

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Corruption in Presidential Speeches

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Abstract

Corruption is not only a well-known lexical expression (e.g. Orpin, 2005), it is also a social phenomenon (e.g. Khondker, 2006; Collier, 2002) researched by scholars from different fields and from different standpoints. However, the study of corruption from the perspective of language has not enjoyed adequate research. This is especially true of the speeches of Nigerian presidents that are particularly revealing of how a president/government construes corruption. This research paper explores and analyzes the discursive positioning of corruption by two successive Nigerian presidents - Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan - using their two official speeches as data. Following Halliday's system of Transitivity (Halliday, 1978, 1985, 1993) and Fairclough's three-tier analytical framework grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (1989, 1992, 1995), this paper argues that official speeches of presidents (particularly in Nigeria) can discursively reveal their commitment to fighting corruption. Also, the instruments of language can be used tactically absolve themselves from corruption.

Keywords: Corruption, Systemic Functional Linguistics Critical Discourse Analysis, Nigeria

1. Introduction and background to corruption in the social sciences

Corruption as a nominalized lexical item has its Latin origin in the verbal variant 'corrupt'. As a subject of research, corruption has been investigated across several disciplines in social sciences by different scholars (e.g. Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2001; Nye, 1967; Warren, 2004; You, 2007; Kaufmann, 1997; Tanzi, 1998; Jain, 2001; Khondker, 2006; Bassegy et al, 2013; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Nuijten and Anders, 2007). Just as there are several disciplines researching corruption, there are also debates over how corruption should be conceptualised and described (see for example, Faralles, 2005; Nuijten and Anders, 2007). This is owing to the fact that 'corruption' is perhaps a fuzzy concept or term that has been defined and re-defined particularly due to ramifications in which the phenomenon occurs in human society (Peters 1978, Johnston 1991, Ogundiya, 2009). Johnston maintains that definitions (of corruption) are controversial, and solid evidence is often elusive. Descriptive accounts may be clouded by self-serving equivocations. Equally subtle is the question of the significance of a corrupt act- not only its consequence, but also its meaning as perceived by citizens and officials (Johnston, 1991:48).

From this foregoing, we may be able to account for various definitions and descriptions of what corruption is, and what is not. Some of the definitions of corruption include *the use of public office for private needs* (Werlin, 1973:73), *illegal or unauthorized profiteering by officials who exploit their positions for personal gain* (Blackburn, Bose & Haque, 2004:2), *the sale by government officials of government property for personal gain* (Shleifer and Vishny, 1993:599) and *abuse of public roles and resources for private benefit*' (Johnston, 1997:8). However, Joseph Nye appears to have given a broader definition which has been described as 'the most famous and classic'. He sees corruption as a

... behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role (elective or appointive) because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) wealth or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence (Nye, 1967: 417).

Farrales (2005) adds that corruption includes actions by politicians or bureaucrats who favour specifically targeted groups, such as persons from their own ethnic groups or home region. For the purpose of this paper, I adopt Nye's definition as it encompasses various areas of corruption in the public domain. This also includes political lies – a kind of rhetoric - aimed at achieving political support advantage. Political lying is 'a voluntary attempt to create a deceptive gap between the believed meaning of a political act and its perceived meaning' (Pitseys, 2014).

Furthermore, there are philosophical arguments over the extent of the evilness or badness of corruption, particularly between the moralists and the revisionists. While the moralists condemn corruption, and believe that any type of corruption is inherently toxic to society, to politics, and to development in general, the revisionists see corruption as a 'by-product of modernization and development, and so, it is not inherently harmful' (Farrales, 2005: 14-16; Nuijten and Anders, 2007). The revisionists hold that corruption may be consistent with development and at times may even foster it. In the late 1970s, Nathaniel Leff of Columbia University argued that 'corruption may introduce an element of competition into what is otherwise a comfortably monopolistic industry..., [and] payment of the highest bribes [becomes] one of the principal criteria for allocation... Hence, a tendency toward efficiency is introduced into the system.' Likewise Lui (1985), asserted that "bribing strategies...minimize the average value of the time costs of the queue.... [and the official] ...could choose to speed up the service when bribery is allowed' (see Kaufmann, 1997)

Corruption has been classified into several types. While the list of corruption types appears endless, it is customary to subsume all these types under political corruption and bureaucratic corruption. Whether it is political (which occurs at the highest level of political authority) or bureaucratic (which occurs at the public administration or at the implementation end of politics), it is common knowledge that corruption is perpetrated in form of bribery, embezzlement, fraud, cronyism, favouritism, nepotism, extortion and other deceptive means (Amundsen, 1999; Urien, 2012; Eskeland and Thiele 1999; Andvig et al, 2000). Regardless of the forms or causes, corruption is capable of impeding socio-economic growth and equal distribution of wealth. It engenders poverty, incapacitates government and administration, reduces investment, prevents development and destroys the image of any nation (Andvig et al, 2000; Jain, 2001; Galtung and Pope 1999; Doig and Theobald 2000; Tanzi and Davoodi, 1997; Urien, 2012, Adeyemi, 2012).

2. A Nigerian perspective

All the foregoing is equally true of a country like Nigeria. Literature on corruption especially in the field of social sciences is very substantial particularly in the aspects of its prevalence, negative impacts on the country's socio-economic, political and public life. This appears to be more worrisome juxtaposing the country's enormous natural resources and human capital cum the poor living conditions of many Nigerians. The World Bank's latest poverty index published in 2014, ranks Nigeria third among countries with the highest population of extremely poor people in the world. Also, the prosperity index report listed Nigeria as the 125th out of 142 countries surveyed in the world on annual prosperity indicators, and in terms of human prosperity, Nigeria ranked 27 in Africa, behind smaller countries with smaller resources such as Niger, Benin, Mali and Cameroun (Legatum Institute, 2014). Surprisingly, Nigeria prides itself as the largest producer of oil and gas in Africa. However, reports (both national and international) point to Nigeria as a corrupt country. The Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index still rates Nigeria as a 'highly corrupt' country scoring below 50 (27%) with the rank of 136 out of the 175 countries surveyed by the index. This retrogression is blamed on the political class who is vested with the responsibility of managing the country (Ogbeidi, 2012).

The above statistics justifies certain positions that ‘corruption runs rampant’ in Nigeria and it ‘has become synonymous with Nigeria’ itself (Ojukwu and Shopeju, 2010:17). Corruption in Nigeria has been described as ‘endemic’ (Bassey et al, 2013:423), a culture (Smith, 2006), ‘a sub-culture’ (Egonmwan, 1992:181), ‘a deadly virus’ (Urien, 2012:1), ‘cancerworm’ (Ajie & Wokekoro, 2012:91) ‘alarming’ (Achebe, 1984:37) and ‘evil’ (Keeper, 2011:172; Ajie & Wokekoro, 2012:91).

3. Corruption as discursive

The representation of corruption, its negotiation, and perpetration are foregrounded through discourse. Just as corruption is a social phenomenon (e.g. Khondker, 2006; Collier, 2002), discourse is also a social practice (e.g. Fairclough, 1992). A couple of works has been done from the perspective of language and discourse. Ademilokun and Taiwo (2013) use the analytical tools of critical discourse analysis with emphasis on Fairclough’s discourse as a social practice approach to the theory to analyse the ‘discursive strategies used in some newspaper campaign advertisements for Nigeria’s 2011 elections’. Although their work primarily focuses on newspaper campaign advertisements, reference is made to how different facets of corruption are discursively foregrounded in the texts of political campaign advertisements. Acts which may be classified as electoral and political corruption are features in electioneering process in Nigeria. And to underscore the spate of corruption, the paper explains that political campaign discourse in Nigeria nowadays features corruption-related issues such as mismanagement of resources, human rights abuses, ethno-religious violence, resources- related crises, highly flawed electoral process, power generation crisis, labour-related crisis and insecurity of lives and property among others. The political activities and campaign itself are also enveloped in corruption. Political blackmailing or ‘political matcheting’ (Opeibi, 2006) are some of the characteristics. They submit that the instrument of language is for direct attacks on political opponents instead of positive, issue-focused, image-building adverts.

In another work with similar context, Mele and Bello (2007) employ the tools of critical discourse analysis to investigate the corrupt practices and exchanges between drivers plying the highways of north-eastern Nigeria and the security personnel manning highway checkpoints. Using a data recorded via unobtrusive observation, they maintain that ‘illegitimate dealings are perpetrated in seemingly innocent conversational exchanges, wherein illegal acts are discursively shielded’. While they admit that discourses on Nigerian highways are reflections of socioeconomic realities might have been brought about by higher level of government, the study shows ‘the underlying relationship between coercion and social control as manifested in discursive power representation’.

Breit (2011) employs the tools of critical analysis of media texts with a focus on the discursive construction of corruption. He believes that articulation of corruption is intimately linked with legitimacy which is based on generalized perception that the desirability or appropriateness of actions is socially constructed within elements such as norms, values and beliefs. According to thesis work, ‘to comprehend the phenomenon of corruption, we need to explore how it is manifested through discourse’. Using media texts on corruption as data, he questions the appropriateness of the discourses and discursive features of media texts. He opines that media texts are outcomes of the institutional setting of the media rather than of distinct organisations. He argues that determining what is newsworthy and what is a breaking story by journalists and their organisations may reveal some kinds of ideological struggles. Thus, the need for critical analysis of certain ‘corporate scandals and crises of corruption’ is worthwhile. The thesis, which has Norway as context, discursively challenged the ideology and the effect of institutional arrangements and systems of domination on individuals and organizations. The transformation of corruption in the Albania public sphere during the period 1991–2005 is the focus of Kajsui

(2013). His paper shows how different articulations of corruption supported different agendas. He argues that it is possible to politicize corruption instead of reducing it to a static and inherent feature of Albanian culture and society. Although, the works of Breit (2011) and Kajsiu (2013) employ (critical) discourse analysis approach, their frameworks and results are not grounded in linguistics.

From a more lexical perspective, Orpin (2005) employs critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to investigate corruption. The paper reports on a study of a group of words semantically related to corruption. Using corpus methodology to manipulate the data, she highlights connotational differences among the words like *bribery*, *corruption*, *cronyism*, *graft*, *impropriety (ies)*, *malpractice(s)*, *nepotism*, and *sleaze*. The paper argues that words (such as *corruption*) with a noticeably negative connotation tend to be discursively foregrounded when referring to corrupt activities that take place outside of Britain, while less negative words (such as *sleaze*) are used when referring to similar activities in British contexts. This conclusion appears to substantiate Anders and Nuijten's position that 'there is tendency to treat corruption in the more developed parts of the world as incidental' (Anders and Nuijten: 2007:3).

As observed from the foregoing, none of the works have engaged in a critical study of corruption using the texts from the Nigeria's presidential speeches. A few studies of presidential speeches has focused on the use of personal pronouns (Bello, 2013); declaration of interest to contest presidential elections (Kamalu and Agangan, 2012), and on features derived from pragmatics (Ayemoni and Akinkuolere, 2012). Thus, knowledge is relatively inadequate regarding how the resources of language employed in the speeches of Nigerian presidents reveal how presidents position corruption and themselves in their official speeches. It is also interesting that corruption is discursively investigated through the speeches of the political class who are often accused of corruption.

4. Theory and Methods

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a useful framework for undertaking a study of the relationship between language and ideology (e.g. Fairclough 1989, 1992, 1995; van Dijk 1997; Wodak 1996). The issue of corruption particularly in the public establishments and the way it is negotiated discursively through the text and talk (i.e. presidential speeches) by people who control the discourse is an issue of power relations and this is central to this study. Traditionally, CDA is a useful approach for text interpretation particularly in relation to the society, and because it establishes a form of inter-relationship between language, power and hidden agenda (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995). The speeches of presidents in relation to corruption can be seen as a kind of struggle over certain interests and the goal may be domination which will ensure the continuation of the status quo without being challenged. Although has been CDA criticised for weaknesses in its linguistic analytical methodology, but it is not just a multidisciplinary approach to the study of language and ideology. CDA itself is situated firmly within the field of Applied Linguistics. Fowler (1996:8) also draws attention to methodological weaknesses inherent in its qualitative approach to language study, explaining that, although a range of text types have been studied, 'they tend to be fragmentary (and) exemplificatory' (see also Orpin, 2005).

However, one of the strengths of CDA is that by incorporating a Hallidayan approach to linguistic analysis, one is able to see detailed representations and choices made in texts. The way in which the resources of language are employed to convey certain meaning (an approach rooted in SFL) is of particular interest. This is owing to the fact that our choices of words and expressions are not value free (Fairclough, 1989, 1995). The aspect of linguistics generally acclaimed to explore language through its social contexts is Systemic Functional Linguistics. SFL is a social theory of language which holds the view that language is not just an abstraction, but an instrument used to construct the world, establish relations and produce text. In other words, it is a

meaning-based theory (Halliday, 1985, 1994). As a social theory of language, SFL views language as a meaning-making resource. It explains how language functions to convey meaning that users of language want to communicate.

Arguably one of the most interesting aspects of SFL is rooted in the concept of 'representation'. This is called ideation or experiential meaning. It is made of up of Process, Participants and Circumstance in the clause structure. They are altogether referred to as Transitivity. The other two are interpersonal and textual meaning. The trio performs functions in relation to their classification and they are called metafunctions. The choice a speaker or writer represents our world is very significant, particularly when there are several options that could have been made (see, Simpson, 1993; Ravelli, 2000).

The SFL functional perspective to the study of text has also been made popular by Fairclough (particularly in his *Language and Power*, 1989). The description aspect of his three-tier analytical framework calls the attention of the analyst to consider the linguistic choices made in texts (both at the level of vocabulary, grammar and textual structures), especially among many other options which could have been chose, with the aim of checking the possible ideology the may be embedded in the usage. The other two are interpretation (which analyses the relationship between discourse and interaction – where text is seen as the product of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation through the Members' Resource), and explanation (the relationship between interaction and social context – using social determination of the process of the process of production, interpretation and their social effects) (Fairclough, 1989: 26).

While these dynamics may play out in the analysis, we shall be more concerned about how the social actors (van Leeuwen, 2008) are represented in relation to corruption.

Data, type and Source

The data used in this study comprises of inaugural and Independence Day speeches of the two former Nigerian presidents. A total of four speeches are used. The first part comprises the inaugural speeches of Umaru Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan as Nigeria's president respectively on May 29, 2007 and May 29, 2011. The second part comprises the Independence Day speeches made on October 1, 2008 and October 1, 2013 respectively. The speeches are available in the public domain: <https://maxsiollun.wordpress.com/great-speeches-in-nigerias-history/>, www.dawodu.com/greatspeeches and www.fmi.gov.ng/c/speeches. To ensure accuracy, the speeches were proofread and double-checked against the three websites.

Inaugural speeches are usually the first official assignment of a president immediately after swearing-in formalities. Apart from acknowledging the participants at such event; the occasion is also meant to highlight policies, programmes and expectations of the new government. The Independence Day speech is usually a day set aside to commemorate the country's independence from Britain in 1960. It is also meant to make statements about government policies, programs and achievements. The data is processed and analysed by reading the four speeches and bringing out corruption-related clauses, whether it is directly stated or textually implied. For example, expression such as '*the fight against corruption is a war in which we must all enlist...*' is thematically different from '*we will pay special attention to the agricultural sector, to enable it play its role of ensuring food security and massive job creation for our people*'.

5. Background to the speeches of the two presidents

Umaru Musa Yar’Adua was sworn in as president of Nigeria in 29 May 2007. He took over from Olusegun Obasanjo who has ruled the country previously for eight years. Obasanjo is criticized for supporting and campaigning for Musa Yar’Adua due to the history of the latter’s poor health. Yar’Adua was from the Northern (Hausa) extraction and he ruled Nigeria for three years from 2007 until his death in 2010. Goodluck Jonathan, who was the vice president, was sworn in as the president in 2010. Jonathan later contested in 2011 polls and became the Nigeria’s president. His status as the sitting president was said to have help him to win the election. His four-year tenure as the president of Nigeria officially ended on May 29, 2015. Goodluck Jonathan is from the minority South-south (Ijaw) extraction and he has been ruling Nigeria for almost six years from 2010 to 2015.

Although both presidents emerged from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Yar’Adua’s 3-year rule is credited for acknowledging Nigeria's problems. Under him, the government pushed through business and banking reform, cracked down on corruption, publicly declared his assets and secured a cease-fire from the Niger-Delta militants. He ‘left a legacy of patient rule and realistic reform’ (TIME, 2010). Although the ruling elites see Jonathan as achiever in aviation, industrialisation, railway, power, transportation and insurgency among others (Vanguard, 2013), but Goodluck Jonathan is majorly criticized for poor performance characterised by bad leadership, corruption and unprecedented violence and insecurity (Momodu, 2014; Sahara News, 2014). However, both presidents ruled at a time when the masses appeared disappointed and dissatisfied with the much publicised Obasanjo government’s fight against corruption. While some people believed that Obasanjo has used the anticorruption agencies to fight his seeming political enemies, others believe that the war has not translated into better living conditions for Nigerians.

The two successive governments also made corruption as one of their policy focus as reflected in their speeches.

6. Description and analysis corruption-related clauses in inaugural speeches

This is related to the first stage in Fairclough’s three-tier analytical framework in CDA (e.g. 1989, 1995, 2003). Here, I attempt to describe the features of language used in the corruption and corruption-related clauses used in the inaugural speeches by the two presidents. For the ease of analysis, I try to do a linguistic ‘labelling’ and analysis drawing from the resources of language as formulated by Michael Halliday (see also Janks, 2005). Based on this, we are able to clearly see the pattern of language which description stage of critical analysis can bring. Table 1A and 1B below presents the clauses, the processes utilized, the voice (whether active or passive) among others.

N	Corruption-related clauses	Transitivity	Voice	Mood	Modality	Theme	Lexis:T-cohesion
1	...Nigerians have reached a national consensus in at least four areas...	Material	Active	Statement	Categorical		
2	... display zero tolerance for corruption in all its forms	material	active	statement	categorical	Nigerians	inclusive
3	We are determined to intensify <i>the</i> war against corruption...	mental	active	statement	categorical	We	inclusive – We the war-shared knowledge

4	...more so because <i>corruption is</i> itself central to the spread of poverty	relational	active	statement	categorical	corruption	Why? corruption causes poverty
5	<i>Its (corruption) corrosive effect is</i> all too visible in all aspects of our national life.	relational	active	statement	categorical	its (corruption)	
6	Let <i>us work</i> together to restore our time-honoured value of honesty, decency, generosity, modesty, selflessness, transparency, and accountability.	material	active	statement mild command	offer – inviting	Let us	inclusive overlex: to restore values of honesty, decency...
7	...I <i>will set</i> a worthy personal example as your President.	material	active	statement	categorical	I (President Yar’Adua)	exclusive : intertextual reference to corruption
8	Let <i>us stop</i> justifying every shortcoming with that unacceptable phrase, “the Nigerian factor,” as if to be a Nigerian is to settle for less.	material	active	statement mild command	categorical	Let us stop justifying	inclusive ‘the Nigerian factor’ the – shared knowledge

Table 1A shows a linguistic analysis Yar’adua’s inaugural Speech

N	Corruption-related clauses	Transitivity	Voice	Mood	Modality	Theme	Lexis: T-cohesion
1	<i>The bane of corruption shall be met</i> by the overwhelming force of our collective determination, to rid our nation of this scourge.	material	passive	statement	categorical	The bane (of corruption)	The – shared knowledge inclusive: force of our collective determination
2	The fight against corruption <i>is</i> a war	relational	active	statement	categorical	The fight (against corruption)	The – shared knowledge

	in which we must all enlist...						
3	...so that <i>the limited resources</i> of this nation will be used for the growth of our common wealth.	material	passive	statement	categorical	the limited resources of this nation	the (meant to be shared knowledge)
4	<i>we will intensify</i> our advocacy against the illicit trades in small arms and light weapons	behavioural	active	statement	categorical	we	exclusive: we

Table 1B shows a linguistic analysis Jonathan’s inaugural Speech

Eight corruption-related clauses are identified and obtained from Umaru Yar’Adua’s inaugural speech; whereas **four** of such clauses are identified from Goodluck Jonathan’s (See Table 1A below). In terms of processes, **five** of the **seven** clauses contain material processes apparently constructing Yar’Adua as a president who believes in *acting* or *doing*. This notion is underscored by the fact that all the processes in this category are in the *active voice*. The participants are also represented by the pronoun *we* (as government) and the inclusive *us* (the government and the Nigerian people). *Corruption* is represented as participants that people need to know very well. This is achieved by two clauses with two relational processes: ...more so because *corruption is* itself central to the spread of poverty...*its (corruption) corrosive effect is* all too visible in all aspects of our national life. **Two** of the **four** corruption-related clauses identified in Jonathan’s speech contain material process but with obscured participants (agent deletion). In Clause 1, ‘the bane of corruption’ is a kind of nominalization with the definite article ‘the’ expressing a shared knowledge. The notion of ‘bane’ is entirely negative (deadly, destructive and ruinous). The other two processes are relational and behavioural with the participants as carrier and behavior (the exclusive *we*) respectively.

The fight against corruption is a war in which we must all enlist...**We will intensify** our advocacy against the illicit trades in small arms and light weapons.

Here, *the fight against corruption* is metaphorically described as a *war*. *The fight* is also a form of *nominalization* which masks the *actors* in ‘the fight’. The pronoun (**we**) potentially refers to Jonathan and his government. The definite article (**the**) used to describe as shared information between Jonathan and the Nigerians being addressed. The use of *we* in Clause 4 represents Jonathan and his government. While the behavioural process ‘intensify’ is powerful as it represents outer manifestations of inner workings. The participants ‘our advocacy’ is described as a role or duty of the government.

Description and analysis corruption-related clauses in Independence Day speeches

For Musa Yar’Adua, the Independence Day speech is the last available speech. The Jonathan’s was made three years after his inaugural speech. Similarly, the tables below present a functional analysis of corruption-related clauses.

N	Corruption-related clauses	Transitivity	Voice	Mood	Modality	Theme	Lexis: T-cohesion
1	<i>We are resolved as an Administration, not to resort to quick-fix methods and short-cuts in approaching fundamental problems</i>	behavioural	active	statement	categorical	We (limited to ‘an Administration’)	exclusive: we fundamental problems
2	<i>Our commitment to the entrenchment of transparency and accountability in the conduct of Government business remains unwavering...</i>	existential (it exists)	active	statement	categorical	Our commitment...	less inclusive
3	<i>...we have realized over N400 billion from unspent capital releases to Ministries, Departments, and Agencies.</i>	material	active	statement	categorical	We (government/ authorities)	Exclusive - We government/ authorities
4	<i>The strengthening of the anti-corruption institutions and other law enforcement agencies is a direct consequence of our determination to institutionalize zero-tolerance for corruption.</i>	relational	active	statement	categorical	The strengthening...	determination to institutionalize zero-tolerance for corruption
5	<i>Our ultimate goal is to engender a culture of prudence, diligence, honesty, sincerity, decency, transparency, selflessness and accountability...</i>	relational	active	statement	categorical possibility (goal)	Our ultimate goal...	overlex: a culture of prudence...

Table 2A shows a linguistic analysis of Yar'Adua's Independence Day's Speech

Five clauses consisting five processes are identified from Yar'Adua's speech. It consists of material (1), relational (2), existential (1) and behavioural (1) processes. Transitivity analysis shows that the main participant in clause 1 and 3 (see Table 2A) is *we*, and it refers to Yar'Adua and his government. In clause 1, the government represents a behavior. Behavioural process, as mentioned earlier, is at the borderline between material and mental processes (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004:171). Clause 3 constructs the government as a *doer* of something, which is the realization of 'over N400 billion from unspent capital releases to Ministries, Departments, and Agencies'. The two relational and one existential processes (which is at the borderline between relational and material process) appear to be dominant in the sense that it portrays government's existing policies and actions against corruption.

Our commitment to the entrenchment of transparency and accountability in the conduct of Government business remains unwavering...The strengthening of the anti-corruption institutions and other law enforcement agencies is a direct consequence of our determination to institutionalize zero-tolerance for corruption. Our ultimate goal is to engender a culture of prudence, diligence, honesty, sincerity, decency, transparency, selflessness and accountability...

While the use of *our* (at the beginning of the first and third clauses above) refers to Yar'Adua and his government, the use of *the* in 'The strengthening...' expresses a shared knowledge of both Yar'Adua and the Nigerians about the existing anti-corruption institutions. It is noteworthy that all the clauses are in the *active voice*. The agents and other participants are clearly delineated. On the other hand, a total number of 11 clauses are identified in the Jonathan's speech. It comprises material (6), mental (1), relational (3) and verbal (1) processes.

N	Corruption-related clauses	Transitivity	Voice	Mood	Modality	Theme	Lexis: T-cohesion
1	<i>Our people are divided</i> in many ways – ethnically, religiously, politically, and materially.	material	Passive (Agent: obscured)	statement	categorical	Our people	agent (hidden)
2	<i>We are waging</i> a steady battle against poverty, unemployment, and corruption.	material	active	statement	categorical	we	exclusive - we
3	<i>Our politics should be</i> an art of patriotic labour and selfless service to the community,	mental	active	statement	social authority	Our politics	Our – inclusive (vague)
4	...particularly by <i>the political elite</i>	material	passive	statement	categorical (positions of great trust and responsibility)	political elite	particularly the political

	who are placed in positions of great trust and responsibility.						elite (exclusive)
5	<i>Politics and politicians</i> sometimes	material	active	statement			
6	distract the people ...and create unnecessary tension.	material	active	statement	categorical	Politics and politicians	unnecessary tension
7	I can reassure you...	verbal	active			I	exclusive - I
8	that <i>Nigeria's</i> <i>place on the</i> <i>world stage</i> today is strong and safe,	relational	active	statement		Nigeria's place on the world stage	
9	...and <i>it</i> is certainly a place of dignity and respect.	relational	active		categorical- ability (can reassure)	it (Nigeria)	
10	And ultimately, <i>the ballot box</i> gives us all the opportunity to instigate change.	material	active	statement	categorical	the ballot box	ballot box opportunity
11	This is no time for the harmful clutches of parochial sentiments and the politics of bitterness, impunity, arrogance and unhelpful indiscipline.	relational	active	statement	categorical	this	The – shared knowledge (politics of bitterness)

Table 2B shows a linguistic analysis of Jonathan’s Independence Day’s Speech

Out of the six material processes, two (in clauses 1 and 4) (see Table 2B) are in the passive form obscuring the doers of the action. Participants in other material processes are *We* (Jonathan and his government), *Politics and politicians* and *the ballot box*, and they tend to only make statements in relation to other participants.

We are waging a steady battle against poverty, unemployment, and corruption. Politics and politicians sometimes **distract** the people...and **create** unnecessary tension.

The verbal process in Clause 7 is linked to relational processes in 8 and 9. Jonathan constructs himself (with 'I') as a (convinced) *Sayer* about the position or status of Nigeria. This is similar the relational process in clause 11, only that the Attribute appears to have been over lexicalized. The main participant (Carrier) in the remaining process - mental – is our politics while the Attribute 'an art of patriotic labour and selfless service to the community' represents the opinion of the speaker (Jonathan) which is somewhat directly stated.

7. Corruption in the inaugural speeches

Interpretation is a stage of **CDA**, which may come between *description* and *explanation* in analysis. Situational context and intertextual context are central to the process of interpretation. As the level of social interaction in critical analysis, I look at each president's discursive choices and how they draw on an array of 'resources', or 'Members' Resources' (henceforth MR) (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995), which comprise their understandings of the prevailing social order and the linguistic competence to 'speak' this order. As we know, the two speeches were made at the inauguration of the two presidents Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan. Since 1999 when Nigeria returned to democracy, corruption has been a public issue. Corruption at the level of government and bureaucracy is widely known not only due to the reported cases but also due to its general negative impacts. Yar'Adua took over from Olusegun Obasanjo who also made anticorruption a policy. Due to these incidences and the overwhelming approval of its negative effects as cognitively inscribed in the MR, he categorically declares (speaking for himself and people of Nigeria) that 'Nigerians have reached a national consensus' to 'display zero tolerance to corruption'. This is a statement that may not likely have any dissenting voice due to the social cognition associated with corruption. In other words, he appears to have successfully drawn on MR (in this case, Nigerian populace). Yar'Adua tries to position himself as a leader in displaying 'zero tolerance to corruption'. This interpretation is further underscored by the categorical statement of determination made in Clauses 2, 3 and 4.

We are determined to intensify the war against corruption...more so because corruption **is** itself central to the spread of poverty...its (corruption) corrosive effect **is** all too visible in all aspects of our national life.

This is a powerful lexical resource that appears to reflect a kind of commitment to fighting corruption. And the following two clauses aptly corroborate the determination. In clauses 5 and 7 (Table 1A), Yar'Adua employs the discursive strategy of persuasion, and that of leadership in Clause 6. He uses the phrase 'let us' to discursively implore Nigerians to do away with corruptible tendencies, while he expresses leadership: 'I will set a worthy example as your President'.

Jonathan's speech also shares similar context with that of Yar'Adua. However, Jonathan's speech was made in 2011, four years after Yar'Adua's (although he had made several other speeches). The discursive strategy employed by Jonathan in the corruption-related clauses can be described as 'distancing'.

The bane of corruption **shall be met** by the overwhelming force of our collective determination, to rid our nation of this scourge.

Corruption is expressed by the process (shall be met) as animate. The above underlined expression is therefore a kind of reification. Also, 'the bane of corruption' appears to have used discursively to present corruption as the only problem the country has. It is a nominalization which omits the actual participants in corruption as corruption cannot be perpetrated by itself. Jonathan discursively draws on (perceived or imposed) MR through the use of nominalization in the remaining three clauses: 'the fight against corruption, the limited resources the

illicit trades...’ First, Jonathan appears to have used the grammatical article ‘the’ to state of things which the Nigerian people are quite aware of and possible share. However, some Nigerians, for example, feel that the ‘the fight against corruption’ is just a mere rhetoric as government officials still engage in corruption and offenders are not punished.

8. Corruption in the Independence Day speeches

As stated earlier, the Independence Day is a day in which the president delivers an official speech to talk about the country’s nationhood and review policies and programmes of the government since inception. Both presidents delivered the speech in this context. However, Yar’adua made this speech about one and a half year after his inaugural speeches while Jonathan made his about three years after his inaugural speech. Knowing fully well the expectation of Members (Nigerians), Yar’Adua, for example, reviews the policies and programmes of his administration in the initial paragraphs and thereafter declares: *We are resolved as an Administration, not to resort to quick-fix methods and short-cuts in approaching fundamental problems.*

The notion of ‘quick-fix’ and ‘short-cuts’ semantically represents a lack of professionalism and incompetence which may be tainted with corruption. This appears to be a persuasive rational discursive argument cognitively decipherable and acceptable to the people. Persuasion is a feature of argumentation where politicians try to convince their audience that certain course of action is right or certain point of view is true (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). Having categorically stated his anticorruption policy and stance in his inaugural speech, Yar’Adua tries to appeal to the MR to lodge his commitment and action.

Our commitment to the entrenchment of transparency and accountability in the conduct of Government business remains unwavering.....we have realized over N400 billion from unspent capital releases to Ministries, Departments, and agencies.

In trying to discursively buy into the MR, he employs nominalization with the mark of certainty in expressing the current government action regarding corruption and articulating the goals the government is set to achieve which comprise the other sides of corruption.

The strengthening of the anti-corruption institutions and other law enforcement agencies is a direct consequence of our determination to institutionalize zero-tolerance for corruption. Our ultimate goal is to engender a culture of prudence, diligence, honesty, sincerity, decency, transparency, selflessness and accountability...

Jonathan’s independence speech came about five years after Yar’Adua’s. Unlike Yar’Adua who tries to review the policies of his administration at the beginning, Jonathan’s appears to be playing to the MR when he maintains at the beginning that ‘we (Jonathan and his government) should not be scoring political points’ (brackets mine), while he later went ahead to do just that! Jonathan starts with a kind of lamentation using a clause in a passivized form with obscured agent: *Our people are divided in many ways – ethnically, religiously, politically, and materially.* The absence of the agent may have been employed to shield responsibility for the division especially the leadership headed by the president himself. We also find only one clause directly referring to corruption (lexically) even though ‘corruption’ is ‘pushed’ to the end of the clause.

We are waging a steady battle against poverty, unemployment, and corruption.

Here, *poverty, unemployment and corruption* are reified. As we know, all these three elements are abstractions which are treated as physical entities (e.g. human beings) that could be fought in a battle. Rather, such elements require well-formulated plans and policies to achieve. Jonathan also discursively positions himself outside the political circle and space. This strategy of suppression (see Leeuwen, 2008) may be aimed at setting himself apart

as an embodiment of the ‘political virtue’ he is trying to preach. This is also a way of distancing himself and appealing to consciousness of the MR to apportion blames to other (unnamed) parties instead of the speaker (Jonathan) for the prevailing political actions in the country.

Our politics should be an art of patriotic labour and selfless service to the community ...

particularly by the political elite who are placed in positions of great trust and responsibility.

Politics and politicians sometimes distract the people...and create unnecessary tension. This is no time for the harmful clutches of parochial sentiments and the politics of bitterness, impunity, arrogance and unhelpful indiscipline.

Although the above clauses may be seen as a speech act performing the subtle function of advising or preaching, it may also be a subtle strategy of indicting the opposition who do not have equal power to control the discourse. Elements of misrepresentation of the prevailing circumstances and the situation of things in the country are also noticed in Jonathan’s speech.

I can reassure you that Nigeria’s place on the world stage today is strong and safe, and it is certainly a place of dignity and respect.

This misrepresentation appears to be deliberate in the sense that information regarding the deplorable and ludicrous state of affairs in Nigeria (such as corruption, decaying infrastructure, poverty and crime) is available in the public domain. The same interpretation could be said of the reference to election and choice.

And ultimately, the ballot box gives us all the opportunity to instigate change.

This can easily be acceptable in the participants’ mental resources. However, what is probably unsaid is the electoral corruption (such as rigging) that is capable of truncating ‘the opportunity to instigate change’. It is apparent the two presidents depend on the background knowledge and assumptions (which may also be ideological) in constructing themselves and the situation in Nigeria, albeit differently.

9. Positioning and commitment in relation to corruption in the speeches

Fairclough (1989, 1995) maintains that explanation stage in critical discourse analysis is a matter of seeing discourse as part of the social struggle within a matrix of relations of power. Here, I attempt to present a wider explanation, and contextualize the texts with greater focus on issues of ideology and power relations. I look at how the two presidents ideologically view corruption at the time of taking over power, and how the speeches show their commitment to either fight it or sustain the existing situation.

From the analysis in the *description* and *interpretation* stages above, Yar’Adua appears to position himself as a leader who sees corruption as a national problem and who is ready to find a solution by leading.

We are determined to intensify the war against corruption.....more so because corruption is itself central to the spread of poverty. Its corrosive effect is all too visible in all aspects of our national life.

Although the appeal to the cognitive resources of Nigerians here is meaningful as corruption is not only known to exist in the country but its effects are widely seen. It has been variously argued that that corruption is evil and unacceptable; however, the ramification of the facets and issues around corruption appears to be wider and more dynamic that it is presented in the speech. The war on corruption, enhanced by the formation of Economic

and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences (ICPC), by the preceding administration of Olusegun Obasanjo, has been criticized to have been reduced to just a tool to witch-hunt political enemies (e.g. Aregbeshola, 2010)

He tries to remove all doubts about the war and also goes further to foreground by quickly telling Nigerians about its effects. This positioning is also reflected in his Independence Day speech: *Our ultimate goal is to engender a culture of prudence, diligence, honesty, sincerity, decency, transparency, selflessness and accountability...*

From these, we observe that the social determinant of Yar'Adua's speech in relation to corruption is two-fold: The Nigerian people and the expectation of people from the leadership. The ideology being foregrounded here is that the participants (Nigerians) should do away with corruption whether in the public or private sector. Corruption is positioned from the perspective of its effects; even the ramifications and the dynamics appear to be underplayed. What is said of the speaker has positive representation: *I will set a worthy personal example as your President*. He also gives an example of a long time corrupt act in government agencies in which he stopped: *...we (the government) have realized over N400 billion from unspent capital releases to Ministries, Departments, and Agencies*.

In the two speeches however, no mention is made to the speaker (Yar'Adua himself) or his political associates regarding corruption. He used the instrument of language to position himself as a fighter of corruption. It is common knowledge that his nomination to the position of the president by his political party and his eventual winning the general election was riddled with (electoral) corruption. What about other political office holders? President Yar'Adua was quoted to have made the statement below.

I promise this nation that once we have a response, those names in response will be made public and we will take action and direct that the names should be forwarded to the EFCC and those officials and former officials involved will be arrested and prosecuted (see Oloja, 2009).

However, the entire administration was reported to have been riddled with corrupt practices. Barely three into the administration, there were publication on the pages of Nigerian newspapers that contracts were awarded for the renovation and furnishing of official residences of the speaker and the deputy speaker as well as the purchase of 12 Vehicles for principal officers at 628 million Naira, an amount which was later corrected by the senate president, David Mark as 579 million Naira (Jimoh, Ogbodo and Agbana, 2007:1 and 2)

In the case of Jonathan's corruption speeches, he appears to have discursively taken a distant position especially with the use of passivisation and reification. An example is: *the bane of corruption shall be met by the overwhelming force of our collective determination, to rid our nation of this scourge*. The notion of 'collective determination' here may be ideological as the social determinant in the discourse practice of a leader is expected to display certain elements of leadership. The use of such expressions to talk broadly about corruption questions the degree of the speaker's commitment. The following clause also presents corruption with a big brush lacking specificity and diligence it requires.

The fight against corruption is a war in which we must all enlist...so that the limited resources of this nation will be used for the growth of our common wealth.

Logically, it may amount to mere rhetoric to ask Nigerians to enlist in the fight against corruption where there are several anti-corruption agencies instituted by previous governments without giving a practical clear

direction. It all reduces to mere preaching against corruption; without specific pronouncement on how corruption should be fought! 'The limited resources' may be ideological in two ways: first, to enforce the 'limitness' of the country's wealth in the cognition of the populace so that the apparent infrastructural decay and poor development will not be blamed on the government. Secondly, the discursive backgrounding of the real users (managers) of the country's 'common wealth' may also have a dint of ideology. In terms of quantity, four clauses that specifically refer to combating corruption in Jonathan's inaugural speech dropped to just only one in his Independence Day speech (three years later). This may not be an indication that corruption has reduced; but it may explain that the government is no longer seeing it as a real problem to be addressed.

Other selected clauses are embedded with issues of misrepresentation. Rhetorical misrepresentation of issues or the garbing of falsehood in acceptable terms is embedded in the act of corruption itself. This is speaker's deliberate attempt to foster in others a belief or understanding which the communicator considers to be untrue' (Pitseys, 2014). The whole speech is built on rhetoric and false representation of the realities on the ground. For example, Jonathan started the independence speech by saying, 'Today of all days, we should *not* be scoring political points' (emphasis mine), and then went ahead to do the opposite by 'scoring political points' in the whole speech!

I can reassure you that Nigeria's place on the world stage today is strong and safe, and it is certainly a place of dignity and respect...the ballot box gives us all the opportunity to instigate change.

Jonathan appears to position himself favorably as a detached viewer of issues and 'apportioner of blames' instead of seeing himself as an integral part of the overall decay he 'claims' to purge. In the following clause - *Politics and politicians sometimes distract the people and create unnecessary tension*- he fails to position himself as part and parcel of the politics and politicians that do the distraction. In fact, the agents of the process are put in the third person's plural. In the following sentence, *our people are divided in many ways – ethnically, religiously, politically, and materially*, the agents of the process doing the 'dividing' are not declared. Jonathan, as a president, is expected to provide the leadership and enabling policies for the unity of the country. Like Yar'Adua, Jonathan failed to note any corruption case in his own administration. However, corruption in his administration has been described as massive (e.g. Olaniyan, 2014).

10. Summary and conclusion

From the above analysis, we can see that the way in which grammatical clauses are constructed in relation to corruption. The number of clauses on corruption and the way in which the issues of corruption is addressed can lead to certain generalizations. Through the speech, we see that corruption exists in Nigeria and it is discursively presented in texts in certain ways. Secondly, the representation of the phenomenon in the speeches appears to be skewed. None of the presidents make specific reference to individuals or organizations in their government as responsible for corruption. Their speeches appear to have been built on the cognitive resources of Nigerians; which is meant to narrow the dynamics of the phenomenon rather than encapsulating all its aspects in life of the nation.

Looking at individual president, we see that Yar'Adua may have considered corruption as a problem more than Jonathan. This is not only because he laments the phenomenon of corruption more than Jonathan but also the ability to flaunt his achievement through the recovery of 'over N400 billion from unspent capital releases to Ministries, Departments, and Agencies' and expression of personal commitment which are not found in Jonathan's. The only clause specifically says something about corruption in his Independence Day speech – *We are waging a steady battle against poverty, unemployment and corruption* - is only performing a speech act of

‘informing’. Interestingly, the phenomenon of poverty and unemployment is a shared knowledge in Nigeria, and people need not to be told of these effects. Moreover, the assertion may be questionable as people need not be informed if real ‘battle against poverty, unemployment and corruption’ is actually happening. Other clauses in his speeches appear to have been misrepresented in relation to the reality on ground. As a president, he has the constitutional power to make national broadcasts – the power which other participants may not have to be able react, especially, using the same context. When issues that are available in the public domain are apparently misrepresented by a president, it may be to achieve certain political gains.

For the two presidents, however, it appears that the emphasis on corruption reduced by the passage of time. This raises a fundamental question. The context of the inaugural speeches is different from that of Independence Day speech. At the beginning of a government, a president might assume office with the determination to fight corruption, and in the process of government he may have seen certain obstacles threatening such determination. He may also find himself encircled in certain forms of corruption. This, in turn, may affect the discourse and the content of such discourse.

This paper focuses on the discourse on corruption as reflected in the speeches two Nigerian presidents. The grammatical concept of transitivity assisted by critical discourse frameworks of description, interpretation and explanation enables us to know that the discourse of corruption is a feature in the Nigerian presidential speeches particularly those made between 2007 and 2013. It further shows that Nigerian presidents make reference to corruption differently using different linguistic resources to foreground or background responsibility. The clauses dedicated to corruption (whether directly or implied) and the various representations assist us to know a president’s commitment to fighting corruption. While no leader may likely accept the argument that he or his government is corrupt, this paper has shown that it is possible to linguistic frameworks to study leadership attitude to corruption in general.

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