

The Language of Nigerian Women in Politics: An Ideological Reconstruction

Balogun, Temitope Abiodun¹(PhD)

Abstract

Women participation in politics in Nigeria and many parts of Africa is lower compared to men. In recent times, women consciousness of politics, campaigning and contesting elective positions are improving. These roles have enjoyed scant attention among existing literature. This paper, therefore, investigates language use on posters of selected female politicians towards elections so as to identify their context, themes, linguistic features, and strategies. Data were collected from fourteen campaign posters of selected female politicians from Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, and Osun between 2007 and 2015. Six campaign posters of three female political leaders from Liberia, America, and Germany were also used. Analysis was carried out in line with Van Dyke's (1999) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The Nigerian female politicians appealed to religious sentiments, family heritage and gender-based emotion, unlike their counterparts, whose emphases were intellectual and technical competence, purposeful agenda, and experience which promotes their suitability or otherwise for the positions aspired. Nigerian women need to de-emphasise the sentiments of gender, family affiliation and emotion as campaign's strategies through which they can secure election victory and significantly contribute towards building a technologically, economically, and ideally democratically developed society.

Keywords: campaigns, political roles, gender, propaganda, national development

1. Introduction

The place of women in Nigeria's political and social firmament has always been a strong one. In history, myths and legends across the country, noble roles have been ascribed to women in the past and they have served as agents of change to bring positive verve to the tone of life in the society. Literature on Nigeria's national development is relatively silent on the contributions of women. However, 1975 (the International Women's Year), was a period of ferment in ideas about the status of women (Ogunseye, 1998). In Nigeria, awareness about the role of women in development gained momentum in the latter half of the 1980s (Omu & Makinwa, 1997). Awareness was further enhanced in 1995 as a result of the effective participation of Nigerian women in the International Conference on Women in Beijing, China. In spite of these efforts, it is still in doubt whether to state that the role of Nigerian women in development has not been sufficiently emphasised.

In the 2007 campaign, various parties promised to address the issues of inequality within and outside the parties, the People's Democratic Party, for instance, promised to increase the number of women representatives at the different constituencies ranging from delegates to government congress at the local and state levels, to increasing the number of female members that make up their board of trustees. Other parties promised to give more women chance to represent them during the election. From the trend of politics over the recent years, it seems that government often present this consciousness towards gender equality, in order to gain majority votes since women make up about half (49%) of the population. However, these promises often just remain promises because many women at the end of the day are neither given the opportunity at election nor appointed as promised.

¹Osun State University, Department Of Languages And Linguistics, College Of Humanities, Ikire Campus, Osogbo, Osun State
E-mail: temitopebalogun@gmail.com Tel: +234 703 492 9259

From the foregoing, it is notable that election of female political leaders is still viewed as a sort of favour and also as propaganda. It is quite disparaging to view the election of women into political offices as "being given the chance" rather, women should "take the chances" and not wait to be given.

While Nigeria is yet to elect its first female president, other countries like Liberia, Malawi, Chile, Germany, Brazil, India and others have had and some still have female presidents or chancellors. In fact, some of these countries have elected the same female leader twice (e.g. Liberia and Germany).

2. Context

Nigeria, which easily qualifies as Africa's demographic giant, is a colonial invention. European colonialists, who paid little or no attention to ancient tribal cultural differences and similarities, produced the boundaries. Several different peoples were thus pooled together to form Nigeria. About 300 distinct ethnic groups make up the country. The Hausa/Fulani constitute 29%, the Yoruba 20%, and the Igbo 17% of the country (Izugbara, 2004:4). The remaining one-third belongs to other ethnic groups. The country's religious profile shows that Muslims comprise half the population. The Christian population is put at 40%. Indigenous worshippers, adherents of other religious groups, atheists, and agnostics form 10% of the population (Esiet, et al, 2001). Forty-five percent of Nigerians resides in the urban area. The country's population is decidedly youthful with persons aged less than 35 constituting almost two-thirds of the population. Men comprise a little above half of the Nigerian population (PRB, 2004). Despite the fact that women constitute about 49% of the country's population, their participation and representation in the governing process of the country remain in the shadows. According to Badmus (2006:60), "studies and literature on women in politics often highlight various reasons for the masculine super-ordination/ feminine subordination dichotomy often experienced".

3. Methodology/Theoretical Framework

The excerpts used in this study are political statements that are written to be read. Fourteen (14) of these excerpts are campaign posters posted at public places within the geopolitical areas of the political aspirants while the remaining six (6) were culled out from the net. These political documents are specifically written to gain the support of the eligible voters in favour of the particular parties and persons the campaign posters are advertising. Twenty (20) of these excerpts were purposively selected and subjected to content analysis drawing insights from Van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory because of its multidimensional nature at integrating both micro and macro structure indices in the examination of discourse.

CDA attempts to uncover what is not immediately obvious in relations of discursively enacted dominance or their underlying ideologies (Fairclough, 2009:165). Thus, it specifically focuses on the strategies of manipulation, legitimization and other discursive ways to influence the minds of people in the interest of the powerful. Thompson (2002) maintains that CDA helps to clear the connection between the use and the exercise of power. This is because the words of those in power are taken as self-evident truth, and the words of those who are not in power are dismissed as irrelevant, inappropriate and without substance (van Dijk 1998). Hence, some words are politicised, even if one is not conscious of it.

The socio-cognitive approach which is associated with van Dijk is selected for this study. This approach to critical discourse analysis is largely concerned about how discourse represented in 'text and talk' reveals a 'socio-cognitive interface of discourse,' that is, the relationship between the mind, discursive interactions and the society. Discourse is seen as a 'multidimensional social phenomenon' including 'linguistic objects, actions, a form of social interaction and practice, cultural products as well as mental representation (van Dijk, 2009:67). This multidisciplinary approach examines how mental representations manipulate the production and interpretation of discourse as well as knowledge, principles and beliefs shared by a group of people. It also studies how cognitive phenomena are related to the structures of discourse, verbal interaction, communicative events and situations as well as societal structures such as domination and inequality (van Dijk, 2009). This approach also argues that the power to control the mind is an essential way to reproduce dominance and hegemony (van Dijk, 2001). Thus, this theory deals with how mental representation of human values and belief systems are connected with linguistic variables as well as context to condition personal, group or cultural ideology.

4. Data Presentation

Datum 1

Women for Change 2011

Vote

Chief (Mrs) Taiwo Adeife

For

Members Federal House of Rep

Abeokuta/North

Tested and Trusted

Reputable, Reliable, Responsible

This datum appears to be premised on gender role in the clamour for change; the candidate's choice of plural noun 'women' calls to mind that she is not really presenting herself but her gender. Hence this data has a silent call on the female gender to bring a turn around to the current order of things. Also, drawing from the social ideology that can meet the expectation of the masses as well as the projection of difference from the experience people have always had with elected representatives, she amplifies the qualities of being 'reputable', 'reliable' and 'responsible'. She also managed to market her brand using an advertising cliché 'tested and trusted'. This shows that she has some pedigree in the Nigerian political scene.

Datum 2

Senate 2011

Vote

Chief Jumoke Akinjide

The heritage of service

Oyo Central Senatorial District

Omowanii, e je o se e...²

One may, at first, assume that 'service' is the driving force for this particular candidate, however, the datum shows that the candidate sees service as a handover. The background information gathered about this candidate would prove that her ideology of service is that it is an inheritance; (the candidate is a daughter of Nigeria's former Attorney); so to her, her father had set the precedence that she needs to continue with. The content of this particular poster is not without an undertone of nepotism ('omowa ni...she is our daughter').

Datum 3

Quintessential woman of excellence

Princess Rahidat Afolabi

For

PDP House of Reps

Like the preceding data, gender projection is a major concern for this candidate. The datum has no special information apart from the necessary nomenclature and intended post. This goes a long way in signposting the crop of people who seek political posts in the country; people who profess little or nothing they want to offer the voting public.

Datum 4

Stop gap in paradigm shift

Vote

Alhaja Ayo Omidiran

For

House of Reps. (ACN) Osun State

Omidiran's poster here shows that there is a process of change that is being inhibited by a bridge, thus, she by her choice of imperative verb, calls for a removal of such inhibiting factor (of which is not clear to the reader). The gap to be stopped here, of course, is that created by non-participation of the female gender in Politics.

²she is our child (in this context-'daughter') give her the opportunity...

Datum 5

Equality, Equity and Justice guaranteed

Vote

Hon Patricia Olubunmi Etteh

For

PDP House of Reps

This datum addresses social problems of inequality and injustice that characterise the Nigerian society. Here, the candidate considers her service a panacea to these social problems.

Datum 6

Breakthrough 2011 (PDP)

Vote

Barrister Oluoyomi Coker

B.A (Hons) MPH, LLM, B.L.

For Lagos State House of Assembly

Ojoo Constituency 1

“When the righteous rules, the people rejoice”

Datum 6 brings in a touch of religious inclination coupled with one of the most desired economic terms, ‘breakthrough’. The idea, though associated with the economic condition, is mainly popularised in religious circles, particularly in Christianity. A possible reason for the candidate’s choice of this attention getting phenomenon is the fact that Nigeria is enlisted in the world’s poorest economies, thus, the candidate projects herself as an agent of the solution to the citizens’ economic quagmire. This is further foregrounded as she draws reference to the bible ‘when the righteous rules...’; then who is ‘the righteous’? one may want to ask. Her reference to herself as ‘righteous’ may be an attempt at saying that her competitors are not and as such, she is a more desired candidate.

Datum 7

Vote

Azeezat Funmi Olugbosi

For Lagos State House of Assembly

Kosofe Local Govt. Constituency II

God’s chosen

Like Coker, this candidate leverages on the religious underpinnings of the Nigerian society; Nigeria is such a religious country in which people believe so much in God being interested and actively involved in the affairs of people. Considering the socio-cultural background of this candidate, her use of ‘God’s chosen’ may not be totally out of the Yoruba worldview of whatever God chooses is always easy and produces good results.

Datum 8

TESTIMONY 2011 (ANPP)

Vote

Barrister (Mrs) Emily Adedayo ADEGBOYE

LLB (HONS) B.L

For

OnaAra/ Egbeda Federal Constituency

House of Reps

Vote for a woman of substance

Who will cater for the elders

Develop the youths

Empower the women

BARRISTER ADEGBOYE IS THE PEOPLE’S CHOICE

‘Testimony’ has become greatly associated with Christian gathering, which is believed to be a proof of answer to a problem or situation that had hitherto proven difficult. In the light of this datum, therefore, the candidate considers getting to the desired political office as a pointer to ‘testimony’.

Like some other earlier considered too, the datum is not without the projection of femininity not just in addressing herself as a woman of substance, but one that would also empower women. This is to a degree, a show of marginalisation. Also, in projecting herself as a candidate ‘who will cater for the elders’, she subtly courts the support and vote of pensioners (who are mostly dependent).

Datum 9

Ogidiomo

Kosomobi Iyabo

VOTE

Iyabo Obasanjo - BELLO

For SENATE

The only projection in this datum is a comparison; the poster subtly compares the candidate with every other person and submits that there is none that levels up with her. This uncouth comparison and the reference to ‘omo’ (child) ingeniously signpost nepotism. Also, Iyabo Bello intentionally retains her maiden name in order to entice the prospective voters that she is a daughter of the sitting President at that time.

Datum 10

Vote

Chief Mrs Olanrewaju Adedeji Oti

Senate

Oti for Senate, for effective representation

Ayo ni ti wa³

This candidate, vying to become a senator, promises effective representation. This promise is fast becoming a cliché among candidates contending to represent their senatorial districts during senatorial polls.

Datum 11

Vote

Mrs. Okeoyo Osinkolu Dupe

for Lagos House of Assembly

The signature of God

In the political landscape of Nigeria, the expression ‘the voice of God is the voice of man’ has become a cliché; in recent times, politicians have been trying to modify this expression, one of such modification is Osinkolu’s use of ‘the signature of God’ (which is akin to Olugbosi’s use of *God’s chosen*) this expression carries almost the same semantic implication as ‘the voice of God is the voice of man’. This is a subtler way of saying that the candidate is God’s approval/voice. This candidate also uses religious sentiments to court the support and vote of religious Nigerians (who represent a sizeable number of the population).

Datum 12

Vote for Virtuous Woman

Hon (Mrs.) Tairat Adeyemi

For quality representation

Lagos House of Assembly

Vote wisely

Like the preceding one, this datum draws reader’s attention first to womanhood; perhaps the candidate is leveraging on the increasing fall in the moral standard of the society. Her choice of adjective ‘virtuous’ appeals to morality (just as her societal background would say ‘omoluabi’)

Datum 13

Vote Woman of Substance

Alhaja Simiat Durojaiye

I stand as a neutraliser

Who will provide parenting therapy

³Ayo is our choice. (This study considers this statement ambiguous as it could as well be interpreted as ‘Joy is our portion’)

This is another projection of femininity coupled with a glimpse of what to offer the masses but without aspecific statement of service, the audience should expect from her election. It could be quite startling to see that out of several other pressing issues of governance, 'parenting' is what this candidate wants to focus on if elected.

Datum 14

If you really want change
THIS IS IT!
Vote
REMI SONAIYA
For President
Let's make history

The tone of this datum is quick and pointed. It presents the reader with a conditional clause and the result of this conditional introduces her as the change Nigerians so much crave. It also invites the reader, using an inclusive imperative, to make history through their votes. The goal in the imperative is appropriate because if this candidate wins, she would be Nigeria's first female president.

Datum 15

Don't play lotto with our future.
Keep the team we know.
Vote UP...(Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia)

Owing to her choice of pronouns (possessive plural and first person plural pronouns *our* and *we*), this candidate (Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf) views her failure to win the election as detrimental even to her own future, hence, she admonishes her supporters to keep her team in power. Her reference to lotto playing helps to compound her view of her antagonists' candidates as largely irresponsible because what her opponents have to offer is not decisive just as the results of lotto are. Her phrase "Vote UP" is to suggest that the electorates should not hesitate in their decision to support her through their votes. Also, the "UP" incapitalletters is to emphasise that a vote for her translates to development.

Datum 16

Keeping the promise...
Education, Health, Road, Water, Electricity,
Good Governance, Debt Waiver, Fight against Corruption,
Peace Security and Stability, Freedom of Speech,
Protection of Women's and Children's Rights...

To secure a brighter and more stable future...Vote UP...(Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf)

This candidate, same as the one in datum 16, outlines the precursors to 'a brighter and more stable future'. This datum is possibly a re-election campaign poster owing to the title 'keeping the promise'. The outline of this candidate's agenda, her achievements as President of Liberia and her re-election in 2011 all show that she is making good on her promises.

Datum 17

Hillary has the experience
Hillary has the vision
Hillary for America ...(Hillary Clinton of America)

Here, through the repetition of the candidate's first name, a parallel is created between her name and 'experience', 'vision', and 'America'. Hence, this candidate is unequivocally saying that she has the experience and vision to be the president of America.

Datum 18

She is the one ... (Hillary Clinton)

Without any other extraneous reference, this candidate creates another parallel between herself and the choice of the voting public by simply stating that 'she is the one'.

Datum 19

Deutschland ist stark. Und sollesbleiben:
Germany is strong. And should it stay... (Angela Merkel of Germany)

The candidate in datum 20 insinuates that her election into office will uphold her country’s status as a strong nation.

Datum 20

Merwachstrum. Merharbeit:
More growth. More work... (Angela Merkel)

Here, the candidate’s focus is on growth and development through the provision of more jobs.

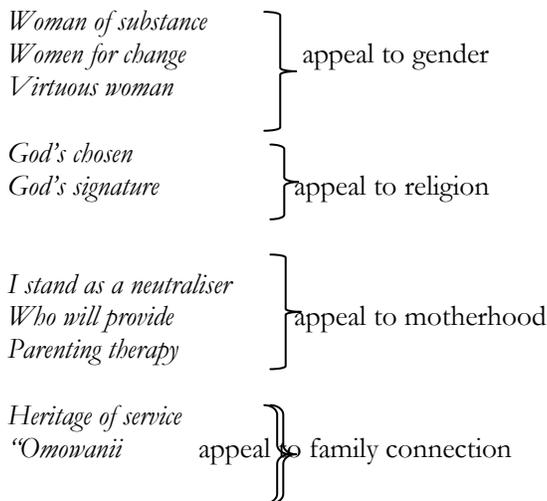
6 Discussion

6.1 Language features

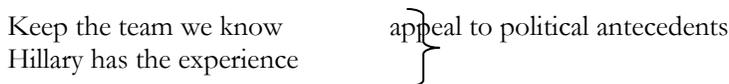
Ambiguity: many of these candidates are ambiguous in their use of language; for example, how will readers interpret the ‘Ayo’ in ‘Ayo ni ti wa’ as Ayo (as a person) or ‘ayo’ in the sense of abstract noun ‘joy’ that an average Nigerian desires? Also, the use of the word ‘testimony’ in datum 8 is not made clear to the readers; from whose end is the testimony coming from; the candidate or the electorates? In the same vein, one might want to ask the candidate whose poster forms datum 6 if she is the one breaking through, a gender breakthrough,a breakthrough in terms of finance or what? The use of the expression ‘stop gap in paradigm shift’ as used in datum 4 shows that the aspirants are concerned with bridging the gap in paradigm shift but the concern of the paper lies in the fact that there is no categorical statement by the aspirant on how the gap can be closed.

6.2 Phrasal/Lexical choices

Lexical items that appealed to sex, religion, family background and status are used to determine and present the ideological standpoint and worldview of the aspirants examined. Some of these lexical items that depict their ideology are seen in phrases like:



Words like; *mother, daughter, heritage* are appealing to reader’s sentiment based on the family background of the aspirants and discourse. However, candidates like Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Hillary Clinton made references to experience and thereby appealing to their political antecedences. Examples of such clauses are:



6.3 Rhetorical features

Implicature

Different clauses that show significant implicature were used in the data collected. Some of these are shown below:

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Omowa ni eje o see</i> | Give our child a chance |
| <i>Omo Akinola nio o</i> | She is Akinola's daughter |
| <i>Omo wa ni</i> | She is our child |
| <i>The heritage of Service</i> | |
| Vote Barrister Emily ADEGBOYE | |

It is clear from the above excerpts that the emphases are on daughterhood and family connection as it is seen in the phrase: *omowani* (our daughter); the social class as in *heritage of service* and wifehood as found in the capitalisation of the name of the husband to show that the husband belongs to a particularly notable class within the society. The same thing is applicable to 'Akinola' in 'OmoAkinola ni o' (she is aAkinola's daughter). The aspirant by the name Jumoke Akinjide uses the slogan "the heritage of service" to draw allusion to the fact that service to the fatherland in high-powered capacity is her family heritage since her father was a one-time Attorney General of Nigeria in the second Republic. The inference is that since the father once served the nation well, based on her father's name, she should be given the opportunity based only on these parameters to continue to enjoy and keep political power in the family. These excerpts are based on family connection, prejudice and sentiment.

6.4 Foregrounding

In most of the excerpts, women are foregrounded. The attempt of the posters is to direct the attention of the audience to the roles of women as nurturers, mothers, wives as well as the voices that are crying for representation and equality. These are seen in the following excerpts:

Vote **Woman** of Substance
 Vote for Virtuous **Woman**
 Vote for a **woman** of substance
 Quintessential **woman** of excellence
Women for Change 2011

In the examples provided above, the sexual category is emphasised rather than the values, missions and definable objectives. Too much emphasis is placed on the gender than the purpose and the issue at hand. Some of the phrases and clauses that show the gender biases are also written using colour print while some are embolden in order to stand them out from other words in the political documents.

6.5 Backgrounding

Abstract nouns that relate/show the personal statement and signature of the aspirants are backgrounded since these come as the final remarks in most cases in the excerpts used for the analysis. Noteworthy is the fact that some of these clauses use alliteration to call for the attention of the readers to these backgrounded items. Examples of such are seen in

Reputable **R**eliable **R**esponsible
 Tested and **T**rusted

6.6 Metaphors

The use of metaphors in the excerpts analysed gives a vivid image of the expectation of the aspirants. For example:

Women are the salt of the earth
The signature of God
A vote for Yeyeloja is a vote for life

The metaphorical usage of 'salt' here overrates women as 'political sweeteners', but the true fact here is based on personal and political philosophy. Anybody, either male or female may decide to lead a people oriented government that will enhance the trust of the populace. Also, the '**signature of God**' as used here serves as a form of coercion based on religious sentiment as it emphasises the fact that God Himself has endorsed the candidacy of the aspirant. This could box any religious person to a corner as to think that since God has approved of this candidate, he/she may be the perfect candidate.

6.7 Parallelism

This is achieved through the repetition of items like: *for, women, vote*. Repetition is a device that is meant to emphasise the aim and goal of the aspirants and the party. *Vote* is repeated to show that it is the focal issue in the posters. *Woman* is also common and used in almost all the excerpts considered to show that their femininity is a point to be considered by prospective voters. Also, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf repetitively used the verb 'keep' to reiterate that she still wanted to be in the corridors of power, governing Liberia.

6.8 Thematic concern

The data presented above show that Nigerian woman who is into politics express a limited number of issues and ideologies that inform the themes of their campaign posters. Most of them merely appeal to gender, others appeal to nepotism and religion. However, their other counterparts studied make pointed references to striking issues of national importance. Such issues as economic growth and development, education, healthcare, fight against corruption, nationalism, peace and stability, debt waiver, unemployment etc. were referenced in their campaign posters.

At the fore of the thematic concerns of the Nigerian stratum of posters selected for this study is appeal to gender, or what could rather be referred to as 'gender strife/femininity'. The use of femininity here does not equate feminism; rather it is a conscious attempt to call the mind of the public to the on-going change in the political terrain, that is, the fact that they too have arisen to be actively involved in politics. In the data, expressions such as 'woman of substance', 'women for change', 'virtuous woman' 'quintessential woman of excellence' are common; in all these expressions, the major projection is 'the female gender' as a tool to react against male dominance. Unfortunately, this does not in any way point towards the development desired by the citizens of Nigeria.

Democracy is expected to transcend cultural barriers; on the contrary, to some of the subjects of this study, politics appears to be ethnicity-induced. This is reflected in their use of expressions such as 'omowa ni e je o see', 'omo Akinola ni joo' and such likes. To a degree, this showcases Nigerians and Nigerian politics as nepotic; though the country claims to uphold democracy.

No doubt that Nigeria is a country with a high sense of religion; however, governance is more than religious affiliation. For example, the expressions 'God's chosen' (datum 10) and 'the signature of God' simply appeals to reader's sentiments on a religious ground that conforms with the common saying among the Yoruba people that nothing comes as easy as what God is in support of. In line with this, datum 9 has the quotation 'when the righteous rules, people rejoice'. All these are attempts to identify with particular religious groups, affiliation to a particular religious orientation has little or nothing to do with readiness for good governance and national growth and development.

7 Findings

From the discussion so far, this study finds that the use of language in the posters of female politicians in Nigeria indicates that the kind of politics women embrace in the country is characterised by nepotism/family connection; this ideology has and if care is not taken will continually hinder national progress and integration in the Nigerian nation. Again, it is revealed in this study that Nigerian female politicians, as represented in this study, are more particular about gender equality (projection); it appears as though, first and foremost, they want to create awareness of their coming into politics, this then will amount to gender strife. In a similar vein, most of the women who venture into politics do not lay much emphasis on service to the masses which is the whole essence of democracy. This study also finds that ambiguity and vagueness are recurrent features of posters of women in politics in Nigeria, though these could be considered as rhetorical devices in certain respect, but in an egalitarian society and more importantly, in the face of tense competition, it is pertinent that politicians give their audience clear understanding of their messages. Another feature of campaign posters found in this study is the choice of lexical and metaphorical expressions that appeal to religion, which is geared towards associating with specific religious groups; and code alternation; no doubt, this will continue to psychologically create polarisation along the lines of religion thereby denying the nation of the political state it desires to be. It is expected that political posters should briefly but effectively convey verbal and visual messages of the political parties they represent in order for the electorates to analyse the aims, projects, and goals of the political aspirants which can enable them to make their choices. But unfortunately, many female politicians in Nigeria as discovered from the excerpts examined do not really foreground their corporate purpose in their posters.

Through the sampled data, specific statement of purpose geared towards service and development are evidently lacking. A reference can be drawn from an excerpt from one of the speeches of Mrs Jubril Sarah, (a former presidential aspirant in Nigeria). This is the highest public office in Nigeria and as such requires an explicit statement of objective for the candidate to prove to the prospective electorates of her readiness and capability. But unfortunately, the basics of her speeches are:

Provide parenting therapist...
 You have relegated women to the background in this country...
 We must concede political office to women...

In the real sense of it, the matters raised here are too trivial to bring Nigerians to a point of considering her (and perhaps the entire female folk in Nigeria) for such political office. This is in no way comparable with the speeches of her 'sister' from Liberia. Johnson-Sirleaf was not after a particular gender rising to the office neither did she consider political office a tool to profit a particular gender. She is particular about the national interest of her nation. This is evident in her address to the public. The following are her mission statements:

- ... Creating a government that is attentive and responsive to your needs, concerns, and the development and progress of our country.
- ... Pledge anew our commitment to transparency, open government, and participatory democracy for all of our citizens.
- ... Commits itself to the creation of a democracy in which the constitutional and civil liberties and rights of all of our people will be respected
- ... Promote a healthy economy in which Liberians and international investors can prosper.
- ... Working with our partners to identify key objectives and deliverables in the first one hundred and fifty days of our Administration...
- ...times were hard before. Times are even harder today... will work to change that situation
- ... If elected, we would wage war against corruption regardless of where it exists, or by whom it is practised
- ... Corruption, under my administration, will be the major public enemy (Sirleaf2009:127 &208).

The above excerpt from Johnson-Sirleaf's speeches attests to her readiness and of course her attendant victory in the 2005 presidential race in Liberia.

Campaign theme includes the general topics of campaign messages. In other words, campaign theme gives answers to the questions about why a candidate runs for election. It is then necessary that thematic campaign is planned to let the electorates know about the kind of projects and plans political parties have developed for their issues and to enable them to make decisions as they deem appropriate. In essence, Nigerian women in politics need to realise that gender appeal/femininity should not be at the fore of the content of the messages carried by their posters.

Also, in the phase of serious clamour for national integration in a complex and heterogeneous society like Nigeria, ethnic affinity/nepotism would constitute a setback for development, hence, politicians, females, in particular, need to be careful with their language use in posters; bearing in mind that this tool (poster) is static and visual in public (or private, but publicly observable) and it spaces for a longer period of time.

In addition, Nigerian women in politics should consider the monotony that characterises the language used in their posters as the main issue, because, this furthers profiles their male counterpart as being more creative. They need to realise that gender tussle is still a factor in any society especially Nigeria which is dominantly patriarchal; an eye opener for women here is their limited representation if compared to the number of male counterparts actively involved in politics who are already seeing these women as not being capable of the tasks. The content of their campaign posters should have a capacity of inoculating the target electorate to destroy possible effects of the negative messages given by their male counterparts. Female political actors make use of different campaign strategies in order to maximise their electoral success, thus producing variations in the application of campaign tools, content and channels of communication with the electorate.

8 Conclusions

This study investigated women roles in politics with specific attention on their language use. It examined how female politicians in Nigeria deployed language to exhibit their political ambitions.

Particular attention was on the campaign posters of selected female politicians from Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, and Osun between 2007 and 2015, and three female political leaders from Liberia, America, and Germany. It proposes that the *Sirleafian campaign strategy and methodology* could be adapted to the Nigerian situation for prospective Nigerian women in politics. This is because Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's approach was pragmatic, current, resourceful, goal oriented and focused which made her measure up to her male counterpart throughout the campaign period.

Applying Van Dyke's (1999) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to the data, it was found that selected campaign posters of female Nigerian politicians are replete with religious sentiments, promotion of family heritage and links, and gender-based emotion. It is noteworthy that Nigeria has been depleted and has suffered terribly from the hands of corrupt and inept leaders. With women participation in politics, the country can definitely grow into a viable, stable, secure and developed nation whose leaders are insightful, determined and functional, who can effectively fashion-out different variables towards addressing many of the attendant problems bedevilling the country's development. To achieve these, Nigerian women in politics need to embrace the reality that political and election victory is not won without proper planning, documentation of enduring policies and ideas, adopting and adapting unbeatable strategies, and also versatility that can stand the test of time. In this, religious sentiments, family heritage and gender-based emotion must be de-emphasised, but accentuate intellectual and technical competence, purposeful agenda, and experience which promotes the aspirant's suitability for the positions being sought.

In the study, the role of women with regards to their linguistic expressions through their posters was investigated. Future researchers might be interested in other electioneering activities involving women in politics, such as the signs and symbols on the posters, dresscodes, comportment, among other variables. Also, verbal and non-verbal cues in political debates and other pre-election activities which involve women aspirants can also be explored. All these are capable of redefining the role and place of women in politics in Nigeria and other parts of the world.

References

- Badmus, Isiaka 2006. Political parties and women's political leadership in Nigeria: The case of the PDP, the ANPP and the AD. *Ufabamu*, (32)3, Spring.
- Cooper, Helen. 2010. 'Iron Lady: The promise of Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf'. Retrieved from www.worldaffairsjournal.org on the 2nd of December, 2016
- Esiet Uwem, Bello Mairo, Adebayo Christine, Booth, Rakiya.. *et al.* 2001 'Sexuality in Nigeria' in *International Encyclopaedia of Sexuality*. Retrieved from (www.2.hu-berlin.de/sexology.IES/Nigeria).
- Fairclough, Norman. 2009. A dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse analysis in social research. Eds. R. Wodak and M. Meyer. *Methods of Critical Analysis*. 2nd Edn. London: Sage. 162–186.
- Izugbara, Chimroke.O. 2004. 'Understanding human sexuality seminar series'. ARSRC. university ofUyo.
- Mohammed,Amos, 2009. *Visionary Liberia Leader: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf*. Bloomington: AuthorHouse.
- Ogunseye, Farouk. 1988. 'Formal education and the status of women in Nigeria'. Ogunseye et al. (Eds) *Nigerian Women and Development*. Ibadan: Ford Foundation.
- Omu, Frefrick, and Makinwa, Kofo., (eds.) 1987. The role of women in Nigeria's socio-economic development'. *Integrated Rural Development in Nigeria and Women's Roles*. Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Ltd. pp. 213-227.
- Population Reference Bureau, 2004, *2004 World Population Data Sheet; Demographic Data Estimates for the Countries and Regions of the World*. Washington D.C., PRB
- Thompson, Mark 2002. 'ICT, power, and development discourse: a critical analysis'. Retrieved Nov. 20, 2007, from <http://www.jims.cam.ac.uk/research/seminar/slides/2003/030529.thompson.ab.pdf>.
- van Dijk, Teun. 2001. 'Critical discourse analysis'. Eds. D. Taunem, D. Schiffrin & H. Hamilton. *Handbook of discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell, 352-371.
- van Dijk, Teun. 2009. 'Critical discourse studies: a sociocognitive approach'. Eds. R. Wodak & M. Meyer. *Methods of critical analysis*. 2nd edn. London: Sage, 62-81.