

## LEXICALISATION AS A TOOL FOR IDEOLOGICAL EXPRESSION IN NEWS

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**ABSTRACT:** *The use of critical discourse analysis has led to the development of a different approach to the understanding of media messages. This study focusses on the deployment of lexical items by the broadcast media to portray the political actors in Osun State, South-western Nigeria. The data for the study centred on politics and are derived from selected radio news of Osun State Broadcasting Corporation, Nigeria. The selection of data was done by purposive sampling and cover the period from 2007 to 2010. This period of time was very significant because of the political activities as a result of the elections in Osun State, Nigeria. A content analysis of the data was carried out at the surface and deep levels using the linguistic approach and critical discourse analysis to bring out the ideologies and the underlying meanings embedded in the texts. The analysis reveals that the news items feature lexical choices projecting positive self-presentation of the ruling political party and negative other-presentation of the opponent.*

**KEYWORDS:** lexical choices, ideology, broadcast media, politics.

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## INTRODUCTION

Lexicalisation is a major and well-known domain of ideological expression and persuasion (van Dijk 1999:25). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has made the study of language, including, media criticism, into an interdisciplinary tool. As noted by Olowe (1993), what the mass media, especially newspaper, radio and television attempt to represent to their audience through the use of language is a complex of ideologies. According to van Dijk (1995), ideologies involve mental objects such as ideas, thoughts, beliefs, judgements and values.

Ideology is a complicated and elusive term with different implications and interpretations according to the context in which it is used. A definition that suits the purpose of this paper is the one given by Eagleton (1991). According to him, ideology denotes the “interest of specific groups and refers to ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolise the conditions and life experiences of specific, socially significant group or class”. It is the promotion and

legitimation of the interests of such social groups in the face of opposing interests (1991:29). Some previous studies that have addressed language and ideology in Nigerian news include Olowe (1993), Taiwo (2007) and Chiluwa (2011). Recent studies include Ehineni's (2014) critical discourse analysis of modals in Nigerian political manifestos and Sharndama's (2015) study which was a critical discourse analysis of Nigeria's President Mohammadu Buhari's inaugural speech.

The Osun State Broadcasting Corporation (OSBC) is located in Osogbo, the capital of Osun State South-western Nigeria. The radio station of the corporation broadcasts news reports at different intervals of the day with a view to disseminating and analysing issues and events of local, national and international importance.

### **The role of language in expressing ideology**

The selection of vocabulary or lexical items, whether neutral or emotionally loaded, signals the speaker's or writer's attitude about a certain topic. Lexical items are therefore, the most obvious and most thoroughly studies forms of (ideological) expression (Mayr 2008:28). Fowler (1991) posits that categorisation by vocabulary is an integral part of the reproduction of ideology in media texts. In the words of Richardson (2007:47), "words convey the imprint of society and of value judgements in particular – they convey connoted as well as denoted meanings". According to Anigbogu (2016), human perceptions and ideas are communicated more effectively through the use of language. Effective use of language plays an important role in educating, enlightening, informing and entertainment. As noted by Babatunde (2006:viii), "lexical knowledge is a very crucial basis for comprehension and meaning explication". According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), language construes human experience and enacts our personal and social relationships with the other people around us. Ogunsiji (2001:77) observes that "human language is essentially functional in that language is used for various purposes in the society". According to Caldas-Coulthard (2003), the language of the mass media is one of the most pervasive and widespread discourses that people from all sorts of literate societies are exposed to. Allan, cited in Omenugha (2007:167) posits:

The language of news can never be ideologically 'neutral'. Rather, each word of the news accounts for a 'two sided act' in that it is continuously oriented towards an addressee, that is, it is conditioned by whose word it is and for whom it is meant. The meaning of a word can never be affixed once and for all, as it is actively negotiated through the reciprocal relationship between addresser and addressee.

Language use, apart from being form and meaning also means act and action, that is, speech acts, and sociologists insist that language use is essentially a form of social interaction, most fundamentally in the form of everyday interaction. The ideological content of news reflects the interest of those who finance and manage the press.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The data for this study are drawn from the radio news of the Osun State Broadcasting Corporation, Osogbo, Nigeria. A total number of twenty news items covering political issues and which spanned the period from 2007 to 2010 were purposively sampled for analysis. This period of time witnessed the regime of Olagunsoye Oyinlola of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as the Governor of Osun State of Nigeria. The analytical framework adopted for the study is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using van Dijk's (1995) concept of ideology.

Critical discourse analysis is the uncovering of implicit ideologies in texts; it exposes ideological bias and the exercise of power in texts.

### **van Dijk's concept of social cognition**

According to van Dijk (1995), ideologies are the overall abstract mental systems that organise socially shared attitudes and which indirectly influence the personal cognition of group members in their acts of comprehension of discourse among other actions and interactions. He calls the mental representations of individuals during such actions and interactions 'models' which according to him control how people act, speak or write, or how they understand the social practices of others. He states further that mental representations are often articulated along "US versus THEM" dimension, in which speakers of one group will generally tend to present themselves or their own group in positive terms and other group in negative term. This he further explicates in the strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. In order to enable a more subtle ideological analysis in the expression of ideology, he gives the following principle:

- Emphasise positive things about Us.
- Emphasise negative things about Them.
- De-emphasise negative things about Us.
- De-emphasise positive things about Them. (van Dijk 2000:44)

He explains further that discourse has many ways to emphasise or de-emphasise meanings, and as soon as these have an ideological basis, we are able to analyse the expression of ideology on many levels of discourse.

### **Data Analyses**

#### **Lexical Choices and Collocations**

The OSBC radio news features different lexical items and collocations which bring out significant meanings in the texts. These are highlighted in the underlined expressions in the following news texts:

#### **Text 1:**

**The PDP National Chairman, Dr. Ekwesilieze Nwodo has described Osun State Governor, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola as a pace-setter among all the governors in the country, saying that this is why the state is developing at a galloping rate. (The news at dawn 06-11-2010).**

#### **Text 2:**

**Engr. Ayegoro highlighted some of the tremendous achievements of Governor Oyinlola in the areas of potable water and declaration of Osun State as guinea-worm-free state and the best state in B-field zone to have good record by the UNICEF. (The news across the country. 05-02-2010).**

**Text 3:**

**A message of goodwill signed by the Chairman and Secretary, Alhaji Ismail Ayodele and Elder Tunde Oguntomi described the celebrant as a worthy leader and a man of the people.**

**(The Home news. 03-02-2010).**

**Text 4:**

**In a statement issued by his Press Secretary, Mr. Olumide Ajayi, Honourable Bello noted that the exemplary life of Prince Oyinlola is a testimony for others to emulate.**

**(The news at Dawn. 05-10-2009)**

In the examples given above, we have the use of lexical items projecting the good image of Governor Oyinlola. For example, referring to Oyinlola as a pace-setter (Text 1) portrays him as a leader and somebody worthy of emulation. This quality is then tied to the development of the state which was at a 'galloping rate'. This implies that Osun State is developing at a very fast rate due to the outstanding qualities of the governor. In Text 2, the adjective 'tremendous' collocates with the noun 'achievements' to paint a picture of great and impressive performance of the governor. To have a 'good record by the UNICEF' places Osun State in a top position among all other states in the country. Also the reference to Governor Oyinlola as a worthy leader and a man of the people presents him as a respectable person who deserves the people's respect and somebody who is loved and admired. The expression of Oyinlola's good image is further projected in the statement – 'the exemplary life of Prince Oyinlola is a testimony'. This implies that Oyinlola's achievements and style of administration should be copied by others.

Also, the news texts exhibit lexical items that are used to highlight and portray the government positively. This can be seen in the following:

immense human and material potential of the country.

enviable leadership

leadership position

sustainable youth development

job creators

country's polity

functional and qualitative education

economic prosperity

democratic process

self sufficiency

greatest good

enhanced performance

self employed

self reliant

political arena

tremendous assistance

developed economy

arduous task

The lexical items – self-employed, self-reliant, job creators, refer to the activities of the government in encouraging the people, especially the youths to earn a living by working independently or by running a business. The contexts of usage of these items can be seen in the following:

**Text 5:**

**Represented by the Director of Grassroots and Public Enlightenment, Mrs Moji Fakokunde, the Permanent Secretary said the training programme was meant to train the participants to become self-employed and self-reliant. Dr Babatunde pointed out that the country is faced with economic problems, hence the need for the youths to become job**

**creators and turn the country to a producer rather than a nation of consumers foreign goods.**

**(The News at dawn 05-02-2010).**

The above projects the welfarist ideology of the government in catering for the needs of the people. This is further portrayed in the following:

**Text 6:**

**The present administration in Osun State would continue to give attention to the growth and enhanced performance of all aspects of agriculture to ensure self-sufficiency in livestock production and exportation of food and cash crops.**

**(News across the country 15-07-2009).**

The above suggests that the Osun State government values agriculture and will therefore, encourage the farmers in agricultural production to cater for the needs of the people. The expression – ‘ensuring self sufficiency in livestock production ... cash crops’ connotes that people in the state will have food in abundance and also in excess for importation. The effort of Governor Oyinlola and his administration towards the economic development of the state is highlighted in the underlined lexical items in the following extracts.

**Text 7:**

**Prince Oyinlola expressed the optimism that partnering with a developed economy, such as Pennsylvania, would boost the economy of Osun State and uplift the standard of living of the people.**

**(News across the country 01-07-2009)**

**Text 8:**

**The event saw the Osun State Governor, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola assuring that his administration would continue to work in consortium with willing private investors with a view to propelling the state to economic prosperity.**

**(State news 20-08-2009).**

**Text 9:**

**Prince Oyinlola, in his Goodwill message in the occasion of the country’s independence anniversary reminded Nigerians of the immense human and material potential of the country which he said had positioned the nation for enviable leadership in the Committee of nations.**

**(The news at dawn. 01-10-2008).**

**Text 10:**

**He added that very few countries in the world were as well endowed as Nigeria, stressing that with determination, faith and steadfastness, the nation would take its leadership position among countries of the world. Oyinlola restated his administration’s resolve to continue to promote the greatest good for the people.**

**(The news at dawn 01-10-2008).**

The collocations, developed economy and economic prosperity in the above texts suggest that Osun State government is not lagging behind in the plan for economic uplift of the state. The expression – ‘with a view to propelling the state to economic prosperity’, with the use of the lexical verb **propelling** connotes that the state will experience a kind of action that will move it forward speedily.

The use of the expression ‘immense human and material potential of the country’ strategically places Nigeria in a higher position among the nations of the world. The collocations enviable leadership and leadership position also project Nigeria as a country to be emulated. In Text 10, the abstract nouns determination, faith and steadfastness are employed to attract the attention of the listeners. The employment of these lexical items and collocations are used to highlight the ideology of the government / the ruling political party.

Lexicalisation is also used strategically to portray and describe the actions of the opposition political party. We have expressions such as: ‘*opposition candidates, reported inconsistencies, serious objection, manipulated electoral register*’ etc. as manifested in the following texts:

**Text 11:**

**Counsel for Osun State chapter of PDP, Mallam Yusuf Alli, SAN, today took serious objection to the attempt by AC counsel to scuttle justice in the trial of the petition by Rauf Aregbesola.**

**(News across the country 04-02-2010).**

**Text 12:**

**The objective was sequel to the alleged manipulated electoral register that the AC counsel, Mr. Rotimi Akeredolu, SAN, attempted to use to cross examine a witness called by PDP to maintain its defence against the charge of electoral disturbance which the AC ward supervisors brought against some members of the party.**

**(News across the country 04-02-2010).**

**Text 13:**

**This is sequel to complaints by a number of agents of the opposition candidates on the basis of the reported inconsistencies on the voters’ register which prevented many eligible voters from exercising their voting rights.**

**(The news at dawn 08-02-2010).**

Some of these collocations carry negative connotations. For example, the adjective ‘manipulated’ in the phrase ‘manipulated electoral register’ portrays the AC as fraudulent. It suggests that the AC has falsified the register, probably for the party to win at the Tribunal. It also projects the party members as criminals who should be prosecuted. To ‘scuttle’ in the collocation - scuttle justice suggests destruction and implies that the opposition party, i.e. the AC is destructive. The negative collocations are aimed at silencing the opponents by attacking their position.



**Text 14:**

**Osun State Deputy Governor. Erelu Olusola Obada has re-emphasised that the present government will not set vengeance on anybody but continue her development projects across the state.**

**Erelu Obada stated this in her office while receiving Ibodi Traditional Council, headed by Oba Ibiwonke Ajibike who paid her a courtesy call to celebrate the victory of PDP in the just concluded general elections.**

**According to the Deputy Governor, the present government places high premium on the well being of the entire citizenry irrespective of socio-political differences.**

**The Deputy Governor, who assured that the Oyinlola led government will always extend its hand of love and affection to all without sentiment added that the government is to care for all, not people of the same political ideology alone. She then admonished Ijesa people to be more united and focussed for the area to enjoy more progress and peace.  
(The News at dawn, 01-05-2007)**

The above report is a typical political-ideological move that tries to win over the opposition by emphasising the political power and moral superiority of Erelu Obada and the party she represents. The extract contains the strategy of manipulation and as rightly observed by van Dijk (2006), one crucial cognitive condition of manipulation is that the targets (persons, groups etc) of manipulation are made to believe that some actions and policies are in their own interests, whereas in fact they are in the interests of the manipulators and their associates. He states further:

Of importance in such a case is that the (real) interest and benefits of those in control of the manipulation process are hidden, obscured or denied, whereas the alleged benefits for 'all of us', 'for the nation' etc are emphasised (2006:370).

Thus, the positive reference to the party (PDP) or praise of the government and its principles is to enhance the party's credibility. The expression that the present government 'will not seek vengeance on anybody...' as contained in the first paragraph amounts to trying to win the support of people who probably did not cast their votes for the PDP in the general elections. Also the admonition given by Erelu Obada to Ijesa people 'to be more united and focussed' is an indirect way of telling them to support the PDP. There is an implication here that supporting any other party amounts to lack of focus. The use of the verb **assured** is to further convince the people and to substantiate the claim earlier made by the deputy governor.

**Positive Self-presentation and negative Other-presentation**

This strategy is typical in giving biased account in favour of the speaker's or writer's interest while blaming negative situations and event on the opponents (van Dijk 2006). The strategy is found and analysed in the following:

**Text 15:**

**Nigerian politicians have been advised to imbibe the spirit of forgiveness whenever there is a disagreement in their fold.**

**Architect Goke Omigbodun a former chieftain of the Action Congress now in the Peoples Democratic Party stated this while featuring on a personality interview programme on OSBC Television Ch. 32 UHF.**

**Architect Omigbodun who claimed he had to leave his former party because of the inconsistency and undue imposition of candidates by the party hierarchy, crossed over to the PDP because of its large heartedness towards its members, especially the aggrieved ones.**

**According to him, the posture of Osun State Governor, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola is such that no politician can fault his capital as well as human developments.**

**(The World at Noon 01-04-2007)**

In this extract, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is represented as accommodating, consistent, law abiding and adhering to democratic processes, while the opponent, the Action Congress (AC) is portrayed as inconsistent and undemocratic. According to this report, Architect Omigbodun ‘had to leave his former party (AC) because of the inconsistency and undue imposition of candidates by the party and crossed over to the (PDP) because of its large heartedness towards its members’. This statement in the third paragraph of the extract carries the notion that the PDP is more reliable, more accommodating and democratic in contrast to the Action Congress; hence the advice in the first paragraph – ‘Nigerian politicians have been advised to imbibe the spirit of forgiveness whenever there is disagreement in their fold’. It presupposes that the AC as a party lacks the spirit of forgiveness and this led to the defection of its members to the opposing party – the PDP.

The last statement in the extract – ‘According to him ... as well as human development’ reinforces the notion of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation as Governor Oyinlola and his party - the PDP are presented positively while the AC and its members are presented negatively. The ideology that underlies this statement is one which projects the People’s Democratic Party as being superior to the other parties. We note the phrase **large heartedness** in ‘...crossed over to the PDP because of its large heartedness towards its members especially the aggrieved ones’. The PDP was the ruling party in the state at that period of time and as such politicians especially the ones in the opposing parties would want to associate themselves with the party so as to enjoy the benefits of being members of the party. Thus the PDP cannot but have a ‘large heart’ that can accommodate people. Also ‘their’ (Action Congress) negative actions are made more prominent, whereas ‘our’ (i.e. People Democratic Party’s) negative actions are de-emphasised. This is an example of ‘emphasising our good things, and de-emphasising our bad things’ which according to van Dijk (2004), is using a positive generalisation in order to mitigate the effect of a specific negative act. Ehineni (2014) notes that in the political terrain, language is used to capture certain messages, convey promises, reflect beliefs and foreground political ideologies.



**Text 16:**

**The State Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Ademola Rasaq has described recent calls by the Action Congress (AC) that the election petition tribunal venue be shifted to the state Police headquarters as a political subterfuge which should be dismissed outrightly.**

**The Chairman, in a release by the party's Director of Publicity, Prince Adeolu Adeyemo, indicates that it is laughable that the AC rather than showing concern for the welfare of judicial workers and appreciating Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola's peace meeting that led to the suspension of their strike, the AC is imputing sinister motive for their alleged resumption of strike.**

**It would be recalled that the AC had on Monday agitated for the shift of the venue of the election petition Tribunal.  
(The State News. 10-02-2010)**

In this extract, the PDP is represented positively while the AC is represented negatively. The call by the Action Congress for the change of venue of the election petition tribunal is seen as an evil and malevolent act by the Peoples Democratic Party. While Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola of the PDP is portrayed as peace loving and caring, the opposition party – the Action Congress portrayed as insensitive. The noun phrase – ‘political subterfuge’ as contained in the first paragraph suggests that the AC has a hidden agenda and an ulterior motive by its actions. The expression – ‘that the Action Congress rather than showing concern for the welfare of judicial workers...’ carries the implication that the Action Congress is insensitive and callous, while the PDP is portrayed as welfarist. According to Sharndama (2015), political discourse is as a result of politics; it is historically and culturally defined and it fulfills different functions due to different political activities.

In the first paragraph, we have the use of apposition in - ‘The State Chairman...Alhaji Ademola Rasaq’. Apposition, according to Alo (2007) is a major linguistic tool for representing and identifying people in the media. The position as well as the responsibilities of the person is given by the journalist before mentioning the names. The employment of the adjective ‘laughable’ in the second paragraph and the verb ‘agitated’ in the last paragraph implies that the action of the AC is ridiculous and that is also an attempt to arouse public feeling.

**Positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation with Lexicalisation**

The OSBC radio news texts feature lexical choices used to represent the ruling political party positively and the opponents negatively. Some examples are presented below:

**Lexical items representing positive self-presentation**

good governance	PDP's large heartedness
enviable state	improved technology
economic advancement	rightful living
good work	good performance
prevailing peace	visionary leader
astute administrator	positive impacts
leadership quality	selfless service
improved standard of education	

**Lexical items representing negative other-presentation**

aggrieved politicians	unpatriotic people
election rigging	noise
opposition political parties	violent demonstration
political thugs	miscreants
cannon fodders	desperate politicians
controversial poll	hell bent
battlefield	gruesome murder
pockets of violence	selfish ends
unleash terror	attack by members of an opposition party
lukewarm attitude of past governments	rival party

The contexts of usage of some of the lexical items listed above are illustrated in the following texts:

**Text 17:**

**Osun State chapter of the Peoples' Democratic Party has commended the people of the state for identifying with the good work of Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola.**

According to him, the contribution of PMAN and the large turnout of people who witnessed the Democracy Day Rally is a testimony to good performance and the prevailing peace and security in the state.

(The news across the country. 31-0-2009)

**Text 18:**

**The state wing of Nigerian Union of Teachers has congratulated Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola on his 59<sup>th</sup> birthday.**

In a statement by the caretaker committee... the union described the Okuku born prince as a visionary leader and astute administrator whose style of governance has helped to wipe tears and sorrow from the face of all public servants in Osun State... The statement added that teachers in the state will never forget Prince Oyinlola for his positive impacts on their lives ....

(The State news. 23-05-2010)

**Text 19:**

**Osun State Police Command has been charged to ensure adequate security of life and property in the state. Chairman Osun State Peoples Democratic Party Alhaji Ademola Rasaq gave the charge in a release issued in Osogbo. The release is sequel to an alleged attack by members of an opposition party on some innocent members of the public. Alhaji Ademola accused the gubernatorial candidate of a rival party of importing political thugs who dressed in mobile police uniform to the state to unleash terror on the public.**

(The news at dawn. 25-05-2007)

**Text 20:**

**The conference of Nigeria political parties in Osun State today counselled aggrieved politicians who are hell bent in turning Osun State to a battle field for their selfish ends to desist from such acts. The call was made today when representatives of the NPP paid a solidarity visit on the state Governor Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola in his office.**

**(The news across the country. 09-07-2009)**

The underlined words in the above news texts show how lexicalisation is used to project pro-government ideologies and manipulate the audience. The texts reveal the employment of lexical items such as ‘good work’, ‘good performance’, ‘prevailing peace’, ‘visionary leader’, ‘statute administrator’ etc to emphasise the positive qualities of Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola. On the other hand, derogatory terms such as ‘rival party’, ‘opposition party’, ‘aggrieved politicians’ etc are used to refer to the opponents. These are mainly used by journalists to express their ideological position and that of the political ruling class. Following Fowler and Hodge (1979:188), we can infer from the news texts that lexical choices ‘are consciously or unconsciously principled and systematic’. We can thus deduce that lexical choices in the news texts are ideological based.

**CONCLUSION**

Media discourse contains ideologically based opinions which are often hidden or implied. The analysis revealed that lexical choices employed in the news serve the purpose of projecting the ideology of the government. Findings from the study revealed the use of linguistic devices of lexicalisation and collocations to foreground the ideology. It also revealed that the news reports contain latent and subjective meanings that highlight government activities and ideology. Lexical choices in the report were used for positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation in giving biased account of the facts in favour of the writer’s or speaker’s interest, while blaming negative situations and events on the others. Information that portrays the interest group in a negative way or the opposition in a positive way tends to remain implicit, de-emphasised, hidden and vague, while information that portrays the interest group positively or the opposition negatively are made explicit, emphasised, topicalised and given detailed attention in news reports. The study revealed that OSBC radio news conveys ideological meanings and postures of the political ruling class.

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