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Discourse and Persuasive Strategies in President Tinubu's 2025 Nigeria Independence Day Speech

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Abstract

Keywords

Independence Day speeches are a form of political discourse that symbolize a country's sovereignty and national identity. While previous linguistic studies have explored various aspects of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's (PBAT) speeches, including rhetorical strategies, ideologies, and linguistic politeness, there is a gap in research on discourse and persuasive strategies in his speech. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining President Tinubu's 2025 Nigeria Independence Day speech, focusing on how discourse and persuasive strategies shape audience engagement and influence. Adopting Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), complemented by Teun van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory and Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach, this study descriptively analyzes the speech sourced from Premium Times' website. The analysis reveals six dominant strategies: deontic/epistemic modality, inclusive language, deictic, metaphorical framing, evidentiality, and constructive sequencing. These strategies collectively enhance the speech's linguistic and persuasive power, enabling President Tinubu to convey certainty, foster unity, bridge gaps between government and citizens, and frame challenges as collective opportunities for growth. The findings underscore the potency of rhetorical choices in political discourse, offering insights into the interplay of language, power, and ideology in shaping national narratives.

Nigeria
Independence Day
speech, political
discourse,
persuasive
strategies, inclusive
language, audience
engagement

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria Independence Day commemorates the country's liberation from British colonial rule on

1st, October, 1960. To mark this significant occasion, Independence Day speeches have become an institutionalised tradition, symbolizing the country's sovereignty and national identity. These

speeches provide a platform for leaders to articulate their vision, policies, and ideologies to citizens. These speeches often employ rhetorical devices, inclusive language, and persuasive tone, to promote national unity and collective purpose, shape the nation's narrative, and inspire citizens to work towards a shared objective (Ezeifeke, 2024).

Independence Day speeches are inherently political, as they involve the articulation of national identity, unity, and purpose. Politics is a social activity which lies at the centre of dialogue and searches all the available means of finding solutions to opposition's disagreements (Ogbogbo, 2021). As Akinseye (2023) notes, political speeches serve as a platform for communicating policy agendas, motivating collective action, and nurturing a sense of unity among the citizens. According to Chilton (2004), language is a fundamental aspect of politics, and political discourse is a key site for the exercise of power. Leaders use these speeches to promote their agendas, shape public opinions, and reinforce their authority. As Nigeria celebrates its 65th anniversary, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's (PBAT) Independence Day speech serves as a milestone in the country's history, offering insights into the government's vision, policies, and national identity. In the speech, the president reflects on national progress and challenges, reaffirms national values, outlines future development plans and policies, and fosters unity and patriotism.

This study aims to investigate discourse and persuasive strategies used in PBAT's 2025 Independence Day speech delivered on the occasion of Nigeria's 65th anniversary. The main objective of the study is to examine the effectiveness of his communication style and persuasive tactics in engaging and influencing the Nigerian public, shedding light on the role of presidential rhetoric in shaping public perception and political discourse.

2.1 Literature Review

Language is a powerful instrument of social control, persuasion, and identity construction. In political communication, it functions not merely as a means of conveying information but as a strategic tool for influencing public perception, legitimizing authority, and sustaining ideology. The term discourse refers to language in use; it is a social practice rather than as an abstract system of rules. According to Fairclough (1992), discourse involves both text (spoken or written) and social practice, revealing how language shapes and is shaped by social structures. In the same vein, Brown and Yule (1983) assert that discourse is a process through which people create and interpret meaning in context.

Discourse strategies are deliberate linguistic choices that speakers employ to achieve communicative and ideological goals. Van Dijk (1997) defines discourse strategies as patterned ways of organizing

language to express social meanings, maintain power relations, or construct group identity. In political communication, these strategies include the use of pronouns (e.g., we, our), repetition, metaphors, rhetorical questions, and appeals to unity and hope. Such features enable politicians to project solidarity with the populace, construct legitimacy, and establish a shared national identity (Chilton & Schaffner, 2002). Hence, discourse strategies in political speeches are not random; they are systematically deployed to guide interpretation, influence attitudes, and align listeners with the speaker's ideological stance.

Persuasion, however, is a central component of political rhetoric. It is a deliberate attempt to influence another person with the use of language embedded with rich and cultural meanings. It is about shaping or moulding attitudes as the persuader's intention is to change their attitude or behaviour (Lamidi, 2008; Heath, 2007). In addition, persuasion is a symbolic process in which communicators attempt to convince others to adopt specific attitudes or actions through the transmission of messages. It is described as the understanding and changes of attitudes by influencing other people's minds; it is an information-processing activity, in which thoughts are actively manipulated to create new beliefs and attitudes. (Heath, 2007; Perloff, 2010). By harnessing the power of persuasion, politicians can

effectively communicate their vision, articulate their policies, and persuade their audience to accept and support their message.

Several scholars have examined political discourse from the perspective of CDA. Fairclough (2001) analyzed Tony Blair's speeches and revealed how political leaders use discourse to naturalize ideological positions and maintain dominance. Charteris-Black (2005) studied the metaphors in George W. Bush's speeches, concluding that religious and moral metaphors were persuasive devices for legitimizing foreign policies. Similarly, Chilton (2004) demonstrated how political discourse is structured by cognitive strategies of inclusion and exclusion, which define the boundaries of 'us' and 'them.'

Within the Nigerian context, the analysis of political speeches has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Ayeomoni and Akinkurolere (2012) examine the stylistic and rhetorical devices in Nigerian political speeches, revealing that repetition, inclusive language, and metaphor are common persuasive tools used to promote unity and legitimacy. Odebunmi (2017) applied CDA to Buhari's inaugural address, identifying ideological elements that reinforced the anti-corruption agenda and projected a nationalistic identity. Also, Akinseye (2015) examines President Muhammadu Buhari's inaugural speech delivered on May 29, 2015. The study focuses on providing insights into

Buhari's interpersonal styles through an analysis of his choice of modality, mood, and pronouns.

In the same vein, a number of scholars have examined PBAT's speeches. Chinyere and Bibian (2023) investigate the acceptance speech of PBAT at the presentation of certificate of return to him by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). The study examines the rhetorical and linguistic strategies employed in the acceptance speech and its overall effectiveness in conveying the intended message. The study finds that PBAT's acceptance speech effectively employs rhetorical devices and linguistic strategies to convey a message of unity, hope, and collective responsibility. He employs a formal, metaphorical syntactic structure and grammatical construction to develop his identity as a dignified, empathetic, inclusive leader and strategically employs language to convey and reinforce his ideological goals. The study concludes that PBAT sheds light on the intricate and purposeful use of language and rhetoric by political leaders to communicate their visions. It also demonstrates the manifestation of political power in the speech showcasing how language can be a potent tool in influencing and persuading the masses.

Another study by Akinseye (2023) focuses on the discursive strategies and interpersonal resources in PBAT's inaugural speech. The study provides

insights into the intricate interplay of language and power dynamics. Drawing on van Dijk's ideology stance and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, the study explores the ideological and social functions of his speech. The findings reveal topicalisation and actor/situation descriptions within his speech, highlighting key themes, ideas, and the polarisation of 'us' versus 'them', which reinforces his ideological stance. Furthermore, the speech showcases lexicalisation techniques, including synonyms, collocations, repetition, parallelism, and metaphors to enhance clarity, impact, and rhetorical effectiveness, while also conveying nuanced meanings within his speech. Moreover, the deployment of personal pronouns reflects his perspective and attitude toward the audience. The inclusive/exclusive use of 'we' fosters a sense of unity, shared responsibility, and emphasizes his connection with the people. The analysis offers valuable insights into the intricate interplay of language and rhetorical strategies, contributing to a deeper understanding of political communication and its impact on leadership and public engagement.

Also, Badmus and Kilani (2024) carry out a critical discourse analysis of Presidential Bola Ahmed Tinubu's inaugural speech. The paper is qualitative in nature. Through Fairclough's (1989) 3D Model of Critical Discourse Analysis, the President's address is analysed focusing on detecting his ideologies.

The study finds that the speaker conveys the message of optimism, dedication, reliability, tolerance, peace, unity, and development to Nigerians. He clearly declares his mantra of *Renewed Hope* with his mastery of diction that is appropriate for his audience. This reveals the ideologies of the President as being optimistic, dedicated, reliable, tolerant, and peace-loving, a unity champion and an icon of development.

Another study by Olawe (2024) identifies the linguistic politeness strategies deployed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's (PBAT) inaugural speech of May 29, 2023. The study employs Leech's theory of politeness to outline the linguistic politeness strategies PBAT applied in presenting himself as intelligible, accommodative and godsent president of Nigeria. The study reveals that PBAT applies tact maxim, approbation maxim, generosity maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim to convince Nigerians over his ability to deliver on polite governance with strict adherence to rule of laws.

Furthermore, Yusuff and Adedokun (2025) examine politeness principles and persuasive strategies in PBAT's inaugural speech of May 29, 2023, using Miriam Locher's and Richard Watts' Relational Work, Penelope Brown's and Stephen Levinson's Politeness Theory and M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. The focus of the study is on the roles of politeness

principles and persuasive strategies in shaping audience engagement and influence. The study finds that three dominant politeness principles in the speech were inclusive language, negative politeness and call to action. Inclusive language was deployed to foster unity through personal pronouns 'we', 'us', and 'our'. Negative politeness was employed to show respect and deference and call to action was utilised to encourage audience to cooperate for the country's benefit. Four persuasive strategies (appealing, asserting, assuring, and engaging) were dominantly employed in the speech. The study concludes that strategic use of politeness principles and persuasive strategies enhances the persuasive power of President Tinubu's message and engages the audience, and fosters a sense of unity.

A review of existing studies on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's political speeches within the Nigerian context reveals a notable research gap, with limited attention paid to the discourse and persuasive strategies employed in his Independence Day speech marking Nigeria's 65th Anniversary. This study bridges this gap by examining the linguistic features, rhetorical devices, and persuasive strategies employed in PBAT's speech. Such an analysis is crucial, as Independence Day speeches typically leverage rhetorical devices, inclusive language, and a persuasive tone to foster national unity and collective purpose (Ogbogbo, 2021; Ezeifeke, 2024), thereby highlighting the

significance of this research in contributing to the understanding of political discourse in Nigeria.

2.0 Methodology

The Nigeria's 65th Independence Day speech of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, delivered on October 1, 2025, was purposively selected for this study due to its rich embedded discourse strategies and persuasive features. The speech was sourced from Premium Times' website. This speech is a prime example of a political discourse that employs rhetorical devices, inclusive language, and a persuasive tone to foster national unity and collective purpose (Ogbogbo, 2021; Ezeifeke, 2024). The selection of this speech allows for an in-depth analysis of the linguistic features, rhetorical devices, and persuasive strategies used by President Tinubu to convey his vision and message to the Nigerian people. As noted by Fairclough (2013), political speeches are a crucial site for the exercise of power and the shaping of public opinion, making this speech an ideal candidate for critical discourse analysis.

The methodological approach employed in this study involves a descriptive and qualitative analysis of the selected speech, with a focus on identifying and examining the discourse strategies and persuasive features embedded within the text. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is ideal for exploring and understanding the

meaning and context of a particular phenomenon. The choice of Premium Times' website is based on the fact that Premium Times is known for its in-depth journalism and investigative stories on politics, governance, and human rights. Accessing the speech from this source ensures the researcher to receive the complete and unaltered text, reflecting the exact official address delivered by President Tinubu.

The data analysis involved a systematic process of selecting, grouping, and analyzing sentences and expressions that suit the objectives of the study, under relevant headings. This approach enables a nuanced understanding of the ways in which President Tinubu employs language to achieve his communicative goals and engage his audience (Van Dijk, 2008). By examining the linguistic features and rhetorical devices used in this speech, this study contributes to the understanding of political discourse in Nigeria and sheds light on the ways in which language is used to shape public opinion and mobilize support.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a theory and method that examines how language functions as a form of social practice through which power, ideology, and persuasion are enacted, reproduced, and resisted. CDA provides the analytical lens through which President Bola

Ahmed Tinubu's 65th Independence Day speech is examined, particularly in relation to the discourse strategies and persuasive elements embedded within his language use.

Critical Discourse Analysis emerged from the works of Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995), Teun van Dijk (1993, 1998), and Ruth Wodak (2001). These scholars share the view that discourse is not merely a linguistic activity but a form of social practice that both shapes and is shaped by the socio-political context in which it occurs. According to Fairclough (1992), discourse is a mode of action (something people do) and a mode of representation (something people use to signify the world). Therefore, CDA seeks to reveal the often hidden relationships between discourse, power, and ideology.

In political communication, CDA exposes how language is used strategically to sustain authority, legitimize actions, construct identities, and manipulate public opinion. Presidential speeches, such as President Tinubu's Independence Day speech, are not neutral texts; they are deliberate acts of persuasion designed to shape citizens' perceptions of governance, progress, and national unity. Thus, CDA is appropriate for interrogating how such speeches deploy discourse strategies to gain legitimacy and consent.

3.2 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

This study adopts Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which offers a systematic framework for connecting language and society. Fairclough's model involves three interconnected levels:

i) *Textual Analysis (Description)*: This level focuses on the linguistic features of the text (word choice, modality, pronoun use, transitivity, repetition, metaphor, and rhetorical devices). At this stage, the study identifies how Tinubu uses specific lexical and grammatical features to project authority, solidarity, and hope.

ii) *Discursive Practice (Interpretation)*: This dimension examines how the text is produced, distributed, and consumed. It explores intertextuality—the way President Tinubu's speech draws upon earlier nationalistic narratives, founding fathers' visions, and shared cultural values, to construct a persuasive and unifying message.

iii) *Social Practice (Explanation)*: This final dimension links the discourse to wider social, political, and ideological contexts. It considers how the speech reflects and reinforces prevailing ideologies such as nationalism, reform, and collective responsibility, and how it serves to legitimize Tinubu's administration and policies within Nigeria's socio-political environment.

3.3 Van Dijk and Wodak's Supporting Perspectives

While Fairclough's model provides the structural foundation for this study, insights from Teun van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive theory and Ruth Wodak's (2001) Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) complement the analysis. Van Dijk emphasizes the role of cognition, how political elites use discourse to shape shared mental models (beliefs, values, attitudes) among the populace. His notion of ideological square (presenting 'us' positively and 'them' negatively) helps uncover persuasive polarization in Tinubu's speech. Also, Wodak's DHA stresses the importance of historical and situational context, enabling this study to interpret Tinubu's rhetoric within the broader trajectory of Nigeria's post-independence political discourse.

3.4 Relevance of CDA to This Study

Applying CDA as a theoretical framework enables this study to reveal how linguistic choices in President Tinubu's speech are linked to ideological and persuasive goals. It also allows the speech to explain how discourse strategies support the political agenda of unity and reform. In addition, it provides the work room to identify how persuasive elements (ethos, pathos, and logos) operate within the discourse to shape citizens' perception and emotional alignment; connecting the textual features of the speech to broader socio-political realities in Nigeria. Hence, CDA provides a critical and interpretive framework for understanding the

interplay between language, persuasion, and power in Tinubu's 65th Independence Day speech.

4.0 Data Analysis and Discussion

The discourse and persuasive strategies employed in the data are analysed to understand how they achieve specific communicative goals. The discussion begins with an in-depth analysis of deontic and epistemic modals.

4.1 Use of Deontic and Epistemic Modals

Modal verbs such as 'will', 'must', and 'shall' dominate President Tinubu's syntactic choice. These deontic modals signal obligation and commitment, projecting authority and certainty, features associated with presidential ethos. They also encode persuasive force by expressing inevitability as found in excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1

We **must** continue to make sacrifices; we **will** not turn back. We **must** continue to celebrate their gallantry and salute their courage on behalf of a grateful nation.

President Tinubu constructively uses the deontic modals to address different audiences. This shows that he is a unifying and audience-sensitive leader. This, in a way, also reflects his belief in encompassing administration. As seen in excerpt 2, he emphasises the need for unity and patriotic

solidarity and moral obligation as he engages the citizens generally.

Except 2

We **must** remain united as one nation under God. We **must** never let cynicism erode our faith in Nigeria.

The President hints at the institutional obligation of the security forces, believing it is their core responsibility to protect the nation effectively. He charges them to beam their security searchlight on the nooks and crannies of the nation. This is found in excerpt 3.

Except 3

Our security forces must continue to display courage and professionalism. They **must** not relent until every corner of Nigeria is safe.

His strong trust in the youths is again expressed in excerpt 4 when he stresses their distinct role in building the nation. He metaphorically uses the word ‘builders’ to reiterate the magnitude of the responsibility resting upon the shoulders of the youths.

Except 4

Our young people **must** believe in the promise of our nation. You **must** see yourselves as key builders of our collective future.

His address is marked by an inclusive rhetorical style, through which he simultaneously engages citizens, security personnel, and the youth, thereby

reinforcing national solidarity and legitimizing shared responsibility.

Also, President Tinubu employs epistemic modals to convey his stance on knowledge, belief, probability, and logical conclusion, reflecting his judgment on the likelihood or certainty of a proposition’s truth. The epistemic modals (can, may, etc.) soften assertions and convey optimism, balancing authority with politeness and empathy. The most interesting part is that he equally addresses different audiences with the use of the epistemic modals. To the general public, he uses ‘will’ to express certainty and assurance, persuading citizens to maintain faith in his administration’s vision as found in excerpt 5.

Except 5

We **will** overcome our present challenges. Nigeria **will** rise again. The sacrifices we make today **will** yield a better tomorrow.

He uses ‘will’ and ‘can’ to express confidence in the capacity of the security agency. He addresses the military and law enforcement community, assuring them that government reforms and strategies will yield results. This functions as institutional motivation, boosting morale and reaffirming state control over national security.

By employing ‘will’, he projects future certainty, positioning the youth as inevitable drivers of Nigeria’s progress. This strengthens a persuasive

appeal through vision and inclusion. The choice of words such as ‘builder’ (as mentioned under deontic modal above) and ‘drive the future’ reflects his ideological resolve, portraying the youths as the pillars upon which a lasting nation rests. Also, Tinubu speaks indirectly to investors and international observers, projecting predictability and confidence in governance. This diplomatic use of ‘will’ frames Nigeria as a reliable global partner, enhancing international persuasion through linguistic assurance as seen in excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6

Our economy **will** stabilize as we implement reforms. Nigeria **will** remain open to global partnerships.

4.2 Use of Deictics

Deictics or deixis markers are context-dependent words that point to people, place, or time in relation to the speaker. In political discourse, they are persuasive because they locate power, solidarity, and identity. In President Tinubu’s speech, personal deixes, temporal deixis, and spartial deixis are used to perform different rhetorical functions. First, his predominant use of ‘we’ and ‘our’ builds inclusive nationalism. It is a strategic move to unify diverse audiences (citizens, security, youth) and legitimize his leadership through collective pronouns. These personal deixes are used by the President to construct collective identity and merge the leader and citizens in a shared struggle.

Excerpt 7

We must remain united as one nation under God
I assure you that Nigeria will rise again. **Our**
security forces must not relent

In the expression as found in excerpt 7, ‘our security forces must not relent’, ‘our’ expresses ownership and solidarity with the armed forces; legitimizes control through empathy. It also portrays President Tinubu as a leader who, together with the citizens, entrusts national security to the armed forces. This disposition, in a way, strengthens the hope and assurance the masses have in the nation’s security infrastructure.

Spatial deixis expands his geographic inclusivity, showing that his message covers the entire nation, not just elites or regions. It is a nation-building discourse strategy: ‘across the nation’ / ‘every corner of Nigeria’ symbolically represents national wholeness and inclusiveness. ‘Here in our beloved country’ brings proximity and narrows psychological distance between government and people.

Temporal deictics frame time as transformation. President Tinubu positions the present as a moment of sacrifice and the future as reward, which strengthens persuasive temporality (hope-driven discourse). This presents him as a leader who acknowledges the realities of today yet he believes in a significant turnaround in the nearest future. According to Aristotle’s Three Classic Appeals,

ethos concerns with the speaker's credibility and trustworthiness. President Tinubu's acknowledgment of the current social-economic garners him some form of trust from the citizens. He summarises what the country is facing as a sacrifice which only takes time to yield as depicted in Excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8

Today, we celebrate 65 years of independence. The **sacrifices** we make **today** will yield a better **tomorrow**. Now is the time to renew our faith in Nigeria.

4.3 Metaphorical Framing and Lexicalisation

Metaphorical framing is the use of conceptual metaphors to structure discourse and guide interpretation, allowing speakers to make abstract or complex ideas more concrete, emotionally resonant, and ideologically persuasive (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Charteris-Black, 2004). President Tinubu's speech is richly patterned with metaphors of journey, renewal, and construction, which serve to frame Nigeria's socio-political situation as a process of transition from difficulty to recovery. Through these metaphors, he positions himself as both a guide and a fellow traveller in a collective national journey, thereby enhancing persuasion and shared vision. The assertion 'The worst is over' metaphorically represents hardship as a temporal phase. It is a stage that has already passed, thereby

framing national suffering as temporary and conquerable. In line with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Tinubu's metaphor operates on the underlying conceptual schema of LIFE/REFORM AS A JOURNEY, where the nation moves forward from crisis toward renewal. Similarly, his declaration that 'We are building a new dawn' draws on a construction and renewal metaphor, suggesting that national transformation is not instantaneous but an ongoing collective project.

The lexical choices in the speech further reinforce this metaphorical framework. Words and phrases such as 'reform,' 'renewal,' 'hope,' 'future,' 'progress,' 'unity,' 'rebuild,' and 'together' constitute a semantic field of optimism and transformation. These lexical items evoke emotional resonance (pathos) and stimulate national pride and perseverance among citizens. For instance, when President Tinubu says 'We are laying the foundation for a stronger, more prosperous Nigeria,' the construction metaphor ('laying the foundation') implies long-term planning and collective effort, persuading the audience to see temporary hardships as investments in future success.

President Tinubu's use of metaphorical language accomplishes two compelling goals. First, by viewing complicated political and economic realities as a common process of reconstruction, it

cognitively simplifies them. Second, it allows him to create a vocabulary of optimism and perseverance by emotionally engaging citizens through the lexicalization of hope and continuity. Therefore, metaphor and word choice in President Tinubu's Independence Day speech are ideological tools for influencing public opinion and maintaining trust in leadership rather than merely being aesthetic accents.

4.4 Evidentiality and Legitimation

President Tinubu's speech addresses evidentiality of his achievements. He successfully lists economic milestones, which, in a way, statistically proves that he is credible and trustworthy. This economic milestones are categorised into three subheadings for constructive analysis.

4.4.1 Economic Recovery and Reform Evidence

Tinubu provides quantitative economic data to validate the success of his reform agenda. He declares in excerpt 9 that:

Excerpt 9

Under our leadership, **our economy is recovering fast** ...The second quarter **2025 Gross Domestic Product grew by 4.23%** ... **Inflation declined to 20.12%** in August 2025 ...

This use of hard numbers is a clear evidentiality strategy: he offers measurable proof to back up his claims. In doing so, he legitimates his reform path

as effective and grounded in results, enhancing his credibility (ethos) and appealing to rational judgment.

4.4.2 Structural Reform and Fiscal Legitimation

Outlining and framing twelve major economic milestones as the fruit of 'sound fiscal and monetary policies' strengthens his credibility. In the points given by Tinubu as he lists the economic milestones as seen in excerpt 10, his rhetorical dexterity and persuasive strategy play out as he first hints at the nation's foreign reserve status and immediately begins to talk about difference in tax-to-GDP ratio compared to previous years.

Excerpt 10

We have a stronger foreign Reserve position than three years ago. Our external reserves increased to \$42.03 billion this September—the highest since 2019.

Obviously, he uses this strategy to advertise his next economic policy, reminding people of what they should expect from January, 2026. This is confirmed by the subsequent point he gives in excerpt 11.

Excerpt 11

Our tax-to-GDP ratio has risen to 13.5 per cent from less than 10 per cent. **The ratio is expected to increase further when the new tax law takes effect in January.** The tax law is not about increasing the burden on existing tax payers but about expanding the base to build the Nigeria we

deserve and providing tax relief to low-income earners.

Tinubu explains the purpose of the tax law to clarify any misconception the masses could have had about it. Thus, he adds that the tax law will expand the base to build the nation.

Excerpt 12

The tax law is not about increasing the burden on existing taxpayers but about expanding the base to build the Nigeria we deserve and providing tax relief to low-income earners.

Generalising the purpose of this tax reform policy presents Tinubu as the president who has the masses at heart and prioritises the interests of his country. This aligns with Fairclough's explanation of the social practice dimension of discourse. Tinubu's prioritisation of national interests reflects a nationalistic ideological stance. It also signals an administrative resolve that is socially encompassing, politically accountable, and institutionally legitimate.

4.4.3 Social Investment, Export Diversification, and Institutional Strength

Tinubu also legitimises his government's broader social and development strategy by pointing to gains outside just macro-economics. He says as seen in excerpt 13 his administration has redirected funds towards 'education, healthcare, national security, agriculture, and critical economic infrastructure ... social investment programmes.'

Excerpt 13

Our administration has redirected the economy towards a more inclusive path, channeling money to fund education, healthcare, national security, agriculture, and critical economic infrastructure, such as roads, power, broadband, and social investment programmes.

These references serve both evidential and legitimisation purposes: they show that his reform is not narrow, but multidimensional. By doing this, Tinubu asserts that his administration is not only fiscally responsible, but also socially conscious and forward-looking, legitimising both his economic and social mandate.

4.5 Constructive Sequencing

Constructive sequencing refers to arranging ideas, events, or information in a logical, meaningful, and progressive order so that each part builds on the previous one. It is often used in writing, speech patterns, teaching, and project planning as discussed in Monroe's Motivated Sequence (MMS) (Monroe, 1935; Monroe & Ehninger, 1967). MMS is a practical model for structuring persuasive speeches. It was developed by Alan H. Monroe in the 1930s to 40s as a step-by-step method to motivate an audience to take action. According to Monroe, the five steps for selective persuasion are: *Attention, Need, Satisfaction, Visualisation, Action*. It is observed that President Tinubu's strategic sequencing aligns with Monroe's Motivated

Sequence, and this implies that his speech is structurally persuasive.

4.5.1 Attention as a Persuasive Strategy

This step aims to capture the audience's interest. The speaker uses stories, questions, statistics, or quotations to make the audience pay attention. President Tinubu begins by invoking a powerful, unifying vision rooted in Nigeria's history as found in excerpt 14:

Excerpt 14

Today marks the 65th anniversary of our great nation's Independence ... let us remember their sacrifice, devotion, and grand dream of a strong prosperous, and united Nigeria ... that will lead Africa and be the beacon of light to the rest of the world.

He calls on the founding heroes: 'Herbert Macaulay, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, and other nationalists' to remind Nigerians of their shared legacy. This opening captures attention by appealing to national pride and collective memory, setting an emotional and ideological foundation.

4.5.2 Need as a Persuasive Strategy

The speaker shows that a problem exists and that it affects the audience. This step creates a sense of urgency by explaining the gap between the current situation and what should be. After calling the masses' attention, President Tinubu then outlines

the problems Nigeria has faced: social, political, and economic turbulence as seen in excerpt 15.

Excerpt 15

For decades, the promise of our Independence has been tested by profound social, economic, and political challenges, and we have survived.

He acknowledges inherited issues: 'my administration inherited a near-collapsed economy ... distorted by years of policy misalignment.' By highlighting the crises (instability, poor governance, economic collapse), he makes a case that there is a real and urgent need for reform.

4.5.3 Satisfaction as a Persuasive Strategy

Here, the speaker provides a solution to the problem identified in the *Need* step. The goal is to convince the audience that the proposed action or idea can solve the problem. Here, Tinubu offers solutions and evidence that his administration's reforms are working.

He gives macroeconomic data to show recovery: 'The second quarter 2025 Gross Domestic Product grew by 4.23%, Inflation declined to 20.12% in August 2025.' He claims 12 economic milestones: 'We have achieved 12 remarkable economic milestones as a result of the implementation of our sound fiscal and monetary policies.' He also explains how reforms freed up resources as found in excerpt 16.

Except 16

Following the removal of the corrupt petroleum subsidy, we have freed up trillions of Naira for targeted investment ...in the real economy and social programmes for the most vulnerable.

These points satisfy the *Need* by showing that not only there is a problem, but there is a tangible solution, and that solution is already producing results.

4.5.4 Visualisation as a Persuasive Strategy

The speaker helps the audience see the future (either the positive results of adopting the solution or the negative consequences of ignoring it). This step strengthens motivation by painting a vivid picture of outcomes. President Tinubu helps Nigerians imagine a better future if reforms continue as depicted in excerpt 17.

Excerpt 17

We are racing against time. ... We must build the roads we need, repair the ones that have become decrepit, and construct the schools our children will attend and the hospitals that will care for our people ... We have to plan for the generations that will come after us.

President Tinubu also contrasts past difficulties with a hopeful turning point: 'I am pleased to report that we have finally turned the corner. The worst is over, I say. Yesterday's pains are giving way to relief.' By painting a vivid picture of infrastructure, education, and health improvements, he encourages citizens to

visualize the long-term payoffs of his reform agenda.

4.5.5 Action as a Persuasive Strategy

President Tinubu calls on the audience to take specific steps. This could be supporting a policy, adopting a behaviour, or embracing a belief. He issues a call to support his reforms: 'I urge Nigerians to support my administration's reforms; they are crucial to addressing the nation's infrastructure deficit.' He appeals to patriotism, responsibility, and shared sacrifice: building for 'the generations that will come after us.' Implicitly, he asks citizens to endure short-term pain (hardship) for long-term gain, legitimising his policy agenda.

From the above, it is clearly established that President Tinubu uses constructive sequencing as a persuasive tool. His rhetorical style does not only align with Monroe's Motivated Sequence but also aligns with van Dijk's definition of discourse strategy. Van Dijk (1997) defines discourse strategies as patterned ways of organising language to express social meanings, maintain power relations, or construct group identity.

4.6 Summary of the Findings

The study reveals the following findings:

1. Modal verbs such as 'will', 'must', and 'shall' dominate President Tinubu's syntactic choice to

signal obligation and commitment, projecting authority and certainty.

2. In President Tinubu's speech, personal deixes, such as 'we' and 'our', temporal deixis, and spatial deixis are used to build inclusive nationalism and unify diverse audiences (citizens, security personnel, youth). While personal deixes are used to construct collective identity and merge the leader and citizens in a shared struggle, spatial deixis is employed to expand the President's geographic inclusivity, showing that his message covers the entire nation, not just elites or regions. Temporal deictics frame time as transformation.

3. President Tinubu's speech is richly patterned with metaphors of journey, renewal, and construction, which serve to frame Nigeria's socio-political situation as a process of transition from difficulty to recovery. Through these metaphors, he positions himself as both a guide and a fellow traveller in a collective national journey, thereby enhancing persuasion and shared vision.

4. President Tinubu employs evidentiality and legitimisation to foreground his achievements by providing quantitative data to validate the success of his reform agenda.

5. President Tinubu uses constructive sequencing, such as *attention*, *need*, *satisfaction*, *visualisation*, and *action*, as persuasive strategies to capture the audience's interest.

5.0 Conclusion

This study has critically examined the discourse and persuasive strategies in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2025 Independence Day speech, marking Nigeria's 65th Anniversary, through the lens of Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), complemented by insights from van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory and Wodak's discourse-historical approach. The analysis reveals six dominant strategies: deontic/epistemic modality, inclusive language, deictic, metaphorical framing, evidentiality, and constructive sequencing. These strategies collectively enhance the speech's linguistic and persuasive power, enabling President Tinubu to convey certainty, foster unity, bridge gaps between government and citizens, and frame challenges as collective opportunities for growth. By adeptly employing these strategies, Tinubu reinforces his leadership narrative, legitimizes shared responsibility, and inspires hope, ultimately shaping public perception and advancing his policy agenda. The findings underscore the potency of rhetorical choices in political discourse and offer insights into the interplay of language, power, and ideology in shaping national narratives.

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