

Aggression and Banter as (de)legitimisation Strategies in Political Debate

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ABSTRACT

Political debate is an emerging culture in Nigerian politics, aimed at fostering popular democracy, and presenting candidates to electorates to make their choice. But it is likewise a platform for exchanging cynic comments and banter, especially between the contestants, most of the two dominant political parties in Nigeria, the All-Progressive Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). This has not been sufficiently researched in studies on political discourse. Extant studies have focused on campaign speeches, acceptance, and concession speeches, among others, using speech acts, socio-stylistics, and critical discourse analysis. This study investigates the comments and rebuttals of Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu of the APC, and Governor Godwin Obaseki of the PDP, in the 2020 Edo Governorship Debate. It adopts implicature, explicature and pragmatic acts as theories to, qualitatively, analyse the downloaded and transcribed excerpts from Channels Television's website, where they were televised to reach millions of people, both in local and international spaces. The results show that both conventional and conversational implicature, and explicature were employed by both aspirants to achieve party and self legitimisation, supremacism, cynicism, and criticism. These are used as campaign strategies. The study concludes that the contestants in the Edo 2020 political debate made it about themselves and their parties. Aggression is initiated and managed as a debate-campaign strategy to canvas for the electorates' votes.

KEYWORDS

political debate; politeness; aggression; legitimisation

INTRODUCTION

It is apparent that the politics and democracy of the west is grossly affecting the Nigerian political scene. One of such influences is the culture of political debates, which began here in the 2015 election, the maiden edition between President Goodluck Jonathan and Gen. Muhammadu Buhari. Today, it has been entrenched as a norm to parade political office holders, in some cases, as it applies to the Edo presidential debate of 2020, between the candidates of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All-Progressive Party (APC) before the electorate that should vote them into power. Isotalus (2017) opines that political debate is the most followed campaign programme in any political dispensation. This is because people want to see and hear the candidates talk to them on issues of concern that is highly moderated on popular television stations. Isotalus (2017:32) says that it is a controlled event. But this is descriptive of the American contexts, which parade the longest history of political debates, dating back to the Nixon–Kennedy debate of 1960. As said above, this culture is relatively new in Nigeria.

Marshall (2004:286-287) equates political debate with campaign speeches, averring that they both feature the same political strategies. In terms of purpose. For instance, these two discourses are utilised to ‘threaten the integrity of the electoral process’ (Marshall, 2004:286). Marshall’s notion of threat is in the fact that politicians often exploit every opportunity to manipulate electorates, even if it entails offending and defaming the image of fellow candidates. The grandest stage of doing this is the debate session, which above all things, is also a campaigns strategy. As it is part of the politicians’ strategy to confuse certain issues from their opponent’s camp so that they can easily influence or distract the opponent’s supporters or voters, candidates use powerful provocative or aggressive language to delegitimize or discredit the other camp. This, in most cases, sequences stiff verbal arguments or powerful exchanges.

For other scholars like Oparinde, Raipeane-Mathousi and Mhefa (2021), political debaters employ rhetorical strategies in debate. The question here is when debates turn into bitter arguments, do the aggressive comments and attacks forms of rhetoric. Considering this, it is hard to classify in which of the triadic – Aristotelian rhetorical classifications aggressive banter falls into, whether logos, ethos, or pathos. The best explanations to this question can be explained in two categorical fashions. First, debates are not peremptory, candidates do not come to the programme with prepared speeches. They only expect questions and comments, and then respond, in some cases with underlying aggressive language or tone. Thus, the way questions are asked and the response of the one candidate may have effect on the other which implies that face threatening acts are either plausible or evident. Second, the focus of debates may be drifted, occasionally to reverberate the political candidates’ mannerisms, which are not eluded in every user of a language, or in any discourse encounter (Ambuyo, Indede, and Karanja, 2011). Most of the research in the discourse of political campaign, debates, and speeches have been focused on the above factors. The most relevant to this study are reviewed below to establish the gap in the literature.

Ambuyo, Indede, and Karanja (2011) studied Face threatening Act in the Kenyan parliament, while Dridi (2020) considered face threatening act in the American Israeli public affairs speeches. These are supposed diplomatic speeches. The fact that face threat can be in such discourses which require meticulousness in delivery, and regulations implies that it can be in other forms of political discourses, especially in debates, which is like face-to-face encounter between and among contestants. They break the ground-rules of turn exchange at will and attack fellow contestants. Addy and Ofori (2020) deploys the three-dimensional model of Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (CDA) to understudy the strategies that Ghanaian politicians employ in the campaign speeches. The context (Ghanaian political terrain), and the scope are completely different from this present study, which focuses on the rhetoric of aggression in face-to-face politicians’ debate.

One notorious political actor, who was always caught in the web of the use of aggression and face threat is President Donald Trump. But Rachman, Yuniarti, and Ratnadewi (2017) chose to go the other way in their research, identifying techniques he employed to win electorates’ mind, including face saving act, in the 2016 election. This view is projected further by Balogun and Murana (2018), who studied the politeness features of Trump in his inaugural speech. Considering these, one can say that politicians, when at the centre of attack or criticism deploy face-saving act for defense but deploy face threatening act for attack. Aggression and verbal barter in this study count as attack strategies. It can also be surmised that the context and occasion are the determining factors for the use of face threaten (aggression) or politeness (face-saving) acts in political speech or debate encounters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Power and political discourse

Talk or speech is one of the most essential and revolving features of politics, and language itself plays a critical part in its definition, and practice not only in nations of the world but also universally, with respect to its micro (circumstantial) and Macro (institutional) dimensions (Jones, 1994:5; Chilton, 2004:3). For instance, Chilton (2004:3) defines politics, from the ‘implicit and explicit’ perspectives, as the struggle for power, mainly, between those ‘who seek to assert and maintain power and those who seek to resist it’. This definition, among other insinuations, delineates three attributes of politics. These attributes include the fact that politics has two sides, those who cling – seize power and want to maintain it at all costs, and those who power is exerted on and constitutently fight to resist the exertion of power. The second is that politics is conceived as a material – a possession or claim, which sequences the third attribute that it is worth struggling. Chilton (2004) opines that all state formations, whether democracy or dictatorship, or the combination of both involve struggles for power. The reasons for struggle at the micro level may be over money, influence, resources, liberty, among others, while at the macro level it may be for policies, party interests or ideologies.

Dichotomy is an inevitable part of politics in every region, and this has been conceptualised in different perspectives. Wodak (2015) calls this polulism since democracy itself is establishing the will of the majority. Pelinka (2013) refers to this as ‘right-wing’ and left-wing party politics, what Rydgren (2007:242) had referred to as ‘enemies within’ and ‘enemies outside’. This is also the interface between the identities, ‘us’ and ‘them’, which define political actions. Political actors use language to project their identity. Politics also involves allegiance, some form of cooperation among political cliques. Therefore, it can also be conceptualised as an institution or practice (Chilton, 2004). Institutional politics often involves conflict and conflict resolution, which may arise as a result of the assertion of power of ‘a dominant individual (a tyrant) or group’.

Jones (1994) puts it that the strategies used in politics (and political discourses) include persuasion, rational argument, irrational strategies, threats, entreaties, bribes, manipulation, any kind of tactics that is workable. In political communication, social facts are always associated with the events and times in which the social facts occur (Sikumbang, 2021). For instance, Brock says that language is used by political office holders to conceal truth. There are other numerous things that politicians do with language including what Jones (1994) has said above. This is the basis of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as propounded by Norman Fairclough. In the words of Fairclough (1995; 2005; 2014), CDA is the interface between language, power, and identity, while Eagleton sees power as a means of pushing certain ideologies, which political officers may be willing to die for. Brock (2016) posits that what language does in politics can be interpreted in divers of ways, and CDA provides some of the tools that could be used in this regard.

Fairclough (2014:24-26) channels the focus of CDA to the ways in which people communicate, not only around power, but also in general. These ways “are constrained by the structures and forces of social institutions within which we live and function”. A review of Fairclough’s statement here indicates three basic conditions for discourse or the use of language in relation to power and rank, or how power, rank, or social status affect talk. First, it is evident that there are social conditions in power and language, and these reflect in the production and interpretation of language. In other words, social factors condition text and discourses (van Dijk, 1998). These social factors, necessarily, according to CDA, must determine how discourses are interpreted. Mey (2001) refers to this as social situational knowledge, while Odebum (2006) refers to it as socio-cultural knowledge. Second, CDA emphasises that there are processes in the production and interpretation of

language. Processes entail strategies; in every talk or discourse, there are inherent rhetorical strategies, which is the manner that the text is produced, and, on the other hand, that determines how the text should be interpreted. The third condition is the text itself, which is the end-product – result of the former two conditions. According to van Dijk (1998) and Widdowson (1975), the text is what the CDA analysts act upon.

Theoretical Framework

A sequence of tools from two pragmatics theories are selected for this study; these are Levinson's politeness, using face Threatening acts and Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory, using implicature and explicature. These tools cannot be undermined in political debates. Hence, this section is devoted to the review of the working of the tools in this study, beginning with the most all-encompassing, which are implicature and explicature.

Grice (1989) conceptualises the notion of implicature, establishing the disparity between 'saying and implicating', which transcends to the concepts of 'what is said' and the underlying pragmatic or contextual principles that count in interpreting what is said. Thus, Grice proposes the terms conventional and conversational implicature, which could be averred or negotiated by certain cooperative principles/maxims, especially at the level of conversational implicature. For Clark (2013:159), the interface between what is said and what is implicated is 'the assumed divergences between natural and logical languages', or communication. For instance, Clark believes that natural language is not vague or ambiguous, and this enables implicatures. Grice (1989:24) puts it clearly, that natural language gives 'intuitive understanding of the meaning of say in such contexts, and an ability to recognise particular verbs' that connect with the meaning of the words used in the communicative process (Grice 1989: 24–5)

Sperber and Wilson (1995) aver to the fact that the interpretation of utterances is in two phases, which are 'a modular decoding phase', which, basically is the input model, and the 'inferential phase, which entails 'the linguistically encoded logical form', which also is strongly enhance by the context that provides the affordance for any form of communication (Odebunmi, 2006). Together, these two are used to, hypothetically, reveal speakers' intention to inform hearers. But this is not all there is to communication. Before meaning can be achieved there is the decoding process. In the words of Wilson and Sperber (2012: 149), while it is possible to understand decoding processes, seemingly, 'inferential processes are not only not understood, but perhaps not even understandable'; no one can really read one's intention except one. However, there is a borderline between the encoded and decoding processes, which is the code – linguistic resources that are used.

Wilson and Sperber (2012) say that 'linguistically encoded information achieves a single purpose, in relation to truth condition. This idea is got from Recanati (1986; 1987), who argues that an utterance can make propositions, which may have inherent truth conditions. However, the meaning of an utterance is inexhaustible, and this cannot rest on truth condition alone. This entails that the proposition in an utterance can be used to perform different speech acts. Wilson and Sperber puts it that an utterance can encode two types of information, which are truth-conditional (representational) and non-truth-conditional (computational, on the one hand, and propositional and illocutionary (both conceptual procedural), on the other hand. While implicature can be directly linked with the conceptual meaning relation, explicature is more related to the truth condition, pointing to the obvious proposition.

Clark (2013) distinguishes between what it is to 'infer' from the Grice's notion of 'implicate' which is the most preferred technical in analysing intentions or conclusions that are not 'intentionally communicated' in utterances. This view reemphasises the fact that 'any communicated proposition which is not part of what is said is an implicature' (Clark,

2013: 162). Sperber and Wilson (1995) opine that the boundary between intentional and unintentional communicated conclusions is in the ending structure, ‘-icature and -icate’. This is considered in their (Sperber and Wilson’s) proposition of explicature, which is ‘an explicitly communicated assumption. This signifies, in an analogical sequence, that ‘any assumption’ that is not explicitly communicated is otherwise implicitly communicated (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 182). Implicatures are categorised into premises or conclusions, which are termed as conventional implicatures, and ‘generalised’ or conversational implicatures. Clark (2013) adds deriving implicatures to the list, which he explains as implicatures derived from ‘relevance-guided comprehension heuristic and the mutual adjustment process’. Clark also classifies explicature into embedded explicature, meaning embedded another type of meaning (say truth condition), ‘higher-level explicatures’, which is more generalised or propositional, and is built around words, concepts and object in the real world.

Politeness is a necessary part of everyday communication, considering that people involved in communication have different backgrounds. One of the basic tests for politeness in discourse situations is that it determines the reception or rejection of a message and determines possible outcomes or responses by participants in the interaction process (Yusti, 2013). Brown and Levinson (1987) posit that politeness is interactants’ linguistic or pragmatic tool for reducing the effects of face threats. This is a follow up of Brown’s (1970) submission, that speakers formulate (politeness) strategies to save hearers’ face, especially when face threatening acts (henceforth, FTA) are desired or expected. However, politeness is not only about mitigating face threat, considering that there is positive and negative politeness, and the later intensifies rather than mitigate threat. An example of this can be negative criticism (Watts, 2003). Four features of politeness are advanced by Brown and Levinson (1987), which are positive politeness, otherwise face-saving acts (FSAs); bald on record politeness, which is used to emphasise an act that is clearly, concisely, or directly stated; negative politeness, otherwise face-threatening acts (FTAs); and off record politeness, which employs indirect language and removes the speaker from imposing on the hearer’s corresponding acts. Sadly, African politics, which has been characteristic of several individual, corporate, and party conflicts is a high harvester of both FSAs and FTAs, which manifest during campaign speeches and debate sessions, to mention only a few.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data for this study are the transcribed texts of the recorded Edo State political debate between Osagie Ise-Iyamu and Governor Godwin Obaseki, which was organised by Channels Television. The video was downloaded from Channels’ website, <http://channelstv.com>, where it was streamed live to reach millions of people, especially the electorates. The data was transcribed to texts, and analysed, using the top-down analytical approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Anger, aggression, and subsequently verbal batters are the culminating features of most political debates. It is evident that contestants, wholly, use the debate stage as a battleground. Their tool for battle is carved with words, spontaneously, used to, not only delegitimize their opponent, but also to push them to react in a certain manner. The implicatures and explicatures of aggressive batters, otherwise FTAs, in political debates, as used by Governor *Obaseki* and *Ize-Iyamu*, project the following intended and (or) end goals: advancing political supremacism, self/party legitimisation, criticism of administration and personality, and unveiling cynicism of candidacy.

Advancing Political Supremacism

Both candidates utilised, mainly, their opening statements to present or prove themselves as the better candidate for the office of the Governor of Edo State. Several strategies are employed here, which include capitalising on weakness or faults, reference, or reliance on past records, among others, some instances are presented below.

Excerpts:

- i. I have had the opportunity to hold very key positions in the administration of this state. Those positions have given me a very deep insight into the workings of government; the strengths and the weaknesses and I believe that if we have the right leadership, Edo state can be a lot better than it is now... ‘based on my experience, based on my agenda, I think that I will be a square peg in a square hole’ (*Pastor Ize-Iyamu*)
- ii. ‘...The last four years has been one in which we have made remarkable and fundamental changes in the socio-economic and political life of our state... we have brought out possibility- We have shown that it is possible to have a society where democracy truly thrives... To change lives, build infrastructure, reorder society and give hope to the down-trodden...’ (*Governor Obaseki*)

Pastor *Ize-Iyamu*, in (i) uses, first, reference to previous ‘positions and administration’ in declaring suitability for the office. Using these, he proves that he is not only qualified, but also competent for the position of governor. The adjective, *key*, implicates that he is more qualified than *Obaseki*, irrespective of being the incumbent governor. In their political antecedents, he served as Secretary to the State Government, which is closer to the mainstream decision-making section, while *Obaseki* was Special Adviser on finance. To this end, he undermines *Obaseki*’s initial four years in government, stating explicitly that his government has shown several *weaknesses*. This is a negative politeness used for deligitimisation of *Obaseki*’s government, on the one hand, and exerting his supremacy as a better candidate that will make *Edo state better*, on the other hand. His supremacy is advanced strongly using personal reference – pronoun, *I*, and *me*, and a metaphor, which implicates his being more competent than the sitting Governor.

Governor *Obaseki* uses the same reference strategy in reinforcing the implicature of his supremacy as a candidate for the election. He refers to his performance in ‘the last four years’, implicating that he has performed better than his predecessors. He uses the honorific pronoun, *we*, as positive politeness marker, to refer to himself, as the main actor of his government, which of course is made up of other personalities. The implication here is proclaiming himself as a team player; and selling to the electorates the idea that he is running an inclusive democracy. He goes further to explicate, at the latter part of the excerpt, that is, reordering the society, and giving hope to ‘the downtrodden’.

Excerpts:

- iii. You must note that I was one those who helped comrade Oshiomole become governor... I put together the plan for his administration, and for eight years I worked pro-bono to make sure he succeeded, having succeeded, and worked very closely with him, it was clear that I could continue with the plan I have given to him... (*Governor Obaseki*)
- iv. ... I’m sure you are aware that I’m a foundation member of the APC. We were one of those who formed the APC... what is very good about what I’m doing is that I remain consistent with the agenda that I have, the same agenda that I had four years ago... the same agenda that I still have... definitely, I’m not going to any place new; I’m going to a place that I built... (*Pastor Ize-Iyamu*)

In the excerpts above, both Pastor *Ize-Iyamu* and Governor *Obaseki* resort to boasting as face-saving-positive politeness, to reinforce their superiority over each another. For example, *Obaseki* uses the epistemic modality, *must note*, to explicate the fact that he *helped* to install his predecessor, Adams *Oshiomole*, into office. He uses the personal pronoun, *I*, implicitly, to reaffirm his influence and place himself at the centre of *Oshiomole's* political success. This further implicate being deserving of the governorship seat, as a reward, and projects his knowledge of government, giving him an edge over his co-contestant. Using the legal register *pro-bono*, which implicates working for the public good, in most cases, for free, he implicates that he is the better public servant than *Ize-Iyamu*. However, it is explicated stated here that his initial four years of office have been about continuing with a *plan*, which he explicitly states that he gave *Oshiomole*. *Ize-Iyamu*, on the other hand, first claims party superiority. He explicitly states his involvement in the founding of APC in the state, explicates how he 'built' the party. However, his leaving and returning to the party implicates his desperation for power; he wants a party that will give him an edge and since APC is now the ruling party, he feels he has a better chance, compared to Governor *Obaseki*, who also had switched side to the opposition party. Another implicature in *Ize-Iyamu's* exertion of party hegemony is to indirectly take glory in *Obaseki's* governorship, despite contesting against him, in the previous election. The inference is that if he had not played a part in the success of the party, it would not have been able to produce successive governments, one of which is *Obaseki's* first term, which he won under the flagship of APC.

Advancing Self/Party Legitimation

Several instances of legitimation of self or party, abound in the debate. In the process of self-legitimation, both contestants give credit to themselves, validating their programmes. For Governor *Obaseki*, his incumbency is visible evidence, performing the explication of legitimation, while for Pastor *Ize-Iyamu*, the implicature and explication strategies for self-legitimation include, deligitimation of his opponent, and self-proclamation. It is surprising that both contestants, irrespective of swapping their political parties still engaged in party-legitimation. And in the same process, implicate the deligitimation of the party they once belonged to, and even got their mandate from.

Excerpts:

- v. My name is Pastor Ize-Iyamu, I'm a lawyer by profession, a pastor, a farmer, mostly a politician... I believe that the past four years has not been too good... in our own case, whatever we are doing, the focus will be Edo People. we are going to engage Edo people in jobs. We are going to make sure the money circulates in our states. Not bringing outsiders to come and do jobs here and they go away with them... (*Pastor Ize-Iyamu*)
- vi. 'We are very proud because our records are there to speak for themselves. I did not nickname myself 'Wake and see'. It's the people of Edo state who decided they would give me the nickname 'wake and see' because of the dramatic changes they have witnessed in the last four years of life in the state... (*Gov. Obaseki*)

In excerpt (v), profiling is used to implicate legitimation of self. In order to appeal to the electorate, *Ize-Iyamu* also explicate his competence for the job, he introduces himself to be multitasking, using the article, *a*, to foreground each title, which he has arranged in order of climax. These qualities are explications of his acclaimed social status, which he believes counts or has a stake in affecting the electorates' decision or choice. Furthermore, he uses negative politeness as delegitimation strategy to further, indirectly, implicate

legitimation of his candidacy. Saying that the *four years* of *Obaseki's* administration was not *too good*, implicating that the government has failed the people, and there is need to replace it with his government. *Ize-Iyamu* uses his planned programmes also as legitimisation strategy, which include 'jobs', and 'money' circulation, implicating that those are what the people need most. This also implicates that the latter, 'money', has been at the centre of the Nigerian politics. On the other hand, Governor *Obaseki* refers to his power of incumbency to explicate his claim to power in excerpt (vi). He refers to his performance as 'records', and 'dramatic changes' to implicate that he performed well in his first term, by his and the electorate's assessment. This is also explicated, using the slogan, 'wake and see' as strategy.

Excerpts:

- vii. ...when I came into office only one flight came into Benin... today, you have not less than eight flights that come into Edo state through Benin airport... (we) opened up the economy and created 157,000 jobs... (*Gov. Obaseki*)
- viii. ...for a governor who talks about creating jobs, a sector as vital as education you have left it the way it is... The same thing with the hospitals... The agricultural sector is in shambles, security is in shambles. Where are these jobs? who did you give them to? (*Pastor Ize-Iyamu*)
- ix. I'm happy that Governor *Obaseki* concede that the initiative to set up modular refineries is that of the APC federal government... I am very thankful to God that I have a better platform to serve my people. (*Pastor Ize-Iyamu*)
- x. I obtained a ticket from another platform and specifically the People's Democratic Party...who gave me that umbrella in my political storm and that has made me survive and be here today as a candidate for the PDP. (*Gov. Obaseki*)

The excerpts in (vii) and (viii) present instances of self-legitimation, using propaganda and delegitimation, as strategies. First, Governor *Obaseki* employs implicature and comparison of his government, in just four years, with precedent administrations, as strategies, to foreground his success, with respect to aviation, increasing 'flights to eight' as against 'one' in the previous government. Reference to job creation is an explication to performance. He uses figures, 157,000, for record and reference purposes. *Ize-Iyamu*, on the other hand, uses negative politeness to challenge *Obaseki's* statement of job creation, giving the implicature that his statement is a mere propaganda, and a face-saving act before the electorate. He then mentions, explicitly, crucial sectors, as analogical sequences to negate the governor's claim. His examples include 'education', 'agriculture' and 'health'. Another explication strategy used by *Ize-Iyamu* is rhetorical questions, at the latter part of the excerpt. Here, he explicates that one cannot affirm *Obaseki's* claim to have provided jobs, because there is no evidence, only mere words.

Excerpts (ix) and (x) focus on party legitimisation. While *Ize-Iyamu* uses explication to tag APC, as a *better platform* than PDP. The signification above does not implicate that the opposition party is not good, and this explains why he can run back and forth between the two parties. The adjective, *better*, is comparative, which implicates face-saving acts that both parties have elements of good, but APC is better. As said above, the face-saving act implicates that he is indulging in safe politics in case he has a reason to cross (return to the party) in future. He explicates that the APC led government is a progress-oriented party, in rebutter to *Obaseki's* comment on building 'modular refinery'. *Obaseki*, on the other hand, presents the PDP as a welfarist party, using positive politeness. References to 'political storm' and survival is a negative politeness, which implicates his suffering and frustration

out of APC, which necessitated his decision to recontest his second term under the flagship of PDP. He explicates that his supporters feel it is the right party. This also implicates his belief that the electorates will vote him in for his second term. The data also shows instances of other-self legitimisation, using positive politeness, to implicate the contestants' praise for their supporters. For instance, *Ize-Iyamu* comments on reaching out to the electorate in schools, farmers, among others as grounds for affirming *Obaseki's* lack of performance as governor, while *Obaseki* uses the first-person plural case, *we*, as positive politeness to explicate legitimisation of group identity.

Unveiling Political Cynicism

Both contestants engage in disparaging comments about each other and their previous role in government. For *Ize-Iyamu*, the immediate reference point for his cynic comments is *Obaseki's* first term and a little reflection on his role under *Oshiomole*, his predecessor. Even though *Ize-Iyamu* had been away from the corridors of power for thirteen (13) years, his period of service was also used as a reference for cynic comments by *Obaseki*. Another form of cynicism in the debate is enhanced using implicature showing the expression of doom in various sectors of Edo state and blaming it on each other.

Excerpts:

- xi. If it is true that we have been able to have the number of jobs that the Edo governor claims, our IGR will not be where it is...Every school we went, they practically had no teachers. Nobody was employed... so for a governor who talks about creating jobs, a sector as vital as education you have left it the way it is... The same thing with the hospitals... The agricultural sector is in shambles, security is in shambles... (*Pastor Ize-Iyamu*)

In the excerpt above, we see the typicality of opposition in government. The candidate here uses negative politeness to not only discredit his opponent's claim about job creation, but also to delegitimize any claim of performance, using cynic language. First, he uses implicature to connect *IGR* (Internally Generated Revenue) with *job* creation, despite that these may not be bidirectionally linked. In most cases, the more jobs created, the more the overhead cost of government. He uses direct-active explicature to allege that his opponent, Governor *Obaseki*, has not performed well in his initial four years, referring to 'education, hospitals' (health), 'agriculture', and 'Security', which he implicates are 'vital' areas of the state's economy. The statement also has an overt implicature that good government can only be evaluated on the basis of performance in 'vital' sectors. In other words, any government that does not perform in those areas implicates or is adjudged to be a failed government. This is implicated by the adjective, 'shambles', which is synonymous to disaster, or failure.

Excerpt:

- xii. what unfortunately happened with the civil service was that when my brother was secretary to government of Edo state, they retrenched, sacked the crème-de-la-crème of the civil service- most of the experienced permanent secretaries in the civil service in the guise that they were trying to save money. So you have a civil service over the last 20 years that has grown without mentorship, without training and without capacity building. (*Gov. Obaseki*)
- xiii. 'I left office 13 years ago...for eight years, you served under a government and you are telling us that during those 8 years you did no training... You've done 4 years, add that to the 8 years. That's 12 years of total inactivity...'
(*Pastor Ize-Iyamu*)

In the statement above, the speaker uses blame shifting as cynicism, using negative politeness. In response to questions about *the civil service*, Governor *Obaseki*, using explicature, accuses the previous administration, in which his co-contestant had served 13yrs ago, for the lack of efficiency in the civil service. The explicature in *crème-de-la-crème* is the best hands that would have provided the ‘mentorship, training and capacity’ building for the civil service workers. He however contradicts himself, when he says the ‘civil service’ has ‘grown’, in the last twenty years. The implicature here is that he is insincere about attributing blame. He has served for four years, without having to change the negative trend; and besides, the date stated is irreconcilable, implicating that the draught in the civil service had started way before the government he is blaming to be responsible. Considering that, as the governor, he had the power to recall the so-called *crème-de-la-crème*, but he chose not to. However, his comment, simply implicates mere blame shifting.

Advancing Personal and Administrative Criticism

Debates are often taken personal at times, because of desperation to win electorates’ mind. Thus, candidates do not only seek to legitimise their claim, rights, experience, or qualification for political offices, but also seize the moment to criticise their opponents personal and administrations’ policies, programmes or even attributes, using negative politeness, explicature and implicature as punchlines, to appeal to electorates to turn against them. In other words, they use these strategies to canvass for votes from their opponent’s supporters’ side. These strategies also result to discrediting or delegitimising the competence the opposing candidate. This is where anger or aggression management counts; in most cases, comments and rebutters taken personal may be vituperative and harsh requiring aggressive exchanges.

Excerpts:

- xiv. ‘... the failed Sobe maize project, 2billion went down the drain. The Agene-Bode rice project, 5 billion went down the drain and then the oil palm project, you have collected 69 billion from the Central bank and the money has been shared to cronies... all these monies came in, what did you do with them...All the promises that you made remain unfulfilled. You promised mini-stadium in the 18 local governments, they are not there. You promised health centers in 192 wards, they are not there. So, what have you done?’
‘You have wasted our money... (Pastor Ize-Iyamu)

The above excerpt is a direct – explicit negative politeness used as attack on Governor *Obaseki*’s personality. He uses analogical sequences, that is, the mention of financial implications to juxtapose or substantiate his insinuation that Governor *Obaseki* has done nothing but embezzle the funds of Edo people in the last four years of his first term of office. Although there is explicature in the fact that projects are tagged with spatial locations, leading to the mention of *Sobe*, *Agene-Bode*, *Ize-Iyamu*’s implicature is that the funds were rather shared among ‘cronies’, rather than put in the actual project. He uses the rhetorical question as face threat to challenge the governor to say otherwise, which he subtly concedes later that they recorded some loses in the farms. Subsequently, the speaker, in the excerpt, uses parallel-accusative case, using the second person pronoun, *you*, followed by structural negations to implicate that the initial four years of *Obaseki*’s government have either been spent funding projects that were not in his manifestoes, or looting of the delegated funds. He tags him as a spendthrift of Edo people’s money, as well as one who has reneged on his political mandate and promise to the Edo people, using explicature. He also represents him, using implicature, as a clueless governor, who does not have investment (economic and business) initiative. *Ize-Iyamu* achieves uses face-

threatening act to infuriate him or push his anger beyond limit. But in response, *Obaseki* deploys positive face by admitting to the loses in the agricultural investments as a constraint, and deploying the act of silence, on issues concerning failed projects, undermining them as insinuations or banter, not questions

Excerpts:

- xv. We had the opportunity when allocation was good to diversify our economy. The governor made what I might call a very lame attempt and it failed completely and today we are in a very sorry state ... (*Pastor Ize-Iyamu*)
- xvi. ...the mistake that previous administration have made including the one in which my brother served is that they do not realize that government's role is to leverage ... to attract more resources... (*Governor Obaseki*)

Ize-Iyamu continues his direct assaults and criticism of *Obaseki's* first term of office in (xv), using face threat. This time, he explicates that *Obaseki* is an unserious governor, and implicates that he is a failure, that is, his government has 'failed' the people of Edo. He also explicates that Edo State is a bad shape or state, because of Governor *Obaseki*. The intensifier – adjectives, 'very sorry', explicitly points to doom in the state as a result of *Obaseki's* alleged failure. In response to this, *Obaseki* manages his anger by explicitly deploying positive politeness. He uses the honorifics, 'brother', to refer to *Ize-Iyamu*, despite being bitter rivals in the campaign. This is a form of submissive strategy to point out that the only cause of their rivalry is political matters, not interpersonal. But on the other hand, indirectly, he uses face threat as a defense strategy, going after *Ize-Iyamu's* service history. The statement implicates that despite spending eight years as SSG, *Ize-Iyamu* does not know anything about the workings of government to talk about his failures. Hence, he implicitly calls him a novice.

CONCLUSION

It has been established in the study that the speakers – candidates of APC and PDP, *Pastor Ize-Iyamu* and *Governor Obaseki* respectively, employed implicature, explicature and both positive and negative politeness, in political debates, to achieve four political canvassing techniques these are to advance political supremacism, self/party legitimisation, personal and administrative criticism, and cynicism. These techniques are advanced using various lexical and pragmatic resources. First, the intended or end goal of the candidates is to present or prove themselves as the better candidate for the contested positions. To also do this, they capitalise on the weaknesses or lapses of their opponents, and on the other hand, refer to their past records, serving in one position or the other. For *Governor Obaseki*, the immediate antecedence is his *positions* as the incumbent governor of Edo State. Hence, he quickly refers to his *administration* to emphasise his suitability for the office.

Candidates in political debates indulge in blame shifting and using vituperative comments to delegitimise the candidacy of their opponents. For self legitimisation, candidates give credit to themselves, validating their programmes and policies as the best for the people. The two candidates, *Obaseki* and *Ize-Iyamu*, just like other political candidates, in a politically desperate scene, engage in indirectness in the delegitimation of parties, in some instances, to serve as a contingency plan or strategy. In other words, they are careful to not condemn the two parties they had one time or the other declared their membership. This is done to leave an open-ended opportunity to return to the party at any time. Hence, most of the delegitimation tilts to self, that is, the candidate, for the purpose of causing rancor or bitter argument or aggression. The cynical comments are also achieved, using blame shifting and negative politeness.

There are punchlines for positive and negative politeness strategies, in the data. Both contestants use face-saving - positive politeness to reinforce political superiority or supremacy. They employ pronouns, honorific, and metaphors as positive politeness to declare allegiance to party, and to proclaim themselves as worthy and better candidates. There are also punchlines for explication and implicature in political debates, using the Edo political debate as an example. These include the use of modality, adjectives, registers, proclamations, and political slogans, like *wake and see*. In other instances, they use 'rhetorical questions', 'parallel accusative case' and negation strategies to implicate or explicate instances of legitimisation, superiority, cynicism, and criticism while giving their comments and rebuttals in the debate session.

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