

A STUDY OF PRESUPPOSITION IN ATIKU'S 2023 PRESIDENTIAL DECLARATION

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Abstract

Linguistic studies currently have become more interesting consequence of the invaluable contributions of fields like pragmatics and semantics through which understanding is gained about what speakers say and how they express their intended meanings. A speaker's intended meaning is a crucial element of consideration in discourse primarily because communication amongst people in any social situation is message oriented. It is against this background that this study is undertaken with the aim of identifying or investigating pragmatic presupposition in the declaration speech of Atiku for the 2023 presidential election. Yule's (1996) classification of presupposition was employed as conceptual framework for the analysis. Sentences from each section of the speech were purposively selected for analysis. The analysis revealed that the dominant presuppositions in the speech are the existential and lexical type. From the analysis, it is obvious that politicians employ certain linguistic items deliberately to underscore their political ambitions which might just turn out to be mere propaganda. The speech clearly showed that Atiku is determined to win the 2023 presidential election.

Key Words: Pragmatics, Context, Presupposition, Political Discourse

Introduction

Language use by man, right from antiquity, has been a purpose driven activity because of his need for survival and contribution to societal development. As an essential tool, language is employed by humans for encoding meanings in different social situations as determined by various biological, social, self-actualization and self-esteem needs. In view of the crucial role of language in human development, linguistics inquiries presently are directed at investigating

what language speakers accomplish through their utterances and the possible consequences of such usage on the hearers. This implies that studying how language is used involves examining the meaning content of utterances within the context of the communicative event.

Primarily, language is used to perform different functions and according to Yule (1996), these could be classified into two; transactional and interactional. The transactional function reveals how important language is in transmitting factual information, in which case language use is message oriented. This suggests that people, most often engage in communication for the deliberate purpose of transferring specific information as the occasion demands. On the other hand, the interactional function of language emphasizes how humans establish and maintain social relationship through their language use. In such instances, language is deployed to negotiate role relationship as well as peer solidarity in informal situations. It is against this background that this study is undertaken in order to unveil the meanings encoded by Atiku in his declaration of interest in the 2023 presidential race. The main goal is to investigate the pragmatic presupposition in his speech.

Pragmatics: Nature and Scope

Pragmatics is a linguistic field which primarily investigates how language use in communication relates to social context. Its emergence as a field of study has been traced to Charles Morris (1938), a philosopher whose major focus was the general shape of semiotics (the science of signs). In his works, Morris identified three distinctive branches of semiotics; syntax (the study of the formal relation of signs to one another); semantics (the study of the relation of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable); and pragmatics (the study of the relations of signs to interpreters or users (Osisanwo, 2008). What is central in pragmatics is the belief that for mankind, language use occupies an important part of his daily activities, hence the emphasis on language use for accomplishing specific functions in different contexts by great philosophers such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969),

Grice (1975) etc. Their works underscore an important fact in language use; the occasion that gives rise to an utterance and the understanding of the context as a premise for arriving at the correct meaning and intention of the utterance. From this perspective, crystal (1987) opines that pragmatics investigates or examines those variables which determine people's choice of language while interacting with one another as well as the effects of such choices on other participants in communicative events.

According to Allot (2010), pragmatics does not have a single acceptable definition to all its practitioners and this implies that there are divergent views about what pragmatics means/involves. While some consider it as the general study of language use, others see it as the study of communication while for others it is the study of language communicative function. These varying views notwithstanding, there seems to be agreement that in pragmatics, a speaker's meaning and the manner of the communication are crucial. In his discussion, Allot (2010), refers to Wilson Deirdre as one leading theorist who has identified three approaches to pragmatics thus;

Pragmatics can be seen as a part of philosophy; an attempt to answer certain questions about meaning; in particular the relation between what sentence mean and what speakers mean when they utter them, Alternatively, it can be seen as an extension of the study of grammar in order to take into account and codify some of the interactions between sentence meaning and context. On this view pragmatics belongs to linguistics. Finally, pragmatics can be pursued as a psychologically realistic account of human communication; this would make pragmatics part of cognitive science (1).

Allot (2010) notes that among pragmatics whose major concern is the communicative use of language, there are four fundamental aspects agreed upon despite differences about the scope, aims and methods of the field. The works of Paul Grice provide those areas of agreement and these are stated below

1. Communication involves certain complex intention which is fulfilled in being recognized by the addressee.

2. The addressee has to infer his intention from the utterance, a form of inference to the best explanation.
3. Communication is governed by maxims. It is actually assumed that these principles derived from more general principles of nationality or cognition, Griceans, neo gricean and relevance theorists propose differing principles.
4. There is a distinction between what a speaker conveys explicitly and what she implicates, which are both aspects of speaker meaning or what is communicated. Many theorists would also claim that speaker meaning includes another component or components. The list of components that have been proposed include presupposition; conventional implicature and illocutionary force (1).

As earlier noted, the major goal of pragmatic enquiry is how humans use language for interaction in different social contexts. In other words, how speakers/people are able to effectively express intended meanings through deliberate choice of utterances is a major interest of pragmatics. Therefore, studying a piece of discourse from a pragmatic perspective would mean examining the text as a series of communicative acts and not just as a configuration of phonetic, synthetic, and lexical patterns.

Different views of scholars in the field account for diverse definitions; some of which are considered either too general or too narrow. According to Levinson (1983) quoted in Odebunmi (2015), "Pragmatics is the study of language usage" also pragmatics concern the study of "principles that will account for why a certain set of utterances are anomalous, or not possible utterances" (p.197). Odebunmi observes that the first definition is obviously too broad as a result it could be extended to almost all areas of applied linguistics while the second definition is too narrowed down to grammar. Yule's (1996) definition of pragmatics draws attention to the participants as well as the context of situation in which the utterances are made. According to him,

pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning; the study of contextual meaning; the study of how more gets communicated than is said; and the study of relative distance. Yule's submission reveals how people, as language users, are pivotal to the context or situation in which communication takes place in relation to other contextual variables.

Grundy (2009) notes that central in pragmatic study is the relationship between context and language. He posits that engaging in pragmatic study, one of the key issues of consideration is whether context determines the way people use language or the way language is used determines context. He concludes that pragmatists are interested in the meanings of utterances, as such, the contexts in which such utterances are expressed are of interest to them as well because context helps in determining the meanings of what speakers say.

Adebija (1999), quoted in Odebunmi (2015), provides a more representative and comprehensive definition of pragmatic as:

The study of language use in particular communicative contexts or situations. This would take cognizance of the message being communicated or the speech act being performed, the participants involved; their intention, knowledge of the world and the impact these have on their interaction, what they have taken for granted as part of the contexts (or the presuppositions) and the deductions they make on the basis of what is said or left unsaid; the impacts of non-verbal aspects of interaction on meaning. (198)

From the above definition, it can be deduced that the scope of pragmatics includes: the message(s) being transmitted; the speech acts functions carried out as well as the intentions of the speakers, which emerge from their common background knowledge; the persons (interlocutors) who are involved in the communicative event; the impact of the speech functions (acts) or expression of intended meanings on the participants, the assumptions made by them and their understanding of ideas or speech acts performed as well as the impacts associated with the non-verbal acts.

Generally speaking, the main task of pragmatic endeavours, going by the discussion above, involves efforts to understand how

language users communicate more than their utterances mean and how these utterances are interpreted; to investigate reasons that account for the choice of saying and interpreting something in one particular way instead of the other. Similarly, a pragmatic enquiry would also include attempts to underscore participants' perception of contextual variables and the influence their perception has on the process of producing and interpreting language use in communication. Spencer - Oatey and Zegarac (2010) submit that 'one main task of pragmatics is to explain how participants move from the decontextualized (that is linguistically encoded) meanings of words and phrases to a grasp of their meaning in context' (72). The process, according to them, would include assigning reference, figuring out what is directly communicated as well as what is indirectly or implicitly communicated.

Context

A brief review of the concept of context in this study is relevant in that primarily, pragmatics focuses on investigating the meanings of utterances in particular contexts. Ezeifeke (2018:7) submits that the works of a number of scholars have provided evidence of the relevant role of social context in linguistic studies. These include, among others, Malinowski (1923) who first employed the terms context of culture and context of situation. Others are Bühler (1934), Dell Hymes (1967, 1971) Austin 1962 Searle (1969) Halliday & Matthiessen (2004, 2014), Gumperz (1998) Bhatia (1998), Garfinkel (1967), Gaffman (1974) Fairclough (1995), Sacks Schegloff and Jefferson (1979). The use of the term context of situation by Malinowski (1923) is a representation of an early attempt of coming to terms with the question of context because his studies revealed how difficult it is to understand the meaning of an utterance without reference to the socio-cultural knowledge of speakers. Odeunmi (2016) considers context as "the spine of meaning" (14) in the sense that explicating meaning without recourse to extra-linguistic variables will be insufficient. He adds that Malinowski's concept of context was taken up and expanded by Firth (1957), Hymes (1964), Lewis (1977) and Ochs (1979) and their

expansion emphasizes the roles and goals of participants, linguistic resources, verbal actions, non-verbal actions, spatial and temporal indices and types of activities. However, it should be noted that very importantly, participants' role in a given context cannot be overemphasized because they manipulate language within a given context as noted by Holmes (2013) that "language varies according to its use as well as its users, according to where it is used and to whom, as well as according to who is using it" (p. 239).

Van Dijk (1977) in Odebunmi (2016:13) defines context as whatever "we need to know about to properly understand event, action or discourse. His definition is expanded by Owen (1977) quoted in Odebunmi (2016) thus:

Context is constituted by all events that are functionally related to the occurrence and qualities of a particular event.... And the description of a particular event is only meaningful to the extent that it includes the conditions that contribute to its occurrence and its qualities. (13)

Drawing from the above perspectives, Odebunmi (2016) defines context "as the condition that constraints the determination of the propositions of an utterance or the understanding of an event or discourse" (p.13). According to Ezeifeke (2018), the spatio-temporal situation including particular speech events in which an utterance occurs is what is referred to as context of situation/culture... this implies that the speakers/hearer, the actions being performed at the time and different external objects and events account for what is context. Ozo-Mekuri (1997) quoted in Ezeifeke gives a more comprehensive definition of context thus:

Context of an utterance does not only consists of the spatiotemporal situation in which it occurs or the words used to express it. It must be held to include not only the relevant objects actions taking place at the time but also the background knowledge shared by the speaker and hearer of what has been said earlier in so far as this is pertinent to the understanding of the utterance. It must also be taken to include the tacit acceptance by the speaker or hearer of all

the relevant conventions, beliefs and presuppositions “taken for granted” by the members of the speech community to which the speaker and hearer belong. (11)

From the foregoing discussion, the context of an utterance is an all-inclusive concept as the various perspectives above have shown. The role of context in language use cannot be taken for granted because to every naturally occurring use of language, there is a social and contextual dimension and the choice and form of what is said or written is influenced by these social factors.

As an important concept in language use, context has been classified into two main types; linguistic context or co-text and extra linguistic/non-linguistic context. The linguistic context refers to the set of words in the same sentence or utterance which constitute the linguistic environment that determines the sense of the words in the context while the non-linguistic context suggests that establishing the meaning of an utterance requires looking outside the text. This include the physical context (participants, the place, time, etc.) sociocultural context (beliefs, habits, value, etc.) psychological context (the state of mind of the participants etc.). Generally speaking the context of situation involves participants, time, place, atmosphere etc. (Yule, 1996; Osisanwo, 2003; Ezeifeka, 2018). Besides shaping the meaning of utterances by participants, context, according to Cann (1993) in Ezeifeka (2018:11), performs specific functions such as restoration of ellipsis, provision of referents for deictic elements, resolving anaphoric dependences and ambiguity and provision of background information for pragmatic influence.

Language and Politics

Overtime, politics has been a dominant and an integral aspect of human society predicated on the necessity of governance and development of society. In the 21st century, political activities of man have increased particularly as a consequence of the adoption of democracy as a system of governance by many nations across the globe. This system of governance has resulted in the increase of speech making

such as campaign speeches, declaration speeches, manifestos and the like and these all aim to persuade and win the favour (votes) of the electorates during electioneering campaigns. Since the electorates must be convinced of the credibility of their chosen candidate, politicians rely heavily on their linguistic abilities to explicitly express their political ambitions/goals. Primarily, language for politicians is a powerful tool by means of which the supporters are persuaded because the success of any political campaign is determined by the persuasive use of language.

There is a force which semantically relates language and politics together thereby making them inseparable and linguists use the term political discourse to refer to this interface. The term is deliberately coined for the purpose of describing the use of language for political purposes (Odehunte, 2016). On this premise, politicians who are key in the electioneering bid to win votes necessarily have to persuade people to identify with a particular course of action. The force of persuasion consciously used in political discourse by the key players is aimed at achieving different goals as pointed out by Hilton and Schaffner in Odekunle (2016) that “the linguistic detail of (political) talk can be seen to be far from accidental but delicately structured and functional in the management of social and thus potentially political relationships” (p.65). Akinwotu (2013) in Jibir and Ohiemi (2015) asserts that political discourse is a major domain of language use that has become an area of interest of scholars because it is a complex human activity that deserves critical study because of its importance in societal organization and management.

Investigating political discourse as an important aspect of language use brings to limelight the manner in which language is employed by those who wish to gain, exercise and keep power. The effective persuasive use of language by politicians attracts the electorates. Thus, their language use is very important because politics is a game of words. As a veritable tool in the hands of politicians, language is used to shape social realities; to create new meanings and to exercise power and dominance in society eventually.

Otagburuagu (2015:93) maintains that in Nigeria, political discourse is a highly calculated attempt to entrench power control and

dominance on the common man; therefore, the use of language (spoken or written) unravels the power relation in the society. In other words, social control, power dominance, political socialization and propaganda are determined by politicians' use of language. He adds that social and political actors explore, deploy and manipulate language which is at the centre of every human activity to create a novel situation that will enable them actualize their goals and aspirations. Within the Nigerian context, political actors, through their use of language, express their ideologies and manipulate the linguistic and socio semantic elements of a text so as to remain in power and be in control or maintain dominance because politics naturally is about gaining power and being in control in society. As an important aspect of human socio political life, language is employed in politics as a symbolic system of power entrusted with the latent ability to make people see visions of the world that either confirm or transform their perceptions and beliefs of the world. Central to the use of language in politics is power control and this explains why political discourse is characterized by such features as persuasion, irony symbolism, metaphor and the like.

Conceptual Framework

Pragmatic presupposition is used as a conceptual framework in this study for the purpose of investigating and establishing the assumed common grounds and the assumptions made by the aspiring PDP 2023 presidential candidate. According to Allot (2010) presupposition is a technical term in philosophy of language and pragmatics for an extra level of meaning in addition to the proposition expressed by an utterance and its implication and the intention for the use of presupposition is for explicating the pre-theoretical intuition that some utterances take something for granted. The notion originally emerged in semantics to refer to a proposition whose truth value a speaker takes for granted while making a sentence. This is also called logical/sentence presupposition (Ezeifeke 2018). There are two main presuppositions: semantic presupposition which is the logical relations existing between sentences and pragmatic presupposition which refers to the

assumptions and beliefs about the context or the presuppositions whose truth a speaker takes for granted as part of the background information (Osisanwo 2003,86).

Brown and Yule (1983) hold the view that what is required in analysing discourse is pragmatic presupposition. Amodu (2017) notes that presupposition has two main properties: first, it is something that is taken for granted by the interlocutors in a speech event and secondly, it is that presupposed contents which behave differently from the asserted contents. He concludes that in as much as presupposition is what a speaker assumed prior to making an utterance, it must be mutually known by all the participants before the utterance is considered appropriately correct in a linguistic context. Also, the constancy of the presupposition should remain irrespective of whether the utterance occurs in the form of an assertion, denial or interrogative in that it has to do with an assumed common ground. This is the way by which presuppositions are tested and preserved.

From Yule's (1996) perspective, however, presupposition has been categorized into six types and this study employs these in the analysis of the text. The six types of presupposition identified by Yule (1996) are briefly explained below:

Existential Presupposition: this refers to the existence of an entity which a speaker names or refers to through a definite noun phrase. This suggests that the speaker makes reference to something. This type of presupposition is expressed through a definite noun phrase such as 'the girl' presupposes the existence of a girl and 'your wife' presupposes that you have a wife.' 'Our school' presupposes that a school belonging to us exists.

Factive presupposition: this type of presupposition is expressed through some of the mental process verbs like, think, know, regret, realize. The presupposition is considered factive when the presupposed part needs to be a fact or true in order for the utterance to be felicitous (Amodu, 2017). For example, 'the community knows that John is

generous (John is generous). 'He didn't realize that the principal was angry (the principal was angry).

Non-factive presupposition: this type of presupposition is one which is assumed not to be true. It is expressed through some English verbs such as dream, imagine, pretend etc. (Osisanwo 2003). Example.

Toyosi dreamt that he has graduated

(Presupposition; Toyosi has not graduated)

Lami acted a teacher (Presupposition; Lami is not a teacher)

I imagine living in Italy. (Presupposition; I am not living in Italy).

Counterfactive Presupposition: this type of presupposition is assumed not only untrue but contrary to facts and is expressed through the English conditional if-clause construction. Some conditional structures referred to as counterfactual conditionals presupposed that the information in the if-clause is not true at the time the utterance is made. A counterfactual conditional is one that expresses a reality contrary to the actual one. Example;

If Larai were your sister she will help you.

(Presupposition: Larai is not your sister)

If I were a trader, I'll be happy.

(Presupposition: I am not a trader).

Lexical Presupposition: this is the type of presupposition in which the use of an expression by a speaker presupposes another unstated concept. This implies that the utterance asserts something else through the use of a certain lexical items. Example:

Taiye stopped helping his wife in the shop.

(Presupposition: Taiye use to help his wife.)

Structural Presupposition: In a text or piece of discourse, certain structures naturally seem to trigger presupposition irrespective of their lexical content. In other words, in some sentences, certain structures in them may contain a naturally recognized presupposition in which case speakers accept such parts as true and by implication such parts are also

considered to be true by the listener. This type of presupposition in English is expressed typically by the WH – interrogatives. In them the information which comes after the WH is already known to be the case. Examples

Who ate the rice? (Presupposition; the rice was eaten)

When did you see them? (Presupposition; you saw them)

Where are the books kept? (Presupposition; the books are somewhere)

Methodology

This study of pragmatic presupposition of Atiku's 2023 presidential declaration speech is a descriptive one. The speech was made on the 23rd March, 2022 at the International Conference Centre Abuja. It was downloaded online from www.businessday.com on the 31st March, 2022. The speech was purposively selected for analysis of presupposition because of the personality of Atiku Abubakar as a one-time vice president of Nigeria during the era of President Obasanjo and the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Atiku's declaration speech contained eight sections thus: Introduction, 2023 Election, My story, My declaration, My plan, My Policy, Style of Governance and Conclusion. For the purpose of analysis, sentences/utterances from each section were purposively selected and analysed based on their presupposition content. Yule's (1996) classification of presupposition is used for the analysis. A brief explanation is given on the sentences selected from each section.

Data Presentation and Analysis

EXTRACT 1

¹First I want to thank you all for being here today and for all your enduring supports. ²I know there are over twelve million Nigerians out there, who may not be here with us today, but they have been with us since the 2019 election. ³I know these number are growing every day. ⁴I want to thank you all for believing in our vision....⁵ I know why you are doing this. You are doing this because you believe something good is possible

and is coming to Nigeria. ⁶In the face of the worst division, you believe this country can still unite, in the face of economic hardship, you believe prosperity is coming, in the face of the worst insecurity, you believe peace is possible.

The above extract contains different presuppositions as revealed by the speaker's choice of words. First is existential presupposition in sentence 1 which is manifested in the use of the possessive noun phrase "your enduring supports". This presupposes that there is a support from the audience. The clause 'I know' in sentences 2 and 3 is factive presupposition pointing to the fact of the existence of supporters whose number increases by the day. The noun phrase "our vision" presupposes that as a party, the speaker and his supporters have an existing collective vision. In sentences 5 and 6, there is a repetitive use of the words 'know' and 'believe' thereby giving rise to factive presupposition. Repeating these lexical items by the speaker implies how optimistic he is in becoming the president of Nigeria in the 2023 election. The presupposition is predicated on the ills the country is currently undergoing; ethno religious disunity, economic hardship and insecurity. The utterance 'This country can still unite' suggests a lexical presupposition that the country once was united. The lexical item 'still' presupposes the possibility of achieving the unity of the country again.

EXTRACT 2

¹We need a new kind of leadership that will steer us to a positive path.² In 2023, we want a president who has ideas on how to fix Nigeria. ³ We want a president who understands, inspires and is empathetic.⁴ I have contested for the office of the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria a couple of times in the past. ⁵ My enduring persistence is borne out of my passion to rekindle the Nigerian dream that I was privileged to live.

The first sentence in extract two presupposes the existence of a positive path which can be reached through a new leadership and it also presupposes that the present government has taken us through a negative path hence the need for a new leadership. Both sentences 2 and 3 make the assumption that there is somebody who has ideas on

how Nigeria can be fixed as well as understands and is empathetic. The last sentence (5) is a lexical presupposition where in the aspirant presupposes the existence of a passion in him to rekindle the Nigerian dream. It is that passion that has made him to persistently desire the office of the president despite previous defeats at the polls. In the above extract there is a preponderance of lexical presupposition because of the deliberate choice of words by the aspirants.

EXTRACT 3

¹Who could have imagined, an eleven-year-old village orphan, who had to rear other people's cattle to raise money to feed his family would have the opportunity to go to school for free, rise through the cadre of a decent profession, establish successful businesses and become the vice president of this country?² That is the Nigerian dream and that is my story....³That is my dream for Nigeria. ⁴ However, that is not possible without credible and visionary leadership, and that is what I want to offer Nigeria.

The above extract can be likened to the language of advertisement and of course, political discourse is more like the language of advertisers who employ deliberate choice of words to win customers attention. The rhetorical question in sentence 1 above presents a structural presupposition because of the 'wh' question 'where' the information which follows is known to be a fact. From his story, he rose from grass to grace, from nothing to something, from poverty to wealth as a result of the opportunity of free education. On this premise, he has a dream (existential presupposition) that can be realized if he becomes president. The fact that he is not yet president makes the second sentence "That is my dream for Nigeria" a non factive presupposition. It is merely a brooding desire which he hopes will become a reality when he is elected president. The last sentence (4) of the extract presupposes that the speaker possesses the quality of being a credible and visionary leader that can transform Nigerian into a land

of great opportunities even for the underprivileged as implied by sentence one of the extract.

EXTRACT 4

¹ Since the civil war, the unity of Nigeria has never been threatened as it is today. ²Nigerians, are losing hope in the oneness of this country. ³ My fellow Nigerians, I am the unifier that is coming to bond the broken union. ⁴We will open doors for dialogue to hear the grieving voices by all Nigerians. ⁵ Under my presidency, there will be a new Nigeria, where everybody has equal voice and is heard.... ⁶All Nigerians are equal and should be seen and treated equally. There is no unity without justice and fairness. ⁷ That is why I will deliver leadership of justice and fairness. ⁸ Why is unity a priority? ⁹Why security? ¹⁰ Because security is the first sign of a functional government.... ¹¹They said we should go to the farmlands. ^{12s} How can you ask people to go to farm while you have not secured the farms?

The very first sentence of extract four (4) presupposes that since the Nigerian civil war, unity of the country had been threatened. The use of the phrase ‘has never been threatened as it is today’ implies that there has been disunity in Nigeria after the civil war. The vocative “my fellow Nigerians” is employed deliberately as an endearment term for the purpose of identifying with other Nigerians (the audience). The phrase “grieving voices of all Nigerians” presupposes the existence of pain. Another lexical presupposition can be seen in sentence five expressed in the clause “where everybody has an equal voice and is heard”. This implies that presently, there is inequality in Nigeria hence the need for a new leadership. Contained also in the extract is a structural presupposition expressed in the last three rhetorical questions of the extracts. These all revealed the common assumption that unity and security are priorities.

EXTRACT 5

¹ For our population to have positive impact, we must equip our people with modern competitive skills and provide the right environment for them to thrive. ² As chief Abiola once said, “we in Nigeria must not allow ourselves to be left behind”. ³ If you look at our present state, you will agree with me that the world and sadly, even the rest of Africa have left us behind. ⁴ More than 100 million Nigerians are either unemployed, underemployed or unemployable. ⁵How could our ever increasing population be of added value if we do not create opportunities for our people? ⁶ Education should be given free to every Nigerian at least up to the secondary level. ⁷ I know the value of education; if not education, what kind of value would someone like me, a poor child from a small village would have added to Nigeria... ⁸Nelson Mandela once said “No country can develop unless its citizens are educated”.... ⁹ We will strengthen our health care programs so that every Nigeria can have access to the required minimum health care quality. ¹⁰ To provide an adequate and affordable electricity supply for every Nigeria, we will ensure sufficient investment in the sector. ¹¹ We will leverage renewable energies to power homes and commercial centres.

A number of assumptions are made evident in the above extract through a deliberate choice of lexical items by the speaker. First, there is an assumption that Nigerians lack modern competitive skills and the enabling environment to thrive which is responsible for backwardness in development so much so that even other African nations have progressed more than Nigeria. Following this is the assumption that Nigerians lack opportunities by which they could be of added value. One of such opportunities is education which according to the speaker is the chief means by which he (a poor child from the village) had added value to Nigeria. On this premise, he made a lexical presupposition that Nigeria cannot develop if the citizens to do have access to quality education. From sentences 10 and 11 of the extract, Atiku presupposed that health care services in Nigerian are poor and electricity supply is

inadequate, hence the need to strengthen the health care programmes and ensure sufficient investment in the power sector.

EXTRACT 6

¹I am confident in my ability to deliver inclusive government.² I invite every well-meaning Nigerian to join me in rescuing Nigeria. ³I don't have to be the most qualified Nigerian, but I should be wise enough to bring together the most qualified Nigerians to work with them even if I don't know them previously. ⁴ I will summon the best brains and work with them. ⁵I would like to work more with young people. ⁶Young people are agile, creative and conversant with contemporary opportunities challenges. ⁷ I too, I feel like I am a young man. ⁸ So you can call me a youth too. ⁹We will cut down the cost of government because leaders must sacrifice for the benefit of the people. ¹⁰We will set out fiscal budget within a realizable and realistic level so that we can reduce government debts. ¹¹We will support and engage the private sector in building infrastructure and creating job opportunities.

The first presupposition made by the speaker in the very first sentence is the fact of possessing the ability for governance and this is expressed through the noun phrase 'my ability'. Following this is the assumption that Nigeria is perishing, hence the invitation to well-meaning Nigerians in the rescue mission. Another presupposition made is the existence of qualified Nigerians, the best brains that he can work with. He made a non-factive presupposition, when he said "I too, I feel like I am a young man.... Lastly, there is the presupposition of the high cost of governance, unrealizable and unrealistic fiscal budget by government and lack of support and engagement of the private sector in the country.

EXTRACT 7

¹In the end, this campaign is not about me, it is about the future of this country.² Let our stories be told to generation to come that we are the ones that rescued Nigeria when it was on the verge of total destruction.³ This is our last opportunity

to write our names in the golden ink of history.⁴ It must be now or never....⁵ Our journey will not end at the poll; we will get to work and rescue Nigeria.⁶ I invite every Nigerian to join me in this mission to save our country.⁷ I believe together we can do it. ⁸This is what we owe to Nigeria and the future generation.⁹ I have never been this optimistic, and with your support and God's grace, we will get to the promise land.

In his conclusion, the speaker made the first existential presupposition about the future of Nigeria; its eminent total collapse. He also assumed obvious victory at the election in this statement "our journey will not end at the polls; we will get to work and rescue Nigeria" there is an obvious assumed assurance of success hence the invitation to every well-meaning Nigerian to join in this mission of saving Nigeria from total collapse. With the statement... "We will get to the promised land" the presidential aspirant presupposed victory in the elections which would bring him to Aso Rock (the presidential villa) as the number one citizen of Nigeria.

Conclusion

Language is a viable tool indeed to politicians who, like advertisers of new brands, deploy their linguistic abilities to market their political ideologies. They deliberately choose and use their words/statements persuasively in order to win and sustain the attention of their electorates whose support/votes is crucial if the aspirants must achieve their goals. Apparently, so much is assumed or presupposed in political discourse as exemplified in the analysis of the extracts. Within the context of politics, common assumptions in the speech of politicians cannot be lacking since most of their speeches are propaganda which is intended to persuade their audience (electorates) by influencing their attitude positively towards supporting their candidates and the ideology they set out to market.

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