

## Vision for Sustainable Development: Pragmatic Strategies of Media Political Competitive Encounter

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### Abstract

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Media Debate is an evolving pattern of political discourse in Nigeria that deserves being studied in order to address the discursive and pragmatic strategies of language indexing it. This is capable of revealing the motivations of the stances expressed by participants, thus providing clearer insights into their positions on issues. Existing works have hitherto concentrated on campaign speeches and interviews of individual candidates to the neglect of competitive encounters. This is a gap this study attempts to fill. The study adopts a combination of Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness and facework, Watts' (2003, 2005) relational work and frame theory. The final session of the Ondo State governorship election media debate of 2012 involving the three major political parties formed the bulk of the data. The data was electronically recorded and transcribed into the written mode for analysis. Two types of verbal behaviour (polite and impolite), projected by three context-driven politeness strategies (persuasive, offensive and defensive), marked contestants' utterances. While persuasive politeness strategy (exemplified by promising and testimonial argument) projects polite verbal behaviour, offensive and defensive politeness strategies (deployed by contestants to categorise and construct one another as corrupt, inept, incompetent, unfit, dishonest, deceitful) project impolite verbal behaviour.

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**Keywords:** Election media debate; Relational work; Politeness and facework; Framing; Ondo State governorship election media debate

### 1.0 Introduction

Political campaigning in the past two decades has assumed a new dimension with the introduction of media debates into the election campaign system in Nigeria. The media political debate is a more sophisticated and effective method than the previous person to person and political rallies methods because it affords candidates the opportunity to reach thousands of electorate at different locations at the same time, using the mass media. Its introduction into the political campaign strategies in Nigeria has also afforded the public the opportunity to interact with candidates of various party affiliations in a widely publicised media debates on radio and television. In spite of the high volume of scholarly works in this domain, scholars are yet to examine the language use of media political debate. As an evolving pattern of political discourse, it becomes important to account for the discourse engagements of participants in order to address the discursive and pragmatic strategies of language indexing it. This is capable of revealing the conceptual and cognitive motivations of the stances expressed by participants, thus providing clearer insights into their positions on issues.

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## 2.0 Perspectives on Political Discourse

Scholarly works on political discourse have been from various perspectives. Existing works in Nigeria have concentrated on campaign speeches, press addresses and interviews of individual candidates to the neglect of media competitive encounters. As a new entrant into the political campaigning system in Nigeria, its introduction has created a gap in scholarship in that new forms of strategies are being employed by participants to outwit one another in the encounter. This is a gap that this study attempts to fill.

Writing on the language of politics, Beard (2000: 57) avers that "all the written and spoken texts that are produced during an election campaign are designed to persuade people to do one thing: to vote in a certain way". Harrison & McSweeney, (2005) identify public meetings, open air rallies, posters, newspapers, media reporting, party web-site, letter and telephone and election literature as other contemporary possible methods for persuading voters during election campaigns. Van Dijk (2000) studies the text and context of the British House of Commons' March 5, 1997 debate on Asylum Seekers. The study which adopts the cognitive contextual model, notes that the conversations of Members of Parliament (MP) during debates are characterised by overall domain, global action, setting, current action, participants and their roles identity, goals, and knowledge. It concludes that MP share much of the knowledge and beliefs about the contexts they construct through which they interpret how other members define the situation of a parliamentary debate. In a burckean analysis of Ronald Reagan's 'Tear down this wall' speech, Schoniecki and Colledge (2004) identified the relevance of the context of the speech which was delivered against the backdrop of the cultural history of the Americans and how it culminates in the opening of the Berlin wall. Also, Van Dijk (2002) studies parliamentary debates about ethnic affairs and immigration. The paper examines some of the discursive mechanisms involved in the enactment of racism as well as how it is challenged in contemporary Western Europe. It concludes, among others, that parliamentary discourse helps in shaping the minds of individuals, groups and institutions and the public at large.

Also, scholarly works in Nigeria have hitherto concentrated on campaign speeches and interviews of individual candidates to the neglect of media political competitive encounters among candidates. Opeibi (2006) has observed that, "with the resuscitation of democratic activities in 1999, the competitive nature of recent election campaigns and the winners-take-all-syndrome that characterised the 2003 elections, many of the political candidates abandoned positive, issue-focused, image-building adverts for direct attacks on their opponents". Awonusi (1996) examines the language of advertising in Nigeria's political transition programme. The study which focuses on the use of advertisement to project the image of politicians to voters concludes that, in political advertising, people's political image can be packaged and marketed like those of commercial products and that the notion and deception in advertising is perhaps more prominent in political advertising than product advertising. Opeibi (2004) examines the discourse features and patterns in the political texts produced in English during the 1993 presidential election campaigns in Nigeria. The study focuses on the identification of how Nigerian politicians use the English language to persuade and woo the electorate while explaining the relationship between the use of language and the achievement of communicative goals. Also, Opeibi (2006) examines the impact of negative campaign (advertising) on the Nigerian electorate. The study provides a structural and functional description of the significant features of language use in the political campaign texts of 2003. He observes that factors such as the level of education of voters, political literacy, content and structure of the adverts, personality of the sponsor (and/or the political candidate) are responsible for differential attitudes of voters towards negative adverts.

The present study is significant in that it examines the pragmatic strategies deployed by participants in the management of their face and that of their opponents in the Ondo State Governorship Election Debate of 2012. This is with the view to further enhance a better understanding of campaign communication in Nigeria. The findings can be of great value especially to politicians on strategies to obtaining outstanding performance in media political competitive encounters. It will also be of pedagogical importance in language and mass communication classes as well as in political science and related fields. The study adopts a combination of Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness and facework, Watts' (2003, 2005) relational work and frame theory. The data was drawn from the Ondo State Governorship Election Media Debate of 2012 which was electronically recorded, transcribed into the written mode and subjected to pragmatic analysis.

The debate was conducted in two batches as a result of the long list of candidates for the election. However, only the final session which involves the three major political parties was selected for analysis due to time and space. The three political parties and their candidates are as follows:

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP)  | - Olusola Oke      |
| 2. Labour Party (LP)                | - Olusegun Mimiko  |
| 3. Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) | - Rotimi Akeredolu |

### 3.0 Theoretical Orientation

Media political competitive encounter is a formal or structured social process in which politicians seeking elective positions are not only made to face the mass public (electorate), but also have to contend with other speakers (co-contestants) in a widely publicised media political debate. In the first place, the encounter with other co-contestants in a question and answer session of this nature is seen as an opportunity for a contestant to prove that he or she is a better choice than other co-contestants. It is therefore, common in this type of encounter for contestants to exhibit verbal behaviour such as confrontations, criticisms, condemnations, accusations, rudeness and aggression etc which may constitute a threat to the face of another contestant. Also, the encounter is an opportunity for the electorate to meet their prospective representatives and critically assess them in order to make informed choices during election. Corroborating this, Mullany (2002:10) avers that "in political interviews, it is not the interest of participants to pay mutual attention to each other's face needs." Also, the debate is usually a campaign outlet for participants; an avenue for them to defend their manifestoes in a game of wit and mental contest. It is an opportunity to persuade the electorate to vote for them hence, the need to deploy both linguistic and discourse resources to achieve this aim. Therefore, a detailed pragmatic analysis of the utterances of participants in a media political debate would require a combination of theories namely; politeness and facework, relational work and frame theory.

In the framework of Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is conceived as a way of controlling potential aggression between interactants. Their face work model considers politeness as a way of mitigating threats. According to them, every individual has two types of faces -positive and negative. Positive face has to do with individual's desire, what he/she wants to be appreciated in social interaction while negative face relates to individual's desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition. Their conceptualisation of *politeness* and *face* entails a set of rational strategies used to reduce or mitigate the potentially unwelcomed effects of face-threatening. Participants in our data deploy language resources to boost their image (Face Saving Act) as a way of persuading their audience (electorate) to vote for them.

In a related model, Locher and Watts (2005) considered politeness as an aspect of relational work that has to do with interpersonal meaning. According to them; relational work refers to "Work" individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others. Human beings rely on others to be able to realize their goals and aspirations and as social beings they will naturally orient themselves towards others in pursuing these goals. Indulging in social practice, they need not be aware of, and indeed are frequently oblivious of, their reliance on others.

Unlike Brown and Levinson's model, relational work is situated within social theory. Hence, Odebunmi (2009:342) observes that "the theory is broader than facework, and is capable of handling directedness, impoliteness, rudeness/aggressiveness and impolite interaction, including verbal behaviours that are either appropriate or inappropriate". Two types of behaviour are identified in relational work, namely, marked (polite) and unmarked (politic or appropriate). Odebunmi (2009) has however, distinguished three aspects of relational works anchored to context; namely: *politic* (appropriate) *verbal behaviour*, *polite verbal behaviour* and *impolite verbal behaviour*. As noted above, in media political competitive encounters, participants do not pay attention to each other's face needs and attacking each other's position is a frequent and expected occurrence and this does not result in conversational breakdown. Therefore, it is possible for a verbal behaviour to be impolite and face threatening yet, it may be a politic (appropriate) act as can be found in the context of competitive encounter which our data typifies. Also, in competitive encounters, contestants express certain stances which are motivated by the way they perceive issues. It becomes necessary therefore, to examine the conceptual and cognitive motivations for the stances of contestants in our data in order to be able to provide clearer insights into their positions. This explains relevance of Frame theory (Framing).

Framing is regarded as the construction of social reality. It is the process by which people develop a particular perspective of an issue. Chong and Druckman (2007:104) aver that “the major premise of framing theory is that an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and be construed as having implications for multiple values or considerations”. Within the realm of political communication, framing is conceptualised as social constructivism. Framing is an interactive model of construction of social reality, involving the individual, society and the mass media. This is why it (framing) is often regarded as a theory of media effects. According to McQuail (1994:331), mass media have a strong impact by constructing social reality, that is, by framing images of reality...in a predictable and patterned way. Also, Tuchman, (1978:ix) has observed that mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events. The framing and manner of presentation of news and events in the mass media can affect the way readers (individuals) come to understand such news or events. Public speakers, including politicians, also influence individual perception of issues. For example, politicians invoke a “frame in communication” in their attempt to mobilise voters behind their policies by encouraging them to think about those policies along particular lines. Thus, in media political discourse, politicians and the mass media (journalists) are parts of the process by which individuals develop and crystallise meaning in public discourse.

In the section below, the Ondo State governorship media debate of 2012 is subjected to analysis through a combination of theories of politeness and framing.

#### 4.0 Data Analysis and Findings

This section examines the politeness strategies identified in the data and their pragmatic import. The data is characterised by politically-driven issues which include governance, economic and social development, all situated in political and media events. Three politeness strategies are significant in the data, namely, persuasive, offensive and defensive politeness strategies.

##### 4.1 Persuasive Politeness Strategy

As earlier said, media political competitive encounter provides an opportunity for candidates for elections to meet a wide audience and their performance in this exercise may affect their chances at the poll. This explains the reason for employing polite verbal behaviour in their responses to questions that are of particular interest to the electorate. Polite verbal behaviour in this context means behaving in a way that is socially correct by showing understanding of situation, giving due regard to, and care (solidarity) for the feelings of others. Of particular importance to the contestants are the electorate who must be convinced by them that they are worthy of their votes. Persuasion becomes a good strategy to attract the attention and win the trust of the electorate.

Two types of persuasive strategies are significant in our data: namely; promising and testimonial argument. Usually, candidates employ promising and testimonial argument to maintain a positive face or achieve face saving acts (positive politeness). It is observed that while all the candidates engage the strategy of promising, the LP candidate (incumbent governor) Dr. Olusegun Mimiko and the PDP candidate Olusola Oke also employ the testimonial argument. Let us examine the following examples. (*Italics mine*)

Example 1: Olusola Oke; People’s Democratic Party (PDP)

About three and half years ago, Ondo State lost an opportunity of a government that was taking it to a new level. Our educational system had started functioning effectively. Our health sector was on the right direction. Employment generation was taken to the peak... Suddenly, there is a downward trend in Ondo State. Our economy has no... There is a high rate of unemployment. There is poverty everywhere in the land...  
*My government will acquire large hectares of land, clear it, prepare it, provide infrastructures and encourage private individuals at very cheap rate to build their houses on such plots of land. I will also make it very easy for our citizens to access the federal mortgage loan.*

Example 2: Rotimi Akeredolu; Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)

When we come to office, *we would address the housing problem* as we have in the rural areas... we must provide for them houses at cheaper rate for their own living so that we make farming more attractive to younger people, so everybody can come there and farm. ... *So, the government under my watch will look at that possibility of revamping housing in the rural areas.*

Example 3: Olusegun Mimiko; Labour Party (LP)

*What we have done* is to put together a strategy to be able to fill this gap. One, through direct construction: *we have empowered* the housing Corporation here to start reconstruction of houses. And if you go to Ilekun, in Oda Road, the housing units are ready... Number two, is through P.P.P. Getting private sector to partner with us. We taking care of infrastructure and providing land as equity. *We have completed and commissioned* more than 200 housing units in Oba-Ile...

Example 4: Olusola Oke; People's Democratic Party (PDP)

*We will ensure* that projects that are designed to tackling this problem are immediately designed by government and we see it as an emergency area. ... *What government will do is to make adequate budgetary provision* for tackling the various ecological problems ravaging this state so that we can prevent disaster from occurring in this state. In this regards, *I will immediately review the budget* to ensure that good sum is budgeted for erosion control in Ondo State.

Example 5: Olusegun Mimiko; Labour Party (LP)

Concerning flood, erosion and other environmental degradation, let me say *I will continue to do what I have been doing in the last 3 ½ years.* Let me first of all thank my colleague in P.D.P for accommodating the fact that we have not witnessed flooding in this state in the last 2, 3 years. He has thanked God for it, yes, but God has used some of us as instrument to do that. *Let me tell you* that in 2008, the level of rainfall was lower than what we had in 2007, 2010, 2011, but if you would recall in 2008/2009, there was massive flooding in Akure here. The same thing in Ondo, the old Ijomu area was almost under water. But *what we have done is to do proactive channelisation.* That is why in spite of the fact that the last 2 years have witnessed unprecedented custom of rainfall in this state, we have not experienced flooding in Ondo State. And we will continue to work along that line. In 2011 alone, we planted 1 million trees. *As I speak with you, this year we have distributed* 660,000 trees in "one house, one tree programme" and we are encouraging our people to plant trees.

The candidates in the examples above employ positive politeness strategies of promising and testimonial argument to maintain their good image as well as the image of their parties. Since their main intention is to persuade the electorate, their utterances are therefore politic or appropriate given the context of the data as a campaign text. A candidate may employ language resources to endear himself/herself to the electorate either by identifying with the plight of the electorate or by convincing them of his/her ability to improve on their situation. The extracts above are part of the candidates' responses to the question: "*Can you please share with the people of Ondo State your vision for Ondo state today, tomorrow towards sustainable development and general wellbeing of the citizens of this state?*" Contestants jointly co-construct the socio-political and economic reality of the state which include problems of housing, education, health and unemployment. By engaging in promising, contestants in the data are able to influence the electorate and hoodwink them into taking decisions that are beneficial to the contestants They engage in promising by deploying phrases with futuristic semantic implications using the modal auxiliary verbs *will* and *would* such as, 'we would address...', 'My government will acquire...', 'I will continue...', 'We will ensure...', etc (*see the italicised portions in the extracts*). Sometimes, politicians maintain their positive face (face-saving act) by making sweeping statements intended to hoodwink the electorate into accepting their offer. Sometimes, such statements are usually too generalised, vague or non specific as in example 4 where the speaker did not actually make any concrete promise on his plans to tackle the problem of flood and erosion in the state.

Again, Dr. Mimiko and the candidate of PDP, Olusola Oke, co-jointly construct the state as free from erosion in their response to the question: *What will be your blueprint to tackle this huge natural disaster?* While they jointly co-construct the state as free from this problem, the moderator sees it on the contrary judging by the thesis statement (*Some parts of Ondo State are experiencing devastating gully erosion*) which introduced the question.

Another face-saving act (positive politeness) manifesting as persuasive strategy employed in the data is testimonial technique which is found in the responses of the LP and the PDP candidates. Testimonial argument is appropriate/politic in this context as it serves to boost the face want of the speaker usually without any threat to the face of other candidates.

For example, Mimiko (LP) employs the richness of language to protect his interests and policies and to boost his image. He makes specific reference to some of his achievements in office especially his efforts on the economic and social development of the state. For instance in example 3, he said;

*And if you go to Ilekun, in Oda Road, the housing units are ready... Number two, is through P.P.P. Getting private sector to partner with us. We are taking care of infrastructure and providing land as equity. We have completed and commissioned more than 200 housing units in Oba-Ile...*

Mimiko's utterances above are politic (appropriate) in achieving a positive face (Face-saving act) Thus, he engages his listeners in a joint co-construction of his performance record; the knowledge of which is shared by them. He also employs the testimonial argument to make promises as in: *I will continue to do what I have been doing in the last 3 ½ years* (example 5).

As can be seen in the utterance below, the PDP candidate, Olusola Oke, also employs the testimonial arguments to frame the immediate past PDP government in the state led by Dr. Olusegun Agagu as a successful one.

*About three and half years ago, Ondo State **lost an opportunity** of a government that was taking it to a new level. Our educational system **had started functioning effectively**. Our health sector **was on the right direction**. Employment generation **was taken to the peak**...*

Note that it is not the intention of the speaker to threaten the face of the citizens of Ondo State (electorate) as the phrase "lost an opportunity" it may seem.

#### 4.2 Offensive Politeness Strategy

Candidates in media political debate may also engage one another in offensive verbal attacks. Offensive verbal attack is a negative (impolite) politeness strategy and it constitutes a threat (FTA) to the face of an opponent. In this paper, offensive politeness strategy is defined as a verbal attack; usually an onslaught or a fierce assault or aggression, intended either to cause disaffection or ill will towards the offender in order to cause him/her to be angry or feel disgusted and as a result, loose focus or misbehave in the process. Sometimes candidates use language to offend one another and these may cause disaffection, anger and rudeness. However, as expected, it does not lead to a breakdown in communication in competitive encounters since it is a controlled or monitored interaction which is guided by rules of engagement. Instances found in the data manifest in form of framing and blackmailing, accusation and direct attack, criticism and condemnation achieved by unmitigated face threatening act without redress (FTA bald-on-record). The following examples support our claim. (*Italics mine*)

Example 6: Olusegun Mimiko; Labour Party (LP)

*... how my friend AKETI talked about his programme; AKETI is his name, so if a man wakes up and then starts building programmes around his name, so it means that he has not given deep thought to governance. I have always said it that, my colleagues are not ready for governance because there is no philosophical mantra. He is also ROTIMI, he can as well say ROTIMI: R- for Road, O for Ogi, T for Transport and all of that. We are talking of philosophy ..... basis of programme.*

Example 7: Olusola Oke; People's Democratic Party (PDP)

Ondo state undoubtedly is blessed with abundant mineral resources. The conception of Olokola project was meant to expose the coastal resources of this state, and to expose the opportunities for this state. Olokola Filtrate Zone was meant to produce a refinery ... Ondo State has been accountable for not less than between 5 and 10% (sic) of the oil production in Nigeria. Unfortunately, this product has not enhanced the capacity of the welfare of the people of Ondo State. That project was conceived by our administration to attract investment in this sector to Ondo State. *Regrettably that project was abandoned by the present administration.*

Example 8: Rotimi Akeredolu; Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)

*You have all and all listened to the governor of this state. He has admitted to you all that he has failed to attract investment to Ondo State in the last 3 ½ years. Can you entrust governance to him again? When will he be in position to attract an investor? ... What I'm saying is simple, this government has failed the people and that is that he could not attract a single investor to tap his mineral resources which he say we all have.*

Example 9: Olusegun Mimiko; Labour Party (LP)

One thing for sure is that I will not wait until people live under bridges here before we provide solution to housing. *I don't blame my colleague because he lives most of his time in Ibadan. If he lives in Ondo State, he would know that our urban centres are already experiencing shortage of accommodation.* As a matter of fact, statistically, I put off the curve, that in urban centers, our housing deficit in terms of quantum will not be less than a 100,000.

Example 10: Rotimi Akeredolu; Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)

The present government did not meet 38 billion. It was left with over 41 billion. In 3½ years, it has received over 600billion and having spent all that, has gone to the money market to raise a loan of 50billion. I know that the full loan of the bond has not been paid to the state government. But I am sure the total amount of money will be taken before the election. The important thing is this, what use was this 50billion or what use was the money released to the government for. To what use have they put that money? We cannot continue to take loan when you don't have capital project...

Participants in the debate engage in impolite verbal behaviour that constitutes FTAs to their opponents. For example in example 6, Olusegun Mimiko comments (*italicised*) on the candidate of ACN, Rotimi Akeredolu, constitute an FTA (bald-on-record) on the face of the latter. Through the technique of framing and blackmailing, the speaker, in a rather sarcastic manner, implicitly categorises Akeredolu as inept, incompetent and lacking in the capacity to rule the state. In example 7, the PDP candidate, Olusola Oke, in a seemingly polite manner, threatens the face (FTA bald-on-record) of the incumbent governor and candidate of the LP by accusing him of ineptitude; not harnessing the potentials of the state for the betterment of the people and abandoning a programme (Olokola), initiated by the immediate past PDP administration of the state (*italicised*). Thus, he constructs the referent as inept, lacking the capacity to coordinate the resources of the state to uplift the standard of living of the citizens. Example 9 also constitutes an FTA (bald-on-record) on the ACN candidate, Rotimi Akeredolu. The LP candidate described him rather sarcastically, as too far away from the state to know the problems of the people. He implicitly labelled the ACN candidate as alien or unfamiliar therefore, unfit for the governorship position. The accusation in example 10 which is also a threat (FTA bald-on-record) to the face of the LP candidate Olusegun Mimiko, is an attempt to frame him as corrupt and incompetent.

### 4.3 Defensive Politeness Strategy

Another form of impolite verbal behaviour found in the data is defensive politeness strategy. This is usually employed by a candidate to counter any offensive onslaught that threatens his or her face. A contestant whose face has been threatened may react either by clarifying issues, refuting allegations levelled against him (rebuttal) or through a counter attack (FTA bald-on-record) on the opponent who made the allegation. Such a contestant may become aggressive, confrontational or even rude in a bid to defend or save his face. Instances of these in the data are presented below with analysis.

Example 11: Olusegun Mimiko; Labour Party (LP)

Let us just say this when my colleague PDP mentioned the word Olokola, I wanted to say never again. *Look for six years, this Olokola was paraded as an abracadabra for solution to all our problems.* Now, this Olokola is about a filtrate zone, is fundamental. There is no question about the fact that the filtrate zone will encourage industrialization and commerce based on tax holiday and the rest. But you need to take some fundamental steps to get there. ... *As I speak with you, my predecessor did not take light to Olokola which is fundamental.* We have awarded the extension of the grid from Alape junction up to Araromi sea side to be able to take light to the filtrate zone. ... *I want to assure you that fundamentally, Olokola is ok, no problem. But there are some basic and fundamental things that we have to do to get it right. Those are the things we are doing.* There are issues with equity structure, you may want to know.

## Example 12: Olusegun Mimiko; Labour Party (LP)

*If anybody says he's saving money, you're keeping 34 billion in the bank in the face of excruciating infrastructural deficit, the cost of building a road today will be more (sic) cheaper than it would be in the next ten years. So, what is the point of your money being there and anyway, you are talking of the credit side, you are not talking of the debit side. You left a debt of more than 117billion but that is not the issue. You must have a coherent strategy to manage them.*

## Example 13: Olusegun Mimiko; Labour Party (LP)

It is obvious to me that even some of the existing ideas are not well digested. Let me just say this straightaway that if anybody talks about inflation of contract and people in government being rich, they can't be referring to me. *I have served the people of this state in many capacities. I have served this country without blemish. No iota of blemish and in terms of value for money, I have gotten (sic) the best value for every Kobo that we have spent in my administration.*

## Example 14: Rotimi Akeredolu; Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)

Ok. I'm sorry, I thought when he'd talked about AKETI, you should have responded. That was a direct attack on me;

Example 11 is the response of the LP candidate to the accusation of the candidate of PDP candidate that as the governor, he has not harnessed the potentials of the state; especially on the oil sector and that he abandoned the Olokola project initiated by the immediate past PDP administration (example 7). The LP candidate responded with a counter attack, an unmitigated threat (FTA bald-on-record) to the face of the PDP candidate and his party. The following extracts from the examples are FTAs:

- i. *I want to assure you that fundamentally, Olokola is ok, no problem. But there are some basic and fundamental things that we have to do to get it right.* It is implicated in the underlined sentence which is a counter FTA on the PDP's candidate that the project was not well planned before the take off. He, however, defends himself by informing his listeners of the steps he is taking to address the issue. (*Those are the things we are doing.*)
- ii. *Look for six years, this Olokola was paraded as an abracadabra for solution to all our problems. ... The interesting thing about Olokola is that for six years that they talked about Olokola, they left no files on Olokola.* Here, speaker classifies the project as a trick thereby framing the PDP government as fraudulent (Counter FTA). The speaker defends himself against the accusation of abandonment of the project by informing his listeners of the steps he has taken so far (*We have awarded the extension of the grid from Alape junction up to Araromi Sea Side to be able to take light to the filtrate zone*).

Example 12 is also a response to an earlier accusation (FTA) in which the LP candidate was accused of financial indiscipline and unguided spending (example 10). His response here is a form of clarification and accusation.

- iii. The response, an FTA, implied that it is foolishness on the part of the immediate past administration to be keeping money in the face of excruciating inflation. This is also an FTA on the PDP candidate and his party that they are not good managers of the economy.
- iv. The utterance, *you left a debt of more than 117billion...* is a counter attack on the PDP candidate that the debit profile of the state under his predecessor was higher than the credit. This implicitly portrays the PDP candidate as dishonest and deceitful (FTA).

The speaker in example 13 simply engages in a face saving act by refuting the allegation of corruption levelled against him and boasts of his impeccable record in his various capacities in public service (*see the italics*). Example 14 is an implicit accusation (FTA) of bias levelled against the moderator. The extract is Akeredolu's response to the moderator who cautioned him that his utterance (example 8) which is a counter attack on the LP candidate was too personal.

## 5.0 Conclusion

So far, this study has examined the discursive and pragmatic strategies of language use indexing media political competitive encounters in Nigeria. The analysis has revealed that the data is characterised by politically-driven issues which include governance, economic and social development, all situated in political and media events. Two types of verbal behaviour namely polite and impolite verbal behaviour which are projected by three context-driven politeness strategies namely persuasive, offensive and defensive politeness strategies marked contestants' utterances. While persuasive politeness strategy, which is exemplified by promising and testimonial argument, projects polite verbal behaviour; offensive and defensive politeness strategies employed by contestants to categorise and construct one another as corrupt, inept, incompetent, unfit, dishonest, deceitful, project impolite verbal behaviour.

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