of adverbs and adjectives to provide additional information, convey nuances, and shape the tone of the discourse.
- **Adverbs:** Adverbs like “recently,” and “widely” were strategically used to establish timeliness, highlight spontaneity, and enhance the visibility of information.

For example, in Rejoinder 7, the adverb “recently” was employed to highlight the contemporaneity of Jimmy Idiovwa’s actions.

while in Rejoinder 5, the adverb “widely” was used to emphasize the visibility of Barrister Omonade’s resignation details.

- **Descriptive Adjectives:** Adjectives such as “pitiable,” “necessary,” and “desperate” were employed to convey sympathy, emphasize importance, and evaluate actions, respectively. In Rejoinder 6, Keyamo’s actions were characterized as desperate, indicating a sense of intensity.
- while in Rejoinder 1, the president’s statements were described as “careless,” “mischievous,” and “utterly false,” raising concerns about potential interference with a court ruling.

2. Lexical Collocation

The rejoinders exhibit an observable pattern of lexical collocation, where certain words consistently cluster together, forming cohesive and meaningful expressions. This linguistic choice, evident throughout the rejoinders, plays a critical role in shaping the tone, perception, and intended meaning of the writers.

- **Collocation Pairs:** -“Attack Dog”: -Example from Rejoinder 6: “Festus Keyamo, who recently served as an attack dog for baseless allegations against our party...”- This collocation implies Keyamo’s fierce defense or attack on behalf of a political entity, shaping the discourse’s tone and

intensifying the criticism against him.

- - **“Leading Opposition Party”:** Example from Rejoinder 2: “The All Progressives Congress (APC), as the leading opposition party...” This collocation highlights the APC’s significant role as the primary challenger to the ruling party, framing their position within the political landscape.
- **“Sham and Farce”:** Example from Rejoinder 10: “The attempt to change the narrative is nothing but a sham and farce...” This collocation conveys a sense of deception or insincerity in altering the established narrative, emphasizing the writer’s skepticism towards the attempted narrative shift.
- **“Burden of Survival”:** - Example from Rejoinder 1: “The burden of survival in the face of political oppression...” This collocation expresses the challenges associated with coping or staying alive in adverse conditions, highlighting the difficulty of the survival process.
- **Negative Collocations:** - “Attack Dog”: Example from Rejoinder 6: “...served as an attack dog for baseless allegations...” This negative collocation intensifies the criticism against Keyamo, portraying a strong and assertive stance against his actions within the political discourse.
- - **“Sham and Farce”:** Example from Rejoinder 10: “...a sham and a farce to change the narrative...” This negative collocation adds a critical dimension to the discourse, suggesting skepticism towards the attempt to alter the established narrative.

These examples of lexical collocation demonstrate its significant role in shaping the tone, perception, and rhetorical strategy employed within the rejoinders. Negative collocations, in particular, intensify language, adding emotional depth and criticality to the discourse.

3. Syntactic Choices:

The syntactic choices in the rejoinders play an important role in structuring the discourse, conveying meaning, and establishing the entire rhetorical strategy. Examining the syntactic elements reveals a deliberate selection and arrangement of linguistic devices, including modification, phrases, clauses, and sentences.

- **Adjective Modification:** Adjective modification is the act of using an adjective to provide more information about a noun, helping to describe or qualify it. For example, in the phrase “Fair Square,” “fair” is the adjective modifying the noun “square” to convey more about its characteristics.

Another instance from Rejoinder 8, “The rejoinder seeks to address the glaring omissions and biased presentation of historical events.” The adjectives “glaring” modify the noun “omissions,” emphasizing their conspicuous and easily noticeable nature.

In rejoinder 10, Adjective modification such as “...the narrative is misleading and incomplete...” The adjectives “misleading” and “incomplete” modify the noun “narrative,” providing additional information about its nature, suggesting it contains false information and lacks thoroughness.

In rejoinder 6, “The rejoinder characterizes Keyamo’s actions as desperate...” The adjective “desperate” modifies the noun “actions,” offering a judgmental description, indicating a sense of

urgency or intensity in Keyamo's actions.

The rejoinders employ adjective modification to enrich and refine noun phrases. The use of adjectives like "fair and square" serves to provide a more detailed and specific description. These modifications contribute to a clearer and more vivid expression of the entities and concepts discussed in the rejoinders.

- **Adverbial Modification:** Adverbial modification involves using an adverb to provide more details about a verb, an adjective, or another adverb in a sentence. It often answers questions like how, when, where, or to what degree an action is performed. In the sentence "clearly states," "clearly" is an adverb modifying the verb "states" by indicating the manner in which clearly states. Other examples from the Rejoinders are;

In Rejoinder 5, the adverbial modification: "...clearly points out the universal principles that guide the party's democratic processes." The adverbial phrase "clearly" modifies the verb "points out," indicating how the principles are presented clearly. Also, another example from Rejoinder 8, "The rejoinder seeks to address the glaring omissions and biased presentation of historical events." The adverbial phrase "glaring" modifies the adjective "omissions," providing additional detail on how the omissions are characterized glaringly.

Example from rejoinder 10, "The writer points out that the narrative is misleading, suggesting a deliberate attempt to present inaccurate information." The adverbial phrase "suggesting a deliberate attempt" modifies the verb "points out," specifying the manner in which the writer is indicating the misleading nature of the narrative.

Adverbs are strategically used to modify verbs, offering additional insights into the manner in which actions occurred. The adverbial modifications, such as "clearly" and "vividly," contribute to the precision of the language, ensuring that the reader gains a more detailed understanding of how certain actions or events unfolded. These modifications enhance the clarity and impact of the written discourse.

In both cases, whether through adjective or adverbial modification, syntactic choices are made to refine and amplify the meaning of the expressions. Adjective modifications add descriptive layers to the nouns, while adverbial modifications provide an understanding of the manner in which actions or events transpired, collectively contributing to the effectiveness of the language use in the rejoinders.

Phrases and Clauses in Syntactic Choices:

- **Nominal Phrases:** Nominal phrases, also known as noun phrases, are groups of words centered on a noun. These phrases function as a single unit within a sentence, acting as a subject, object, or complement. A nominal phrase typically consists of a noun and its modifiers, which can include articles, adjectives, and/or other elements. For example,

In Rejoinder 5, "...for the purpose of not misleading gullible readers..." The nominal phrase "the purpose of not misleading gullible readers" emphasizes the intention behind the rejoinder, highlighting the commitment to providing accurate information

and dispelling potential misconceptions.

Rejoinder 8: "...address the glaring omissions and biased presentation of historical events." The nominal phrase "the glaring omissions and biased presentation of historical events" identifies the specific issues the rejoinder aims to tackle, emphasizing the need to correct distortions and present a more accurate account. In Rejoinder 10, example "...a sham and a farce to change the narrative." The nominal phrase "a sham and a farce to change the narrative" characterizes the criticized elements, conveying a sense of disapproval and asserting that the challenged content is misleading and intended to alter the established narrative.

The nominal phrase "characterizes Keyamo's actions as desperate" specifies the nature of Keyamo's actions, providing a basis for judgment and contributing to the entire tone of the rejoinder.

- **Relative Clauses:** Relative clauses are subordinate clauses that provide additional information about a noun in the rejoinders or in the main clause. These clauses begin with a relative pronoun (such as who, whom, whose, which, or that) or a relative adverb (such as where, when, or why).

Example from Rejoinder 9: "...Notice dated August 15, 2022 was served on Nellies Nigeria, which was the only entity mentioned in the said notice." The use of "which" in the relative clause clarifies and specifies the noun "Nellies Nigeria," offering essential details about the entity mentioned in the preceding clause. This syntactic choice aids in avoiding ambiguity and ensures that the reader has a comprehensive understanding of the context.

In Rejoinder 5: "...for the purpose of not misleading gullible readers, it became necessary..." The relative clause "for the purpose of not misleading gullible readers" explains the reason behind the actions taken in the rejoinder, emphasizing the commitment to avoiding misinformation and guiding the readers.

Rejoinder 8: "...address the glaring omissions and biased presentation of historical events that the original narrative contained." The relative clause "that the original narrative contained" specifies the nature of the issues being addressed, providing context and helping to pinpoint the exact content in question.

Both nominal phrases and relative clauses contribute to the syntactic diversity of the rejoinders. Nominal phrases add specificity and formality, while relative clauses enhance the richness of information and maintain clarity within the discourse. These syntactic choices are intentional and align with the conventions of formal and precise communication in the legal and political context.

Sentences in Syntactic Choices:

- **Complex Sentences:** Complex sentences are sentences that contain an independent clause (a complete sentence) and at least one dependent clause (a group of words that does not express a complete thought). The clauses in a complex sentence are connected by subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns. Complex sentences allow for the expression of more intricate relationships between ideas within a single sentence.

Examples from Rejoinder 2: "Democracy purposed to allow

people their freedom of choice, but a situation where a court issues a restraining order against a party in an election matter, thereby preventing it from further participation, goes against the very essence of democracy.”

“Despite the Allegations, the Agency Has Flourished” A complex sentence in Rejoinder 1, presenting a contrast between accusations and positive outcomes.

Despite Unfounded Criticisms, the Government Stands Firm” A complex sentence in Rejoinder 4, presenting resilience in the face of baseless critiques.

Complex sentences, as seen in the examples, are utilized to present intricate ideas and arguments. The conjunctions “but” and “thereby” link clauses, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the implications of a court-issued restraining order. This syntactic choice accommodates the need for detailed analysis and expression of perspectives within the legal and political context.

- **Short Impactful Sentences:** Short impactful sentences are concise and potent expressions that deliver a powerful message or evoke a strong response in a brief span. These sentences typically cut to the core of the matter, conveying meaning, emotion, or significance without unnecessary elaboration. They aim to capture attention, make a point, or leave a lasting impression with brevity and intensity.

Example from Rejoinder 6

“This reckless move is nothing short of desperation.” The sentence critiques a move made by APC’s choice of Keyamo as the campaign spokesman, indicating that the move is not only reckless but also driven by desperation. It expresses strong disapproval of the decision and implies a sense of urgency and intensity in APC’s strategy.

“Our democracy deserves better than this ill-prepared attack dog.” The sentence expresses dissatisfaction with Keyamo, referred to as an “ill-prepared attack dog,” who is presumably involved in democratic processes. It comments on Keyamo’s perceived inadequacy in responding to criticism, highlighting a negative assessment of Keyamo’s preparedness and suggesting a lack of suitability for the role.

“This Unfounded Claim is Baseless” The author is responding to criticism by Keyamo, asserting that the claim lacks a foundation and is baseless, emphasizing its lack of credibility. The sentence is a direct and concise dismissal of the criticism, highlighting the perceived lack of substance in Keyamo’s claims.

These Rejoinders incorporate short impactful sentences to underscore critical points. The brevity of these sentences enhances the emphasis on terms like “reckless move” and “ill-prepared attack dog,” creating a more forceful and memorable impact.

4. Types of Sentence

In the selected rejoinders analyzed, various types of sentences are used to achieve their aims. These include declarative, exclamatory, interrogative, and imperative sentences.

- **Declarative sentence:** In rejoinder 6, declarative sentences

serve to introduce the main subject matter straightforwardly. For instance, “I have read Festus Keyamo’s response...” initiates the discussion, while “I have nothing to say other than the fact that in its desperation...” presents the writer’s standpoint clearly.

Another declarative sentence in rejoinder 6, “It is inconceivable that a Learned Silk, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) could go this low...” functions as a concluding statement, summarizing the writer’s perspective on the situation.

Moreover, additional declarative sentences in rejoinder 6, such as “Beside believing that life begins and ends with genuflecting for rotten politicians, Festus Keyamo is permanently stuck with the rather funny impression that Nigerians who are dignified enough to differ with his paymasters on how the nation should be run, should either shut up or be buried alive,” contribute to summarizing the writer’s perspective conclusively.

- **Interrogative Sentences:** In rejoinder 6, interrogative sentences such as “What did Keyamo say is Dele Momodu’s crime?” and “Does Keyamo think we all have forgotten?” In this contexts, this interrogative sentence “what did Keyamo say is Dele Momodu’s crime?” directly challenges Keyamo by questioning the nature of the accusations against Dele Momodu. It prompts people to critically assess the legitimacy of Keyamo’s claims and encourages a closer examination of the alleged “crime” attributed to Dele Momodu. The use of “What” emphasizes a demand for clarity and transparency. While,

“Does Keyamo think we all have forgotten?” implies a sense of skepticism and challenges Keyamo’s assumption that people may have forgotten certain events or statements. It prompts public perceptions to reflect on Keyamo’s expectations and raises doubts about the credibility of the issues being addressed. The question encourages people to reconsider the context, bringing attention to the potential selective memory or manipulation of information.

Another example in rejoinder 4, “By the way, is it out of place for the governor who wants a better Nigeria to have remembered to brief the president about the request of the United Nations about the release of IPOB leader?” This question challenges El-Rufai’s priorities and actions, implying a perceived neglect of certain issues. The use of “By the way” adds a conversational and informal tone, making the question more direct. The question implies a perceived neglect on El-Rufai’s part suggesting that, in the pursuit of a better Nigeria, there might be an expectation for him to address or bring to the president’s attention to important matters such as the United Nations’ request regarding the release of the IPOB leader.

This sentence describes a specific moment in the cross-examination process where a question was posed to the witness, and the witness responded affirmatively. The use of an interrogative sentence here is not to directly ask a question but to report or narrate the events during the cross-examination.

- **Exclamatory Sentence:** In rejoinder 6, the exclamatory sentence “Our democracy deserves better than this ill-prepared attack dog” serves to express strong disapproval and emphasizes the writer’s opinion on Keyamo’s suitability for

the role.

Another example is from rejoinder 3, “The APC said Amosun... was obviously suffering from ‘political amnesia and out-of-office loneliness’” is employed to express the party’s strong opinion on Amosun’s state, emphasizing negativity.

In rejoinder 4, “It’s rather regrettable that Okezie concluded, without evidence, that Kanu’s matter wasn’t discussed...” uses an exclamatory tone to express regret and emphasize the alleged lack of evidence in Okezie’s conclusion. Furthermore, in rejoinder 18, the exclamatory sentence “The testimony of the witness in question is under serious challenge...!” is used to emphasize the intensity of the challenge to the witness’s testimony, creating a sense of urgency and importance around the doubts raised concerning the Deputy Governor’s citizenship.

- **Imperative Sentence:** In rejoinder 6, the imperative sentence “My only hope is that Keyamo does not continue to delude himself” expresses strong disapproval and issues a directive for Keyamo to modify his approach.

Another example is from Rejoinder 3, where the writer said “Oladunjoye called on the general public to pray for Amosun” is issued as a directive or a call for action, guiding the reader’s response or behavior.

In rejoinder 4, an imperative sentence is evident, directing attention and urging caution regarding Okezie’s conclusions. “Readers are warned to be wary of some journalists who peddle falsehoods...” is used in the context of directing attention and urging caution.

Additionally, in rejoinder 5, an imperative sentence is used to advise the public “Members of the public are hereby advised to disregard the deliberate falsehood being bandied about regarding the status of the citizenship of the Deputy Governor of Lagos State.” This sentence gives commands or makes requests, guiding the audience’s response.

5. Discursive Features:

Discursive features within the rejoinders are various linguistic and rhetorical elements employed in the texts to convey meaning, influence perceptions, and construct discourse. These features include the use of rhetorical strategies, pragmatic elements, positioning and alignment of language. They collectively shape the political discourse, revealing how language is strategically used to communicate, persuade, and position individuals or groups within the given context.

1. Rhetorical Strategies:

Rhetorical strategies involve the deliberate use of language and persuasive techniques to influence or engage an audience. Strategies such as; Metaphor, hyperbole, Anaphora and rhetorical questions are evident in the rejoinders analyzed.

Metaphor

Example 1 (Rejoinder 6): use the term “attack dog” to characterize Festus Keyamo. In this context, “attack dog” is used metaphorically to describe Keyamo as someone who aggressively defends or supports a person or cause, often by attacking or criticizing others. Also, another notable use of metaphor in

the rejoinder is “street boy” to describe Keyamo. It figuratively characterizes Keyamo, suggesting traits associated with someone from the streets, such as toughness, aggression, or a lack of refinement.

Example in Rejoinder 5, referring to misleading information as a “cancer,” creating a metaphor to convey the harmful nature of such content. “...the purpose of not misleading gullible readers, it became necessary to make this rejoinder and cut out the cancer of deceit and falsehood that has found its way into the public space.”

Example (Rejoinder 4): “Nasir El-Rufai is an open book, written in bold letters.” Here, El-Rufai being an “open book” is a metaphor, implying transparency and openness. The co-text suggests that El-Rufai’s actions and intentions are transparent and easily understood, akin to reading an open book.

Hyperbole

Example (Rejoinder 6): Referring to Festus Keyamo as the “greatest political joke of the century,” amplifying the derogatory tone and criticism. “The greatest political joke of the century is contained in the press release issued by the Tinubu-Chatham House Hypothesis group.”

Example (Rejoinder 4): “El-Rufai’s meeting with President Buhari was not motivated by the deteriorating security situation in the country, but by the threat of the terrorists to kidnap the president and himself.” Here, the emphasis on the threat to kidnap the president and El-Rufai is a hyperbolic exaggeration. It suggests skepticism and challenges the credibility of El-Rufai’s meeting with the president.

Rhetorical Questions

Example 1 (Rejoinder 10): “Is Tinubu, as the so-called national leader...doubling as the leader of the opposition party to form a shadow cabinet.” Here, it challenges the dual roles attributed to Tinubu, it suggests skepticism about whether Tinubu, referred to as the “so-called national leader,” is also acting as the leader of the opposition party to create a shadow cabinet. The questions serves to question the legitimacy or feasibility of such a scenario, prompting the public to consider the implications of the roles assigned to Tinubu.

Example 2 (Rejoinder 11): “How many of them have yielded positive results? What impact does Obasanjo’s analogue letters have in today’s digital world?” The questions implies doubt about the positive results and impact of using outdated communication approaches, framing them as less relevant or impactful in today’s technologically advanced world.

Example 4 (Rejoinder 4) “The question is, why should, Mr’Okezie crucify El-Rufai, and not Godfrey Onyeama, the minister of foreign affairs...?” This rhetorical question is used to engage the public and Prompt them to consider the author’s perspective.

Anaphora

Example (Rejoinder 7): The repetition of “we challenge” emphasizes the opposition’s lack of credibility.

Example (Rejoinder 2): The repetition of “Suleiman was obviously not happy” emphasizes the writer’s stance on Suleiman’s reaction to President Muhammadu Buhari’s commendation of Governor El-Rufai. “Suleiman was obviously not happy about President Buhari’s excitement after commissioning projects in Kaduna, Zaria, and Kafanchan.”

Example (Rejoinder 4): Repetition of the phrase “El-Rufai” at the beginning of several sentences, like “El-Rufai, who was able to reach out to President Buhari...” and “El-Rufai is an open book, written in bold letters.” This repetition serves to emphasize and reinforce certain points.

Euphemism

Euphemism softens potentially harsh realities, influencing the reader’s perception.

For example, In Rejoinder 5 the government official subtly used euphemism, describing a policy setback as a “challenging adjustment period” Despite facing a challenging adjustment period, our commitment to progress remains unwavering.

In Rejoinder 6, the term “attack dog” is a euphemism for a spokesperson who aggressively defends and counters criticism. This choice of words softens the characterization. The term “rural bumpkin” can be considered a euphemism, though it carries a negative connotation. It’s a milder way of criticizing Festus Keyamo’s perceived lack of sophistication.

In Rejoinder 8, the phrase “strategic recalibration” can be considered a euphemism for adjusting or changing political strategies. It downplays the potential challenges associated with such adjustments.

Another instance in Rejoinder 10, “adjustments to the budget” is a euphemism for budget cuts or reductions.

Pragmatic Elements

Pragmatic elements has to do with language use in context, focusing on speech acts, implicature, and presuppositions.

Speech Acts

Example 1: Rejoinder 6 engages in speech acts by challenging Festus Keyamo’s competence, creating a pragmatic effect that questions his suitability for the role. The writer asserts, “Mr. Keyamo’s understanding of legal matters is highly questionable, raising concerns about his ability to perform effectively as the Attorney General.”

Example 2: Rejoinder 8 utilizes speech acts to challenge the credibility of the opposition’s claims. The writer asserts, “The opposition’s attempt to cast doubt on our candidate’s integrity is nothing more than a desperate ploy to gain political mileage.”

Example 3: In Rejoinder 2, the writer engages in speech acts by categorizing the claims as ‘unfounded’. The rejoinder states, “Suleiman’s arguments are entirely unfounded and lack any substantial evidence to support their allegations.”

Implicature

Example 1: In rejoinder 8, implicature is present when the writer questions Jimmy Idiovwa’s suitability for legislation, implying

a lack of intellectual capacity. The writer implies, “Considering Mr. Idiovwa’s previous track record, one wonders if he possesses the intellectual rigor required for meaningful contributions to legislation.”

Example 2: In Rejoinder 3, the use of ‘it is common knowledge’ implies shared understanding, employing implicature to strengthen the writer’s claim. The statement continues, “Given the widespread awareness of these facts, it is evident that the opponent is deliberately ignoring the truth.”

Presuppositions

Example 1: In Rejoinder 3, speech acts is employed when the writer categorizes the claims as ‘completely false.’ The rejoinder presupposes, “The narrative is built on a foundation of falsehoods, requiring a thorough debunking of their baseless assertions.”

Example 2: In Rejoinder 2, implicature is present in the implication that the narrative is fictional, adding a layer of meaning beyond the explicit words. The rejoinder suggests, “By labeling their story as fictional, we highlight the lack of credibility in the version of events.”

Example 4: In Rejoinder 6, presuppositions are present when the writer criticizes Festus Keyamo’s competence, stating, “Mr. Keyamo’s understanding of legal matters is highly questionable, raising concerns about his ability to perform effectively as the Attorney General.” The presupposition lies in the assumption that Keyamo’s understanding of legal matters is indeed questionable, framing the critique within that context

Power relations and Ideological positioning embedded in the language rhetoric of political rejoinders:

Power Relations:

- **Targeting Opponents:** Rejoinder 6 targets Festus Keyamo, portraying him as incompetent and unfit for his role. For example, the phrase “Festus Keyamo is the greatest political joke of the century” positions Keyamo as a subject of ridicule, diminishing his authority and power.
- **Asserting Authority:** In Rejoinder 2, the author asserts authority by dismissing the claims of their opponents as “unfounded” and lacking evidence. This assertion positions the author as a credible source of information and diminishes the credibility of their opponents.
- **Challenging Dominant Narratives:** Rejoinder 3 challenges the dominant narrative surrounding Peter Obi and Bola Tinubu, questioning Tinubu’s suitability for a leadership role and positioning Obi as a more suitable candidate. This challenges the established power dynamics within the political landscape.

Ideological Positioning:

- **Alignment with Political Ideologies:** Rejoinder 3 aligns with the ideology of the All Progressives Congress (APC) by criticizing Ibikunle Amosun’s actions and positioning the APC as the voice of reason and integrity. This ideological alignment reinforces the party’s values and principles.
- **Demonization of Opponents:** Rejoinder 13 demonizes the publication by describing their allegations as a “fabrication of lies with malicious intent.” This demonization aims to delegitimize the publication and discredit their claims, posi-

tioning the author as morally superior.

- Appeals to Identity: Rejoinder 7 appeals to the identity of Dele Momodu by referencing his previous statements, framing him as inconsistent and unreliable. This appeal to Momodu's identity undermines his credibility and reinforces the author's ideological position.

Language Rhetoric:

- Emotive Language: Rejoinder 18 uses emotive language to emphasize the intensity of the challenge to the witness's testimony, stating that it is "under serious challenge." This emotive language creates a sense of urgency and importance around the doubts raised, reinforcing the author's argument.
- Manipulation of Symbols and Imagery: Rejoinder 16 manipulates symbols of authority by referring to the National Financial Intelligence Unit's "historic achievements," bolstering the unit's credibility and reinforcing its ideological position.
- Selective Framing: Rejoinder 5 selectively frames the issue as a battle against "the cancer of deceit and falsehood" in the public space. By framing the issue in this way, the author positions themselves as a crusader against dishonesty and corruption, aligning with certain ideological values.

How rejoinders contribute in the construction of political narratives and shape public opinion in Nigeria:

Here are ways in which rejoinders contribute to the construction of political narratives and shape public opinion in Nigeria:

1. Countering Opposition Narratives: Rejoinders serve as a platform for political actors to counter narratives put forth by their opponents. By providing a rebuttal to claims made against them or their party, politicians can shape the narrative in their favor and mitigate potential damage to their reputation.
2. Reinforcing Party Ideologies: Rejoinders often reinforce the ideologies and values of political parties. By aligning their arguments with the party's principles, politicians seek to solidify support among their base and present a united front against opposing ideologies.
3. Shaping Perceptions of Competence: Rejoinders frequently aim to shape public perceptions of the competence and credibility of political figures. By highlighting their achievements, addressing criticisms, and challenging the narratives of their opponents, politicians seek to portray themselves as capable leaders worthy of public trust.
4. Mobilizing Support: Rejoinders can serve as a tool for mobilizing support among the electorate. By rallying supporters behind a particular cause or candidate, politicians aim to galvanize public opinion and mobilize voters to their side.
5. Discrediting Opponents: Rejoinders often seek to discredit opponents and undermine their credibility. By questioning the motives, integrity, or competence of their rivals, politicians aim to weaken their opponents' influence and sway public opinion against them.
6. Framing Policy Debates: Rejoinders contribute to framing policy debates by presenting arguments and evidence in support of particular policy positions. By shaping the narrative around key issues, politicians seek to influence public opinion and garner support for their policy agenda.
7. Shaping Media Discourse: Rejoinders play a crucial role in shaping media discourse by responding to news articles,

opinion pieces, and commentary. Politicians use rejoinders to push back against negative coverage, correct misinformation, and shape the narrative in their favor.

8. Engaging with the Public: Rejoinders provide an opportunity for politicians to engage directly with the public and communicate their message to a wider audience. By publishing rejoinders in newspapers, on social media, or through other channels, politicians can reach voters directly and shape public opinion.

Findings

The findings on a study, a critical discourse analysis of rejoinders to political press releases in selected Nigerian newspapers illuminate the deliberate use of diverse and precise vocabulary, syntactic structures, and rhetorical devices within Nigerian political rejoinders. These strategies contribute to the complexity of language, assert authority, and shape ideological positioning.

Moreover, the findings shed light on the role of rejoinders in fostering transparency and accountability within the political landscape. Through the clarification of facts and exposure of corruption or mismanagement, rejoinders serve as a tool for holding both public officials and media outlets accountable. This commitment to truth and accountability aligns with broader democratic principles, emphasizing the role of an informed citizenry in the functioning of a transparent and just political system [8].

Discussion

The discussion delves into the symbiotic relationship between rejoinders and the broader media landscape, emphasizing their role as corrective forces in challenging disinformation and shaping public narratives. Furthermore, the temporal, geographic, and demographic dimensions of rejoinders add complexity to their impact on public discourse. The temporal dimension allows for the analysis of evolving perspectives over time, providing insights into shifts in public opinion and changes in political strategies. Meanwhile, the geographic and demographic considerations embedded in rejoinders offer valuable insights into regional and ethnic dialogues, fostering a more inclusive political discourse that acknowledges diverse perspectives [9-11].

Conclusion

This study has made significant strides in comprehending political discourse in Nigeria by intricately analyzing rejoinders. Through examining the intricate nuances of linguistic choices, syntactic structures, and rhetorical strategies within these rejoinders, the research has illuminated the pivotal role they play in shaping public opinion, influencing political narratives, and promoting civic engagement.

The strategic deployment of language emerges as a potent tool, not only shaping perceptions of political issues but also contributing to the broader media landscape. The findings of this study not only enhance our understanding of Nigerian political communication but also set the stage for further exploration in linguistics and political science. The potential impact of this research extends to fostering a more knowledgeable citizenry, enriching the media environment, and deepening our understanding of the interconnectedness of language, politics, and public opinions [12, 13].

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