

A Gender Reading of Selected Speeches of Former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan

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ABSTRACT

The way Nigerian presidents use speeches to express their disposition to governance has received scholarly attention. Much as these abound, little attention has been paid to the way gender is expressed in these speeches, especially those of former Nigerian president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. This study examines the way gender is expressed in selected speeches of Jonathan. It deploys the socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) articulated by Teun van Dijk, which incorporates aspects of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), to explain the gender sensitivity of Jonathan, which translates into reasonable involvement of women in government during his administration between 2010 and 2015. Three of his speeches, Inaugural, Democracy Day, and Independence Day, are purposively sampled. Verbs, nouns, adjectives, and linguistic strands are subjected to descriptive linguistic analysis to bring out the underlying gender rhetoric. Jonathan portrays himself as gender friendly and projects the capabilities of women. There is an underlying feminist ideology of women as crucial to national development. The paper also demonstrates that speeches reveal the disposition of Nigerian presidents to gender issues.

Keywords: speeches, critical discourse analysis, gender, Nigerian presidents

1. Introduction

The world over, political leaders impress their opinions on the masses and, sometimes, win people to their sides through political speeches. This suggests that the desire to persuade underlies many political discourses. The art of persuasion, popularly known as rhetoric, is traceable to Aristotle (trans. 2010). It involves the deployment of figures of speech and other discourse techniques cum strategies in language use to convince other people to see the need to embrace certain viewpoints that may be different from the one(s) they previously held onto. Essentially then, where political discourses are made, regardless of the race, culture or nation, the purpose is to instantiate domination over the less dominant group, either persuasively or otherwise, to enforce abuse or to exercise political power (Windt, 1990; Wodak and Menz, 1990; van Dijk, 2002). Presidential speech is a sub-categorisation of political discourse. These speeches provide the platform for presidents to acclimatize the people with the programmes of government. These speeches are not haphazardly written; rather, they are carefully composed to suit the occasion of presentation and, as well, sound as convincing as possible. The above assertion is applicable to political/presidential speeches in all climes, Nigeria inclusive. Given the thoroughness required to make a presidential speech achieve its essence, a proper mastery and deployment of language is important. For Rudyk (2007), language is a fundamental social institution and, thus, is inherently linked with power and domination even in the freest democracy.

Furthermore, language reflects and has an impact on power structures. Language is an indicator of social and, therefore, political situations. It is viewed as a driving force directed at changing the opinions of people, politics, and society. It is an instrument for or against enlightenment, emancipation and human right. The centrality of language is also so intense that it is intricately related to beliefs, opinions and ideologies (Van Dijk, 2008). Bearing the above in mind, Zaidi (2007) posits that language and the ideology of a government have an overwhelming hold on people – the ability to convince and be convinced, persuade and be persuaded, and the possibility of

establishing the distinction between the in-group and the out-group. Similarly, Yahaya (2003) argues that no linguistic expression is neutral in the real sense of it because the linguistic act is designed in a way that the text carries the ideology of the text producer. According to him, in the process of text formation, the writer uses language to expose their ideological inclination.

Yahaya (2003) posits further that ideology refers to the way a text mediates a set of beliefs through a character, narrator, or author. From the foregoing, it is arguable that when writers use language, their ideological inclinations are often expressed implicitly or overtly. This suggests that the political ideologies of presidents are inseparable from their speeches. Since language is considered very important in expressing the ideology of an individual or a government, it is taken that no language use, especially in a presidential speech, is coincidental. It must also be stated that even though presidential speeches are, most times, written by hired and paid professional speech writers, drafts are first presented to the presidents to make sure that the issues raised by such speechwriters capture their thoughts. For emphatic reasons, language is used to express ideological beliefs, which buttresses the argument that language is used to express gender. Gender is defined as the sex role identity used by humans to emphasize the distinctions between the male and the female.

Gender and sex, though often used interchangeably, are two different concepts. Sex relates to the biological-cum-physical characteristics which make a person male or female at birth whereas gender refers to the behaviours associated with members of that sex. Gender issues stemmed from the feeling that certain expressions really place a certain gender, especially the feminine gender at the lower rungs of the societal ladder in relation to men. Thus, gender can be regarded as a social construction whereas sex is not (Lamidi, 2009). It has been argued in many quarters that language has, in a number of ways, conferred a second-class status on women. Yusuf (2006: 14) corroborates this fact by observing that language deprecates women in very many ways. The deprecation of women by language, he believes, accounts for why feminists regard language as an overwhelming reflector of anti-female values. He is of the opinion that language does

this by way of downgrading the female, and that the English language is especially guilty of this through ignoring and obscuring women by foregrounding masculine terms at the expense of the feminine ones.

Ezeigbo (1996), Tseayo (1996), and Yusuf (2006) comment on the way the Nigerian woman has been robbed of her personhood by colonialism, foreign religions and western education, which came via the foreign English language. All these, they believe, have in one way or the other contributed to the way the woman lost her self-concept or negated it. The above also possibly explains why anti-female lexical choices dominate many Nigerian presidential speeches, and the regular deployment of masculine pronouns and more of generic terms to refer to the entire citizenry with the assumption that females are automatically incorporated in the set. Little wonder many of these presidents fail to accord women due place in their administration or even follow the 35 percent women actualization. After all, they did not make any categorical statements in their speeches which could make them accountable to women. It is, however, noteworthy that even though this feature manifests in the speeches of many Nigerian presidents, those of Goodluck Jonathan, especially the ones selected for this study, exhibit a departure from the norm.

Rather than use masculine or generic terms to refer to both the male and the female, Jonathan expresses in clear terms his thoughts towards women. Incidentally, despite his effort, little has been done with respect to subjecting the speeches of Jonathan to a feminist reading from a linguistic perspective. If presidential speeches are used as an avenue to present a wide range of programmes and activities of the government to the populace, the constant mentioning of gender issues by Jonathan is taken as a proof of his recognition of women as an integral part of the government. Hence, this study attempts to investigate the gender issues underlying the three selected speeches of former Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan.

2. Former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan

Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan hails from Otuoke in Ogbia Local government Area Bayelsa State. He is from the Ijaw ethnic group. Born on November 20, 1957, he holds a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree

in Zoology, a postgraduate degree in Hydrobiology/Fisheries Biology and a doctorate in Zoology—all from the University of Port Harcourt. He was at various times inspector, lecturer, and Environmental Protection Officer. He joined politics in 1998 and later became the Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State and then Governor from December 2005 to May 2007, following the impeachment of his boss, the then State governor over allegations of mismanagement of funds and money laundering. He was picked as the running mate for the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidate, late Umaru Yar'Adua, in the 2007 presidential election.

Jonathan took the oath of office as the Vice President of Nigeria in May, 2007. Though he was initially Vice-President, Jonathan soon metamorphosed into the acting president due to the ill health of President Umaru Yar'Adua. A motion from the Nigerian Senate was moved on February 9, 2010 confirming that Jonathan could continue to act as president in the absence of his boss. After the return of Yar'Adua to the country on February 24, 2010, he still could not carry out state duties. Hence, Jonathan continued as acting president. Upon the demise of Yar'Adua on May 5, 2010, Jonathan succeeded him to become a substantive president of Nigeria thereby emerging the 14th president (military and civilian) of Nigeria. He later nominated the then Governor of Kaduna state, Namadi Sambo as the Vice-President. In 2011, he contested and won the presidential election under the PDP platform. He was sworn in on May 29, 2011. His tenure ended on May 29, 2015.

3. Overview of speeches

Three speeches of Jonathan are selected for this study. These include those produced during his inauguration as president in 2011, the 2012 Democracy Day Speech, and 2013 Independence Day speech. The three speeches selected span over the first three years of Jonathan in office. This is significant because it serves as the formative years of the administration during which the president is able to make public the blueprint of his government. Unlike the inaugural speech given by Jonathan in May 2010, which was emotional owing to the circumstances surrounding his elevation to the position of president after the demise of his boss, Umar Yar'Adua, his inaugural speech in

2011 was not emotion laden. At this time, Jonathan seems to have a fuller grasp of the nature of his job. The Democracy Day speech given by Jonathan projects a brighter future for the country. Typical of Democracy Day speeches, Jonathan makes effort to convince the masses that democratic governance is better than military. He employs linguistic choices that promote democracy, regardless of the prevailing situation in the country. The Independence anniversary of Nigeria signifies its birthday. Thus, it is usually a time of celebration. Moreover, it is a period of sober reflections.

Hence, it usually serves as a platform for appreciation and appraisal of the actual level of development that the country can boast of since its breakaway away from colonial and military rules. Furthermore, Nigerian Presidents often try to provide a progress report on the state of the nation in their independence speeches. These are some of the factors that define the content of the Independence Day speech of Jonathan. Given the significance of the occasion of production of these speeches, it could not have been a coincidence that Jonathan takes out time to elucidate his plans and programmes for Nigerian women. His conscious and thorough itemization of the plans of his government for women is an indication of his interest in them and a demonstration of his belief in their relevance towards actualization of his transformation agenda.

4. Literature review

There is a plethora of studies focusing on the analyses of presidential speeches both within and outside Nigeria. Sarfo and Krampa (2013) worked on speeches of two presidents of the United States of America – George Bush and Barack Obama, examining their portrayal of terrorism and anti-terrorism. Six speeches are selected and analysed through a qualitative content analytical approach while the study draws on the socio-cognitive approach to CDA articulated by van Dijk as theoretical model. The study reveals that Bush and Obama project terrorism negatively and anti-terrorism positively by carefully selecting emotionally charged vocabulary and expressions. Though the subjects are non-Nigerians, the study explained how the presidents used their speeches to portray their ideological beliefs on terrorism.

It should be stated, however, that the focus of this study is not terrorism but feminism. Speeches of Nigerian presidents within the Fourth Republic have also been variously appraised. Adetunji (2006), Adeoye (2009), Adedun and Atolagbe (2011), Abuya (2012), Oni (2012) and Ademilokun (2015) focus on the linguistic analyses of the speeches of Olusegun Obasanjo, Goodluck Jonathan, and Muhammadu Buhari. The effort of Abuya (2012) is a pragma-stylistic analysis of the inaugural speech of Goodluck Jonathan while Adetunji (2006) and Adedun and Atolagbe (2011) respectively look at the use of deixis in the speeches of Obasanjo as well as a discourse analysis of his farewell speech to Nigerians. In her case, Oni (2012) investigates the lexical choices of leadership ideology in selected speeches of Olusegun Obasanjo. She selects her data from speeches produced by Obasanjo when he is both military head of state and executive president. Her emphasis is on lexical indices and how they reflect the leadership ideology of Obasanjo.

Emeka-Nwobia (2013) carries out a pragmatic analysis of selected speeches of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. She examines the various meanings associated with the language used by the ex-president. She looks at the way contextual factors interact with linguistic resource in the interpretation of speeches and utterances. Deploying paradigms of the felicity conditions popularised by J. L. Austin and the model of CDA advanced by Fairclough, she concludes that language is an indispensable social phenomenon necessary in demystifying and carrying out political activities. Wayas, Nneji, and Ogechukwu (2013), Yunana and Eje (2015) and Ashipu and Odey (2016) carry out linguistic analyses of various speeches given by former president, Goodluck Jonathan. Wayas et al. (2013) centres on a pragmatic analysis of the victory and inaugural speeches of Goodluck Jonathan. He uses the speech acts theory of Austin and Searle to explain the pragmatic choice of Jonathan and the functions of such linguistic choice. He concludes that Jonathan deployed more of speech acts that hinge on collectivism rather than as a sole responsibility. Ashipu and Odey (2016) also examine the speech given by Jonathan at the 2014 national conference. Drawing from SFG, his concern is to assess the performance of this particular speech. He ends his study on the note that a well composed speech goes a long way in achieving the desired

purpose for which it is delivered. Even though the speeches of Nigerian presidents have been analysed using different yardsticks, gender issues seem not to be an area of interest to many of these speech analysts. A number of gender indices manifest in the speeches of Goodluck Jonathan. He almost passes for the most gender friendly president Nigeria has produced since the commencement of the Fourth Republic.

According to Oteah (2013, p.8), we must celebrate, institutionalize and emulate the leadership that President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan has shown on gender issues. He has not only delivered on his election promise to reserve more than 30 percent of his cabinet for women but has also ensured that the women he appointed occupy strategic position in his government, including the Chief Justice of Nigeria. In spite of this, little attention has been paid to his expressions of gender especially from the critical linguistics perspective. This study attempts to fill this obvious gap.

5. Research methodology

Every national event provides the opportunity for Nigerian presidents to give a speech to present a scorecard or further endear themselves to the citizens. Thus, as a former Nigerian president, Jonathan has a number of speeches credited to him. Out of this repertoire, three believed to be significant to the life of the nation are purposively sampled. These are Inauguration, Democracy Day, and Independence Day speeches. The inauguration of a new president in Nigeria which occurs every four years is significant especially because Nigeria has a history of bloody and sometimes impossible civilian to civilian transition. Also, the annual independence anniversary is an occasion to celebrate the birth of the country. The Democracy Day celebrations which comes up on May 29 annually provides ample opportunity for the country to assess how well she has fared in democratic governance and by extension measure her development. Speeches given by presidents on these occasions are believed to capture the blueprint of their administration.

Hence, the manifestation of gender in the speeches given by Jonathan on these occasions are believed to be consciously deployed to show his gender sensitivity. Relevant lexical items such as verbs,

nouns, adjectives and assertions are subjected to critical linguistic analysis with a view to showcasing the gender ideology that they portray. The socio-cognitive approach of van Dijk is the preferred theoretical model for this study. This is because it illustrates the relationship among language use and personal/social disposition.

6. Theoretical framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a sociolinguistic theory which became prominent in the twentieth century is notable for its ability to explain the relationships which exists among language power and ideology. Ever since its emergence, various approaches to doing CDA have emanated. Popular among these are discourse socio-cultural approach extended by Norman Fairclough, discourse historical by Ruth Wodak and discourse socio-cognitive model by van Dijk. Of these three, the only one that pays attention to mental models, especially the way writers use their words to express their disposition to an idea or concept is the model propagated by van Dijk. Hence, it is the choice as the theoretical framework for this research.

This study looks at the way the favourable disposition of Jonathan to the female gender is expressed. The accompanying model, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) focuses on how speakers of a language generate utterances and texts to convey intended meanings. Linguistic analysis in SFG is systematic and the central theme of SFG is an examination of the functions that languages perform; that is, the functionality of language, SFG is a theory which stipulates the possibility of systematically deriving unlimited meanings from a limited choice of words. The goal of SFG is to raise awareness of how a learner appropriately communicates meaning rather than learning any specific grammatical point.

This is achieved by facilitating certain kinds of social and interpersonal interactions representing ideas about the world, connecting these ideas and interactions into meaningful texts and making them relevant to their context (Halliday, 1978). Much as SFG provides the platform for language users to link the meaning of an utterance to the larger world, it fails to explain the nature of ideologies which such utterances express. This is why SFG is often deployed as a

complementary model to CDA to enhance a robust linguistic analysis. The data for the research are subjected to a two level analysis identified by van Dijk (1998). These are the micro and the macro levels. At the micro level, linguistic strands are described while such linguistic descriptions are linked to the external world with a view to revealing social cognitions, attitudes and ideologies at the macro level of analysis.

7. Data analysis

In this subsection, an attempt is made to identify and explain the linguistic gender markers in the speeches under consideration. The gender ideology which is instantiated through the use of these lexical choices is also explained.

7.1. Gender rhetoric

Gender ideology refers to a set of attitudes and beliefs about the proper roles of women and men in the society (Korabik, McElwain, & Chappell, 2008). Gender issues permeate virtually every aspect of human society. Considering the fact that Nigerian women are almost as industrious as the men, the study looks at the roles assigned to women by the former President Goodluck Jonathan, especially in actualisation of government policies.

To map out gender ideologies in Jonathan's speeches, attention is given to specific lexical items and assertions that he employs to describe the female gender. Data are presented and analysed subsequently:

- i. My dear wife, Patience, who has been a strong pillar of support. (Inauguration)
- ii. I thank her for galvanizing and mobilizing Nigeria women for the cause of democracy. In the same vein, I owe a debt of gratitude to my mother (Inauguration).
- iii. These brave men and women paid the supreme sacrifice in the service of our fatherland. (Inauguration)
- iv. In the days ahead, those of us that you have elected to serve must show that we are men and women with patriotism and passion. (Inauguration)

- v. My dear countrymen and women, being a Nigerian is a blessing. (Inauguration)
- vi. Let me salute the Nigerian workers who build our communities, cities and country.
- vii. They deserve fair rewards, and so do the women that raise our children, and the rural dwellers that grow our food. (Inauguration)

In the same Nigerian where a president publicly declared that his wife is only important in the kitchen and the other room, and other Nigerian presidents who hardly make recourse to the female gender in their speeches, Jonathan sees his wife, the first lady and by implication the representative of Nigerian women as ‘dear’ – that is, precious and treasured. He acknowledges the roles of the woman in family life and nation building by describing her as ‘a strong pillar of support’. A pillar is very important in building structures. Beyond its ability to serve decorative purposes, it also holds up such structures and prevents the same from collapsing. Women add beauty to the world, they decorate. Far beyond that, they provide the necessary support such that today the maxim “behind every successful man is a woman” is affirmed. Jonathan talks about the ability of the woman to galvanise and mobilise. To galvanise means to be able to stimulate others, to be able to prevent something from unnecessary exposure to rust. To affirm the protective nature of women is to identify them as important not only in the home but in national development. In the same vein, the ability to mobilise is essential in leadership. Hence, to describe women as mobilisers is to portray them as having excellent leadership qualities. The role of the woman as a mobiliser cannot be over-emphasised. In many cases when events are to be put in place, women are included in the planning because of their ability to mobilise and oversee welfare issues such that, in the end, no failure is experienced. By using these verbs, Jonathan ascribes his victory at the presidential poll to his wife and by implication the Nigerian women who were duly mobilised to participate in the election.

Furthermore, in (ii) above, Jonathan makes specific reference to his mother who possibly contributed in no small measure to make him achieve all the feats he achieved in life. He did not just mention his

mother in passing but specifically said he owes her a debt of gratitude. The conscious use of the adjective brave by Jonathan to refer to women in (iii) above is noteworthy. It suggests that Jonathan appreciates women for also contributing to the emancipation and development of the Nigerian nation. His argument is that the men, as well as the women paid the supreme sacrifice for the nation to attain his present status. Also in (iv), the use of the nouns –patriotism and passion – are noteworthy. Women are described as individuals who are patriotic and passionate. For Jonathan, the Nigerian woman is trustworthy, has no divided loyalty and as such, she can be entrusted with leadership positions. Women are mostly believed to be tender and passionate.

Thus, taking time to specifically portray women is such glowing nouns is an attestation that Jonathan appreciates the female gender. In (v), the reference to women is a mark of gender consciousness. Rather than use countrymen which is more generic or better still, country people, Jonathan recognises the men and the women to show that he identifies both sexes as crucial to the development of Nigeria. Also, the assertion – women who raise our children – is a demonstration of his recognition of women as home builders. He also seems to argue that the future of the country lies in the hands of women because the society translates into whatever woman makes of her children. The following set of data are taken from the Democracy Day speech of Jonathan:

- viii. I pay tribute to all the men and women who have made our democratic experience meaningful.
- ix. One man one vote, one woman, one vote.
- x. Our administration has embarked on an ambitious strategy of creating jobs and job-creators through the launch of several initiatives mainly targeted at women.
- xi. We have also launched the Public Works Women. (an empowerment scheme for women)
- xii. Globally, the role of women in governance has assumed great significance.
- xiii. In Nigeria, it is also widely acknowledged that women who constitute about half of the Nigerian population are great and invaluable assets, in both the public and private spheres.

- xiv. On our part, we have demonstrated serious commitment in further empowering women and projecting their role in public life.
- xv. Out of the 42 members of the Federal Executive Council, 13 are women, heading major Ministries of Government.
- xvi. Last week, I appointed the first female Chairman of the Federal Civil Service Commission.
- xvii. In the Armed Forces, female cadets have been admitted into the prestigious Nigerian Defence Academy, an institution that was hitherto an exclusive preserve of men. The first set will graduate in 2016.
- xviii. This year, we reached a significant milestone as the Nigerian Air Force produced the first Nigerian female combatant pilot.
- xix. Our administration will continue to empower women and the girl-child as a focal point of our Transformation Agenda.
- xx. We are also committed to reducing maternal and infant mortality.
- xxi. We need in our land, more men and women who will stand up to defend their beliefs, and whose example will further enrich our democracy.

Women are very important in the democratic process. It is believed that it is easier to persuade women to get them cast their votes in favour of a particular candidate than convincing the men. Hence, the point that Jonathan identifies women as important to democratic governance in Nigeria in (viii) and (ix) could only be an attestation to his gender sensitivity. To further lend credence to his belief in equal rights for men and women within a democratic dispensation, Jonathan speaks of “one man, one vote, one woman, one vote”. No superior and no inferior, Jonathan appears to argue. For a woman to achieve her goals and earn self-respect, she needs to be adequately empowered. To therefore argue that Jonathan supports the emancipation of women is not out of place considering his assertions in (x) and (xi) above where he mentions in clear terms ways his government devised ways to create job opportunities and empowerment for women. In (xii), (xiii) and (xiv) above, Jonathan exhibits his gender sensitivity by aligning with the fact that women have acquired a different and better status globally. He thereby makes a case for the Nigerian women whom he believes cannot

afford to lag behind when their contemporaries in other climes are gunning for the skies. Little wonder the relevance of women in governance came to the fore especially during the Jonathan administration.

Furthermore, Jonathan underscores the relevance of women in the electoral process, and by implication, in governance when he talks about their numerical strength. Number is important in the electoral process. A winner emerges based on the number of votes he polls. Hence, if women constitute about half of Nigerian population, then, it means their participation in the electoral process have implications for the results of such elections. Similarly, Jonathan describes women using glowing qualifiers such as great, invaluable, and assets. To be great is to be important, wonderful and of immense worth. Also, invaluable means priceless, inestimable and very valuable. Asset means a complete property. A combination of these words as used by Jonathan means that the woman is of immense worth; she is inestimable and completes the man. This underscores his gender ideology. An empowered person is self-reliant, independent, and responsible. Little wonder Jonathan speaks of empowering women. This is to enable them manifest their full potentials. Also, in (xv) above, Jonathan talks about women heading major ministries in his federal executive council. Women are not just there as observers but they head (lead, direct, they are at the fore front, they are the main and principal officers) in these ministries. This means that their significant roles are identified and the platform for them to release their full potentials is provided by government. Again, the Civil Service Commission is an important organ of the government that handles issues relating to bureaucracy. Due to the importance and sensitivity of this federal government establishment and the technical nature of its operations, men are preferred as the head of the Commission, not ordinary men but those with high intelligence quotients and proven character.

In (xvi) above, Jonathan talks about appointing the first female chairman of the Federal Civil Service Commission. This departure from what used to be is a sign of his belief in the capability of women that what a man can do, a woman can also do. Also, for Jonathan to have considered a woman to be worthy of this sensitive position, it can only

be suggestive of his gender friendliness. Not only that, it is a means of empowering the female gender. In (xvii), and (xviii), Jonathan also makes assertions about important achievements of his administration. He speaks of female cadets being enrolled into the Nigerian Defence Academy for the very first time.

This underscores his belief that sensitive business like security and defence of a heterogeneous country like Nigeria could be put under the watch of women. It is also noteworthy that the achievement is credited to gender-sensitive Jonathan who believes that such sensitive duties should no longer be the exclusive preserve of men. Again, he asserts: the Nigerian Air Force produced the first Nigerian female combatant pilot. The woman is not only the first female on the job, she is a combatant pilot. As a combatant, she is a trained fighter and warrior. This contradicts old beliefs that women are weaker vessels and is also an attestation to the significant role that women now play in Nigeria. It erases the wrong impression that some professions are male dominated or are no-go-area for women. Moreover, Jonathan does not forget to mention that the female combatant pilot is a Nigerian, not a foreigner.

This is an effort to encourage Nigerian women and erase every wrong mental attitude/inferiority complex that may dominate their minds. It is also a way of saying that the administration of Jonathan provides all that women need to live out their dreams. This is corroborated in (xxi) above. In (xix), the gender ideology underlying the speeches of Jonathan comes to the fore when he says that “the development of women is the focal point of our transformation agenda.” This means issues relating to women are given adequate and special attention. It receives special focus and is constantly kept in perspective. Also, identifying women as important in the transformation agenda is a way of portraying them as change agents and seeing them as important to the development of the nation. Before one could dream of achieving any goal in life, such must be alive and healthy. Jonathan recognises this fact. Hence, in (xx), he says that the health of women would be duly attended to which is a prerequisite to other things. Jonathan also seems to understand the fact that without women, procreation could be difficult. Women are integral to the preservation of life and continuity which necessitates that their health should not be

taken for granted. Jonathan demonstrates his understanding of these unique roles of women by stating that his government would ensure that death rate amongst women is brought down minimally. The following gendered assertions are identifiable in the Independence Day speech of Jonathan:

- xxii. As men and women in leadership, we must continually focus on service, duty, responsibility, and the next generation.
- xxiii. These are the teachers and men and women in academics who inculcate the knowledge and wisdom that transform into tomorrow's wealth.
- xxiv. The market women who tend to our everyday needs.
- xxv. The sportsmen and women in the creative industry who bring honour and fame to our nation.
- xxvi. And the men and women of our armed forces and security services who toil day and night so that you and I may live in a safe and secure nation.

In the data above, Jonathan accords equal significance to men and women. He does not deploy generic terms as commonly used by some other Nigerian presidents. This is a projection of gender equality. He sees women as individuals who have made their mark in virtually every part of national life such as leadership, academics, business and industry, sports, and even security. To Jonathan, Nigeria is a nation where everyone, regardless of their gender, is allowed to live out their dreams and become whatever they want to. For him, there is no such thing as “women are the weaker gender who could not be entrusted with certain responsibilities.” These sum up the gender ideology in the speeches of Jonathan.

7.2. Gender ideology: self-reliance leads to self-actualisation

The predominant gender ideology in the speeches of Jonathan used in this study is that self-reliance is crucial to self-actualisation. To be self-reliant is to depend on the abilities or efforts of oneself. It is the ability to do things and make decisions by oneself without needing the input of other people. Self-actualisation, however, means to become fulfilled in ones potentials. This occurs when people maximise their potentials and are able to do the best that they can do. Underlying the

gender rhetoric of Jonathan is that the woman needs to be empowered (self-reliant) first of all. This is why he speaks of his government looking into issues bordering on the health of women, creating job opportunities for them, appointing them into sensitive positions, making their votes count, and ensuring that they feature in key and sensitive sectors. This way, they could achieve their dream and become whatever they aspire to become.

8. Conclusion

This study has focused on the analysis of gender expressions in the inaugural, Democracy Day, and Independence Day speeches of Goodluck Jonathan. Various linguistic categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and assertions are used to project Jonathan as gender-sensitive. These linguistic categories also reveal the underlying gender ideology in the speeches. The analysis reveals that Jonathan describes women with glowing terms and also makes categorical statements with respect to what his government did to encourage the female. The study shows that the deployment of lexical choices has implications on the disposition of Goodluck Jonathan to gender issues. The paper believes that silence on gender issues in the speeches of many other Nigerian presidents is a way of further suppressing the female gender and vice versa.

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