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**Ideology and Power Relations in Abubakar Shekau's Speech  
Texts**

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**Abstract**

This paper explores the phenomenon of power that exists in Abubakar Shekau's speech text. Drawing from Halliday's Systemic functional grammar and Norman Fairclough's perspective on language and ideology Shekau's speech text was analyzed. The analysis is done using Information structure model of Theme and Rheme to explicate the ideologies embedded in the texts. Results showed that Shekau's ideologies can be grouped into two namely divinity ideologies and political ideologies. The power-relations are three dimensional –that between Shekau and his God, Shekau and his followers and Shekau and the Nigerian government. The ideologies and power-relations are embedded in shekau's use of personal pronouns.

**Introduction**

Research into the interdependence of linguistics, social discourse and power has dominated linguistic studies in recent times. Linguists have argued that discourse is socially effective and socially determined, that ideology and power affects and is affected by discourse.

With the emergence of critical linguistics by Roger Fowler and Gunther Kress, the focal point was the interrelation between discourse, ideology and power. In social and cultural representation, ideology is the most important principle used to manage a society and its activities. Ideology in language exposes connections between the belief that speakers have and the larger social and cultural systems they are a part of. This is why when a language is used; ideologies link the implicit as well as explicit assumptions people have about a language. In this representation, power and ideology becomes a veritable tool to manage the society and its activities. It guides the social activity within in-group and out-groups members of the community. Ideology as Van Dijk (2006) says organizes social representation. He believes that there is a direct relation between discourse and power in which power is an abstract concept holding an influence on people's lives. Fairclough on his part views ideologies as constructions of reality which are built into different dimensions of human life. Thus, ideologies may be expressed and communicated in text and talk variably and indirectly and discourses are used as a suitable and preferential means to construct new ideologies and confirm present ones.

Abubakar Shekau is a leader of a group known as *BOKO HARAM*, this group have been at face-off with the Nigerian state, African state and the Western world at large. Over the years, efforts at ending this onslaught have proved abortive. The Nigerian government seems not to understand the ideological beliefs and workings of this group while the group in turn views the Nigerian government and those associated with it as enemy. This research therefore seeks to examine the linguistic choices used in the speech text of Abubakar Shekau with a view of identifying the underlining ideologies and power relations that characterize the workings of this group.

### **An Overview of Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis or CDA as it is popularly called arose out of researches into the interrelationship between discourse and power. CDA is an analysis of discourse from the social practice and cultural representation. It is a type of discourse analytical method that primarily studies language use as a social practice. CDA believes that there are correlations between textual structures and their function in interaction within the society. According to Baker and Ellace (2011), CDA is not only concerned with words on a page but also involves examining the social content. Norman Fairclough in his own view sees CDA as a kind of discourse analysis which explores the relationship between discursive practice, events and texts and wider social and cultural structures and relations. According to him, this relationship is bi-directional as language influences the society and social practices of the community in which it is used as well as the society in turn affects the use language is put to. Therefore language in CDA is seen as a social practice interested in the ways that ideologies and power relations are expressed through language. Van Teun Dijk (1985) states that there is a direct relation

between discourse and social power, in which power is an abstract concept holding an important influence on peoples lives. He goes further to explain that when speakers and writers are able to influence the mental models, knowledge, attitudes and eventually the ideologies of the recipients, they may indirectly control their future action. According to Batsone (1995) Critical discourse analysis seeks to reveal how texts are constructed so that particular and potentially indoctrinating perspectives can be expressed delicately and covertly: because they are covert, they are elusive of direct challenge, facilitating what Kress calls 'retreat into mystification and impersonality'.

Norman Fairclough in his book language and power argues that ideologies are constructions of reality which are built into various dimensions of the form/meanings of discursive practices and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination.

The one element that differentiates CDA from other forms of discourse is its attribute of critical. Critical implies showing connections and causes which are hidden. It also implies intervention.

### **An Overview of Systemic Functional Grammar**

Systemic functional grammar was developed by M. A. K. Halliday (1985) and it has two aspects: the systemic grammar and the functional grammar. Systemic grammar aims to explain the internal relations in language as a system network or meaning potential .this network in turn consists of several sub-systems from which the language user makes choices while functional grammar on the other hand aims to reveal that language is a means of social interaction based on the position that language system and the forms that make it up are inescapably determined by the uses or functions which they Halliday sees the procedure of stylistic analysis as three logically ordered phases :Analysis, interpretation and Evaluation. The limitless practical functions can be generalized into a set of highly coded and abstract functions known as Meta functions which are inherent in any language. These metafunctions are divided into three: ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function.

In ideational function, Halliday states that a speaker or writer uses language to embody his experiences of the phenomena of the real world and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own, consciousness: his reactions, cognitions and perceptions and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding. The ideational function mainly consists of transitivity and voice in which transitivity includes six processes called material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal and existential through which material, relational, and mental processes are considered as three primary ones.

*In interpersonal function*, Halliday (1973) observed that a speaker uses language as a means of his own intrusion into a speech event, the expression of his

comments, attitudes and evaluations and also the relationships that he sets up between himself and the listener –in particular, the communicative role that he adopts of informing, questioning, greeting, persuading, and the like. Modality and mood are often used to express interpersonal function. Mood show what role the speaker selects in the speech situation and what role he assigns to the addressee. Modality refers to an intermediate range between extreme positive and negative. On the other hand modality, can show the social role relationship, scale of formality and power relationship.

**Textual metafunction**, according to Halliday (1971) y language makes links between itself and the situation and discourse becomes possible the speaker or writer can produce a text and the listener or reader can recognize one. He states that textual functions fulfil the requirement that language is operationally relevant, having texture in a real context of situation that distinguishes it from a mere entry in a book. For Shingling (1988) without the textual component of meaning, we are unable to make any use of language at all.

### **Information Structure Theory**

Information Structure was introduced by Halliday (1967) it describes informally the organization of a spoken sentence which is independent. He states that any text in spoken English is organized into what may be called information units this is not determined ...by constituent structure rather it could be said that the distribution of information specifies a distinct structure on a different plan.

Information structure is an aspect of textual organization of language. It refers to the organization of text in terms of functions. Information structure of a particular clause is determined by the larger sentence or discourse of which it is a part. The communicative effect of the information structure is to foreground certain aspects of the message of the clause but to background others. The description of Information structure as blocks or units of information he calls thematic organization. He argues that there are two parts of a sentence one more informative and the one less informative. The more informative part is generally believed to follow the less informative. These two parts have been termed THEME and RHEME as well as GIVEN and NEW.

Every utterance has two different structure one is grammatical and the other is informational termed information – being structure of the utterance. A sentence contains a point of departure and a goal of discourse. The point of departure called the theme is the group on which the speaker and the hearer meet. The goal of discourse called the rheme, present the very information that is to be imparted to hearer movement from theme to rheme reveals the movement of the mind itself. Theme provides the setting for the remainder of the sentera-rheme. Rheme is the remainder of the message in a clause in which the theme is developed, that is to say, rheme hypocally

contains unfamiliar or new information. New information is knowledge that a speaker assumes the reader do not know but needs to know in order to follow the progression of the argument. The boundary between theme and rheme is simple. Theme is the first element to occur in a Clause the remainder is the rheme. The flow of information in a sentence from theme to rheme is crucial in achieving communicative effectiveness in a message. The exchange of information between successive theme and rheme patterns in a text is called thematic patterning or progression.

### **Norman Fairclough's Perspective on SFG**

Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (hence SFG) from the critical perspective of Norman Fairclough is used as the theoretical framework for this research. This theoretical perspective is considered as the most appropriate for the description and analysis of language use in relation to power and ideology because of its emphasis on language as a form of social practice which represents meaning or reality (Hart 6-9, Fairclough 27). SFG, as a linguistic theory, views language as a system of network for making meaning (Halliday Functional Grammar xvii). It considers social context in which language is used as significant for its functional realization. In SFG, language serves three functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. It is from these that meaning is represented in language. The ideational function represents the social experience of the people about the world. This is realized in grammar through the transitivity and voice. The interpersonal function shows the social relationship between participants in an interaction. This is also regarded as the expression of social roles and attitudes of the speaker to towards the interaction. Thus, it is grammatically realized through mood, modality and pronoun. The textual function deals with the internal and external coordination and organization of the text in relation to its contextual uses. This is realized through cohesive, coherence, and theme (Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic* 184).

The above assumptions serve as a foundation to Fairclough's critical perspective on discourse analysis. Fairclough (22) views discourse as a system of representation in which power and ideology are constructed, reconstructed and resisted through the resources of language and its system of choice. In other words, the system of choice in language which allows the use of certain linguistic features based on the speaker's ideology to further reinforce their social position or challenge other people's position within social discourse. Hence, Fairclough's perspective emphasizes the use of linguistic features in the realization of power relation and ideology constructed in text.

However, Fairclough (*Critical Discourse Analysis* 134) maintains that the relationship between language, power and ideology may be hidden or opaque but with critical analysis such could be made open and clear (understand). He thus suggests three

dimensional models for discourse analysis. First, the description of the text which involves the linguistic analysis; Second, the interpretation of the text which involves the interpretation of the production, distribution and consumption of the text as discursive practice; and the third, the explanation of the text relation to power, ideology or other socio-political context (Fairclough Critical Discourse Analysis 56-58)..

For this research, the analysis is conducted at two levels; linguistic analysis using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar analysis; power relation and ideological analysis using Fairclough's perspective of critical analysis.

These two perspectives are chosen for the research because of their interest in the analysis and interpretation of language use in a real social situation to generate meaning or reality. The SFG is considered as a foundation of text analysis in critical discourse studies, and it is suitable for interpreting text as exchange and representation of reality (Shayegh and Nabifar 3484). However, Fairclough's perspective is chosen because of its interest in examining social, political and cultural changes in the society.

### **Methodology**

The researcher in this paper tries to analyze speech texts of Abubakar Shekau to explore the ideologies and power relations embedded in them. The main thrust of this research is to explore how through linguistic choices Shekau is able to portray his ideologies thereby creating positive and negative power between him, his group and the Nigerian State.

This research makes use of six (6) speech texts of Abubakar Shekau and were selected from the following websites. The speeches used were gathered between November 2014 to February, 2015. In doing the analysis, sentences are analysed using Hallidayian systemic functional grammar in which the most attention is paid to the information structure (theme and rheme) This explication of the theme and rheme enables the researcher to identify power relations and consequently interpret them.

### **Analysis**

In this paper, selected speech texts of Abubakar Shekau are analyzed on the base of Hallidayian systemic functional grammar. At first, theme and rheme are analyzed in a tabular form, from identifying the theme and rheme within the texts, the ideologies and power relations are analyzed against the backdrop of Norman Fairclough.

**Information Structure Analysis**

<b>Theme (Given)</b>	<b>Rheme (New)</b>
I	Thank Allah
I	started with knife and today I have seized more than 20 of your armored vehicles they are in my possession.
Me, Me Shekau I, Whoever	You pledge to Nigeria your country I pledge to Allah my God refuses to listen will be dealt with by Allah
We	hereby send message to the tyrants of Nigeria.
We	only obey Allah
We eternal	tread the path of the prophet, hope to die on this path and get rest in our graves, rise up in bliss
You	shamelessly declared in your radio and newspapers
We	because of the constitution that barred us ... Migrated as Allah ordained
Our goal	is to see only Koran being followed on earth.
We	fear no one but Allah
Jonathan	you are in trouble
We	is it not amazing who started with sticks and machetes are today biggest headache to the almighty Nigerian soldiers
Jonathan	this will mark the end of politics and democracy in Nigeria.
Buhari	is not a Muslim as far as we are concerned.
He	is nothing but an infidel our enemy.
Mohammed Yusuf	you have amazed us
You	shall soon see our wrath
Paul Biya	now you are asking for foreign assistance please don't waste your time because God is more than all the help you will get.
We	thank Allah for making our exploits possible
He	says we should always thank him for every good thing he does so he shall give us more.

We it is his mercy that is why we got them so easily  
We Insha Allahu, we are going to do his work with these aims  
We are going to sacrifice our lives in doing God's work  
Our goal is to see only Koran being followed on earth  
You, Me pledge to Nigeria your country  
Me, Me Shekau I pledge to Allah my God  
I am the President in Islam and in the world  
We will kill  
If you (Obama, Jonathan) seek God's forgiveness  
We will do Jihad  
We married them off  
They are in their marital homes  
Shekau eat the heart of infidels since they disobey Allah  
We should not negotiate  
I 'm only making this speech for those people who want to convert to Islam  
Allah is my focus  
You are trying to deceive people with negotiation

From the above explication of the theme and rheme, Abubakar Shekau's ideologies are reflected variously through the use of pronouns in his speech text. The ideologies are grouped into two: the divinity ideology and political ideology.

(A) **Divinity Ideology:** This ideology reflects the common belief of Shekau and his group. He gives an explanation of their belief which he tries to trace to the nature of being a Muslim. This is seen in such statements as;

*"Our goal is to see only Koran being followed on earth".*

*Allah knows everything. Allah is my witness"*

You find Shekau justifying his/his group's act as that in accordance with the tenets of Islam. He also expresses the duty of the Muslim believers. He states that they have the duty to defend their belief in Allah as stated in the following;

“You people should understand that we only obey Allah, we thread the path of the prophet. We hope to die on this path and get eternal rest in your graves.”

“Allah is the truth, Allah is the focus. Islam is my focus. Whoever refuses to listen will be dealt with by Allah.”

The statements explain the nature of being a Muslim that the Muslim faithful owes his life to Allah and should do any bidding asked by Allah. The speeches argues that the Muslim must keep his religion with all his efforts, death or alive, and I swear by Allah that he will never stop killing, you because Allah commanded us to kill people like you.

### **Political Ideology**

Shekau in his utterances reveals his ideology towards the federal government of Nigeria, the African state and the western world at large. It is about Shekau's perception of the government and its policies. It is evidenced from his utterances that Shekau and his group have great disdain and dislike for the federal government of Nigeria who they term infidels.

Allahu Akbar!! Nigeria is dead, her constitution is dead!! Islam and Islam: war by war upon the Kafir who is the unbeliever.

Jonathan you are in trouble. All governors of Nigeria are in trouble. And you Paul Biya. Now you are asking for foreign assistance please don't waste your time because God is more than all the help you will get.

These is also an onslaught on the foreign and assistance which the Nigerian government feels for. We did not negotiate with anyone. We did not negotiate with Nigeria, that Cameroon France cannot help you. What is negotiate? What is your business with negotiation? Allah said we should not negotiate.

He derides the Nigerian government and it's military as in

*If you bring three trillion troops we will not release the girls. We stand to deal with infidels.*

He took on many countries and world leaders castigating their efforts in fighting his group.

*Any amount let them spend we will bring Nigeria down.*

*We are stronger than America anywhere they are if I catch Jonathan, Obama and others I am going sell them.*

*You Jonathan you are watching me if you like go and bring everybody all over the world, you cannot do anything. Bring up human rights issue, you don't know anything.*

He even derides and insults the average Nigerian

*Do Nigerians know their rights?*

Shekau's ideas about the Nigerian government are stated through his statements. It is also evident from Shekau's utterances that it is a fight against the group (the Nigerian Government) who came out to fight him/his group for declaring their faith in Allah and refusal to abandon their religion.

### **The Power Relation**

Drawing from fairclough's perspective, the power relations of Shekau is explained in his use of pronouns in his speeches. The power – relations is in three – fold

- The power – relation between Shekau and his God
- The power – relation between Shekau and his group
- The power – relation between Shekau and the Nigerian State

### **The Power – relation between Shekau and his God**

This power – relation is indicated in his certain choice of pronouns. Shekau believes in Allah and he makes reference to Allah in all he says and does. In this power – relation Allah is the powerful one. He acknowledges that all he is and has comes from Allah His God, and as a true Muslim it beholds on him to keep the ordinances and commandments of Allah. His belief in God becomes the man ideological concept generating his fight.

The use of pronoun *we* and *our* represent the inclusive power between Shekau and his group. However, the power– relation is presented in two ways. We see Shekau presenting himself equal with his group and all Muslims. For him, they are fighting a common course – the infidels: At another time we see the supremacy of Shekau above other members of his group as exemplified in his use of the pronoun 'I' in - - - - -

These statements disclose that Shekau is more powerful than the others.

### **Conclusion**

So far, this paper has tried its best to analyze the ideologies and explore the workings of power in Abubakar shekaus speech texts. The paper concludes that the

ideologies and power relations are denoted by the choice of pronouns used –me, US, YOU, And THEM. The ideologies of Abubakar Shekau can be grouped into his divinity belief which explains his fundamental religious belief and his political ideology which reveals his growing antagonism to constituted authority. The power relations are three-dimensional namely: power relation between Shekau and his GOD, the power relation between Shekau and his followers and finally, the power relations between Shekau and the Nigerian government. .

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