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Submission date: 06-May-2024 08:20PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2372269283

File name: Fredrick_John_-_Candidacy_Endorsement_948.docx (120.4K)

Word count: 8719

Character count: 49330

Candidacy endorsement and rebuttals as mediated campaign strategies in the 2023 Nigerian election

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Abstract

Endorsements trigger arguments and rebuttals about the relevance of political actors by the spokesmen frontline political parties. Previous linguistic studies have focused more on campaign speeches; little attention has been paid to endorsement as a campaign strategy. This study investigated the endorsement speech of [11](#) Segun Obasanjo (OBJ) and rebuttals by supporting and opposing spokesmen of Labour Party (LP), People's Democratic Party (PDP), and All Progressive Congress (APC) in Nigerian elections, identifying and analysing the locutionary, illocutionary and Pragmatic strategies. The qualitative design was used. Data comprise purposely selected and transcribed texts from Channels Television (CHNLSTV) interview, moderated by [27](#) in Okinbaloye. Data was downloaded from their YouTube channel Mariana Sbisa's Speech Act, supported by [John Searle's](#) classification of illocutionary, and the textual part of Mey's Pragmatic Acts were used as the framework. The locutionary strategies of endorsements and rebuttals in the data were: juxtaposition with alternative facts, conscious denial of position and facts, affirmation of thoughts, representation of opinionated position and counter-position, acceptance of position or facts and attack/defense of personality traits. Three major illocutionary acts: expressive, representative, and directive, were seen. Pragmatic resources such as inference, reference, relevance, metaphor and shared situational knowledge underlined. Expressive was achieved by condoning, criticising, condemning and praising. Representative was constructed by the forces of asserting, accusing, comparing and contrasting or juxtaposing. Directive was justified by defining, declaring, endorsing and analogising. The study concludes that endorsements and rebuttals are the performance ratings of political agents.

Keywords: Endorsement; Political campaign; Nigerian elections; Pragmatics of intention

Introduction

The Nigerian election has been at the forefront of democracy in Africa, and as such, has generated intense debates or arguments, arising from comments, endorsements and rebuttals. These discourses are marked interconnectedly, to a large extent, and in a general sense, by locutionary and illocutionary resources of language. In relation to the Nigerian political process, there is every reason to align with Schmid's (2001: 4) position that political issues often spark up controversies. This goes with the obvious reality that democracy always entails contentious sides, in this case, political parties and agents. Political agents project the interest of their parties, and the arguments raised in defense of their parties may arouse counter arguments and rebuttals from other opposition parties. In other words, language serves as a powerful instrument used to define not only political identity, but also to project stance and boundaries by ingroups and outgroups (Schmid, 2001: 9). It is important to conceptualise that even within the political class there are these two significant subgroups, because political parties claim to have different ideologies and perspectives on issues.

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