CULTURE, MEDIA & FILM | CRITICAL ESSAY

Exploring manipulative rhetorical choices in Nigerian political speeches
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Abstract: This paper attempts to explore the rhetorical choices employed by politicians in the Nigerian political arena. In achieving their political aims, politicians are widely believed to possess a skilled knowledge of astute linguistic use. Thus, one can argue that politicians are presented with a deliberate selection of lexical choices which are coupled with their tactical use of language. Since political language is a social phenomenon, it is thus worth investigating how politicians manage to engage language in their favour. Through a purposive sampling strategy, the study analyses the rhetorical choices found in six Nigerian presidential speeches, with a specific focus on the lexico-semantic features of the speeches, and also the variational expressions embedded in them. The study found that Nigerian politicians employ pronouns, modalities, hyperbole, repetition and the use of metaphor in their political communication. The study concludes that Nigerian politicians strategically use manipulative rhetoric in political discourse.

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
The article discusses the trends in political communication as laden with manipulative rhetoric in the Nigerian political scenario. Since it has been established that language holds a powerful status in one’s society, the Nigerian political scenario is not a far cry. Time and time again, politicians, not only in Nigeria, rely on their linguistic prowess to attract electorates. Through a thematic classification of the diverse manipulative rhetorical choices, the study explores areas of political communication that are developed to manipulate or misrepresent in Nigerian political discourse and by extension, political discursive strategies of other countries.
1. Introduction

In investigating persuasive linguistic strategies and concealed meanings in presidential campaign discourses in Kenya, Michira (2014) opines that politicians have invented unique ways of using language which deviate from normal everyday discourse. This position is arguably true of Nigeria and many other countries, since the careful selection of appropriate words for political campaigns cannot be overemphasised. Over the years, politicians have been presented with a varied selection of lexical choices, which are coupled with their tactical use of language. This not only derives from the specific words they use, but also how they use them. Academic literature on lexical choices from different purviews is plentiful.

There is evidence that power is manifested in political discourse through the strategic use of language which allows politicians to control political information (Abdel-Moety, 2015, p. 8) states. In their study of political speeches in Iran, Jalali and Sadeghi (2014, p. 9) state that one of the most important factors for political candidates to succeed in any election campaign is their use of skillful language, and their ability to persuade and impress audiences with discourse filled with thoughts, emotions and excitement. Scholars such as Tepavčević (2014, p. 119) has also argued that political discourse is characterised by its specific style of persuasion which has a strong influence on the opinion-forming abilities of people. He accedes that political language possesses expressive functions through which politicians strive to attract individuals and convince them to accept and ensure the validity of certain political standpoints and attitudes. From a linguistic perspective, Tepavčević affirms that political language is aimed at conveying a message by informing, convincing and persuading.

The interest of this study is predicated on the premise that politicians creatively manipulate the electorate by using language and other semiotic resources, such as billboards, pamphlets, and brochures, to appeal to a wide audience. Hence, the tendency to manipulate public opinion takes a strong hold in Nigerian political discourse. From avoidance of obvious facts to deliberate insertion of misrepresentative information, the discourse of politics is laden with manipulative rhetoric—the sole intention being to entice as much electorates as possible. The paper argues that political speeches are often an attempt to exploit and influence people rather than a modest presentation of campaign facts. As such, the study brings to fore the manipulative and misrepresentative hidden rhetoric in Nigerian political discourse. In this study, instances of manipulative and persuasive lexical structures in Nigerian political discourse are sought, analysed and validated by the available literature.

2. Nigerian politics and governance: A brief

Much literature has been published on the situation of governance in Nigeria, with the contributions mostly pointing at the ills in Nigerian politics. These ills have continued to guide discursive strategies during elections. Here, we provide a quick insight into the current status of Nigerian governance. This study focuses on two political parties and candidates for the purpose of analysis. Therefore, it is imperative to give a background to the history and development of these foremost political parties—People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC). The PDP came into existence in August 1998 and for over a decade, the PDP were comfortably at the helm of Nigerian affairs, given that they have won four presidential elections out of six since Nigeria returned to independence in 1999 (Aleyomi, 2013). Katsina (2016) notes that the PDP tenure did not only face a leadership problem while in power, they also suffered from absence of coherent ideological principles that could have focused its government and guided its members in public offices.

The APC, considered the strongest opposition in Nigeria, managed to produce a President for the first time in 2015, after displacing the PDP with their highly monetised politics, individualistic...
tendencies of politicians, incoherent party ideologies, and party defection, among several other factors (Olowojolu, 2015). This is a feat that took more than a decade to realise, in terms of disassembling the then sitting political party, which was the PDP. Thus, the continuous and seemingly unending political might of the PDP led to the birth of the APC in February 2013, with the merger of three equally strong opposition political parties in Nigeria. The amalgamation of these parties led to a new dawn, with the political rise of the APC. A party which would later displace the sitting government. The party became more strengthened after five sitting governors, as well as some legislators in Nigeria, defected from the PDP to the APC. These powerful defections all contributed to the displacement of President Jonathan and the PDP in 2015.

Given the fact that the PDP were later defeated at federal level, we strongly contend that this may be as a result of the party not having done well in Nigerian governance to tackle issues such as corruption, electricity and security that have continued to plague the country. For this study, we focus on the discursive strategies employed by the parties/candidates during electioneering, with specific focus on misrepresentation and manipulation.

3. Explaining manipulation in critical discourse analysis

To scholars from different fields of study, manipulation may imply several meanings. For this study, manipulation is observed purely from a linguistic perspective. Since language is generally better understood within a specific context, one such context being the political terrain, language use may be said to be (mis)representative and manipulative in political contexts. If someone considers Van Dijk (2006, p. 360) observation that manipulation is the illegitimate influence of the manipulator on the victims of manipulation by using discourse, while also acknowledging Cabrejas-Peñuelas’s (2015) notion that manipulation is controlling to one’s own advantage through deceitful means, it becomes clearer that manipulation is a mindful effort on the part of the manipulator. In fact, while the manipulator is aware of his manipulative effort, the manipulated is entirely unaware which is the utmost foundation for which manipulation is rested. For Van Dijk (2006), discursive dimensions of manipulation focus on polarized structures of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation. Thus, manipulation involves enhancing the power, moral superiority and credibility of the speaker(s), and discrediting dissidents, while vilifying the Others, the enemy; the use of emotional appeals; and adducing seemingly irrefutable proofs of one's beliefs and reasons.

Manipulation in itself is not an obvious entity. Hence, there are bound to be constant arguments in an attempt to explore manipulative discourse. For Van Dijk (2006) manipulation arises simply from “emphasizing Our good things and emphasizing Their bad things”. Van Dijk differentiates between legitimate mind control and manipulation through the information provided, the persuasive method and by implying what is in the best interest of the dominated group. For Rigotti (2005, p. 61), manipulative discourse implies an asymmetrical relation between the speaker and the hearer, where the manipulator has in particular the properties of: (i) having at least some power over the addressee, (ii) to some extent insincere, and (iii) leads the manipulated to believe false propositions [...]. Conversely, the manipulated is (i) confident, (ii) has a presumption of the sincerity (or cooperation), of the relevance [...] and of the truthfulness of the speaker. For this study therefore, linguistic manipulation is a form of deceiving communicative persuasion, mostly unknown to the manipulated, where a certain individual or group exercises creative linguistic skills to convince their audience, by giving insincere information. While the manipulative texts may be perceived as mere rhetoric in some instances, their ability to maintain power over the addressee make them manipulative.

There is an established interface between Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is our framework, and manipulation. On the one hand, CDA deals with revealing hidden facts. On the other, discursive manipulation is concerned with concealing seemingly manipulative messages. As such, one can argue that the audience of a manipulative discourse is completely unaware of the manipulative prowess of such discourse just as one can also argue that with the potency of CDA, manipulative
discourse can be critically deconstructed by a critical discourse analyst. Hodge and Kress (1993, p. 2) state that CDA deals with the “theorisation and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text, and of social structures and processes within which individuals or groups as social-historical subjects create meanings in their interaction with texts”. From this definition, unlike the audience of the manipulative discourse, the critical discourse analyst considers strongly all meaning-making processes as well as structural processes that contribute to the production of such text. It should therefore be borne in mind that “manipulation” is a typical observer’s category, e.g., of critical analysts, and not necessarily a participant category; few language users would call their own discourse “manipulative” (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 360).

Employing Fairclough’s (1992, p. 73) three-dimensional approach to analysing discourse, this study hopes to examine the rhetorical choices employed by Nigerian politicians in political scenarios. Fairclough’s approach involves analysing discourse using three premises, namely description, interpretation and explanation. For Fairclough, description is concerned with the formal properties and structure of the text; this is also the text stage which may be observed as linguistic features. The second stage referred to as interpretation foregrounds the connection between text and interaction. Consequently, text is further observed here as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation. Finally, the explanation stage focuses on the relationship between interaction and social context. Predicated on Fairclough’s premises, the discussion presented in this study examines the political text in relation to the social context in which they have been produced.

Frequently found in Fairclough’s work is an insistence on the fact that language usage is a social act, and as such, it is only correlative that the two be studied simultaneously. Differently put, language and society are intertwined (Fairclough, 1992). Stated further, these interrelationships between language and society influence the choice of lexis employed during discursive practices in different social contexts. Of more importance to this research is Fairclough’s combination of discourse and power, which evolves from his concept when he attempts to reveal ideological and power-related patterns in discourse. This is in the belief that participants produce and distribute texts depending on different objectives. Using Fairclough’s ideology, we analyse Nigerian language use in Nigerian politics.

4. Methodology
This study attempts to examine the linguistic and rhetorical choices employed by Nigerian politicians for the purpose of electioneering. Data were derived from two political parties, the PDP and the APC, which are considered the most powerful in the history of Nigerian democracy. The speeches of their two presidential aspirants were collated and analysed with the aim of finding similarities or differences in the choice of rhetoric employed by these politicians. Since data were collected from discourses occurring during central elections, it was envisaged that discourses produced during these times could effectively epitomise the general state of Nigerian politics. The time period for this study was from 2010 to the current, a period in which Nigeria has conducted three nationwide elections. Purposively collected data were retrieved from newspapers and online sources. In total, excerpts from six speeches were linguistically analysed. The lexical structure of these speeches is discussed with regard to their impact on the Nigerian political setting.

5. Analysing rhetorical choices in Nigerian political speeches
In this section, an analysis of the rhetorical choices used in Nigerian political speeches is done in relation to their manipulative and misrepresentative tendencies. The section discusses issues such as lexical choices, figurative expressions, metaphors, hyperboles and repetitions in Nigerian political speeches.

5.1. Lexical choices in Nigerian political speeches
One class of words often employed by politicians in political speeches is that of pronouns. In some cases, pronouns are employed to demonstrate personal commitment, while in other cases they
Exhibit the political parties' will. Also important is that in many instances political actors employ collective pronouns to claim solidarity with the people.

Examples of these usages include:

I would like us to place on record our appreciation for the efforts of our … thank our supporters up and down the country for their perseverance … We have worked very hard in the last 18 months … We have tried to ensure all processes in our party formation … Nigeria in my experience has never been so divided … We in APC are resolved to bring change to Nigeria. We plan to do things differently. (President Buhari Declaration 2015)

Our journey … determination of our people and strong support from friends abroad we have today a truly … I would like to thank the millions of our supporters who believed in us even when the cause seemed hopeless. I salute their resolve … ensure their votes count and were counted. I thank those who … (President Buhari 2015 Inaugural 2015)

I am going to address … I am going to address the people … those of you who will attain … I am addressing … I do not want to … we are spent already, I will crave your indulgence Nigerian youths … those of you who are here, listen to what I am saying. I am going to address political gatherings … I am going to dwell … I am focusing on the young people. I say … I will repeat it … and I believe all of you want to be relevant … I will not keep you here for too long because we still have the opportunity … (President Jonathan Declaration 2015)

I am mindful that I represent the shared aspiration of all our people … I assure you that this dream of Nigeria … those of us that you have elected to serve must show … we must demonstrate … we must strengthen … (President Jonathan Inaugural 2011)

The above excerpts are only a few cases of the use of pronouns in selected Nigerian speeches. Jarra (2013) acknowledges the use of pronouns such as “we” and “I” in political discourse to express the degree of politicians’ personal involvement and commitment. This, to a large extent, may be a way of (mis)representing themselves to the masses. In a similar vein, Maalej (2013) considers the use of “I” as representative of, and filled with the personality of, the speaker, but observes the use of “we” as being manipulative. He remarks that the use of “we” is a deliberate attempt employed by politicians to convince and manipulate the audience to reason as the politicians themselves do. In the excerpts above, both President Buhari and President Jonathan employed pronouns to assert authority and declare their personal and political power. President Buhari made use of more plural pronouns in a bid to direct the attention towards his political party more than himself. It can be argued that this is an attempt to make his campaign a collective responsibility of his political party. The opposite can be said of President Jonathan who employed more singular pronouns. In his case, although he belongs to a political party as well, the use of the singular pronouns tends to demonstrate that he is more in charge and takes more responsibility than his political party.

Most importantly, the use of such pronouns assists in appropriating discourse in politics. It could thus be surmised that while users of “I” often put themselves into a position of responsibility, the users of “we” instead place responsibility on everyone else, thereby avoiding commitment. Evidently, pronouns such as “we”, “us”, and “our” are ambiguous, and do not specifically refer to any entity. It is therefore difficult to decipher whether such collective pronouns refer to Nigerians, the political party, or in fact to those other co-lawmakers who are also elected. This is what Nadeem et al. (2014) observe as being manipulation of the mind. Thus, pronouns have a stronger link with influence, authority and solidarity when used consciously than when used unconsciously.

Also, the use of modals in political discourse is worthy of discussion, with politicians often employing modals to emphasise their political desires. Such modals are often asserted to make the masses
believe that political actors are indeed prepared to handle the situation in the state or nation. Amongst the important common modals employed in political discourse are “will” and “shall”:

… our administration will be ready to play any leadership role that Africa … Nigerians will not regret that they have entrusted national responsibility to us … I will try to ensure that there is responsible … This government will do all it can to rescue them alive … we will not allow this to go on … we shall rebuild and reform the public service to become more effective. (President Buhari Inaugural 2015)

We will fight for justice … we will fight for all Nigerians to have access to power … we will fight for education … we will fight for healthcare reforms … we will fight to create jobs … we will fight corruption … we will fight to protect all … we will fight for your rights. (President Jonathan Declaration 2010)

In President Buhari’s declaration, he avoids committing himself through the use of any of these modals. However, he later proceeded to use them in his inaugural address, which is of course questionable, as he technically manages to circumvent personal promises in his declaration for the presidency. President Jonathan, however, fully commits himself with the use of modals, while outlining the specific issues he expects to tackle. Ehineni (2014) considers the use of modals as a strong political device and ideological tool used by politicians to reinforce their individual political ideologies, communicate their political ideas and elicit public support. As such, they are not merely a linguistic element; modals indeed allow politicians to reinforce their commitment, make promises and appeals, as well as give pledges to the public.

Nadeem et al. (2014) share a similar sentiment in stating that the modal “will” is used by all political entities to make statements more likeable and engaging to the public. Nadeem et al. (2014) state that politicians also often employ nouns while using such modals, which is an attempt to give some sense of hope to the people. As indicated above, nouns such as education, electricity, justice, corruption and jobs are representative of the Nigerian situation and are able to give Nigerians hope for reforms in these areas.

5.2. Use of figurative expressions
The functions of metaphor in political discourse have been examined extensively. Hence, studies have proven that politicians rely heavily on figurative language, such as metaphor, by making it serve a pragmatic role in their political discourse (Cox, 2012). Figurative language, according to Heller (2011, p. 62), “refers to words, and groups of words, that exaggerate or alter the usual meanings of the component words. Figurative language and speech may involve analogy to similar concepts or other contexts and may involve exaggerations”.

Vulchanova et al. (2015) define figurative expression as a covering term for linguistic expressions whose interpretation is nonliteral; that is, where the meaning of the expression in its entirety cannot be computed directly from the meaning of its constituents. It is further explained by Vulchanova et al. that such expressions are characterised by interpretations which cannot be retrieved by simply knowing the basic sense of the constituent lexical items, and where the addressee needs to arrive at the intended meaning rather than taking at face value what is literally being said.

From these definitions, figurative expressions are capable of expressing meaning beyond that which is obvious. Given this power inherent in figurative expressions, studying their impact on political discourse is thus worthy of academic research. Amongst the figurative expressions employed by politicians in their communication are: metaphor, metonymy, euphemism and hyperbole, as well as refrain and rhetorical questions, along with others. It is important to note that it is almost impossible, if not entirely impossible, to identify and discuss all possible instances
of figurative expression used in Nigerian political discourse. Hence, only some such instances are discussed below.

5.3. Metaphor

Metaphors are powerful enough to shape opinions and make people reconsider their perceptions, as they are often employed to create influential rhetorical effects. The metaphorical ideas discussed here are entrenched in political discourse i.e. political metaphors. They are indirect and implicit metaphors. As such, for Charteris-Black (2014), political metaphor often allows speakers to manipulate the information by presenting it in a very specific way. He argues that metaphor allows speakers to manipulate the reader(s) by influencing their perception of a given reality. According to Mahmood et al. (2014, p. 213), “metaphors are abstract relations which appear to be more convincing and persuade the reader usually to shape the understanding of an activity as an extraordinary activity that is not actually happening”.

Instances of metaphors in Nigerian political discourse, as demonstrated by President Buhari of the APC and President Jonathan of the PDP, include:

... for committing their armed forces to fight Boko Haram in Nigeria ... will be fully charged with prosecuting the fight against Boko Haram ... cooperate and help to combat threats of cross-border terrorism ... We intend to attack the problem frontally ... We must not succumb to defeatism ... This government will do all it can to rescue them alive. (President Buhari Inaugural 2015)

... I have no enemies to fight ... us a bad name be ready for the fight that I shall give them ... We will fight for JUSTICE! We will fight for all Nigerians to have access to POWER! We will fight for qualitative and competitive EDUCATION! We will fight for HEALTH CARE REFORMS! We will fight to create jobs, for all Nigerians! (President Jonathan Declaration 2010)

... fight against corruption is a war in which we must in which we must all enlist to safeguard our commonwealth ... we fought for decolonization. We will now fight for democratization ... I will continue to fight, for your future, because I am one of you. I will continue to fight, for improved medical care for all our citizens I will continue to fight for all citizens to have access ... (President Jonathan Inaugural 2011)

In the above excerpts, there are many references to a lexis relating to war or battle, such as the use of the words “fight”, “defeat”, “enemy”, and so on. Evidently, President Jonathan has paid more attention to this than President Buhari, possibly resulting from consistent criticism that if or when President Buhari was elected, he would soon resume his old military traits, as he did when he was once a military head of state. Hence, Buhari’s choice of words now fully represent a civilian regime.

One could then argue that Nigerian politicians metaphorically perceive political dealings as a form of war, and that the winner has to always be prepared for war in fighting existing situations. Such discourse encourages Nigerians to be a formidable force against issues contributing to the decline of the country since the term “fight” implies a struggle to overcome. It is thus evident that President Buhari and President Jonathan have given the impression in their speeches that they are ready to tackle and resolve the stated issues in the country. This relates to Otieno’s (2016) view that metaphors in political discourse are used to propagate political ideals and political ideologies.

There is also the metaphorical use of lexis which indicates that politicians are ready to build, renovate, change or transform the nation, particularly in terms of structure and progress. Such instances are:

... reviving industry to generate employment ... Developing solid minerals exploitation which will substantially attract employment and revenue for government. Restoring honour and integrity to public service ... (President Buhari Declaration 2015)
The capacity is built over time … we must set up institutions … working on and we are succeeding … I will build universities for you, I will build secondary schools for you, I will build primary schools for you … we must grow the economy, create jobs, and generate enduring happiness for our people … we are ready to take off on the path of sustained growth and economic development … encourage locally owned rapidly expanding population … To drive our overall economic vision, the power sector … to improve our capability in combating trans-border crimes. (President Jonathan Declaration 2015)

In the above-given examples, the two politicians attempt to create some developmental impressions in the minds of the masses through their choice of words. Politicians deliver their speeches with promises of good governance and an improvement in the general standard of living. Expressions from the domains of movement, competition and progress are largely employed. Explicitly, terms such as “accelerate”, “start”, “drive”, “generate”, “take off” and “rapid” represent progressive movement. This choice of words implies a departure from the status quo, in that there will soon be a difference to the current situation. Also, expressions such as “growth”, “development”, “revive” and “restore” create an impression of progress and transformation. In their study, Nadeem et al. (2014) surmise that politicians use contextualised nouns continuously to show their deep worry and unease towards governance. This could be considered manipulative when Nigerians, unimpressed with the current situation, begin to accept information from politicians as being actual truth. This is especially due to it having been proven time and again that politicians may not necessarily behave as they say after assuming power.

Furthermore, the metaphor of hope is pervasive in Nigerian political speeches. Often, politicians attempt to inject a feeling of hope for the people with constant reminders that their situation will improve. In the selected speeches, the metaphor of hope is discovered in the following:

Nigerians will not regret that they have entrusted national responsibility to us. We must not succumb to hopelessness and defeatism. We can fix our problems ... We shall rebuild and reform the public service to become ... We shall overhaul the rules of engagement to avoid human rights violations in operations. We shall improve operational and legal mechanisms so that disciplinary steps are taken against proven human right violations by the Armed Forces (President Buhari Inaugural 2015).

Together, we will unite our nation and improve the living standards of all our peoples whether in the North or in the South; in the East or in the West. The day of transformation begins today. We will not allow anyone to exploit differences in creed or tongue ... We will create greater access to quality education and improved health care delivery ... enable it to play its role of ensuring food security and massive job creation for our people (President Jonathan Inaugural 2011).

Consistently, politicians in their addresses continue to communicate the message of hope. They often create the impression that the national situation will improve, and that people should hope for the better. Nadeem et al. (2014, p. 5) recognise that politicians employ certain words to make promises and pledges in order to lure and persuade the electorate into voting them into power. Such words are used to communicate and reinforce their individual political ideologies and ideas. For Musolff (2016), political metaphors assist politicians to gain competitive advantage over the audience by offering them new meaning nuances, challenging each other and announcing political initiatives.

It can thus be gathered from the above analytical references that metaphors play an important role in political discourse. Not only do metaphors serve as a way of augmenting political ideologies, but also as a means for swaying the opinions of the electorate.

5.4. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech employed for exaggerative purposes. Henkemans (2013, p. 1) considers hyperbole as a rhetorical trope by means of which statements are made that are
obviously exaggerated, and thus untrue or unwarranted. Politicians, in their speeches, tend to overtstate their achievements and promises in an attempt to make the electorate consider their candidacy. Hyperbolic instances are often present in Nigerian political speeches.

Many millions are grappling with extreme poverty and barely eking out a living. Nearly all are in fear of their lives or safety for themselves and their families due to insurgency by the godless movement called Boko Haram … These outrages have taken a new and a frightening dimension, disrupting economic and social life across whole communities.

(President Buhari Declaration 2015)

In the above excerpt, President Buhari refers to Nigeria by giving the impression that the country is small, and that whatever happens in one area automatically happens in another. This is of course untrue for a nation with a population of over 180 million people. While it is evident that there are security issues in some places in the country, his claim that whole communities are disrupted is incorrect. President Buhari does not refer to statistics to support his statements. He basically exaggerates the situation to assume that all Nigerians are involved in the various issues being faced across the country. For example, the Boko Haram insurgency is generally a problem in some areas of the Northern part of Nigeria.

Nonetheless, President Buhari generalises matters for the whole country in an attempt to convince people that all Nigerians suffer the same predicament, and particularly that whatever affects one affects all. This is an exaggerated claim. Furthermore, the attempt by President Buhari to refer to Boko Haram as a “godless movement” is overstated. The movement started as an Islamic religious group with the intention that everything originating from Western culture was prohibited, which means the group is not totally godless, unlike what is indicated in the exaggeration employed by President Buhari. A Muslim himself, he however distances himself from the group, which is perhaps a way of dissociating himself from a movement which does not share his religious convictions regarding Islam being a religion which preaches peace.

A further statement by President Buhari is that he is ready to liberate all Nigerian women, a promise that does not seem easy to actualise, given the population of Nigeria and also given that he provides no indication as to the demographics of the women he intends to liberate. He likewise fails to provide adequate information on the degree of liberation he has in mind, as well as what methods he plans to use in achieving it. This may indeed be considered misrepresentative, as no one is thus aware of the actual intention of the speaker. Of further importance is the use of the term “women” by President Buhari instead of words such as “girls” or “ladies”.

The term “woman” is usually reserved for an adult, and by using it as a generic term, it could be perceived that President Buhari sees all Nigerian women as mature enough to make a difference during electioneering. In other interpretations, this could be misconstrued as President Buhari focusing more on grown women, while neglecting younger ones, who will also eventually grow old.

These people did not buy anything for the Nigerian soldiers. They refused to equip them. No attack helicopter, nothing … We are ready to liberate all Nigerian women. (President Jonathan Declaration 2015)

In President Jonathan’s speech, he attempts to discredit the APC by claiming that President Buhari never bought “anything” for Nigerian soldiers when he was head of state. Our assumption is that it is not factual that no materials were secured for Nigerian soldiers under Buhari’s former administration, as implied by Jonathan. More so, because one would expect Buhari to value the army, having once been a General in the Nigerian defence force himself.

Sharndama (2016, p. 23) covers overt and covert hyperbole in political discourse when he refers to the division in political communication as being hyperbolic propaganda. His understanding of
hyperbolic propaganda has been effectively established in the above excerpts. Sharndama argues that politicians are fond of overstating their achievements, or the perceived wrongful acts of their opponents. As such, they employ language to overemphasise the negative acts of their opponents, such as Jonathan has done above, and to emphasise their own good works and promises, as Buhari has demonstrated. In both ways, politicians can excel in making the audience perceive them as the best possible candidates.

5.5. Repetition

Repetition is a figure of speech which provides the logical emphasis necessary to attract a reader’s attention to key words or phrases in a text. It implies repeating sounds, words, expressions and clauses in a certain succession, or even with no particular placement of the words in order to provide emphasis (Kemertelidze & Manjavidze, 2013). Repetition is employed for emphatic reasons in both every day and political discourse. In the selected speeches, repetition has been used several times. In some cases, there are repetitive words, while in others, there are instances of repeated phrases or verses which are often referred to as being a refrain.

These instances include the following:

... economic growth when all the major indices namely employment ... immediate attention on youth employment ... to generate employment and make things ... substantially attract employment and revenue for government ... Tackling corruption which has become blatant and widespread. The rest of the world looks at Nigeria as the home of corruption. Nigeria is a country where stealing is not corruption. (President Buhari Declaration 2015)

The first is the issue of insecurity ... I told you I was going to address insecurity ... will fight insecurity ... wants to fight insecurity ... when the crisis of insecurity came up ... we have security challenges ... primarily for security ... they used security channels ... will be used for security ... administration is fighting or encouraging corruption ... government is corrupt ... or we are not fighting corruption ... I addressed the anti-corruption agencies ... for you to fight corruption ... (President Jonathan Declaration 2015)

The repetition of the term “corruption” indicates an alarming situation in Nigeria, and this could be used as a serious political manipulation strategy. Akanle and Adesina (2015) argue that corruption is so common and pervasive in Nigeria that it would be nearly correct to consider it as a way of life. To this extent, many Nigerians have various criticisms concerning their country when the issue of corruption is raised. In the same vein, Awojobi (2014) affirms that political corruption has continued to hinder Nigeria’s development. He states that despite the creation of two anti-corruption agencies in the country, corruption still survives. Given the level of corruption in the country, it is anticipated that politicians could use such popularly recognised instances to manipulate the electorate.

I will continue to fight for your future, because I am one of you. I will continue to fight for improved medical care for all our citizens. I will continue to fight for all citizens to have access to first class education. I will continue to fight for electricity to be available to all our citizens. I will continue to fight for an efficient and affordable public transport system for all our people. I will continue to fight for jobs to be created through productive partnerships. (President Jonathan Inaugural 2011)

We will fight for justice! We will fight for all Nigerians to have access to power! We will fight for qualitative and competitive education! We will fight for health care reforms! We will fight to create jobs, for all Nigerians! We will fight corruption! We will fight to protect all Citizens! We will fight for your rights. (President Jonathan Declaration 2010)

The term “fight” represents a violent struggle for change. This signals that Nigeria is in a situation where change of a subtle nature may not suffice to correct its problems. President Jonathan registers the impression that he is powerful enough to combat these issues in Nigeria.
Instances of repetition in the above excerpts abound. As discussed, repeated words and phrases as highlighted are used for distinctive purposes. It is recognised that insecurity, unemployment and corruption are some of the major problems facing Nigeria as a nation. The consistent repetition of these issues in the above excerpts implies that Nigerian politicians are aware of the many problems in the country requiring urgent solutions. The instances of refrain may also create a melodious rhythm in the audience’s mind, in order for them to continuously remember these political promises. According to Davletbaeva et al. (2016), repetition in political discourse serves to create an emphatic objective which helps produce a permanent effect on the audience for them to believe in and support the stated political course. Ademilokun and Taiwo (2013, p. 441) further affirm that such linguistic devices are employed by the Nigerian political class during political campaigns to assert, maintain and resist power through discourse.

From the above analysis, it can be observed that figurative expressions perform important roles for politicians in their political speeches. Amongst other functions, figurative expressions in political discourse are used to manage emotions, enhance the meaning of words, and manipulate and attract the electorate, whilst emphasising the problems of the nation, as well as expressing the emotional state of the speaker.

6. Conclusion
Misrepresentation or manipulation in political discourse is expressed in the ingenuous use of language employed by politicians, which is deemed to be linguistic manipulation. For this study, shrewd linguistic expressions are perceived as the strategic act of employing language in a particular manner to sway a person or group’s position and perspective regarding a phenomenon. In political discourse, the manipulation of language may be evident in the use of figurative expressions and rhetorical devices. As analysed in this paper, the figurative use of language, such as the employment of metaphor, repetition and hyperbole are considered powerful within political discourse as they significantly play ideological role in the mind of the audience. In virtually all cases, these devices are employed to exert political influence.

The linguistic expressions studied here are engaged by the use of different lexico-semantic devices, with politicians utilising different lexical choices to achieve their political aims. Modalities are used on several occasions to cement promises and commitments, and in order to communicate to the audience that the political actors are seemingly ready to serve the people. The lexico-semantic level is employed via emotional constituents, by reminding the electorate of their difficult situation. Language is thus a tool used by Nigerian politicians strategically to persuade the public without the knowledge of the public.

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