

LEGITIMATION IN SPEECHES OF PRESIDENT BOLA TINUBU AND GENERAL ABDOURAHAMANE TCHIANI ON NIGER COUP D'ETAT

Abiodun Jombadi, (PhD)

Department of English & Linguistics,
Kwara State University, Malete.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11000911>

Published Date: 20-April-2024

Abstract: Deconstructing legitimation strategies in political discourse is a means to analyse specific ways in which language represents an instrument of control (Hodge & Kress, 1993) and manifests symbolic power (Bourdieu, 2001). This is even more evident in a case of conflict where political actors flex power and seek to influence perceptions of the populace while justifying their actions. This study examined the linguistic features deployed in legitimising the speeches of President Bola Tinubu (BAT) and General Abdourahamane Tchiani (GAT) on Niger coup. The study appropriated the transitivity system of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and van Leeuwen's (1996) Grammar of Legitimation Theory. It incorporated insights from the Critical Discourse Analysis using van Dijk's Socio-cognition model to delineate identity construction. The four speeches that constituted our data were obtained online and were quantitatively and qualitatively analysed. Findings revealed four legitimation strategies that were used by BAT, namely authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation and mythopoesis. GAT only used two strategies (rationalization and mythopoesis). The legitimation structures were formed using two processes of the transitivity system – material process and relational process. Two legitimate strategies were employed using material process, namely mythopoesis and rationalization. Three legitimate structures were presented using relational attributive process – rationalization, moral evaluation and authorization. The paper concluded by maintaining a position that a thorough analysis of linguistic features and identity construction in legitimation portends a rich model in investigating political discourse in crisis situation.

Keywords: legitimation, legitimation strategies, political discourse, systemic functional grammar, linguistic features, speeches, critical discourse analysis, transitivity system, identity construction.

1. INTRODUCTION

July 2023 was a watershed in the political history of West Africa sub-region as it witnessed yet another political turbulence. The military took over power while ousting President Mohamed Bazoum in a peaceful coup. Shortly after the takeover, General Abdourahamane Tchiani addressed the nation to defend the action of his men, who had earlier committed their lives to protecting the erstwhile President. He justified the coup as a timely intervention necessary to halt the pervasive economic deprivation and endemic political corruption prevalent under the then current democratic leadership in the country.

In a swift reaction, the regional political and economic body, the Economic Community of West African States, reacted through its leader, Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu, condemning the hapless coup describing it as unacceptable, barbaric and a sheer affront to the progress that has hitherto been established in Africa's decade-long experimentation with democracy.

The current paper investigates the linguistic structures used in legitimising opinions, assertions and actions by both leaders in their speeches and to examine the relation between the linguistic structures and legitimation discursive structures in revealing identity construction patterns hidden under lexical and syntactic structures in both speeches. Discourse of legitimation explicates and justifies social activity by providing “good reasons, grounds or acceptable motivations for past or present action” (van Dijk 1998, p.255). It has pungent explanatory power and functions ideologically in the message it elevates. Importantly, it connects to an objective that seeks the support and approval of an addressee. Political leaders are solidly aware that their speeches, being used to justify political actions or agendas, have the potential to change the direction of a whole nation. To this end, they make efforts to manipulate language and deploy various legitimation strategies in an attempt to construct their identities positively and that of others negatively.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Legitimation studies have already begun to be intensified across disciplines that include, but not limited to social management, politics, business, and newspaper discourses. Within the field of political discourse analysis in particular, several works abound. Letcu-Fairclough (2008) analyses a speech made by the Romanian President, Traian Basescu, following his suspension by Parliament in April 2007. She analysed the adjudication process in the speech and relates legitimation as political strategy to strategic maneuvering oriented to meeting the contradictory demands of the political field. Reyes (2011) references legitimation to politicians’ use of power through analysing complex and simple syntactic structures and direct and indirect speech. Ali, Christopher & Nordin (2016) examine the discursive structures employed in legitimising the event of U.S. forces withdrawal from Iraq and identifies them in relation to linguistic features. Ganaah, Nartey & Bhatia (2022) analyse the legitimation strategies used by Jerry Rawlings, a Ghanaian revolutionary leader, to license his revolutionary actions, including political enemies’ execution and a crackdown on corrupt practices. Other works on legitimation in political discourse analysis focus on war rhetoric (Oddo, 2011), online aggression (Lee, 2020), gendered language (Yu 2020), protest speeches and online activism (Igwebuike & Akoh, 2021) and immigration rejection letters (van Leeuwen & Wodak 1999). Basarati & Abdi (2018) analyse Barack Obama’s speech at Baltimore Islamic Center. The work discusses identity construction as a further analytical lens to van Leeuwen’s approach but pays no attention to lexical and syntactic structures. The present study addresses a gap in the literature by juxtaposing the syntactic structures and identity constructions of speeches of a civilian and a military leader expressed through legitimation.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Political discourse is a discourse produced by a politician in his/her professional role and in an institutional setting. A discourse is political when it accomplishes a political act in a political institution (van Dijk, 2001). van Dijk (1997) acknowledges the difficulty involved in defining the word ‘politics’ and so includes some characteristics.

Firstly, political discourse is characterised by its actors or authors. It involves the analysis of discourses of all actors in the political process including voting and criticising political topics on social media. Secondly, a discourse is political if it is related to activities or practices which have political nature, such as governing, ruling, legislating, protesting, dissenting or voting. Thirdly, the most obvious way in categorising a discourse as being political is the context which can further be analysed through the political and communicative events and encounters with their own settings, occasions, intentions, functions, goals, and legal or political implications. The data for this study is categorised as political discourse as it suffices van Dijk’s scope of politics. The subject of this study includes speakers who are situated in a political context and setting (time, place, and circumstances), holding public offices and their speeches are addressed to a critical political issues happening within a country.

Politics is very close to legitimation (Ananda & Sari, 2021, p.1255). In fact, political discourse is said to be a fundamentally premeditated and planned persuasive speech that attempts to legitimise political goals (Cap, 2008; Ochs, 1979). Political actors, being aided by their teams, deliberately plan their speeches to achieve specific communicative goals. When the purpose of a speech is to legitimise a controversial decision, politicians must pre-plan a speech that would facilitate achieving the said purpose (Said, 2017, p.2). Legitimation in political discourse is, therefore, an entrenched persuasive effort aimed at justifying certain propositions, actions and intentions in order to achieve specific political goals.

The concept of legitimacy has been extensively studied in social and political sciences, in law and in philosophy. Max Weber (1968) was among the first great social theorists to emphasise the importance of legitimacy. Weber applied the concept to administrative systems and social order while emphasising the legitimation of power structures, both corporate

and governmental. After Weber, Talcott Parsons (1960) broadened the focus of legitimation to include features other than power systems. His approach focuses on an organisation's value system. The focus of the organisation's value system "must be the legitimation of this goal in terms of the functional significance of its attainment for the superordinate system" (p.21). Such an approach to legitimacy, emphasising the consistency of organisational goals with societal functions, was later accepted by Pfeffer and colleagues (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978).

Since the past few decades, many scholars have examined the concept of legitimation and its linguistic representations in discourses, giving different definitions. Rojo and van Dijk (1997, p.560) opine that legitimation may be analysed as "a social act of attributing acceptability to social actors, social actions, and social relations within the normative order". van Dijk (1998, p.255) emphasises legitimation as a major function of language use and discourse. In a discourse analytical framework, legitimation can be defined as a social and political act accomplished by text or talk that provides good grounds, reasons or acceptable motivations for past and present action which has been or could be criticised by others. Legitimation relates to the speech act of defending oneself, in which speakers explain why they did or did not do something, and why such an action is reasonable and acceptable.

The legitimisation function validates the right of the regimes and their policies to be obeyed. Its converse form, delegitimation, is often deployed to attack the enemy of the regime or political actor. Cap (2008a, p.7) sees legitimisation as the main goal of the political speaker who seeks justification and support of actions which the speaker obviously intends to perform in the vital interest of the addressee. Within the frame of discourse, certain contextual factors are compulsory for a justificatory discourse to have a legitimate function. Rojo and van Dijk (1997) argue that three conditions are needed to be satisfied, in order to consider a discourse as legitimate: "(i) their sources (speakers, institutions, etc.) must be legitimate; (ii) their representation of events must appear to be true and trustworthy; (iii) their linguistic and discursive forms must be socially appropriate, authorised or 'politically correct'" (p.550).

4. METHODOLOGY

This paper focuses on identifying the discursive/linguistic structures and the process of identity construction employed in the legitimation of the political events surrounding the Niger coup. The sample is represented by excerpts taken from four speeches, two being the speeches delivered by Nigeria's President and ECOWAS Chair, Bola Tinubu, during the first and second ECOWAS summit on Niger coup. The other two speeches were delivered by General Abdourahamane Tchiani, the former head of Niger's presidential guard. His speech came days after he and his soldiers seized power from the country's democratically elected president, Mohamed Bazoum. The study was carried out using the qualitative content analysis through a critical lens. Hence, van Dijk's approach to CDA is used to analyse the patterns of identity construction in the speeches. Halliday's SFL is used to identify the linguistic features of the selected excerpts and van Leeuwen's legitimation theory is employed to deconstruct the legitimation strategies in the speeches.

Whereas the texts of President Bola Tinubu's speeches were delivered in English and obtained directly from an online source, those of General Abdourahamane Tchiani were obtained through videos that were uploaded on YouTube channel. The speeches were delivered in French and subtitled in English. The subtitles were transcribed and their accuracy in relation to the original speech was confirmed through the help of a professional translator. The transcripts of the speeches were divided into segments to facilitate locating cases of legitimation. The segments were examined using criteria that ensure the incidents found are cases of legitimation. First, the segment must include a proposition that attempts to justify a social practice or action for or against the coup. Second, the proposition must include reference to social or institutional practices, social or political institutions or activities that are associated with either or both. Third, the social or institutional practices must be evaluated positively or negatively.

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current paper attempts to investigate the linguistic features and identity construction in legitimising propositions, assertions and actions in speeches of President Bola Tinubu and General Abdourahamane Tchiani using Theo van Leeuwen's (1996) Grammar of Legitimation theory, van Dijk's Socio-cognition theory and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar.

Theo van Leeuwen's (1996) grammar of legitimation theory proposes that discourse may itself be (de)legitimated since it has a very significant role in the formulation and expression of ideologies. The discourse of any social group can be controlled, legitimated or delegitimated in certain ways. Each of these ways may be included within the four legitimation

strategies known as grammar of legitimation. The semantic-functional strategies include authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation and mythopoesis. In addition, there are a number of sub-categories within each type of the legitimation strategies.

Table 1. van Leeuwen's Legitimation Categories

Category	Sub-Category	Exemplification of Sample
Authorisation	Personal Authority	➤ because I say so ➤ because so-and-so says so
	Expert Authority	➤ <i>because experts say so</i> ➤ <i>because Professor X says so</i>
	Role Model Authority	➤ <i>because experienced people say so</i> ➤ <i>because wise people say so</i>
	Impersonal Authority	➤ <i>because the law says so</i> ➤ <i>because the guidelines say so</i>
	The Authority of Tradition	➤ <i>because this is what we have always done</i> ➤ <i>because this is what we always do</i>
	The Authority of Conformity	➤ <i>because that's what everybody else does</i> ➤ <i>because that's what most people do</i>
	Moral Evaluation	Evaluation
Abstraction		➤ <i>because it has X (moralised) desirable quality</i>
Analogies		➤ <i>because it is like another activity which is associated with positive values</i>
Rationalization	Instrumental Rationalization	➤ <i>because it is a (moralised) means to an end</i>
	Theoretical Rationalization	➤ <i>because it is the way things are</i> ➤ <i>because doing things this way is appropriate to the nature of these actors</i>
Mythopoesis	Moral Tales	➤ <i>because look at the reward(s) this person achieved for doing it</i>
	Cautionary Tales	➤ <i>because look at the consequences this person suffered for not doing it</i>

Adapted from van Leeuwen's studies (2007, 2008)

Table 1 presents the legitimation strategies and their sub-categories. Authorisation references the appropriate (personal and impersonal) authority as subject. Its sub-forms are personal authority, expert authority, role model authority, impersonal authority, the authority of tradition and the authority of conformity. Rationalisation is realised by referring to the value of a particular social practice or general beliefs within a particular social environment. Its sub-forms are instrumental rationalisation and theoretical rationalisation. Moral evaluation is recognised by referring to a certain system of values, developing the ethical foundation for legitimation in the social context. Its sub-forms are evaluation, abstraction and analogy. The last category of legitimation strategies is mythopoesis. It emphasises legitimation obtained through narrative or by relating the investigated practice to the past or future through storytelling (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). Its sub-forms are moral tales and cautionary tales.

van Dijk's (1995) socio-cognition model of CDA defines social cognition as "the system of mental representations and processes of group members" (p. 18). According to him, "Ideologies are the overall, abstract mental systems that organise socially shared attitudes" (p. 18). Ideologies, thus, "Indirectly influence the personal cognition of group members" in their act of comprehension of discourse among other actions and interactions (p. 19). He calls the mental representations of individuals during such social actions and interactions "models". For him, "models control how people act, speak or write, or how they understand the social practices of others" (p. 2). Of crucial importance here is that, according to van Dijk,

mental representations “are often articulated along Us versus Them dimensions, in which speakers of one group will generally tend to present themselves or their own group in positive terms, and other groups in negative terms” (p. 22). He believes that one who desires to make transparent such an ideological dichotomy in discourse needs to analyse discourse in the following ways (1998b, pp. 61-63):

- a. examining the context of the discourse: historical, political or social background of a conflict and its main participants;
- b. analysing groups, power relations and conflicts involved;
- c. identifying positive and negative opinions about ‘us’ versus ‘them’;
- d. making explicit the presupposed and the implied; and
- e. examining all formal structure: lexical choice and syntactic structure, in a way that helps to (de)emphasise polarised group opinions.

Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar proposes that when people use language, their language acts are the expression of meaning. From this point of view, the grammar becomes a study of how meanings are woven through the use of words and other linguistic forms such as tone and emphasis. Halliday’s explanation of how language works involves the idea that a language consists of a set of systems, each of which offers the speaker (or writer) a choice of ways of expressing meanings (Bloor & Bloor, 1995, p. 2). Such meanings are established within specific situations, and the form of the language that people use is influenced by the complex elements of those situations. The situation not only affects the choice of words but also the grammar that is used. Halliday (1994, p. 95) makes the point that the relationship between the forms of utterances and the types of meaning they can express is a complex one which is based on the principle that what speakers say makes sense in the context in which they are saying it. He claims in addition, that all adult language is organised around a small number of ‘functional components’ which correspond to metafunctions (or purposes which underlie all language use) and that these metafunctions have a systematic relationship with the lexicogrammar of the language.

The first metafunction of language is ideational. It is represented by the transitivity system which involves participants, processes, and circumstances. It has six types of processes formed by verbs, including material (happening and doing), mental (affection and thinking), behavioural (behaving), relational (attributing and identifying), verbal (saying and asking), and finally existential (being) (Halliday & Malthiessen, 2014). These processes require participants functioning in accordance with the type of process. In material process, the participants function as Actor and Goal; in the mental process, they function as Senser and Phenomenon; in the behavioural process as Behaviour; in the relational process as Carrier and Attribute; in the verbal process as Sayer, Targets, and Verbiage; and finally in the existential process as Existent. In addition, the circumstances refer to the adverbial and prepositional phrases which clarify the event in terms of time, place, manner, cause and result, and conditional aspects (Halliday & Malthiessen, 2014).

The interpersonal metafunction expounds the mood and modality of the clause. The clause mood may be declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory. Modality refers to the degree of certainty or obligation using the modal auxiliary verbs in the present tense (will, shall, may, must) and past tense (would, should, could, might). The third function is textual. This function is represented by the use of references, ellipsis, and conjunctions (Halliday & Malthiessen). The three models so far explicated provide the theoretic grounding for the analysis of linguistic features and identity construction in legitimising the speeches under consideration.

6. ANALYSIS

The main aim of this study is to identify and compare the linguistic structures used in legitimising opinions, assertions and actions by both leaders and to examine the relation between the linguistic structures and legitimation discursive structures in revealing identity construction patterns hidden under lexical and syntactic structures in both speeches. Across the speeches, four types of legitimation discursive structures were employed. They include authorisation (the authority of tradition), mythopoesis (moral tales, cautionary tales), rationalisation (theoretical rationalisation, instrumental rationalisation), and moral evaluation (evaluation). The legitimation structures were formed using different processes of the transitivity system. The following table illustrates a comparison of legitimation strategies in both speeches. The acronym ‘BAT’ stands for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu while ‘GAT’ stands for General Abdourahamane Tchiani (and they are to be used henceforth this way) in the table.

Table 1.1: Legitimation strategies in speeches of BAT and GAT

No. Legitimation Categories	Legitimation Subcategories	BAT		GAT	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1. Authorization	The Authority of Tradition	2	11.1	Nil	Nil
2. Rationalization	Theoretical Rationalization Instrumental Rationalization	7	38.9	2	50
3. Moral Evaluation	Evaluation	3	16.7	Nil	Nil
4. Mythopoesis	Moral Tale Cautionary Tale	2	11.1	2	50
		14	100	4	100

Table 1.1 presents the distribution of the legitimation strategies used by BAT and GAT in their speeches on Niger Coup. All the four strategies are present in BAT's speeches but only two in GAT's speeches (rationalisation and mythopoesis). Out of the 14 occurrences in BAT's speeches, theoretical rationalisation has the largest frequency with 38.9%, making it the most frequently used legitimation strategy by BAT. This is possible to enable BAT to advocate a restoration of status quo in an otherwise troubled sub-region. According to Leeuwen (2008, p.116), theoretical rationalisation builds legitimation based on how the world naturally works. The coup and its process of execution fail to draw salutary depiction from BAT especially in comparison to a democratic arrangement. The strategy of theoretical rationalisation, therefore, helps him to place the coup in a perspective that will make it appear detestable and loathed. Same strategy has a frequency of 50% in GAT's speeches. It is pervasively used by GAT to place the coup in a creditable context while advocating for a peaceful transition at a later date.

Following rationalisation is moral evaluation, a strategy which, according to Ananda and Sari (2021), is built based on values that prevail in particular social communities. Moral evaluation has a percentage frequency of 16.7% in BAT's speeches but absent in the speeches of GAT. It shows the strong commitment of BAT (as ECOWAS leader) to democratic values and the need to have it protected at all cost in the region.

Authorisation and mythopoesis have a balanced percentage of 11.1% each. Both strategies are used by BAT but only mythopoesis is used by GAT. Authorisation is recognised by referring to the appropriate (personal and impersonal) authority as subject (Ali, Christopher & Nordin, 2016, p.76). Its sub-strategy, the authority of tradition, is used in one of BAT's speeches. It is deployed by BAT to reaffirm the strategic mandate of the body to restore order in Niger. This alludes to Ananda & Sari's (2021) submission that "the tradition authority is developed by reference to the tradition, customs, habit and practice". Indeed, ECOWAS prides itself as a body that works to address security issues by developing a peacekeeping force for conflicts in the West African region. Hence, the resurgence of coup in Niger is seen as an affront on its mandate and it is expected that propositions are made on ways to restore democratic order in Niger. This is the justification for the call for dialogue and engagement of all parties involved in the crisis.

Mythopoesis has a percentage frequency of 11.1% in BAT's speeches and 50% in GAT's. With mythopoesis, legitimation can be simply formed through storytelling or narrative text. BAT uses cautionary tale (a form of mythopoesis) to justify the call for an extraordinary summit of ECOWAS by drawing attention to President Bazoum's detention. The negative depiction and portrayal of the scenario and its masterminds is expected to validate any response invoked by the body. On the part of GAT, however, the deployment of moral tale helps to clarify the failed attempts by the government of President Bazoum to address the prolonged security situation in the country. This strategy will hopefully justify the takeover of power and legitimise the actions of the military.

Linguistically, the legitimation structures were formed using two processes of the transitivity system, namely, material process and relational process. The table below illustrates these processes as used in legitimising various propositions, actions and opinions of BAT and GAT on Niger Coup.

Table 1.2: Legitimation in speeches of BAT and GAT through transitivity system

No. Process Types	Legitimation Type	Linguistic Representation of Legitimation			
		Participants	Role	Verbs	Type
1. Material Process	Moral Tale & Cautionary tale Mythopoesis	We	Subject (Actor)	building upon	Verb of doing
		Extraordinary summit	Compl (Goal)	to address	Verb of doing
	Instrumental & Theoretical Rationalization	The CNSP's action	Subject (Actor)	were motivated	Verb of doing
		This resolute measure	Compl (Goal)	would serve	Verb of doing
2. Relational Process	Instrumental & Theoretical Rationalization	The President Bazoum	Subject (Carrier)	is	Attributive
		There	(Subject Carrier)	can't	Attributive
	Moral Evaluation	It	Subject (Carrier)	is	Attributive
	The Authority of Tradition	It	Subject (Carrier)	is	Attributive

In this table, two legitimation strategies were employed using material process, including mythopoesis and rationalisation. All sentences were related to actions performed by the speakers on behalf of the groups they were representing. All verbs used were formulated using verbs of doing. This reveals the proactiveness and sense of responsibility projected by speakers in their speeches. Three legitimation strategies were presented using relational attributive process, namely rationalisation (instrumental and theoretical), moral evaluation (evaluation) and authority (tradition authority). On the one hand, BAT, speaking on behalf of ECOWAS, suggested that any means proposed to restore democratic governance as symbolised by the release of President Bazoum, is justified in the interest of the heritage and mandate of the body and purportedly the people of Niger. GAT, on the other hand, suggested that the coup was a welcome development, a progressive interruption capable of improving the security architecture of Niger which had hitherto failed in the hands of President Mohamed Bazoum. Through the operation of the material process, propositions and actions were conveyed and clarified while the relational process helped to defend those actions.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The linguistic structures identified in the data and their roles in identity construction in legitimising various propositions, opinions and actions about the Niger coup have been discussed below. As mentioned earlier, two processes have been identified in the operation of the transitivity system within the data, namely, material and relational process.

7.1 Legitimation through material process

Two legitimation strategies were conveyed through the material process. They include mythopoesis and rationalisation. As earlier discussed, mythopoesis is achieved through the telling of stories. Thus, President Tinubu deployed this strategy to accentuate the need for the extraordinary summit that was summoned:

It shouldn't have been so if not for extraordinary summit that was necessary **to address** the situation that we have in Niger Republic threatening a very devoted member of the Union.

According to him, the invitation to the summit became crucial to defend the personal interest of President Bazoum, the Nigerien people and the constitutional order of democracy. This absolute loyalty to the three courses is a positive presentation of self and a testament to the formidable mutual bond that exists among the member states of ECOWAS. Through mythopoesis, the Summit asserted its position in defence of President Bazoum but justified its imposition of

sanctions on the military authority in defence of the welfare of the Nigerien people and the constitutional order of democracy through the strategy of theoretical rationalisation. GAT on his part, deployed instrumental rationalisation to clarify his group's commitment to the country:

The CNSP's **were motivated** by the sole desire to preserve our beloved homeland in the face of the continuing deterioration in our country's security situation...

The self-presentation here is also positive. The justification for the audacious coup was asserted to be primarily based on the urgent need to halt a worsening security challenge in Niger. It is, thus, projected by comparison, that while the loyalty of ECOWAS is primarily to an individual country representative in the Union, that of the National Council for Safeguarding the Homeland (the masterminds of the coup) is primarily to the country. This assertion of patriotic zeal and sacrifice is further stretched through moral tale mythopoesis.

The current security approach **has failed** to secure our country despite the heavy sacrifices made by Nigeriens and the appreciable and appreciated support of our external partners. No, the results **have not lived up to** our expectations, and we can no longer continue with the same approaches proposed to date, at the risk of witnessing the gradual and inevitable disappearance of our country.

The attempt by GAT to demonise the leadership style of President Mohamed Bazoum in the face of a prevailing monstrous conundrum of insecurity is the means to justify the coup as a welcome development.

7.2 Legitimation through relational process

Three legitimation strategies were conveyed through relational process, namely the tradition authority, instrumental rationalisation and moral evaluation. In BAT's speeches, the tradition authority was expressed in reference to ECOWAS's practice of sustained "diplomatic negotiations and dialogue" in the events of crises in the region:

It **is** crucial that we prioritize diplomatic negotiations and dialogue as the bedrock of our approach...It **is** our duty to exhaust all avenues of engagement to ensure a swift return to constitutional governance in Niger.

BAT premised all the actions and propositions of the regional body on this goal to project the body as a model of proper democratic behaviour who reserves the constitutional right to redress all undemocratic developments. The Summit was, therefore, legitimated on the need to assess the effectiveness of its approach to finding a 'solution' to the crisis in Niger in favour of the body's core mandate. BAT achieved this through the deployment of instrumental rationalisation:

It **is** essential to evaluate the effectiveness of our interventions and to identify the gaps or challenges that may have hindered progress.

Through moral evaluation, BAT further engaged the relational process by criminalising the confinement of President Mohamed Bazoum:

The danger to us right now is that one of us, His Excellency, Mohamed Bazoum is in hostage by his own army, a presidential guard. What a calamity! It **is** an assault on everyone of us...

The stringent loyalty of the regional body to the welfare of a representative of one of its member states, President Bazoum is indicated here. In this assertion, the force of legitimation is unleashed as the incessant detention of President Bazoum is purportedly correlated with the ignoble idea of a disruption of a democratic order. This portends a positive representation of self for the regional body and the negative representation for the masterminds of the coup.

8. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the linguistic features deployed in legitimising the speeches of President Bola Tinubu and General Abdourahamane Tchiani on Niger coup d'état. The study has expanded on the transitivity system of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and van Leeuwen's (1996) Grammar of Legitimation Theory. It incorporated insights from the Critical Discourse Analysis using van Dijk's Socio-cognition model to delineate identity construction in the data and identified positive self-representation and negative others-representation all across the speeches. All the four legitimation strategies were used by BAT, namely authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation and mythopoesis). GAT only used two strategies (rationalisation and mythopoesis). The need to assert a justification for actions that were necessary to restore constitutional democracy elevated the dominance of theoretical rationalisation in BAT's speeches. Same strategy dominated GAT's submission who placed the coup in context and advocated for a peaceful transition.

The legitimation structures were formed using two processes of the transitivity system – material process and relational process. Two legitimate strategies were employed using material process, namely mythopoesis and rationalisation. Three legitimate structures were presented using using relational attributive process – rationalisation, moral evaluation and authorisation. Through these strategies, BAT relayed three justifications for various actions and propositions made by the regional body. First, restoration of constitutional democracy in Niger; second, the release of President Bazoum; and third, protection of the 'sacred' mandate of ECOWAS in promoting peace and security within the region. GAT's justification rests on the notion that his group's action held the promise to annihilate insecurity in Niger, thus, creating a conducive environment for the country to thrive. The demonisation of the coup and the detention of President Bazoum portends a negative other-representation for GAT who conveyed a positive-representation for his group on the claim that the motive for the coup was for the well-being of the land and the people. BAT on the other hand, conveys a positive self-representation for ECOWAS by equivocally asserting a strong support for the mandate of the body purportedly in the interest of the people of Niger.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abdi, R. & Basarati, A. (2018). Legitimation in discourse and communication revisited: a critical view toward legitimizing identities in communication. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 6(1), 86-100.
- [2] Ali, M., Christopher, A. & Nordin, M. (2016). Linguistic legitimation of political events in newspaper discourse. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 7(4), pp.76-83.
- [3] Ananda. R. & Sari, N. (2021). Linguistic legitimation strategies employed by members of an Indonesian political party. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 8(3), 1248-1266.
- [4] Bloor, T. and Bloor, Meriel. (1995). *The functional analysis of English: a Hallidayan approach*. London: Arnold.
- [5] Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Language and symbolic power*. (G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.) (6th ed.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- [6] Cap, C. (2008). Towards the proximization model of the analysis of legitimisation in political discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40(1), pp.17-41.
- [7] Cap, P. (2008a). *Legitimation in political discourse: a cross-disciplinary perspective (in the modern U.S. war rhetoric* (2nd ed). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- [8] Ganaah, J., Nartey, M. & Bhatia, A. (2022). *Legitimation in revolutionary discourse: a critical examination of the discourse of Jerry John Rawlings*. Received 13th March, 2024 from <https://www.researchgate.net>.
- [9] Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *Introduction to functional grammar*. London: Edward
- [10] Hodge, R. & Kress, G. (1993). *Language as ideology*. London: Routledge.
- [11] Igwebuikwe, E. & Akoh, A. (2021). "Self-legitimation and other-delegitimation in the internet radio speeches of the supreme leader of the indigenous people of Biafra". *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1-9.
- [12] Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- [13] Ochs, E. (1979). Planned and unplanned discourse. In T. Givon (Ed), *Discourse and Syntax*, 12 (pp51-80). New York: Academic Press.
- [14] Oddo, R. (2011). War legitimization discourse: representing ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ in Four US presidential addresses. *Discourse and Society*. 22(3), 287-314.
- [15] Parsons, T. (1960) *Structure and process in modern societies*. Glencoe:IL, Free.
- [16] Reyes, A. (2011). “Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: from words to actions”. *Discourse and Society*, 22(6), 781-807.
- [17] Rojo, M. & van Dijk, T. (1997) “There was a problem, and it was solved! Legitimizing the expulsion of “illegal” migrants in Spanish parliamentary discourse. *Discourse and Society*. Vol.8, No.4, pp.523-566.
- [18] Said, H. (2017). *Legitimation strategies in Egyptian political discourse: the case of presidential speeches*. Unpublished Master’s thesis, the American University, Cairo. AUC Knowledge Fountain. Received 3rd January, 2024 from <https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/674>
- [19] van Dijk, T.A. (1995) .Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis. *Japanese discourse*, 1, 17-24
- [20] van Dijk, T. (1998). *Ideology: a multidisciplinary approach*. London: Sage Publishers
- [21] van Dijk, T.A. (1998b). Opinions and ideologies in the press. In Bell, Allan and Peter Garrett (Eds). *Approaches to media discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell
- [22] van Dijk, T. (2001) ‘Discourse, politics and ideology’. *ALEO Journal*. Received 6th January, 2024 from <https://www.hum.uva.nl/teun/dis-pol-idebtm>.
- [23] van Leeuwen, T. & Wodak, R. (1999). “Legitimising immigration control: a discourse-historical analysis”. *Discourse Studies*, 1(1), 83-118.
- [24] Weber, M. (1968) *Economy and Society: an interpretive sociology*. Roth, Guenther and Wittich, C. (eds). New York: Bedminister