

An Analysis of Political Campaign Discourses in Cameroon before and during the 2018 Presidential Elections

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Abstract

During elections period, politicians manipulate language to defend their political ideologies and gain public opinion. This study aims at having an in-depth examination of political speeches in Cameroon before and during the 2018 presidential election. The speech of Paul Biya (leader of Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement) and that of Maurice Kamto (leader of Cameroon Renaissance Movement) were considered for the study. They were extracted from social media (Facebook, CRTV web and some web sites on Google). With the aid of discourse analysis and pragmatic theory, the results revealed that the campaigners made use of persuasion and indirect language (implicature). There were temporal, personal, spatial, and discourse deixis to link ideas and situate the speakers in a particular situation. Moreover, there were repetition of certain messages to create a psychological impact as well as enumeration, and ambiguity. The tone of the opposition leader was full of dismay while that of the ruling party consisted of aspiration and admiration.

Key words: politics, campaign, discourse, persuasion, ideology

Resumé

En période électorale, les hommes politiques manipulent le langage pour défendre leurs idéologies politiques et gagner l'opinion publique. Cette étude vise à examiner en profondeur les discours politiques au Cameroun avant et pendant l'élection présidentielle de 2018. Le discours de Paul Biya (leader du Mouvement démocratique du peuple camerounais) et celui de Maurice Kamto (leader du Mouvement pour la renaissance du Cameroun) ont été pris en compte pour l'étude. Ils ont été extraits des réseaux sociaux (Facebook, CRTV web et certains site sur Google). À l'aide d'analyse du discours et la théorie pragmatique, les résultats ont montré que les militants ont eu recours à la persuasion et au langage indirect (le non-dit). Il y avait des déixis temporelles, personnelles, spatiales et discursives pour relier les idées et situer les locuteurs dans une situation particulière. De plus, il y avait répétition de certains messages pour créer un impact psychologique ainsi que du dénombrement et de l'ambiguïté. Le ton du leader de l'opposition était plein de consternation tandis que celui du parti au pouvoir était plein d'aspiration et d'admiration.

Mots-clés : politique, campagne, discours, persuasion, idéologie

Introduction

Language and politics are intertwined in that successful politics depends on the "sweetness" of the message in question. Political language refers to a situation where linguistic features are employed to persuade people (Alan, 2011). Common as the features

may be in everyday situation, they remain very unique with politicians and politics.

According to Fairclough (2013), discourse analysis helps to unhide certain political views perpetrated by politicians and other public figures, unveiling how language is used to change ideologies, pin down dissenting voices and create perspectives that serve the interest of the

concerned or those in power. Political messages are sometimes bias and misleading thereby influencing public perceptions (Chomsky 1988).

This study examines the various political utterances used during the electioneering process in Cameroon before and during the 2018 presidential election, based on some selected political campaign materials randomly collected from social media platforms.

I. Definition of key terms

1. Campaign language

Longe (1995:26) reported by Omozuwa and Ezejideaku, (2007) outline two types of language varieties such as dialect and diatype (register). He defines register as the variety of language according to use in situations such as the language of advertisement, the language of religious worship, the language of political campaign, etc. (35). Omozuwa and Ezejideaku (2007:2) opine that:

The language of political campaign as a variety of language use is intended to pass the needed information to the electorate with a view to convincing or appealing to them. It is usually laden with emotion and has the effect of causing the electorate to have a change of mind on an issue

In the same dimension, Szanto (1978:7) in Omozuwa and Ezejideaku (2007) views language of politics as a lexicon of conflict and drama, of ridicules, and reproach, pleading and persuasion, colour and bite permeated. A language designed to valour men, destroy some and change the mind of others. This means that such language goes beyond the confines of

persuasion to that of destruction of other political ideologies.

2. Propaganda

Longe and Ofuani (1996:17) think that propaganda is:

...often associated with deceit because propagandists have seldom scruples to lie or to distort the truth in order to persuade and gather people behind them. In fact, propaganda can be honest or dishonest, while its purpose might be to elicit help or tarnish image. Propaganda is a fundamental instrument of the language of politics. It is used in moulding and changing opinion.

From this explanation, it can be said that propaganda has to do with the manipulation of information in order to gain a particular goal. This manipulation passes through fake information and persuasion.

3. Statement of the problem

In every democratic country, elections are the gateway to power. These elections pass through intensive campaign which is intended to convince people to adhere to a particular ideology. During this period, politicians employ their linguistic skills to woo the audience. Such campaign messages are usually full of hidden meaning, manipulation, pejorative words, and exaggeration. Moreover some of them are derogatory, bias, tribalistic and unrealistic.

4. Objective

The objective of this study is to investigate political discourses in Cameroon before and during the 2018 presidential elections in order to unveil the ideology behind them.

5. Research question

This research centres on the following research question:

How do politicians use language in an election situation in Cameroon?

6. Literature Review

A lot of works have been done in regards to the language used during political situations, for instance, Oloko (2017) analysed Biya' speech during COP21 to view Cameroons' stands on the phenomenon of climate change. The place where climate change occupies in the Cameroonian society was one of the main elements that Biya demonstrates in his speech. It was noted that his speech had some worries about the environmental situation of Cameroon. He used certain words to call for a collective fight against climate change in the world.

Djoko (2009) studied campaign messages in Indonesia. The study focused particularly on how meaning is realised during campaigns and how language is used to exercise authority. This was done based on a close-up linguistic analysis of three different texts. The findings showed that campaign messages are not only full of meanings about what goes on and why, but also meanings about relationships and attitudes. Meanings about distance and proximity were also derived from the texts. He also noted that political discourses are characterised by the construction and reflection of the situational, cultural and ideological contexts. The strength of the campaign messages was determined by the way the campaigners talk to the die-hard fans, their experience, the responsibility of their statements and expected behaviour. After observing all of these features, Djoko

(2009) concluded that language is central in politics. Meanings are explicitly realised in a subtle way and politicians exercise power through the ideological working of language. The study is essential in that it succinctly pointed out the relation between language and politics. This is a regular issue in the contemporary politics, where politicians manipulate language in a given public space to defend an ideology.

Omozuwa and Ezedideaku (2007) see campaign language from the rhetoric perspective. They examined the stylistic effect of political language in the 2007 presidential elections in Nigeria. After a close reading of newspapers, they realised that politicians embellish their language in a unique way to give extra effect and force to achieve their aim of winning many votes. This campaign language is usually spiced with rhetoric, propaganda, repetition, colloquialism and figurative expressions. Concerning propaganda, they argued that it is characterised by exaggeration, rhetorical questions and abusive utterances. One of the most effective strategies used during campaign was language simplification, code-switching and borrowing. Also, the results showed that politicians used abusive language either voluntarily or involuntarily to defend and discard the ideology of the opponents. Attack on party logos, allusion to the bible, promises and idioms are also effective during this period. The study concluded that most politicians resort to using Pidgin English in order to be heard and understood by all, since it is the language many people speak in Nigeria.

Jalali and Sadeghi (2014) analysed the speeches, slogans, and posters of 4 Rasht City Council candidates in Iran. The

four candidates had different educational backgrounds as well as working records. Multiple sources of data collection were used in the study, including questionnaire, controlled interviews and campaign messages. With the aid of critical discourse analysis, it was discovered that all the four candidates used persuasive language to pass across their ideologies. Interestingly, three of the four politicians had similar linguistic features in their speeches which demonstrated Iran's stable political system.

Harmon (2017) examined Andrea Leadsom's speech (candidate for the British prime minister election) to see whether it matches the structure of practical reasoning proposed by Fairclough (1984). In addition, the researcher wanted to confirm the deliberative and argumentative character of political discourses. The findings showed that it was argumentative in nature. However, elements of deliberation were absent in the speech implying that political discourses are not necessarily deliberative.

II. Theoretical framework

1. Pragmatic

John .L. Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969) are often associated with the speech act theory. It is a logico-philosophic perspective on conversational organisation focusing on interpretation rather than the production of utterances in discourse. This theory considers language as a sort of action rather than a medium to convey and express. The contemporary speech act theory was developed by J.L Austin a philosopher of languages in one of his most popular book, *How to*

do things with words. John Searle later on came up with the aspects of theory into much higher dimensions. Actually, it was Austin who came up with the findings that people not only use language to assert things but also to do things. This theory focuses on the need to understand a speaker's intention, and thus proposes that to understand language one must take into account the intention of the speaker. This theory enabled the researchers to capture the hidden meaning in the discourses produced by politicians before and after the 2018 presidential election in Cameroon.

2. Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is an approach to the analysis of written, vocal and or sign language or any significant semiotic event. The object of discourse analysis is variously defined in terms of coherent sequences of sentences, prepositions, speech, or turns-at-talk .Contrary to traditional linguistics, discourse analysts do not only study language use beyond the sentence boundary but also prefer to analyse naturally occurring language use, not invented examples. Discourse analysis is more interested in how language imparts meaning. This can be the use of grammar, gestures, vocabulary, language techniques, imagery and facial expressions. A crucial part of discourse analysis is assessing language use within its social context. This implies that political situation, societal norms, place, time, intended audience and speaker's socio-cultural situation are considered as they can contribute to meaning. Moreover, discourse analysis basically looks at linguistic and para-linguistic features.

There are two main types of

discourse analysis, such as language in use discourse analysis and socio-political discourse analysis. The former is concerned with the technical details of language and the latter focuses on the relationship between language and society, including language and power. The most common socio-political discourse analysis approach is the critical discourse analysis (CDA). Fairclough (1984) has been highly influential in the development of CDA as a research method. The primary principles of CDA are to;

Unravel power structure.

See how language maintains ideologies and creates power.

Assess how power can be abused and maintained through language.

Motivate people to question what they are being told and why.

Restore confidence in marginalised people.

Consider ethnicity, gender, culture and race as constructed in discourse.

According to Fairclough (1984), CDA can be divided into two disciplines, including power in discourse (language structures use to create power) and power behind discourse (ideological and sociological behind who is demonstrating power over others and why). This theory was used in this study to analyse and get the political ideologies of political leaders in Cameroon.

3.Method of data collection

The data was collected on social media sites, such as Facebook, CRTV web and some local sites on Google. The political speeches of Paul Biya and that

of Maurice Kamto were selected for the study. The former politician is the leader of the ruling party (Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement) and the latter is the leader of the opposition party (Cameroon Renaissance Movement). They were selected because of their influence in the political scene of Cameroon in the 2018 elections. The campaign messages were extracted with the aid of screenshots and written down on a jotter for examination.

4.Presentation of findings

An analysis of the campaign messages in Cameroon before and during the 2018 presidential election showed that language has a crucial role to play during campaign. This language is marked by many features, including deitic elements, repetition, rhetorical questions, implicature and ambiguity. The findings are presented below:

Presentation and analysis of political speeches

Extract 1:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me, first of all, to thank you and, through you, the Far-North for the symbolic gifts that have been presented to my wife and to me.

... My dear compatriots of the Far-North,

Thank you for turning out so massively to welcome me here in Maroua. You have braved the sun, the heat and distance to meet me. I heartily thank you. Thank you for all your tokens of friendship and fraternal attachment which are a clear reflection of your region's beautiful traditions of hospitality and loyalty.

My choice to come to Maroua on campaign is an expression of the high esteem I have for your region and my commitment to making it benefit from the "great opportunities" that our country currently offers.

Over the past few years, you have been at the forefront. And you have stood your ground.

Faced with a barbaric invader that destroyed, burnt and killed, you resisted as best you could. You stood by our defence and security forces. The vigilante groups played a key role in your resistance.

Now that the enemy has been repelled beyond our borders, we have to reconstruct, facilitate the return of displaced persons and do all in our power to recreate conditions for normal administrative, academic, economic and social life.

However, we need to remain vigilant as the terrorists have not given up planning suicide attacks that are difficult to prevent.

My dear compatriots of the Far-North,

Now that the threat is receding, we will be facing an exalting task in no distant future. It is a matter of winning the development struggle together, no more no less.

And you have the wherewithal.

In the area of energy, the old hydroelectric dams will be upgraded. Others will be commissioned. Solar facilities, which are easier to build, will supplement them. Therefore, you will have the energy that is indispensable for rural electrification and for running your industries.

Some of your land is fertile and suitable for large-scale farming of industrial crops such as, depending on the area, rice and cotton whose acreages need to be extended.

We will thus reduce food shortages and expand our textile industry to its rightful scale, with predictable employment spinoffs....

Rest assured that I will not lose sight of these problems.

My dear compatriots of the Far-North,

The coming years will be crucial for Cameroon and particularly for your region.

We have been through many ordeals to get where we are. Most of them were imposed on us by the global environment: the 2008 crisis, the drop in oil and commodity prices, especially.

Others stem from our immediate surroundings; such as attacks by Boko Haram or incursions into our eastern border by armed gangs. Such as attacks by Boko Haram or incursions into our eastern border by armed gangs.

Lastly, there are those resulting from the insecurity caused by a secessionist movement in our North-West and South-West Regions.

I think I can safely state that we have overcome the toughest of these ordeals. However, we still need to restore peace in our North-West and South-West Regions, ravaged by acts of violence perpetrated by secessionists. By meeting the legitimate expectations of our compatriots in the two regions and by protecting them against excesses by the so-called liberators, we will prove that their future is truly within our Republic.....

Come 7 October, I know I can count on you to make the choice that will keep you on the side of "the force of experience.

Long live the Far-North Region! Long live the Republic!

Long live Cameroon!" (Paul Biya's Campaign speech, 29 September 2018: source <http://www.prc.cm/en/multimedia..>)

1. Deixis

Deitic expressions are phrases or words whose meaning depends on the context in which they are used in discourse. There are four sub-categories of deixis, such as personal, temporal (time deixis), spatial, and discourse deixis (Stapleton, 2017).

2. Spatial deixis

The following extract contains spatial deixis: *...my dear compatriot of the far north.... Maroua...north-west and south-west...* The speaker mentions these places to show the achievements of the state so far and how he aspires to continue protecting the regions against insecurity. He is indirectly assuring the population to count on him for security and reconstruction projects in the future..

3. Personal deixis

...my...you...me...I... we

These personal deixis were used for two main reasons. The first reason is to show the presence of the speaker. This is expressed through the pronouns *I* and *me*. The second reason is to involve the audience in the speech in order to avoid isolation, resulting in the use of the pronoun *you* (audience). Interestingly, the pronoun *we* was employed to affirm the presence of the discourses and the audience. The speaker in this case is emphasising on cooperation and collective efforts.

4. Temporal deixis

This involves expressions that locate event or time. This is illustrated in the following extracts:

-Over the past few years, you have been at the forefront. And you have stood your ground...

-Now that the enemy has been repelled beyond our borders.....

-The coming years will be crucial for Cameroon and particularly for your region..

-Come 7 October, I know I can count on you to make the choice that will keep you on the side of the force of experience....

The first extract has been used to show that the people of Maroua have been working tirelessly since the crisis hit the region. It is also to show how long the people of this region have been fighting against insecurity. This means that they should keep fighting for the peace of the region.

5. Discourse deixis

These are phrases that make reference to another part of the conversation mentioned before or still to be mentioned in the enunciation as seen below:

-Now that the enemy has been repelled beyond our borders, we have to reconstruct, facilitate the return of displaced persons and do all in our power to recreate conditions for normal administrative, academic, economic and social life.

-However, we need to remain vigilant as the terrorists have not given up planning suicide attacks that are difficult to prevent.

The first extract is related to the second. In the first extract, the speaker

confirms that calm has returned to the region. In the second statement, he calls on the audience to remain vigilant despite the return of peace. This reference is intended to call for vigilance.

6. Repetition

There is an aspect of repetition in the speech which is aimed at instigating the cognitive side of the subject matter. This can be identified in this extract: *my dear compatriots of the far-north*. Moreover, the repetition of this phrase is to assure and attract the attention of the audience on what is being said

7. Enumeration

The speech is full of positive language, persuasion, enumeration. The discourser starts by thanking the population of Maroua for *turning massively* to support his party. He further enumerates some advantages that characterised the region, such as *fertile soil... suitable for livestock, milk and meat production, as well as cereal cultivation*. He continues his speech by promising the sympathisers *depending on the area, rice and cotton whose acreages need to be extended*. This enumeration is intended to unlock the agricultural potentials of the region. Mentioning these potentials also means calling for support.

8. Rhetorical question

The author of the speech uses a rhetorical question (And why not say it: is it unrealistic to think that in the very near future, a railway line will link N'Gaoundere and N'djamena through Kousseri) to announce a railway line linking Ngaoundere and Kousseri. This rhetorical question has been used to

show that the construction of roads and railways will not be left out if the party is given another opportunity.

9. Contradiction

The author also makes contradictory statements in the course of the campaign speech (*Now that the enemy has been repelled beyond our borders*). In this phrase, he is reminding the population that the enemy has been eliminated from the region. It is ambiguous when he says: *Once peace is consolidated everywhere, tourism in your region will also need to be given a second chance*. This means that peace has not totally returned as mentioned earlier.

Extract 2

To my compatriots in the English-speaking regions of our country, some of whom have been pushed to radicalisation by the inconsistent management by the Government of a political problem which has single-handedly amplified for decades by its faults, its refusal to apply the constitutional provisions relating to decentralisation and its immoderate taste for the use of military force, I would like to say that secession is a dead-end for our people...

(Excerpt of Maurice Kamto's speech, 15 April 2018: source: Mimi mefo info)

This extract is full of dismay and blame. The government's inability to restore peace in the North West and South West regions according to the speaker is a major downfall for the system. He is using this as a reference to the unstable political situation of the country and at the same time asserting the presence of his party. In addition, the speaker is indirectly saying that the population of the two

English-speaking regions should vote for him in the presidential elections for peace to return. Throughout the speech, his tone is sarcastic. This is a strategy to decrease the popularity of the ruling party and gain support. Interestingly, he uses ameliorative language to convince members of the ruling party to adhere to his political ideology while mentioning the downsides of the ruling party:

I have just said how, even our brothers of the CPDM who, sincere patriots, realised the incapacity of the current regime to take our people out of misery and suffering, are welcome...

The use of the phrase *our brother* is to show solidarity between the speaker and members of the ruling party who share his views. He goes further to term them *sincere patriots*, implying that all those who are involved in the ruling party are insincere. This also means that members of his party are honest and work for the interest of the population. When he says that the current regime is causing misery and suffering, he is indirectly saying that his party will be capable of taking people out of the misery and suffering triggered by the party in power.

1. Discussion

speakers and the context of the speech cannot be the same everywhere. In the case of the two political parties examined in this study, it was found that CRM leader uses a tone of dismay as compared to that of admiration from CPDM.

Conclusion

This study discussed campaign messages before and during the 2018

presidential elections in Cameroon. The messages were selected from two influential political parties, including Cameroon Peoples Democratic Party (the ruling party) and Cameroon Renaissance Movement (opposition party). Both parties employed ameliorative words to mesmerise the audience. There were also deitic elements that show the presence of the speakers and the audience, encompassing discourse deixis, temporal deixis, spatial deixis and personal deixis. In addition, there was a series of repetition and enumeration intended to assure and persuade the audience. Rheorical questions and indirect language (implicature) were utilised to attract the public opinion.

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