

Rhetoric of Transition: a Pragmatic Analysis of Inaugural Speeches Under Extraordinary Political Succession in Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examines the inaugural speeches of Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State in two distinct political contexts: first, following the sudden demise of his immediate predecessor, Governor Rotimi Akeredolu, and second, after he emerged victorious in the 2024 governorship election. Adebija's Eight Discourse Tacts approach underpins the analysis and provides a viewpoint for inspecting the strategic deployment of language in political discourse. These speeches are analysed to examine how Aiyedatiwa navigates the waves of leadership transition, political collapse, and popular expectation.

Through discourse analysis, this research identifies some of the key rhetorical devices Aiyedatiwa employs, including affiliation, mitigation, persuasion, and empathy. The speeches demonstrate a deliberate use of language to exert power, mobilise the electorate, and convey a vision of governance. Aiyedatiwa's rhetoric is centred on issues of continuity, oneness, and inclusiveness, both in terms of addressing the emotional and material needs of the people of Ondo State. The research also reveals how Aiyedatiwa employs ethos to establish his credibility, uses rhetorical questions, and fosters constructive opposition in building rapport with the audience and promoting cooperation, cutting across political lines.

This discussion contributes to the growing literature on political communication, presenting insights into how language shapes the public image of individuals and consolidates political legitimacy. In particular, within an unusual political transition scenario, the discussion highlights the importance of effective political rhetoric in promoting

stability in government and addressing socio-political issues in a complex democratic environment.

Keywords: Inaugural Speeches; Political Discourse; Rhetoric of Transition; Adegbija's Discourse Tacts; Political Communication; Leadership Legitimacy..

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study. Language is a potent tool for influencing public opinion in social, cultural, and political contexts. In political settings, language serves as a strategic weapon to unify or divide societies, shape ideologies, and maintain control over diverse populations. It is through language that politicians, including figures like Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa, can establish their credibility, diminish the relevance of their opponents, and project a positive image of their administration. As Authors [1, 2] assert, political discourse functions as a mechanism of mind control wielded by dominant ideologies. Political language, therefore, refers to how governments or political figures persuade and mobilise their audience to adopt certain viewpoints.

An inaugural speech is a distinct genre of political discourse in which a newly elected leader outlines their vision, policies, and intentions to the public. This speech aims to shape public opinion and garner support for the new administration. The author [3] notes that an inaugural speech serves to unify the audience by reaffirming shared values and setting the tone for future governance. The context of these speeches often involves a divided audience, supporters, opposition, sceptics, and neutral observers, all of whom the leader must persuade or placate to achieve a cooperative interaction [4].

In the Nigerian context, inaugural speeches reflect the nation's socio-political dynamics, which are shaped by issues such as corruption, election rigging, nepotism, and security challenges. This study focuses on inaugural speeches delivered by prominent Nigerian leaders, replacing these references with those of Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa to illustrate the adaptability and relevance of political discourse analysis. By examining Aiyedatiwa's inaugural speeches, this research will explore how his language conforms to Adegbija's eight Discourse Tacts (1995) and the extent to which his rhetoric fosters unity and addresses the state's challenges [5]. This analysis will provide insight into the strategic use of language in Nigerian political discourse and its impact on governance and public perception.

Hon. Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa, a native of Obenla in Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State, represents a compelling narrative of dedication, versatility, and leadership. His journey from education and business into politics and governance has been marked by significant achievements and contributions to his community and state.

Born on January 12, 1965, Aiyedatiwa's early life in the oil-bearing community of Ilaje shaped his appreciation for grassroots development. He began his education at Saint Peter's UNA Primary School and later attended Ikosi High School in Lagos. He earned a Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) in Economics and Government from Lagos State College of Education in 1986. This foundation would prove instrumental as he transitioned into teaching and subsequently ventured into business [6].

Aiyedatiwa demonstrated a strong penchant for professional growth. He pursued an Advanced Diploma in Business Administration at the University of Ibadan, a postgraduate certification in Business Management at the Lagos Business School, and an MBA from the University of Liverpool [7]. His professional journey included roles in various industries, culminating in the establishment of the Blue Wall Group of Companies in 1996. His expertise spans marketing, real estate, hospitality, and financial management, reflecting a multifaceted career before his foray into politics [8].

Aiyedatiwa ventured into politics in 2011 as a member of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), which later merged into the All Progressives Congress (APC). His leadership skills were recognised early, leading to his selection as the APC candidate for the Ilaje/Ese-Odo Federal Constituency in the 2015 general election. Although he did not win, his influence within the party grew, solidifying his position as a key figure in Ondo State politics [9].

In 2018, Aiyedatiwa was appointed by President Muhammadu Buhari as the representative of Ondo State on the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) board. This role enabled him to participate in critical developmental initiatives

for the Niger Delta region, thereby further elevating his political profile. His commitment to regional progress and his resource management profile earned him widespread respect [10].

Aiyedatiwa's significant political breakthrough came in 2020 when he was chosen as the running mate to Governor Rotimi Akeredolu in the Ondo State gubernatorial elections. Their successful re-election bid led to his swearing-in as Deputy Governor on February 24, 2021 [8]. As Deputy Governor, Aiyedatiwa took an active role in state administration, particularly during Akeredolu's absences due to health-related issues. This period highlighted his leadership capacity, as he ensured the continuity of governance and policy implementation [7].

In late 2023, Aiyedatiwa was sworn in as the Governor of Ondo State following Akeredolu's demise. His administration began with a clear focus on unity, economic revitalisation, and addressing the challenges of the oil-producing communities of Ilaje [6]. His inaugural speech emphasised inclusivity and the need for sustainable development across the state [8].

As Governor, Aiyedatiwa's leadership carries profound significance. Hailing from Ilaje, his rise to power symbolises the representation of marginalised oil-producing communities. His administration has prioritised infrastructural development, economic diversification, and enhanced governance transparency [7]. Aiyedatiwa's emphasis on education, inspired by his academic pursuits, aligns with his commitment to empowering the youth. His government has introduced policies aimed at improving educational access, healthcare delivery, and agricultural development, leveraging Ondo State's natural resources for broader economic benefits [6].

Nigerian media outlets, including Punch, Daily Trust, and The Guardian, have consistently highlighted Aiyedatiwa's pragmatic approach to governance. His leadership style, characterised by collaboration and inclusivity, has earned commendations from stakeholders across various sectors [8]. Reports underscore his ability to navigate the complexities of governance, particularly during periods of political transition, with resilience and a focus on stability [7].

Hon. Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa's journey from humble beginnings in Ilaje to becoming the Governor of Ondo State reflects his dedication to public service and community development. His

tenure as Governor is poised to leave a lasting impact, with initiatives aimed at fostering unity, economic growth, and social progress in Ondo State. As he continues to implement his vision, Aiyedatiwa's legacy will likely inspire future generations of leaders in Nigeria [6, 7, 8].

Statement of the Problem. Language is a powerful tool in the creation of political realities, the control of public perception, and the exercise of power in political spheres [11, 12]. Political leaders' inaugural speeches are employed to outline their vision, unite diverse groups, and legitimate power [13]. In Nigeria, a country marked by frequent political transformations that often reveal ethnic, social, and economic cleavages, speeches play a crucial role in maintaining stability and fostering cooperation among citizens [5]. However, there is a notable gap in the analysis of inaugural speeches delivered by leaders who assume power under exceptional circumstances, such as succession following the death of a serving governor.

The recent political transition in Ondo State exemplifies such a scenario. Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa ascended to power after the unfortunate death of his predecessor, Governor Rotimi Akeredolu, and subsequently won the gubernatorial election to continue governing the state. Aiyedatiwa's two inaugural speeches, first as an acting governor and later as an elected governor, represent unique rhetorical events aimed at stabilising the political climate, uniting the electorate, and setting the course for his administration. These speeches are crucial for understanding how he uses language to address the socio-political challenges of Ondo State and consolidate his legitimacy.

While much research has focused on the inaugural speeches of past influential Nigerian leaders, such as Shehu Shagari, Olusegun Obasanjo, and Muhammadu Buhari [14, 15, 16], Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa's speeches have received minimal scholarly attention. Due to the unusual circumstances that led to his assumption of power, his speeches provide a rich platform for pragmatic discourse analysis, particularly concerning how he attempts to establish trust, navigate political fragmentation, and define developmental goals.

The research gap being addressed is the lack of scholarly attention to the inaugural speeches of political leaders who assume office under extraordinary circumstances, particularly in Nige-

ria. While previous research studies [14, 15, 16] have criticised the inaugural speeches of presidents like Shehu Shagari, Olusegun Obasanjo, and Muhammadu Buhari, no previous study has analysed Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa's speeches, delivered after he assumed office following the death of his predecessor.

This study aims to bridge this divide through an examination of how Aiyedatiwa employs language and rhetoric to justify himself, unify the citizens of Ondo State, and convey his vision for leadership. Using Adebija's Eight Discourse Tacts, the study shall examine the linguistic and pragmatic strategies he uses to navigate the unusual political context of his rise to power. Understanding how he handles political continuity, public trust, and leadership expectations will contribute to the discussion of political communication, governance, and leadership rhetoric in Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives. This study aims to analyse Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa's inaugural speeches using Adebija's *Eight Discourse Tacts* to investigate how his rhetoric builds legitimacy, unites, and addresses the challenges of governance in Ondo State. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the discourse tacts employed in the inaugural and sworn-in speeches of Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa.
2. To examine the sociopolitical context of the inaugural and sworn-in speeches of Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa.
3. To describe the linguistic features of the discourse tacts in the inaugural and sworn-in speeches of Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa.

METHODOLOGY

This study applies Adebija's Eight Discourse Tacts, a discourse analysis paradigm, as the core theory to analyse two inaugural speeches of Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa. Discourse analysis focuses on the social function of language and how it is used to convey power, persuasion, and meaning within a specific context. Using Adebija's theory, the current research investigates the political application of language as a strategic means to examine how the speaker identifies with the audience diffuses potential conflict, and persuades the listeners. The theoretical framework is particularly applicable in de-

termining the linguistic strategies politicians employ to establish authority, build consensus, and secure a favourable position.

The primary data for this study are the full texts of Governor Aiyedatiwa's two inaugural speeches. They were selected because they illustrate a significant political shift in Ondo State as a result of the unexpected death of the incumbent Governor. Due to the uniqueness of his succession, the analysis reveals how Aiyedatiwa constructs legitimacy, wins public confidence, and navigates governance matters through discursive means.

Adebija's Eight Discourse Tacts will be the mode of analysis. The study will examine Aiyedatiwa's use of affiliation to align the audience with common values, mitigate sensitive topics, persuade the audience, appeal to ethos to establish credibility, express sympathy/empathy to engage listeners on an emotional level, employ rhetorical questions to engage the audience, utilise inclusive and exclusive language to establish group membership and incorporate constructive opposition to address opposing perspectives. This approach will illuminate how Aiyedatiwa constructs his political identity and communicates his vision of leadership.

Outside Adebija's model, his complementary theories of communication, such as Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) and Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987), will be briefly referred to to authenticate the analysis of cooperative communication and politeness approaches in his addresses. A comparative content analysis of both speeches will reveal similarities and differences in thematic content, rhetorical strategies, and language choices. This shall reveal how Aiyedatiwa adjusts his rhetoric to address developing political realities and governance demands.

Through the adoption of this methodological approach, the study aims to make significant remarks on the pragmatic use of language in political discourse. It will provide further insight into gubernatorial communication, the application of rhetoric in governance, and the broader context of political discourse in Nigerian politics.

Significance of the Study. This study fills a notable research gap by focusing on the inaugural speeches delivered by Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa, who assumed office under extraordinary circumstances following the death of his predecessor. While recent studies on Nigerian political rhetoric have focused on presidential

inauguration addresses or customary business-as-usual changes in power, comparatively fewer academic accounts of gubernatorial transfers of power with uncustomary leadership swaps are available [17, 18, 19]. Studies on Nigerian presidential inaugural speeches by leaders such as Shehu Shagari, Olusegun Obasanjo, and Muhammadu Buhari have examined rhetorical techniques, structural configurations, and functional goals [20, 21]. Nevertheless, there has been significantly less interest in the Governor's speeches, particularly those delivered under extraordinary circumstances, i.e., in the case of a successor governor when the predecessor had passed away. This study aims to bridge this lacuna by analysing Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa's first speeches using Adegbija's Eight Tacts, examining how his speeches build legitimacy, bring people together, and address governance issues in Ondo State. This context introduces unique rhetorical challenges and opportunities that warrant closer examination.

By applying Adegbija's Eight Tacts to analyse Aiyedatiwa's speeches, the study offers a pragmatic discourse analysis that deepens the understanding of how language is strategically employed to achieve specific communicative objectives. Adegbija's framework enables a nuanced analysis of how Aiyedatiwa navigates the complexities of gaining public trust, addressing divided audiences, and establishing his legitimacy. This approach highlights how political actors use discourse to manage expectations, unite factions, and promote governance and stability.

Additionally, the study offers policy and governance insights by highlighting effective rhetorical strategies that political leaders and speechwriters can employ. Understanding the practical application of Adegbija's discourse tacts can help in crafting speeches that are inclusive, persuasive, and responsive to public sentiment. This is especially relevant for leaders who must reassure citizens and consolidate support after unexpected leadership changes.

Furthermore, the research enhances public understanding of political communication. By deconstructing the language used in Aiyedatiwa's speeches, citizens are better equipped to critically engage with political narratives, promises, and governance agendas. This fosters a more informed and participatory electorate, contributing to a healthier democratic process where political rhetoric is understood and scrutinised.

In conclusion, this study not only addresses a necessary gap in the scholarship on gubernatorial inaugural addresses in exceptional situations, most notably the relative lack of scholarly attention to gubernatorial transitions involving sudden leadership changes, but also contributes depth to the broader discussion of political communication, policymaking, and democratic engagement. While earlier research on Nigerian political rhetoric has primarily focused on presidential inaugural addresses or typical power transitions [17, 18, 19], there has been little emphasis on gubernatorial addresses delivered in the aftermath of exceptional occurrences, such as the capture of a governorship following the death of the predecessor. By interpreting Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa's inaugural speeches through the lens of Adegbija's *Eight Tacts*, this study offers insight into how political leaders construct legitimacy, establish unity, and address governance issues during times of political instability.

Scope and Limitations. The scope of this study is focused on two inaugural speeches delivered by Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State. By narrowing the investigation to these specific texts, the study aims to reveal how Aiyedatiwa employs language to consolidate his position, reassure the electorate, and address the unique challenges associated with his succession following the death of his predecessor. This focused analysis allows for a detailed examination of the pragmatic techniques employed to achieve political cohesion and persuade the audience.

The study also considers how these speeches reflect the socio-political landscape of Ondo State, highlighting issues such as leadership continuity, governance stability, and public perception during a period of political transition. By examining the interplay between language and context, the research sheds light on the intricacies of gubernatorial rhetoric in Nigerian political discourse.

However, the study has notable limitations. The research is confined to the specific context of Ondo State and the particular circumstances surrounding Governor Aiyedatiwa's succession. This means that while the findings offer valuable insights into the language of political discourse within this scenario, they may not be fully generalisable to other Nigerian states or different political environments. Factors such as regional differences, cultural dynamics, and individual lead-

ership styles can influence the applicability of these findings beyond Ondo State.

Moreover, the study's reliance on only two speeches restricts the scope of analysis, limiting the ability to identify long-term patterns or broader rhetorical trends in Aiyedatiwa's governance. These constraints underscore the need for further research that encompasses a broader range of speeches and comparative analyses with other governors or political leaders navigating similar transitions.

In summary, while the study provides a focused and insightful examination of inaugural discourse under extraordinary circumstances, its findings are framed within the specific political and cultural context of Ondo State.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Effective communication is also a key component in determining political rhetoric, governance, and public opinion [11, 12]. Political speeches are also useful tools in that they mobilise, convince, and aid in projecting leadership; hence, familiarity with discourse analysis and pragmatic theories is essential in determining the impact [22]. Theoretical underpinnings of political communication and rhetoric, along with leaders' tactics for framing their message to resonate with their audience, are discussed in this chapter. Inaugural and acceptance speech literature, particularly in Nigerian politics, is also examined in this chapter, focusing on the linguistic and pragmatic means politicians employ to project credibility, evoke emotions, and present logical reasoning [17, 18].

Discourse analysis offers a structured approach to examining how political communication utilises language, highlighting the interplay between power, ideology, and language. Pragmatics is more concerned with meaning-in-use, as it examines how politicians utilise speech acts, implicature, presuppositions, and politeness strategies to convey public images and manage audience responses [4, 23]. Through this convergence of narratives, this research examines how political leaders construct effective messages, negotiate meaning, and create ideological positions through speeches [24, 25].

The literature in this chapter reviews research on inaugural and acceptance speeches, following leaders chronologically across different political divisions as they utilise these types of speeches

to set agendas for governance, legitimise political ideologies, and pursue the mission of national unity [26, 27]. Of course, of particular interest in the review is Nigerian political oratory, which brings together traditional rhetorical practices and modern political tactics of speech-making [28, 29]. Through the use of discourse analysis and pragmatics in the speeches, this chapter reveals the dynamic nature of political discourse and the expression of language as a means of conveying sovereignty to political leadership [11, 13]. The implications of this discussion are significant for the overall understanding of how political rhetoric functions in democratic processes and public engagement [30].

Theoretical Framework

Adegbija's Eight Discourse Tacts. Discourse tact is a highly significant term in discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, particularly in the African sociocultural context. The author [31] formulated Eight Discourse Tacts, which are speaker strategies employed to achieve communicative goals in different contexts. These tacts are pragmatic and rhetorical means employed to construct discourse, regulate interactions, and achieve sociopolitical stability. The tacts are Indirection, Use of Proverbs, Use of Metaphors, Use of Euphemisms, Use of Hyperbole, Use of Humor, Use of Code-Switching, and Use of Silence. All these tactics are explained in detail, along with journal references, here to highlight their significance in discourse analysis.

A. Indirection. Indirection is a communication strategy in which speakers convey messages indirectly rather than stating them directly. This tactic is most common in African and other collectivist societies where confrontation could be regarded as rude or face-threatening [31]. Indirection enables speakers to downplay conflicts, maintain harmony, and discuss sensitive topics without offending anyone's feelings [32]. It has been proven that politicians, traditional leaders, and public speakers commonly use indirection to make subtle criticisms of powers or pass coded messages to the audience [33]. In African writing, authors like Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o frequently employ indirect speech in an attempt to resist colonial narratives and analyse the state [34].

B. Employment of Proverbs. Proverbs constitute a central aspect of African discourse, serving as

vessels of wisdom, moral values, and hidden communication. According to [31], the employment of proverbs serves to augment the persuasive capacity of speech, as well as to shrine values in the community. Proverbs convey social norms and experience and thus become potent tools for rhetoric and persuasion [35]. It has been researched that proverbs are applied universally in African political addresses to gain credibility and trust [36]. Politicians in Nigeria, for example, often use Yoruba, Igbo, or Hausa proverbs in their addresses to connect with the people and convey their cultural affiliation [28]. The potency of proverbs in communication stems from their ability to convey profound ideas in concise terms, drawing on shared cultural knowledge.

C. Employment of Metaphors. Metaphors are linguistic devices that employ figurative language to express abstract concepts in tangible terms. The author [31] notes that metaphors serve a variety of functions in communication, including persuasion, explanation, and emphasis. Cognitive linguistics studies report that metaphors guide thought processes among human beings by capturing perceptions in experiential conceptual domains [37]. Political leaders and religious leaders often employ metaphors to rally their supporters and construct ideological narratives [38]. In African political discourse, for instance, war, family, and agriculture metaphors are typically used to conceptualise governance and leadership [39]. The power of metaphors lies in their ability to elicit emotional appeal and condense complex political or social issues.

D. Application of Euphemisms. Euphemisms help to replace offence-causing words or harsh realities with milder, more acceptable ones socially. The author [31] identifies euphemisms as vital discourse approaches for managing politeness, avoiding conflict, and addressing sensitive issues. Euphemisms have been widely applied in political language, diplomacy, and health discourse [40]. For example, words like *"downsizing"* are used in Nigerian political language instead of *"retrenchment,"* while *"revenue enhancement"* is used instead of *"tax increase"* buffer economic policies [41]. Euphemisms are also used in social interactions where there are taboos, such as discussions regarding death, disease, or financial issues [42]. Strategic use of euphemisms guarantees that what is being said is acceptable and socially consistent.

E. Use of Hyperbole. Hyperbole, or deliberate exaggeration, is a common rhetorical device used to emphasise problems, provoke strong emotions, and create dramatic effects. The author [31] notes that hyperbole is prevalent in African discourse, particularly in political speeches and religious sermons. Studies in pragmatics demonstrate that hyperbolic expressions serve both persuasive and entertaining functions [43]. In African politics, hyperbole is often used to rally support, criticise opponents, or list achievements [44]. Speeches during campaigns, for example, are riddled with inflated promises and bombastic assertions intended to attract followers and instil confidence [28]. Hyperbole brings out the maximum emotive potential of language but can be a bearer of misinformation when used excessively.

F. Use of Humor. Humour is a crucial discourse function that eases tension, entertains the listener, and offers criticism indirectly. The author [31] identifies humour as an effective discourse strategy which allows speakers to engage listeners without directly discussing anything serious. Sociolinguistic studies have proved that humour provides a method for social bonding as well as for negotiating power [45]. Humour and satire in African cultures serve the purpose of mocking political leadership, criticising corruption, and rejecting oppression [46]. Stand-up comedians, folk narrators, and broadcast commentators frequently deploy humour to comment on social phenomena in an avuncular style [47]. The appeal of humour lies in the fact that it makes incisive comments palatable while also evoking feelings of camaraderie among viewers.

G. Application of Code-Switching. Code-switching, or the change from one or more languages in interaction, is a common form of language use in multilingual cultures. The author [31] further contributes that code-switching adds richness to communication by being respectful of diverse audiences, maintaining identity, and conveying nuanced meanings. The application of code-switching in political, religious, and mass media rhetoric has been found by researchers to reach a wide audience [48]. In Nigeria, politicians switch between English and indigenous languages as a means of creating commonality with different ethnic groups [49]. Code-switching is also a rhetorical strategy for emphasising key points, adding humour, and signalling cultural affiliation [50]. Strategic use of code-switching

enriches discourse and enhances communicative effectiveness.

H. Use of Silence. Silence is a powerful discourse strategy that conveys meaning without the use of words. The author [31] argues that silence serves several communicative functions, including expressing disapproval, maintaining decorum, and creating suspense. Discourse analysis studies have proven that silence can be utilised as a figure of speech to provoke reflection, to express dissent, or to assume authority [51]. In African traditional society, silence will often be deployed as a marker of respect or as a silent sign of dissent [52]. Political leaders also employ strategic silence to avoid controversy or steer narratives within public discourse [53]. Silence is significant for its ability to condition interaction without vocal expression.

Political Communication. Political communication, both as a professional practice and an academic discipline, plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing perceptions of leadership. As a multidimensional field, it integrates theories from various disciplines, including communication, political science, sociology, and psychology, among others. The interaction between political actors, media, and citizens is central to this field, with a strategic and persuasive character defining its processes. Political communication, particularly during election cycles, employs various channels and techniques to construct political narratives and mould public perceptions [54].

One of the fundamental aspects of political communication is its use in electoral processes. Political parties and candidates utilise advertising agencies, media consultants, and research firms to develop effective campaign strategies that engage voters. The ultimate goal is to craft messages that resonate with the electorate, creating a favourable image for candidates and their policies. This strategic approach ensures that political actors remain relevant and appealing to voters, especially in highly competitive electoral environments [55].

Elections serve as pivotal moments where political communication is most actively utilised. The ability to garner public support is contingent on well-orchestrated campaign strategies that appeal to voter emotions, logic, and values. Political campaigns are carefully structured to align with voter preferences, taking into account factors such as demographic trends, political ideologies,

and societal concerns. The effectiveness of political campaigns is measured by their capacity to not only disseminate political messages but also to shape public discourse in a manner that enhances voter alignment with a candidate's vision [56].

Historically, political communication has evolved in tandem with advancements in mass media. The expansion of radio and television broadcasting significantly transformed political messaging, allowing politicians to reach a broader audience with greater immediacy. In many countries, the use of political communication for propaganda was more prominent in the mid-20th century due to the late adoption of mass media. However, the real effectiveness of political communication emerged with the proliferation of television and radio, which provided politicians with platforms to engage citizens directly and influence public opinion [57].

Political communication also serves as a mechanism for transparency and accountability in governance. Through strategic messaging, political leaders attempt to establish credibility, justify policies, and foster public trust. The effectiveness of these communication strategies depends on three key factors: policymakers, media channels, and voter perceptions. Surveys and public opinion polls provide insights into voter sentiment, enabling politicians to refine their messages and address public concerns more effectively. The interplay between these factors highlights the dynamic nature of political communication in democratic societies [58].

A primary function of political communication is the framing of political issues. Political leaders use communication strategies to define problems, propose solutions, and establish legitimacy for their actions. The media plays a significant role in this process by amplifying messages and shaping public interpretations of political events. Political communication thus acts as a bridge between policymakers and the electorate, ensuring that governance-related issues are not only presented but also debated in the public sphere [59].

The persuasiveness of political messages is contingent on several factors, including the credibility of the messenger and the clarity of the message. Politicians who are perceived as honest and reliable tend to have a greater influence on public opinion. Moreover, political messages must be aligned with societal values and cultural contexts to maximise their impact. In this regard, political

communication is not just about conveying information but also about constructing narratives that resonate with public sentiment and aspirations [60].

Furthermore, the effectiveness of political messages depends on their ability to sustain public engagement. Messages that are clear, relatable, and emotionally compelling tend to have a lasting impact on audiences. Political campaigns that incorporate storytelling techniques, personal anecdotes, and rhetorical devices such as repetition and parallelism tend to be more effective in persuasion. This highlights the importance of strategic communication in political discourse, where crafting messages that are both informative and emotionally resonant can significantly influence voter behaviour [30].

In contemporary political landscapes, the advent of digital media has revolutionised political communication. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube provide politicians with direct access to voters, enabling real-time interaction and engagement. This shift has democratised political discourse by allowing citizens to participate actively in discussions, share opinions, and mobilise around political causes. However, digital media also presents challenges, such as the spread of misinformation and the manipulation of public sentiment through targeted campaigns [61].

The strategic use of political communication in leadership projection is evident in the ways political actors craft their public personas. Leaders often employ specific linguistic patterns, visual imagery, and symbolic gestures to reinforce their authority and appeal to different segments of society. This phenomenon highlights the performative nature of political leadership, where communication serves as a means of constructing and maintaining political legitimacy. The ability of political leaders to control narratives and shape public discourse ultimately determines their success in governance and electoral politics [62].

Another critical dimension of political communication is its role in crisis management. Political leaders rely on communication strategies to navigate crises, reassure the public, and maintain stability. During crises, effective political communication involves transparency, empathy, and decisive messaging. Leaders who communicate effectively during crises are more likely to sustain public trust and mitigate political fallout.

This highlights the importance of adaptability in political communication, where messaging must be tailored to changing circumstances and shifting public sentiments [55].

In conclusion, political communication remains a vital tool for influencing public opinion and shaping perceptions of leadership. Through strategic messaging, political actors engage with the electorate, establish credibility, and navigate political landscapes. The evolution of political communication, from traditional media to digital platforms, has expanded the reach and impact of political messaging. The effectiveness of political communication lies in its ability to construct compelling narratives, sustain public engagement, and adapt to changing socio-political contexts. As political landscapes continue to evolve, the role of communication in politics will remain indispensable in shaping democratic processes and governance [58].

Literature Review

Studies on Inaugural and Acceptance Speeches. Language remains a crucial asset in political communication, particularly in the context of inaugural and acceptance speeches. These speeches serve as strategic tools through which political leaders articulate their visions, set governance agendas, and establish their credibility with the electorate. African leaders and other political figures worldwide utilise these speeches to communicate policy directions and foster national unity [27].

Inaugural speeches are particularly significant because they mark the transition of power and the beginning of a new political era. They are typically delivered at swearing-in ceremonies, often in a celebratory atmosphere, and function to motivate, educate, and mobilise citizens. Recent studies emphasise that these speeches set the tone for an administration by defining governance priorities and addressing national concerns. For example, The author [63] highlights how U.S. presidential inaugural addresses often emphasise unity, national strength, and policy commitments. Similarly, African leaders, such as Nelson Mandela and John Magufuli, have used their inaugural addresses to promote reconciliation and reform agendas [64].

Acceptance speeches, on the other hand, are instrumental in shaping public perception immediately after electoral victories. They serve as

pseudo-campaign tools where leaders consolidate their legitimacy and connect with both supporters and sceptics. Acceptance speeches offer leaders a platform to reinforce their policy intentions and acknowledge their campaign supporters. According to [26], acceptance speeches in democratic societies function as crucial moments where leaders assert their credibility, build political capital, and establish rhetorical consistency between campaign promises and governance objectives.

Political communication scholars have extensively analysed the rhetorical strategies employed in inaugural and acceptance speeches. Authors [65] argue that such speeches are designed to evoke emotional appeal, using linguistic devices such as metaphors, anaphora, and parallelism. Research on African political rhetoric by [66] highlights that these speeches frequently incorporate elements of traditional oral communication, thereby making them more relatable to local audiences. Furthermore, studies indicate that acceptance and inaugural speeches often employ historical references to create continuity between past achievements and future aspirations [67].

Recent comparative studies suggest that political leaders use inaugural and acceptance speeches to frame their leadership personas. For instance, authors [68] examined speeches from various heads of state and found that leaders often craft their rhetoric to balance personal ethos with collective national identity. The choice of language in these speeches plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and maintaining political legitimacy. Studies [69] further confirm that leaders who use inclusive language in their inaugural addresses tend to foster greater national cohesion and public trust.

An emerging trend in political speech analysis is the impact of digital media on the reception of inaugural and acceptance speeches. According to Chadwick and Stromer-Galley (2016), the proliferation of social media has transformed the way political leaders deliver and disseminate their speeches [70]. Unlike previous eras, where speeches were primarily broadcast on television and radio, contemporary political communication integrates real-time social media engagement, thereby expanding audience reach and interaction. This shift has led to an increased focus on how political figures craft their messages to be more shareable and impactful in the digital space [60].

Studies on African leaders' inaugural and acceptance speeches reveal a unique blend of rhetorical traditions. Scholars such as Adetiba and Rahim (2020) argue that African political discourse frequently incorporates proverbs, storytelling, and collective memory to foster relatability and resonance among diverse populations [71]. This linguistic strategy differentiates African political rhetoric from Western political speech patterns, which often emphasise policy specifics and legislative agendas. Such rhetorical approaches are evident in speeches by leaders such as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Paul Kagame, who have effectively utilised language to construct compelling governance narratives [64].

Further research has examined the strategic use of emotional appeals in political speeches. Studies by Villalobos and Siriani (2018) demonstrate that leaders employ a combination of optimism and urgency in their acceptance speeches to mobilise supporters and frame opposition narratives. Similarly, inaugural speeches frequently include narratives of national rebirth and resilience to inspire public confidence in new administrations. The strategic deployment of pathos, logos, and ethos in these speeches ensures that they remain effective tools for leadership projection and governance articulation [72].

Recent works have also examined gender differences in inaugural and acceptance speeches. According to [73], female political leaders tend to emphasise themes of inclusivity, social justice, and community engagement more frequently than their male counterparts. This was observed in the speeches of leaders such as Jacinda Ardern and Kamala Harris, who framed their leadership personas around collective progress and empathetic governance. This emerging area of research highlights how gender dynamics influence rhetorical choices in political speeches.

Ultimately, the study of inaugural and acceptance speeches continues to evolve, incorporating interdisciplinary insights from political science, linguistics, and digital media studies. As political communication adapts to new technological and cultural shifts, further research will be essential in understanding how these speeches shape governance and public engagement. The continued analysis of these speeches provides valuable insights into how political leaders craft their public images and sustain political momentum through strategic communication [69].

Nigerian Political Oratory. Nigerian political oratory is an essential tool for leadership, mobilisation, and governance. Unlike the Western tradition, where political speeches are often meticulously documented and published, Nigerian political oratory remains deeply rooted in indigenous traditions, relying on verbal artistry, proverbs, and rhetorical devices to engage audiences. The primary purpose of political oratory in Nigeria is to shape public opinion, influence voter behaviour, and establish political legitimacy. Contemporary Nigerian political leaders, such as President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, have demonstrated the power of oratory in galvanising support and articulating policy visions [74].

A distinct feature of Nigerian political oratory is its ability to adapt to various contexts. Political speeches in Nigeria encompass a range of events, including campaign rallies, acceptance speeches, inaugural addresses, and crisis communications. The rhetoric employed by politicians is designed to resonate with cultural values and historical narratives. For example, Tinubu's 2023 inaugural address emphasised national unity, economic reforms, and democratic consolidation, appealing to both the elite and grassroots citizens [29]. Similarly, former President Goodluck Jonathan's concession speech in 2015 was widely praised for its statesmanship and its role in ensuring a peaceful transition of power [75].

Traditional African rhetorical elements, including proverbs, allegories, and call-and-response techniques, often enrich Nigerian political oratory. These elements help politicians establish a connection with their audience, making their speeches more relatable and memorable. For instance, former President Olusegun Obasanjo frequently employed Yoruba proverbs in his speeches to reinforce political messages and underscore his cultural identity [76]. Additionally, Peter Obi, a prominent Nigerian politician, utilises storytelling and statistical data to project an image of transparency and accountability, distinguishing his oratory from that of his peers [77].

Another significant aspect of Nigerian political oratory is its function in consolidating power and authority. Politicians use carefully crafted speeches to assert dominance, manage public perceptions, and counter opposition narratives. During the 2019 elections, President Muhammadu Buhari's speeches strategically addressed security concerns and economic policies to rein-

force his leadership credibility [78]. Political oratory in Nigeria also extends beyond formal speeches to spontaneous remarks, town hall meetings, and televised interviews, where leaders employ rhetorical persuasion to maintain their political relevance.

The performative nature of Nigerian political oratory is another distinguishing factor. Politicians often rely on body language, vocal inflexions, and dramatic pauses to enhance their message delivery. For example, Nyesom Wike, the former Governor of Rivers State, is known for his animated speech delivery, which energises his supporters and creates a strong emotional connection [79]. The use of humour and satire is also prevalent in Nigerian political oratory, serving as a tool for critique and engagement. This was evident in Dino Melaye's Senate speeches, which blended humour with serious political commentary to captivate his audience [80].

Political oratory in Nigeria also serves as a mechanism for advocacy and resistance. Historically, figures such as Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe employed powerful speeches to advocate for independence and national development. In contemporary times, activists such as Omoyele Sowore employ oratory to challenge government policies and demand accountability [81]. The speeches of opposition leaders often serve as counter-narratives, highlighting governance shortcomings and mobilising citizens toward political action.

Furthermore, political oratory in Nigeria plays a crucial role in crisis communication. Leaders use speeches to manage public reactions during national emergencies. For instance, former Vice President Yemi Osinbajo's addresses during the COVID-19 pandemic were marked by reassurances, policy updates, and calls for unity [82]. Similarly, President Tinubu's recent address on the removal of fuel subsidies sought to justify economic reforms and pacify public discontent [83]. The effectiveness of crisis communication often depends on the leader's ability to establish credibility and demonstrate empathy.

Despite its significance, Nigerian political oratory faces challenges such as misinformation, populism, and audience scepticism. The rise of digital media has altered the dynamics of political speech-making, as politicians now tailor their rhetoric to suit both traditional and online audiences. Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook have become arenas for political dis-

course, where speeches are analysed, critiqued, and sometimes manipulated (84). Consequently, contemporary politicians must navigate these complexities to maintain authenticity and persuasive power.

In conclusion, Nigerian political oratory remains a dynamic and influential force in governance and electoral politics. It is characterised by rhetorical flexibility, cultural resonance, and performative elements that engage diverse audiences. As political communication continues to evolve, Nigerian leaders must refine their oratorical strategies to enhance credibility, foster unity, and sustain public trust. Future research should explore the impact of digital media on Nigerian political oratory and how emerging politicians adapt their rhetorical styles to new communication landscapes [85].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Political speeches are significant means through which leaders communicate their visions, policies, and governance agenda to the public. That of Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa, who delivered two inaugural speeches under varied political circumstances, provides fascinating insights into how language is strategically deployed to assert legitimacy, encourage unity, and shape narratives of governance. This chapter offers a close analysis of these speeches, examining the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed to achieve specific political and communicative objectives.

Using Adebija's Eight Discourse Tacts as the theoretical framework, this chapter examines how Aiyedatiwa handles the subtleties of political transition, democratic leadership, and governance expectations. The research centres on how he positions himself with the electorate, diffuse political tensions, employs persuasion to maintain public trust, and strategically appeals to emotions and credibility. Given that the two speeches were delivered in different contexts — one following the death of his predecessor and the other following an election victory — the research also explores how his rhetorical strategy evolved between the two periods of leadership support.

The chapter is structured to provide an in-depth analysis of the speeches, focusing on discourse tactics of affiliation, mitigation, persuasion, ap-

peal to ethos, rhetorical questions, and constructive opposition. This way, an in-depth understanding of the pragmatic and communicative strategies that comprise Aiyedatiwa's discourse is achieved, with particular light being shed on the overall implications of political discourse in governance, leadership transition, and electoral consolidation.

Analysis of Speech 1: December 27, 2023 (Swearing-in as Governor after Predecessor's Death) **and Speech 2:** November 17, 2024 (Acceptance Speech after Election Victory)

A. Context and Overview of the First Speech. This speech was delivered under extraordinary political circumstances following the death of Governor Rotimi Akeredolu, making it a transitional inaugural address rather than one following an election victory. The speech focuses on governance continuity, political stability, unity, and reassurance to the people of Ondo State. Aiyedatiwa had to strategically use language to establish his legitimacy, as he was assuming power in a situation where public sentiment was mixed.

B. Context and Overview of the Second Speech. This speech was delivered following Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa's victory in the 2024 Ondo State gubernatorial election. Unlike his first speech, which was given during a politically sensitive transition following the death of his predecessor, this second speech is a celebratory acceptance address after securing a democratic mandate from the electorate. The tone, therefore, shifts from legitimisation and continuity (as seen in the first speech) to consolidation, inclusivity, and governance expansion.

The speech serves multiple rhetorical purposes:

- Acknowledging the election process and stakeholders (INEC, security agencies, and political figures);
- Expressing gratitude to the electorate and his party for their support;
- Promoting unity by reaching out to opposition parties and emphasising collaborative governance;
- Reinforcing governance commitments to economic growth, security, and citizens' welfare;
- Dedicating the victory to his late predecessor, Governor Rotimi Akeredolu.

Application of Adegbija's Eight Discourse Tacts

Affiliation in discourse refers to the speaker's attempt to align themselves with the audience's values, beliefs, and emotions. It involves building a shared identity or sense of belonging with the audience to foster a connection and mutual understanding. By affirming common ground, speakers can gain the trust and approval of their listeners, which is vital in political speeches aimed at uniting diverse groups [5, 13, 28].

Speech 1, Paragraph 3: In his address, Governor Aiyedatiwa begins by acknowledging the profound loss of the late Governor Akeredolu, a figure with whom he shared a longstanding political and personal relationship. He states, *"It is with a heavy heart that I accept this onerous responsibility of taking over the reins of governance and affairs of our State following the unfortunate loss and passing of our beloved Governor, leader and dear boss, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, SAN, CON."* This statement aligns Aiyedatiwa with the collective mourning of the people of Ondo State, positioning himself as not only the new Governor but as one who shares in the grief and sorrow of the citizens. By expressing this shared sense of loss, he is building rapport and empathy with his audience, fostering a sense of unity in this moment of tragedy.

Speech 2, Paragraph 4: Aiyedatiwa further strengthens this affiliation by highlighting the legacy of the late Governor Akeredolu and emphasising the continuity of his administration's projects. He says, *"I want to assure the people of Ondo State that under my watch, this administration shall continue to advance the welfare of the people. We shall always place the people first in every decision we take."* By emphasising "we" and "the people," Aiyedatiwa signals his alignment with the electorate's hopes and aspirations. This rhetoric aligns him with the populace's ongoing commitment to the achievements of the previous administration, effectively consolidating his position as both a successor and a unifier.

Summary

Governor Aiyedatiwa effectively uses affiliation in his inaugural speeches by aligning himself with the emotional state of the people and expressing continuity with the late Governor's initiatives. His use of collective pronouns, such as "we," and references to shared grief and achievements not only establish a bond with the people of Ondo State but also enhance his credibility as a leader who values the collective well-

being of the populace. This tact plays a significant role in establishing his legitimacy and fostering political unity.

Mitigation involves softening the impact of statements that may be perceived as harsh or controversial. It helps reduce the potential for negative reactions by making the speaker's statements more palatable or less confrontational. In political discourse, mitigation is used to navigate sensitive issues, ensuring the audience is not alienated [12, 28, 31].

Speech 1, Paragraph 6: Aiyedatiwa mitigates the gravity of the challenges ahead by framing them as collective efforts: "Today's event has placed a burden on all of us to pull together and stay together as one because we have the onerous responsibility to continue to sustain the legacies of Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, SAN, CON, which was good governance, properly called." By acknowledging the difficulties ahead but framing them as shared responsibilities, Aiyedatiwa reduces the potential for backlash and invites the audience to join him in addressing the challenges.

Speech 2, Paragraph 8: He further mitigates the expected challenges by stating, "Let us put aside our differences and work together to create a brighter future for ourselves, our children, and our communities." This call for unity softens the potentially divisive nature of political transitions and appeals to the audience's sense of collective good, downplaying the adversities associated with leadership change.

Aiyedatiwa effectively uses mitigation to temper the emotional impact of leadership transitions. By acknowledging the weight of the responsibility but presenting it as a collective task, he eases the audience into accepting the challenges of his new administration without resistance. This approach strengthens his appeal to unity and cooperation.

Persuasion is the act of convincing an audience to accept particular views, adopt specific actions, or support certain policies. In political discourse, persuasion is a critical tool used to influence public opinion and mobilise support. It often involves logical arguments, emotional appeals, or the use of rhetorical devices to sway the audience's attitudes [11, 13, 31].

Speech 1, Paragraph 7: Aiyedatiwa uses persuasive language to align his leadership with the electorate's desires: "I want to assure the people

of Ondo State that under my watch, this administration shall continue to advance the welfare of the people." This statement is an example of persuasive rhetoric designed to solidify trust. By promising the continuation of positive governance, he positions himself as a leader who will act in the best interests of the people.

Speech 2, Paragraph 6: Similarly, in his acceptance speech, Aiyedatiwa persuades the people to trust his leadership further: "We will continue to prioritise the welfare of our people, foster economic growth, and ensure that our state remains a beacon of hope and prosperity for generations to come." Through the repetition of key terms like "welfare," "economic growth," and "prosperity," Aiyedatiwa emphasises his commitment to the people's future, persuading them that his administration will be forward-thinking and inclusive.

Governor Aiyedatiwa utilises persuasion throughout his speeches to build credibility and trust with his audience. By emphasising shared values and pledging to continue the progress of the previous administration, he effectively convinces the people of Ondo State that his leadership will bring stability and prosperity.

Appeals to ethos involve the speaker establishing their credibility, authority, and trustworthiness. In political speeches, ethos is often built through references to personal achievements, integrity, and alignment with core values. The audience is more likely to trust a speaker they view as credible [5, 12, 22].

Speech 1, Paragraph 4: Aiyedatiwa appeals to his ethos by reflecting on his longstanding relationship with the late Governor Akeredolu: "*The demise of Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, SAN, CON is indeed a great loss to me as an individual as our relationship dates back to many years ago, having closely worked with him when his gubernatorial journey started in the Year 2012.*" By positioning himself as a long-time ally and collaborator of the late Governor, Aiyedatiwa strengthens his credibility as a leader who is deeply invested in the state's development.

Speech 2, Paragraph 3: He also reinforces his credibility in the second speech: "I must appreciate the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR for providing exemplary leadership." Aiyedatiwa's acknowledgement of the national leadership ties his ethos to broader

political structures, reinforcing his legitimacy through association with established authority figures.

Aiyedatiwa builds ethos in both speeches by emphasising his close relationship with key political figures and his longstanding commitment to public service. These strategies help to bolster his image as a capable and trustworthy leader, positioning him as a legitimate successor to Governor Akeredolu.

Sympathy and empathy in discourse refer to the speaker's effort to show understanding or shared feelings toward the audience's emotions, especially in times of crisis, loss, or adversity. In political speeches, this tactic is crucial for building a strong emotional connection, making the speaker appear compassionate and aligned with the people's concerns [13, 31, 86].

Speech 1, Paragraph 3: Aiyedatiwa demonstrates empathy early in his speech by acknowledging the collective grief following the passing of Governor Akeredolu: "*The death of our Governor is indeed a devastating shock to us all, as we have all been praying earnestly for his quick recovery and subsequent safe return to Ondo State.*" This statement conveys Aiyedatiwa's emotional connection to the people, showing that he shares in their loss and pain, which helps him relate deeply to his audience.

Speech 2, Paragraph 7: He continues to show empathy in his second speech, addressing the people's grief: "It is my prayer, once more, that God Almighty shall grant the family and the people of Ondo State the fortitude to bear this irreparable loss." By directly invoking a prayer for strength, Aiyedatiwa connects on an emotional level, further aligning himself with the collective sorrow of the state.

Through expressions of sympathy and empathy, Aiyedatiwa strengthens his bond with the people of Ondo State. By acknowledging the emotional state of the citizens and offering shared prayers and hopes, he reinforces his position as a compassionate and understanding leader, further legitimising his role in times of political transition.

Rhetorical questions are questions posed by the speaker that do not require an answer. They are designed to engage the audience, provoke thought, or emphasise a particular point. In political speeches, they are often used to reinforce a key message, stir emotions, or challenge the audience to reflect on important issues [11, 12, 22].

Speech 1, Paragraph 9: Aiyedatiwa employs a rhetorical question to invite reflection on the state's future: *"What kind of Ondo State do we want to build for our children?"* This question does not require an answer but serves to prompt the audience to think deeply about the collective vision for the state's future and the role it must play in achieving it.

Speech 2, Paragraph 10: In his second speech, Aiyedatiwa also uses a rhetorical question to strengthen his call for unity: *"Can we afford to remain divided in the face of the challenges that lie ahead?"* This question is intended to prompt the audience to consider the necessity of cooperation and collective effort in addressing the challenges of governance, as well as social and political fragmentation.

Rhetorical questions are used effectively by Aiyedatiwa to engage his audience and encourage them to reflect on their role in the state's development. By posing thought-provoking questions, he emphasises key issues such as unity and progress, motivating people to participate actively in the political process.

Pronouns and Address Terms. The use of pronouns (such as "I," "we," and "you") and address terms (including titles and direct references to the audience) play a crucial role in shaping the inclusivity or exclusivity of a speech. These linguistic choices are often used to signal solidarity, division, authority, or identification with the audience [5].

Speech 1, Paragraph 5: Aiyedatiwa frequently uses inclusive pronouns like "we" to create a sense of shared responsibility: *"Today's event has placed a burden on all of us to pull together and stay together as one because we have the onerous responsibility to continue to sustain the legacies of Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu."* The use of "we" fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose among the audience.

Speech 2, Paragraph 3: In his acceptance speech, Aiyedatiwa also uses the pronoun "I" to assert his leadership while remaining connected to the electorate: *"I stand before you this day, on the threshold of history, to accept the results of the 2024 gubernatorial elections."* Here, the personal pronoun "I" helps establish his authority and responsibility as the newly elected Governor while maintaining a personal connection with the audience.

Aiyedatiwa strategically uses pronouns to create an inclusive atmosphere, emphasising the collective responsibility of his leadership while asserting his authority. His use of inclusive language strengthens his connection to the audience, fostering a sense of shared identity and purpose.

Constructive opposition refers to the rhetorical strategy of acknowledging and addressing opposing views or potential criticisms in a manner that strengthens the speaker's position. Rather than directly confronting or dismissing opposition, the speaker uses this tactic to present alternative views as manageable or refutable, thus reinforcing their arguments [5].

Speech 1, Paragraph 8: Aiyedatiwa subtly addresses the challenges his administration might face by framing them as opportunities for growth: *"We must acknowledge with pride the wonderful achievements and legacies of Arakunrin Akeredolu. His records of performance are monumental and unprecedented."* He acknowledges the possibility of critiques but frames them as part of a legacy worth preserving, turning potential opposition into a testament to his ability to continue a strong governance tradition.

Speech 2, Paragraph 9: He extends this tactic in his second speech, addressing the electoral opposition: *"Let us put aside our differences and work together to create a brighter future for ourselves, our children, and our communities."* By calling for unity and collaboration, Aiyedatiwa indirectly acknowledges the political divisions while suggesting that these divisions can be overcome for the greater good of the state.

Aiyedatiwa employs constructive opposition to acknowledge political challenges and critiques, presenting them as opportunities for unity and progress. By framing opposing views as manageable, he strengthens his position and reinforces his message of collective action and continuity in governance.

Other recognised tactics are as follows:

a) Use of Silence. Silence in discourse refers to the strategic absence of speech or hesitation that conveys meaning. It can express disapproval, create suspense, signal respect, or invite reflection. In political speeches, silence is often used to punctuate important points, create an emotional impact, or allow the audience time to absorb critical information [53].

Speech 1, Paragraph 4: Aiyedatiwa creates an emotional pause in his speech following his tribute to Governor Akeredolu's passing. This silence, though not explicitly stated, is implied through the careful choice of words and the sombre tone: *"The death of our Governor is indeed a devastating shock to us all."* The pause here allows the audience to process the gravity of the loss, deepening the emotional impact of his words.

Speech 2, Paragraph 5: In his second speech, Aiyedatiwa uses the silence implied in his pause before stating his commitments: *"Now that the elections are over, it is time to rededicate ourselves to the service of our dear State."* The deliberate pause here emphasises the solemn nature of the political transition, signalling the weight of the responsibility he is about to undertake.

Aiyedatiwa's use of silence, though often subtle, enhances the emotional weight of his speeches. By allowing moments of reflection, he creates space for the audience to internalise the significance of his words, adding depth to the emotional appeal of his rhetoric.

b) Hyperbole. Hyperbole involves deliberate exaggeration to emphasise a point, evoke strong emotions, or create dramatic effects. In political speeches, hyperbole is used to rally support, heighten the significance of an issue, or make promises that resonate deeply with the audience [43].

Speech 1, Paragraph 7: Aiyedatiwa uses hyperbole to emphasise the achievements of Governor Akeredolu: *"His records of performance are monumental and unprecedented."* This exaggeration aims to underscore the magnitude of the late Governor's contributions and solidify the importance of his legacy, thereby positioning Aiyedatiwa as the rightful successor who will continue this legacy.

Speech 2, Paragraph 11: Similarly, in his second speech, Aiyedatiwa uses hyperbole to emphasise the significance of his victory: *"I am overwhelmed with gratitude, and I pledge to work tirelessly to justify the trust you have reposed in me."* The phrase "work tirelessly" is an exaggeration meant to highlight his unwavering commitment to fulfilling his promises and demonstrating his dedication to the state.

Aiyedatiwa strategically employs hyperbole to dramatise the significance of his leadership and his predecessor's achievements. This exaggera-

tion is designed to evoke strong emotions in the audience and reinforce his commitment to upholding the legacy of good governance.

CONCLUSIONS

By applying Adegbija's Eight Discourse Tacts to Aiyedatiwa's inaugural speeches, you can provide a robust and detailed analysis that highlights the strategic use of language to build legitimacy, unify the audience, and address the socio-political challenges faced by Ondo State. Each tract offers a unique insight into how Aiyedatiwa constructs his political identity and conveys his vision for the future.

This chapter presents the findings of the data analysis in Chapter Three, where the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed by Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa in his inaugural speeches were examined. The analysis was based on Adegbija's Eight Discourse Tacts, which recognised the rhetorical strategies Aiyedatiwa employed in two contrasting political settings: his swearing-in speech following the death of his predecessor, Governor Akeredolu, and his acceptance speech after winning the 2024 Ondo State gubernatorial election.

Affiliation. Aiyedatiwa employed affiliation tactfully in both speeches to create a sense of belonging among the people. Identifying with the feelings of the people, especially during the unfortunate demise of Governor Akeredolu, demonstrated unity and sympathy. The fact that he employed collective pronouns like "we" and direct reference to collective misfortunes and achievements indicated his support for the continuation of governance. This was effective in Ondo politics because it helped create Aiyedatiwa's legitimacy as a leader who had a stake in the people's suffering and was committed to their future well-being. At the national level, this helped place him as a compassionate and dependable leader within his party, projecting a positive political image.

Mitigation. Aiyedatiwa used mitigation to buffer the suffering and hardships ahead, framing them as communal activities. In his first speech, he acknowledged the challenge of the handover following Akeredolu's death but remained adamant on collective responsibility. In his second speech, he further placated potential discord by calling for unity and cooperation, urging the people to set aside their differences for the common good. This approach helped maintain political stability

in Ondo State. This state experienced an unforeseen leadership change within his party, where reducing the impact of political transitions was a key priority. Nationally, this approach also underscored Aiyedatiwa's readiness to govern in inclusivity and cooperation.

Persuasion. Persuasion in both addresses worked to align the electorate with Aiyedatiwa's leadership ambitions. By constant assurances of improvement in welfare, economic growth, and prosperity, Aiyedatiwa convinced his audience to entrust him. The appeals in his speeches were particularly significant in Ondo politics, as the populace needed to be assured that his government would ensure the continuity of Akeredolu's legacy and address issues of state development. In national politics, persuasion cemented his place within the All Progressives Congress (APC) and expressed his vision of governance beyond his state.

Ethos Appeals. Ethos appeals were central to Aiyedatiwa's rhetoric, as he emphasised his long-term affiliation with Governor Akeredolu and acknowledged significant political leaders in both speeches. By highlighting his previous achievements and affiliations with influential leaders, Aiyedatiwa enhanced his trustworthiness. This tactic was particularly crucial within the context of Ondo's politics, as his right to succeed had been questioned due to the unusual circumstances of his rise to power. More broadly, his use of ethos within his political party further entrenched him as a stable and effective leader.

Sympathy/Empathy. Empathy and sympathy were also key strategies employed by Aiyedatiwa in establishing emotional connections with the people. Both of his speeches demonstrated considerable empathy and sympathy for the people regarding the loss of Governor Akeredolu. The appeal of emotions was most needed in Ondo State because the people had not yet recovered from the loss of a loved leader. On the national scale, his empathic approach was a key contributor to his public image as an empathetic leader who could survive personal and political storms.

Rhetorical Questions. Aiyedatiwa's use of rhetorical questions in his speeches was intended to engage the audience and call for self-reflection. By asking questions about the future of Ondo State and the need for unity, Aiyedatiwa succeeded in making his audience reflect on how they could contribute to the state's development and political harmony. This was a tactic that helped build a sense of responsibility and collective effort,

something that was most crucial in the local and national political arenas where leadership and cohesiveness of governance issues are front and centre.

Pronouns and Address Terms. The use of pronouns and address terms was a well-thought-out tactic used in Aiyedatiwa's speeches. By using inclusive pronouns like "we" and the personal pronoun "I," Aiyedatiwa created a sense of oneness with the people of Ondo State, as well as creating a sense of leadership. This was a plot that created a sense of belongingness and togetherness, something vital in a transitioning state with leadership. At the national level, this deployment of pronouns solidified his bond with the electorate while positioning him as the leader who would assume the burden of governance.

Constructive Opposition. Aiyedatiwa deployed constructive opposition by acknowledging potential criticisms and challenges while considering areas for improvement. Both speeches emphasised the importance of unity and cooperation, even from opposition parties, framing political divides as surmountable and beneficial for the advancement of the state. This strategy was crucial in Ondo's politics, where opposition forces might have weakened his legitimacy; however, his appeal for unity helped consolidate his political strength. At the national level, it testified to his ability to straddle the divides within the APC and across the party lines.

As per the findings of this analysis, the following are suggested:

- 1) Successful Emotional Appeals: Political leaders should tactically utilise empathy and affiliation to engage their public, particularly during moments of crisis or change. Leaders can forge unity and a shared identity by tapping into feelings and values that are shared among their followers.
- 2) Mitigation as a Strategy for Leadership: Political leaders transitioning into leadership roles should utilise mitigation to mitigate the impact of difficult decisions or events, thereby enhancing their leadership's perception as inclusive and human-centred.
- 3) Persuasion for Long-term Goals: Leaders should use persuasion to articulate their vision and policies clearly and forcefully, ensuring that their actions align with the welfare, security, and prosperity aspirations of the electorate.
- 4) Establishing Credibility: Political leaders must establish credibility by highlighting their record,

demonstrating alignment with fundamental values, and fostering trust through both their actions and words.

5) Unity through Rhetorical Devices: Political leaders must employ rhetorical questions and respectful opposition to capture the audience's attention, stimulate their thinking, and encourage collective action in the common interest.

Generally, Governor Aiyedatiwa's inaugural speeches provide a profound demonstration of how Adegbija's Eight Discourse Tacts are strategically employed to manage the complexities of political transition, leadership consolidation, and public trust. Through his masterful deployment

of affiliation, mitigation, persuasion, ethos, empathy, rhetorical questions, pronouns, and constructive opposition, Aiyedatiwa positions himself as both a compassionate leader and a reliable successor. The findings of this study emphasise the power of language in political communication, particularly in leadership transitions, where the subtle management of people's feelings and political unity is of the utmost importance. The strategic application of such tacts not only solidified his position in Ondo State but also set the stage for his subsequent political relevance in the broader national landscape.

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