

A CRITICAL COMPARATIVE STYLISTIC STUDY OF PRESIDENT TINUBU'S FIRST AND SECOND INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY ADDRESSES

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Abstract

This study critically examines President Bola Tinubu's 2023 and 2024 Independence Day speeches, focusing on how his rhetoric evolved in response to Nigeria's worsening economic conditions and growing public protests. Through the lenses of Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday's systemic Functional Linguistics and Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse (CDA), the research investigates how President Tinubu exploits language to construct national realities, engage with the public, and legitimise his government's economic policies. Using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the study analyses how the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions are deployed to frame the government's actions and manage public perception. The speeches were qualitatively analysed to identify key linguistic patterns, such as material processes, pronoun usage, modality, and rhetorical strategies that shape Tinubu's discourse. The findings reveal a notable shift between the 2023 and 2024 speeches: while the 2023 speech projected optimism and active reform, the 2024 address adopted a more defensive tone, emphasising endurance and shared sacrifice amidst public dissatisfaction. CDA highlights how Tinubu legitimised controversial reforms, such as the removal of fuel subsidies, by framing them as inevitable and necessary for long-term national prosperity. The study concludes that Tinubu's rhetorical strategies reflect an adaptive leadership approach aimed at maintaining authority in a politically volatile context. The combined use of SFL and CDA provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex relationship between language, power, and governance in Nigeria's socio-political landscape.

Keywords: Political Speech, Legitimacy, Nigeria, Metafunctions, Language.

Introduction

Political speeches are powerful tools for leaders to communicate their visions, manage crises, and shape national narratives. In Nigeria, the presidency of Bola Ahmed Tinubu has been characterised by significant economic challenges and public discontent, stemming from a variety of domestic and global factors. His Independence Day speeches, delivered in 2023 and 2024, offer a critical lens through which to analyse how language is strategically employed to navigate these challenges, reaffirm leadership,

and respond to public sentiment. Amidst rising inflation, subsidy removal, escalating fuel prices, and widespread protests, Tinubu's rhetoric provides insight into his administration's approach to governance and crisis management.

Shortly after assuming office in 2023, President Tinubu made the controversial decision to remove fuel subsidies, a move that had far-reaching economic and social repercussions. The subsidy removal, initially justified as necessary to curb fiscal imbalances, led to skyrocketing fuel prices, which in turn drove up the cost of living for millions of Nigerians (Akinola, 2023; *The Guardian Nigeria*, 2023). The announcement of this policy during his inaugural speech triggered immediate protests and unrest across various states, with labor unions and civil society groups decrying the government's failure to provide adequate social safety nets (Abdullahi, 2023; *Premium Times*, 2023). As the nation reeled from the impact of these reforms, Tinubu's Independence Day address in 2023 sought to present these economic adjustments as unavoidable but ultimately beneficial for Nigeria's long-term stability and growth.

By 2024, the situation had worsened. Inflation had reached record levels, unemployment continued to rise, and public protests against Tinubu's policies, particularly the fuel subsidy removal, persisted (*The Punch*, 2024; Adeyemi & Omisore, 2024). Many Nigerians were grappling with worsening living conditions, leading to strikes and demonstrations organized by labor unions and youth groups. In this context, Tinubu's 2024 Independence Day speech took on a more defensive tone, acknowledging the public's suffering but reinforcing the need for resilience in the face of adversity. His rhetoric focused on framing economic hardships as temporary setbacks on the path to national prosperity, emphasising the long-term benefits of his administration's reforms (Ajayi, 2024; *The Nation*, 2024). Given these economic and social realities, Tinubu's Independence Day speeches are ripe for linguistic and discourse analysis, offering a window into how political leaders use language to maintain legitimacy, manage public perception, and navigate socio-economic crises. This study employs Halliday's Functional Grammar and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to critically examine Tinubu's 2023 and 2024 speeches. Halliday's Functional Grammar allows for an in-depth analysis of how Tinubu structures his messages through grammatical choices that highlight agency, responsibility, and relationships with the Nigerian populace. This includes exploring how Tinubu uses material processes to frame his administration's actions and how relational and mental processes are employed to shape public perception of his leadership.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis further complements this analysis by examining how Tinubu's language reflects and reproduces power relations and ideological positions. In times of economic hardship, political leaders often employ discursive strategies to legitimise controversial policies, such as shifting blame onto external forces or previous administrations, as observed in both the 2023 and 2024 speeches (Fairclough, 1992). These speeches also provide insight into how Tinubu's administration seeks to construct a narrative of national resilience and unity in the face

of widespread dissatisfaction. Through this analysis, the study aims to explore how Tinubu's speeches reflect the realities of Nigeria's economic conditions while constructing a vision for the future, despite the significant challenges his administration faces.

Statement of the Problem

Political speeches, especially those delivered by a president on national occasions such as Independence Day, carry significant weight in shaping public perception, managing crises, and reinforcing or amending political promises. President Bola Tinubu's tenure has been marked by public dissatisfaction with the economic hardship and ongoing public protests, raising questions about how his rhetoric aligns with his electoral promises and how it shifts to address the country's evolving situation. His Independence Day speeches in 2023 and 2024 are key texts that offer insight into his communication strategies in a time of crisis. The problem this study seeks to address is the critical examination of Tinubu's linguistic and stylistic choices in these speeches. By comparing the language of the two addresses, the research sets to uncover how Tinubu's rhetorical strategies have evolved in response to the public's dissatisfaction, and whether his linguistic style in these key national speeches reflects shifts in his policy approaches or attempts at public persuasion.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for its contribution to political communication studies. It will provide valuable insights into how Nigerian political leaders use language to navigate socio-political challenges and manage public perception. Understanding Public Discourse is also another significance of this study. In a way, it will highlight how language reflects and responds to national crises such as economic hardship and public protests, making it relevant to scholars of public discourse and crisis communication. In addition, this work also critically evaluates Tinubu's ability to address national issues through rhetorical and linguistic strategies, offering a basis for assessing the effectiveness of political leadership in times of crisis.

Literature Review

Halliday's Functional Grammar and Political Discourse

Halliday's Functional Grammar (also known as Systemic Functional Linguistics or SFL) provides a robust framework for analysing how language operates within political discourse. According to Halliday (1994), language serves three key functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. These functions are particularly relevant in political speeches, where leaders must manage not only the content of what is said (ideational) but also the relationship with the audience (interpersonal) and the coherence and structure of the discourse itself (textual).

Several scholars have applied Halliday's Functional Grammar to the study of political speeches to reveal how grammatical choices reflect underlying ideological positions. In his analysis of former Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari's speeches, Oyeleye (2021) highlights the use of material processes (verbs that denote actions) to emphasize governmental achievements, while relational processes (verbs of being and having) are used to associate the president with positive attributes. This linguistic strategy creates a positive self-representation that reinforces the president's image as a capable leader. Similarly, Tinubu's speeches can be examined for these processes to understand how he constructs his leadership in light of Nigeria's socio-economic challenges.

In the context of President Tinubu, his electoral promises centered on economic reform and addressing issues such as fuel subsidies, job creation, and security (Akinlabi & Adeyemi, 2023). However, as Nigeria's economic hardship worsened, Tinubu's rhetoric has evolved, shifting from a focus on optimism and reform to one of resilience and justification. Using Halliday's framework, we can analyze how Tinubu's speeches employ grammatical choices such as modality (to express possibility and necessity) and transitivity (to show agency in economic policy) to manage public expectations in the face of economic difficulties. For example, modal verbs such as "must" or "should" may reflect his attempts to frame economic reforms as necessary and inevitable, while shifts in transitivity may redistribute responsibility for economic problems onto external factors such as global oil prices or historical mismanagement. Recent research by Ajayi (2023) applies SFL to Tinubu's 2023 Independence Day speech, demonstrating that the president strategically employs material processes to assert action-oriented leadership, particularly in economic policy. Tinubu frequently uses verbs such as "implement," "enforce," and "restore" to convey a sense of proactive governance. At the same time, interpersonal elements of his speech, such as pronouns like "we" and "our," aim to build solidarity with the Nigerian public, positioning Tinubu as a leader who is part of the collective struggle to overcome economic hardship.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis in Political Speech

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides another lens through which to analyse the power dynamics and ideological underpinnings of political discourse. CDA examines how language reflects and reproduces social structures, particularly power relations (Fairclough, 1992). In political discourse, CDA is especially useful for identifying how leaders use language to legitimise their authority, manage dissent, and shape public perception.

One of the key concepts in CDA is the idea that discourse constructs social realities. Fairclough (1995) notes that political speeches are not just reflections of social events but are active in shaping those events. In the case of Tinubu's speeches, this means that his rhetorical choices are instrumental in constructing a narrative about Nigeria's economic situation and his administration's response to it. For instance, in

times of economic crisis, political leaders often employ discursive strategies that shift blame away from their administration and onto external forces, such as global economic conditions. This deflection of responsibility can be analysed using CDA to understand how Tinubu frames Nigeria's economic challenges in ways that absolve his administration from blame while reinforcing his legitimacy as a leader.

Okafor (2023) applies CDA to Tinubu's post-election speeches, identifying how the president uses discursive strategies such as intertextuality (referencing past administrations or historical events) to position himself as a reformer tasked with fixing long-standing national issues. For example, in his 2023 Independence Day address, Tinubu refers to previous governments' failures in managing Nigeria's economy, implicitly suggesting that the current economic difficulties are inherited rather than caused by his policies. Fairclough's framework allows for the deconstruction of such references to reveal how Tinubu's rhetoric serves to legitimise his leadership despite ongoing protests and public dissatisfaction.

A key feature of Tinubu's rhetoric, as noted by Adegboye (2023), is his use of persuasive devices to address public protests over economic hardship. In his speeches, Tinubu often appeals to national unity and resilience, using metaphors and allusions to Nigeria's historical struggles for independence and democracy. CDA helps unpack these metaphors to reveal how they function ideologically. By framing the current economic challenges as part of a larger narrative of national endurance, Tinubu attempts to shift the discourse from one of crisis to one of collective struggle, thereby diffusing dissent and fostering a sense of shared responsibility among the populace.

The Intersection of SFL and CDA in Analysing Tinubu's Speeches

Halliday's Functional Grammar and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis can be used in a complementary manner to analyse Tinubu's speeches. While SFL focuses on the functional aspects of language (how meaning is created through grammatical choices), CDA provides a broader socio-political context that allows for the interpretation of these choices in terms of power, ideology, and discourse. Recent studies support the use of this combined approach. For example, Adebayo and Ojo (2023) use both SFL and CDA to analyse how Nigerian political leaders construct their identities in times of crisis. Their findings suggest that the use of material processes (SFL) and the framing of economic challenges as external or inherited (CDA) are common strategies for deflecting blame and maintaining legitimacy. Tinubu's speeches reflect similar patterns, as he frequently emphasises external factors such as global oil prices and historical mismanagement while portraying his administration's actions as necessary interventions aimed at long-term stability.

Critical Stylistic Studies in Nigerian Political Discourse

Critical stylistics, which integrates linguistic and literary analysis with a focus on power and ideology, has been increasingly applied to the study of political discourse in

Nigeria. Scholars such as Adedayo (2022) have examined how Nigerian leaders use stylistic devices such as metaphor, repetition, and rhetorical questions to shape public perception. In Tinubu's case, his speeches are rich in such devices, particularly in the context of economic hardship and public protests.

For example, Tinubu frequently uses metaphors of war and struggle to describe Nigeria's economic situation, framing the challenges as a battle that requires collective effort and sacrifice (Ajayi, 2023). This metaphorical framing serves to unify the audience around a common cause, thereby diffusing dissent and fostering a sense of national solidarity. From a critical stylistic perspective, these metaphors can be analysed as ideological tools that serve to maintain the status quo by framing dissent as unpatriotic or counterproductive to the national struggle. Okon (2023) highlights how Tinubu's speeches use repetition as a rhetorical device to reinforce key messages about resilience and reform. Repetition serves not only to emphasise certain points but also to create a sense of inevitability around the president's policies. By repeatedly framing economic reforms as necessary and inevitable, Tinubu constructs a narrative in which opposition to these policies is portrayed as irrational or short-sighted. Critical stylistic analysis reveals how this repetition functions ideologically to suppress alternative viewpoints and maintain political control.

By and large, this review has established a foundation for the comparative analysis of Tinubu's 2023 and 2024 Independence Day speeches, providing insights into how political rhetoric evolves in response to changing socio-economic realities in Nigeria

Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used to analyse President Bola Tinubu's 2023 and 2024 Independence Day speeches, focusing on the linguistic and stylistic elements of the texts. The study employs a qualitative descriptive design with a focus on critical linguistic analysis through the lenses of Halliday's Functional Grammar and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The study adopts a comparative qualitative approach to analyse the two selected speeches, with an emphasis on uncovering the stylistic and rhetorical patterns that reflect shifts in Tinubu's political discourse. The design allows for a deep linguistic exploration of the texts, identifying how the president uses language to respond to Nigeria's socio-economic conditions and public discontent in 2023 and 2024. By comparing the two speeches, the research aims to uncover both consistencies and differences in Tinubu's rhetorical strategies. The data for this study consists of the full texts of President Tinubu's 2023 and 2024 Independence Day speeches. The selection of these two speeches is based on their significance in representing key moments in Tinubu's presidency. The 2023 speech was delivered shortly after Tinubu assumed office and laid out his vision for Nigeria, while the 2024 speech was given in the context of growing public protests and worsening economic conditions. The comparative analysis of these speeches provides insights

into how Tinubu's rhetoric evolves in response to changing political realities. The data were analysed using of manual textual analysis. Each speech was segmented into thematic sections, focusing on economic issues, national unity, and public protests. The speeches were also coded based on the three metafunctions of SFL.

Data Analysis

The analysis of President Bola Tinubu's 2023 and 2024 Independence Day speeches employs Halliday's Functional Grammar (SFL) and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how language is used to represent Nigeria's socio-political reality, negotiate interpersonal relationships with the audience, and construct power relations and legitimation strategies. The analysis is divided according to Halliday's three metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, and textual), with a complementary focus on CDA's concern with power, ideology, and discourse.

Ideational Metafunction (SFL)

The ideational metafunction in Halliday's framework is concerned with how language represents experiences and reality through processes, participants, and circumstances. In political discourse, this often involves the use of transitivity patterns to construct agency and responsibility.

Material Processes

In both the 2023 and 2024 speeches, Tinubu employs material processes to present his administration as an active agent in addressing Nigeria's economic and social challenges. For example, in his 2023 speech, he states:

"We have begun the removal of the fuel subsidy that drained our resources." (Tinubu, 2023)

Here, the material process "have begun" positions the administration as an active agent initiating economic reform. By using the verb "begun", Tinubu emphasises that his administration is already taking concrete steps toward change. This grammatical choice reinforces the perception of an administration that is action-oriented and decisive, consistent with Halliday's (1994) view that material processes highlight physical actions undertaken by participants.

In contrast, in the 2024 speech, material processes are used to deflect responsibility for ongoing challenges by attributing them to external forces. The President notes:

"The global oil market has affected our foreign reserves, pushing us into difficult choices." (Tinubu, 2024)

Here, the material process "has affected" shifts the agency from the Nigerian government to the external "global oil market," framing Nigeria's economic woes as a result of international forces beyond the control of his administration. Okafor (2023) is

of the opinion that this strategy is common in political speeches when leaders seek to deflect blame for national issues by presenting them as the result of external factors.

Relational Processes

Relational processes, which describe states of being or having, are also prominent in Tinubu's speeches. In the 2023 address, Tinubu uses relational processes to attribute positive qualities to his administration's actions:

"Our economy *is stronger* and *will continue to grow* as we implement our reforms." (Tinubu, 2023)

The relational process "is stronger" serves to construct a positive image of Nigeria's economy, despite evidence to the contrary. This usage reflects Fairclough's (1992) argument that political discourse often seeks to construct a narrative that reinforces the legitimacy of leadership. By asserting that the economy "will continue to grow," Tinubu presents his administration's policies as inherently progressive and beneficial, even in the face of public protests and economic hardship. In the 2024 speech, however, relational processes are used more cautiously, reflecting a more defensive stance:

"These challenges *are not* the result of our actions but of the economic realities we face." (Tinubu, 2024)

Here, the relational process "are not" negates the government's responsibility, aligning with Fairclough's (1995) observation that political leaders often use relational processes to distance themselves from unfavorable circumstances while legitimising their authority.

Interpersonal Metafunction (SFL)

The interpersonal metafunction deals with how language enacts relationships between speakers and listeners, particularly through mood, modality, and pronoun choices. Tinubu's speeches show a deliberate use of these elements to construct solidarity and authority.

Pronouns and Audience Engagement

Pronouns play a crucial role in Tinubu's speeches, particularly the inclusive "we" and "our," which are used to build solidarity with the audience. In the 2023 speech, he states:

"Together, we *will overcome* these challenges and build a better Nigeria for all." (Tinubu, 2023)

The use of "we" here aligns the president with the Nigerian populace, suggesting a collective effort and shared responsibility for national progress. This use of inclusive pronouns is a common strategy in political speeches to establish unity and shared

purpose, as noted by Akinlabi and Adeyemi (2023). In the 2024 speech, the use of pronouns becomes more strategic in addressing growing dissent:

"We *must* endure some short-term pain for long-term gain."
(Tinubu, 2024)

The modal verb "must" indicates necessity and obligation, while "we" includes the audience in the government's actions, suggesting that the hardships are a collective burden. However, by framing the economic difficulties as something "we" all must endure, Tinubu subtly deflects blame, positioning the economic reforms as inevitable sacrifices that all Nigerians must bear.

Modality and Authority

Modality, which expresses the speaker's attitude toward the likelihood or necessity of an event, is also a key tool in Tinubu's speeches. In both speeches, Tinubu uses *high modality* to assert confidence in his policies:

"Our policies *will ensure* a better future for all Nigerians."
(Tinubu, 2023)

The use of the modal verb "will" reflects a high level of certainty and commitment, reinforcing Tinubu's authority and presenting his policies as inevitable and beneficial. This aligns with Halliday's (1994) assertion that modality in political speech often serves to assert authority and control over future outcomes. In the 2024 speech, however, the modality is tempered slightly as Tinubu acknowledges the economic difficulties:

"We *may face* some difficulties now, but the future *can be* bright if we stay the course." (Tinubu, 2024)

Here, the shift to "may" and "can" introduces an element of uncertainty, reflecting the more precarious economic situation. This change in modality reflects the growing public protests and dissatisfaction, indicating that Tinubu is adopting a more cautious stance as the challenges facing his administration mount (Adegboye, 2023).

Textual Metafunction (SFL)

The textual metafunction focuses on how language organises information within a coherent and cohesive structure. In both speeches, Tinubu uses rhetorical strategies such as repetition and parallelism to emphasize key points and create a compelling narrative.

Repetition and Emphasis

Repetition is a prominent rhetorical device in Tinubu's speeches, used to emphasize key themes such as resilience and reform. In the 2023 speech, Tinubu repeatedly emphasises the theme of unity:

"We must *unite* as one people. We must *unite* to face these challenges.
We must *unite* for a better tomorrow." (Tinubu, 2023)

The repetition of the term "unite" creates a sense of urgency and collective responsibility, encouraging Nigerians to work together despite the economic challenges. As noted by Okon (2023), repetition in political speeches serves to reinforce important messages and create a rhythm that makes the speech more persuasive.

In the 2024 speech, repetition is used to address public discontent:

"We must *endure* this pain. We must *endure* for the sake of our future."
(Tinubu, 2024)

Here, the repetition of "endure" highlights the president's acknowledgment of the economic hardship while simultaneously framing it as a necessary step toward future prosperity. This rhetorical strategy attempts to mitigate dissent by framing short-term suffering as essential for long-term success.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

While SFL provides insights into the grammatical structures of Tinubu's speeches, **Fairclough's CDA** adds a layer of analysis that focuses on how these structures reflect and reinforce power relations and ideological positions.

Power and Legitimation

In both speeches, Tinubu employs discursive strategies to legitimise his policies and maintain his authority. In the 2023 speech, for example, he uses historical references to previous administrations to frame his government as a necessary corrective to past failures:

"For decades, we have suffered under inefficient policies that held our economy back. Now, we are moving forward." (Tinubu, 2023)

This statement reflects Fairclough's (1995) observation that political leaders often invoke historical failures to legitimise current policies. By positioning his administration as a break from past inefficiency, Tinubu legitimises his reforms and presents them as the solution to Nigeria's long-standing economic problems. In the 2024 speech, Tinubu's rhetoric shifts slightly to acknowledge the public protests and justify his policies in the face of growing opposition:

"These reforms are not easy, but they are necessary if we are to secure a prosperous future for all Nigerians." (Tinubu, 2024)

Here, the use of the word "necessary" functions as a discursive strategy to legitimise unpopular policies, framing them as unavoidable and essential for national progress (Adegboye, 2023). This aligns with Fairclough's (1992) view that political discourse often employs necessity and inevitability to justify contentious decisions.

Discussion and Findings

The analysis of President Tinubu's 2023 and 2024 Independence Day speeches reveals several key findings about how political leaders use language to manage public perception, legitimize authority, and respond to socio-political challenges. By applying Halliday's Functional Grammar and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, this study uncovers the rhetorical strategies and linguistic patterns that Tinubu employs in response to Nigeria's economic hardship and public protests.

Consistent Use of Material Processes to Construct Agency

In both speeches, Tinubu employs material processes to present his administration as an active agent of change. However, the 2023 speech focuses more on the initiation of reforms, emphasising actions that have been taken (e.g., removal of fuel subsidies), while the 2024 speech reflects a more defensive posture, with an emphasis on external factors affecting Nigeria's economy. This shift indicates an evolving rhetorical strategy, where Tinubu initially positions his government as proactive but later deflects responsibility for economic challenges onto global factors.

Strategic Deployment of Pronouns and Modality to Build Solidarity and Assert Authority

Tinubu consistently deploys inclusive pronouns ("we," "our") to build solidarity with the Nigerian populace, framing his administration's actions as a collective effort. However, in the 2024 speech, this solidarity is tempered by the use of high modality ("must," "will") to assert the necessity of enduring short-term hardships for long-term gains. This shift reflects a more authoritative stance in response to public protests, indicating that Tinubu is increasingly framing his policies as inevitable and necessary, a common strategy in political discourse aimed at managing dissent.

Repetition and Rhetorical Devices to Emphasize Key Themes

Repetition and parallelism are prominent features of both speeches, particularly in relation to themes of unity, resilience, and endurance. In the 2023 speech, repetition emphasises national unity as a solution to economic challenges, while in the 2024 speech, it is used to reinforce the idea that enduring economic pain is necessary for future prosperity. These rhetorical devices serve to create a coherent and persuasive narrative that frames economic hardship as a temporary but essential phase in Nigeria's development.

Legitimation Strategies in Response to Economic Hardship

Through Fairclough's CDA lens, it is evident that Tinubu's speeches employ discursive strategies to legitimise his economic policies and deflect blame for Nigeria's economic woes. In the 2023 speech, historical references to past inefficiencies serve to frame Tinubu's administration as a corrective force, while in the 2024 speech, the use of

terms like "necessary" and "inevitable" functions to justify unpopular reforms. These strategies align with Fairclough's (1995) observations on how political leaders use discourse to maintain legitimacy, particularly in times of crisis.

Conclusion

This study has provided a critical comparative linguistic and stylistic analysis of President Bola Tinubu's 2023 and 2024 Independence Day speeches, applying Halliday's Functional Grammar and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as theoretical frameworks. Through the use of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, the research has revealed how Tinubu strategically employs language to construct reality (ideational metafunction), engage with his audience (interpersonal metafunction), and structure his speeches for maximum rhetorical impact (textual metafunction). The analysis of material, relational, and mental processes across both speeches demonstrates Tinubu's evolving rhetoric in response to Nigeria's economic challenges and public protests.

Fairclough's CDA has further illuminated the discursive strategies Tinubu uses to legitimise his policies, maintain political authority, and manage public perception. By framing Nigeria's economic challenges as a result of external forces and portraying his administration's reforms as necessary and inevitable, Tinubu effectively deflects responsibility while asserting control over the national narrative. The study highlights how Tinubu's speeches not only reflect his government's policy directions but also serve as tools for managing dissent and fostering a sense of collective national responsibility.

This comparative analysis between the 2023 and 2024 speeches reveals a shift in Tinubu's rhetorical approach, from initial optimism and action-oriented promises to a more defensive tone that emphasises endurance and shared sacrifice. As Nigeria's economic challenges intensified, Tinubu's discourse adapted to the socio-political context, reflecting both the pressures of leadership and the need to maintain public trust amidst growing dissatisfaction. Further studies can build on this work by examining other political actors or comparing Tinubu's speeches with those of his predecessors to explore continuity and change in Nigeria's political discourse. In addition, future research could expand on the pragmatic dimensions of Tinubu's language use, analysing how his speeches are received by different segments of the Nigerian public and how they impact national sentiment and policy outcomes.

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