Analysis of Identity Construction through Positioning Acts in Nigerian Vice-Presidential Debate Discourses

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ABSTRACT

More often in political debates, participants do not readily expound their identities and attitudes; they employ language structure that requires the analysis of the placing of self/other in certain positions for comprehension. Hence, this study aims at exploring identity construction through positioning act strategies and the identities projected in the discourse practices by two vice presidential debate candidates in defining selves/others, parties' stance and group categorization. The study used Langenhove and Harre (1999) positioning theory. The data for the study are delimited to five excerpts randomly selected from thirty-two online-transcribed discourses between two debate participants. Findings reveal that the candidates made use of first and second order performative and accountive positioning acts to implicate self/party's moral order and positive stance and the other's immoral attributes. The modes of positioning are moral, personal, intentional, deliberate self and other and forced self-positioning. The discursive practices involved are such that are strategically manipulated to divulge the individual's attitudes to the socio-economic and political development of the nation, thereby portraying the following identities: Scrupulous, dogged, competent, loyalist and committed (self/group) identity and corrupt minded, incompetent, failure and uncommitted (others) identity. In conclusion, the knowledge of the concepts of positioning and its applicability to the understanding of political debates is essential for the understanding of the politicians' ideologies and identities as well as their stance on the nation's growth.

Key words: Positioning Theory, Political Discourse, Identity Construction, Vice Presidential Debate Discourses, Communicative Act

INTRODUCTION

Identities are manifested in varying facets of language structures employed by individuals in their communicative acts. Most often, it is not explicitly expounded in texts but requires the analysis of individuals' language use for recovery; political discourse is such text-type that requires the analysis of language use for identity reconstruction. As such, this paper examines various positioning acts of identity construction in language use that exude identities and parties' stance on nation's development by two political participants: Prof. Yemi Osibanjo of the All Progressive Congress (APC) party and Mr. Peter Obi of People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 2018 vice presidential debate. It explicates how these participants manipulate language use to imbue them with functions that serve as expedient of their identities and attitudes in political values and national development and also, to identify the various modes of positioning acts adopted to communicate the identities.

In recent time, scholars have enormously embarked on researches on political discourse, but inasmuch as language use is paramount in the reconstruction of politicians' identities and stance in national development in a Nigeria situation, not enough work has addressed or examined the language structure of Nigerian vice-presidential debate discourses for identity reconstruction, for better understanding and choice of candidates. This is as a result of its (politicians' identity and stance) consequence being pivotal in subsequent implications in the progress or dwindling of a country's socio-economic and political development. Akinwotu concurs to this when he avers that "political discourse has been a major domain of language use that has attracted the interests of researchers for a long while. This is because political discourse is a complex human activity that deserves critical study particularly because of its central place in the organization and management of society" (2013:43).

What then is political discourse? To explain the term, we will look at some scholars' definition of the individual words and then bring them together for better understanding. Chilton views politics as "a struggle for power between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it" (2004:3). Hague quoted in Chilton

avers that "politics involves reconciling differences through discussion and persuasions. Communication is, therefore, central in politics" (2004:3). To this end, it, therefore, means that when individuals engage in the above list, it is political. On the other hand, Davies and Harre (1999: 34-35) assert that "discourse is to be understood as an institutionalized use of language and language-like sign systems. Institutionalized can occur at the disciplinary, the political, the cultural and the small group level. …to know anything is to know in terms of one or more discourses". Mey (2001:224) opines that "discourse is the ensemble of phenomena in and through which social production of meaning takes place". He further clarifies his use of the phrase 'ensemble of phenomena' to mean 'universe of discourse' that is, it comprises, but not exclusively the textual phenomena usually dealt with in logic and linguistics (Mey,2001:245). Hyland and Patridge opine that:

> Discourse …concerns the ways that language works in our engagements with the world and our interactions with each other, so creating and shaping the social, political and cultural formations of our societies. From an applied linguistic perspective, to study discourse is therefore to study language in action, looking at texts in relation to the social contexts in which they are used. But because language is connected to almost everything that goes on in the world, 'discourse' is something of an overloaded term, covering a range of meanings. People who study discourse might therefore focus on the analysis of speech and writing to bring out the dynamics and conventions of social situations, or take a more theoretical and critical point of view to consider the institutionalized ways of thinking that define our social lives (2011:1).

Therefore, political discourse refers to speeches or discussions that deal with the struggle or exercise of power in political institutions. Language is said to be central to politics. For instance, Chilton, in his explications of the interconnectedness of language and politics and its functions in political matters, purports that:

> it is *shared* perceptions of values that define political associations. And the human endowment for language has the function of 'indicating' – i.e., signifying, communicating – what is deemed, according to such shared perceptions, to be advantageous or not, by implication to the group, and what is deemed right and wrong within that group (2004:5).

Generally speaking, in political speeches, the audience relies in the power of language use to comprehend the leaders or leaders-to-be implicit minds or ideologies which can only be identified through language. As a result, language users construct universe of discourses that are consciously and skillfully recreated for representation, thus, believing in the readers/listeners' active collaboration with the nuances of the language mechanisms in meaning reconstruction. "What is clear is that political activity does not exist without the use of language. It is true, as noted earlier, that other behaviours are involved and, in particular, physical coercion. But the doing of politics is predominantly constituted in language" (Chilton, 2004:7).

Language plays significant role in the understanding of politicians' behaviour; this is because, quoting Langenhove and Harre's assertion, mental phenomena are produced in discursive activities in which the feelings, attitudes and ideologies of the speakers are reproduced perhaps consciously or unconsciously. They skillfully articulate their language structure to achieve goals. Hence, Chilton purports that:

> political actors recognize the role of language because its use has effects, and because politics *is* very largely the use of language, even if the converse is not true – not every use of language is political. The point being to try to convince you that language is important for political life and that it is worth spending time looking more closely at language from this perspective" (2004:14-15).

Additionally, to authenticate his assertion on the significance of language to politics, he quoted the Aristotelian view, thus, "for language would have evolved to perform social functions – social functions that would in fact correspond to what we understand as political" (Chilton,2004:6). Hernandez-Guerra (2013), in his advocacy to language analysts on the importance and need of language study in political discourse, emphasizes that politicians engage in political speeches just to achieve a common goal that may not be understood by first reading but by its analysis. He avers that "political discourse study is a discipline that reveals more information than a first reading can offer. The way of saying, the use of some adjectives in specific matters, the examples offered to explain a topic are some tools used in order to help to gain that purpose" (2013:59). As a result of the influence of language on political behaviours, researchers have extensively embarked on critical examination of political discourses for different purposes, thus, using various frameworks for different purposes. For instance, Wangatiah, Ongarora & Matu (2016) investigate the role of context in interpretation of political utterances on hate speech in Kenya to demonstrate that politicians in Kenya heavily rely on context to encode hate speech messages in their political utterances while making utterance meaning obscure. The study utilizes the principles advanced Relevancy Theory by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1985, 1996 & 2004) in the pragmatic interpretations of political utterances on hate speech. It adopts content analysis procedure in the selection of relevant data from pre-election campaign speeches rendered during the (2013) general election in Kenya. The analyses reveal that in order to enhance communication of hate messages to the hearers, politicians use context to create shared background with the hearers upon which the hate message is delivered. This is achieved through recount of past events which the hearer is familiar with and once this is done, the speaker then advances the intended hate speech messages. The study concludes that context is, therefore, used to achieve relevance of the political utterance to the hearer. Thus, speakers manipulate context to achieve relevance.

In another study, Furko (2017) studies pragmatic markers and its manipulative uses in political discourse. The research argues that these markers do not change the propositional meaning of an utterance but are essential for the organizational and structuring of discourse that helps in facilitating processes of pragmatic inference. The paper analyzes evidential markers, general extenders, quotation markers and markers of (un)certainty in political interviews broadcasted by BBC, CNN and Hungarian ATV. These are considered from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. Particular pragmatic markers are associated with manifestations of

manipulative intent such as suppression, polarization, recontextualization, conversationalisation and intended ambiguity. The findings, therefore, reveal that a single pragmatic marker can serve several manipulative functions while a given manipulative strategy is potentially realized by a variety of pragmatic items.

Khalida, Sholpan, Bauyrzhan, & Ainash (2012) explore the choice of speech markers of explicit and implicit linguistic means at all language levels that presented the feminine features in political discourse. Theoretical frameworks of political discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis were used, thus, employing quantitative and qualitative analytical methods. The analysis reveals that gender aspect has its own impact on the presentation of lingual image of the social at all language levels and also on the communicative material. The result of the analysis from the position of gender differentiation claims that intensification of gender differentiation of Kazakhstani female politicians has its own specific and is explained by the peculiarities as a genre of political discourse. Hernandez-Guerra (2013) examines speeches of president Obama of the United States at Strasbourg, France (2002) to identify the rhetorical and inter-textual means employed to achieve his purpose. The study uses insights from text analysis offered by T. Locke (2004) and updated by Simpson's (2010) contribution to the frame. The analysis is based on linguistic elements and text structure and encompasses many elements in the speeches such as vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, voice, modality, transitivity, intertexuality, preposition and explicature. The analyses reveal that president Obama's utterances are positive and express hope even in hard times. In vocabulary, words related to global problems, threats and the need of a stronger alliance between the two continents reveal the addressee of the speech as both his audience and all the European nations. The use of 'we' refers to different addressees which is done purposely to involve everybody indirectly in the solution of the problems or to reflect that everybody is responsible of the problems that are threatening the world not just America. And Sharndama (2015) analyzes the inaugural speech of president Muhammadu Buhari delivered after his swearing into office in 2015. Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional analytical models were adopted for the analysis while subjecting the speech to description (text analysis), interpretation (processing analysis) and explanation (social practice analysis). The speech concludes that the speech reflects the party's manifestoes and promises made during election campaigning processes, thus, revealing the determination of the new government to strengthen foreign relations and policies, strengthen democracy, fight corruption and insecurity and improve the power sector and economic sector of the country.

It is pertinent, also, to review some scholarly articles that utilize the framework of positioning acts in analysis. One of them is Philip and Hayes (2006) who explore professional identity formation in students of graduate diploma of midwifery using positioning theory. In the study, students' conversations relating to the delivery of care conducted in practice settings between the preceptor/midwife and students are interpreted to understand the emerging meanings,

themes and their professed identity formation as midwives. The study reveals that "the notion of professional conversations relating to midwifery practice setting encompasses factors such as power technology, physical environment and institutional bureaucracy" (238). It, therefore, concludes that students' identity formation is dependent upon the dynamic interrelationships and moment-to-moment interactions in which students' endeavour to position and re-position themselves or others in conversations to enhance and fully exploit their experiential learning.

Hirvonen (2016) utilizes positioning theory in the analysis of small group interaction and small group dynamics to identify the key concepts that come into play when the theory is applied to interactions. The study draws its data from transcribed material from four management board meetings of a Finnish public research institute, including a total of 18 decision-making episodes. The findings reveal that decision-making episodes consist of fluctuating storylines, thus, creating different positions and how the local moral orders of a small group are negotiated and constructed. Furthermore, Barnes (2004) demonstrates the use of positioning theory in the study of mathematical classroom processes by evaluating collaborative learning in senior mathematical classrooms to develop a better understanding of factors that promote or inhibit effective collaboration among students at this level. The study uses a videotaped interaction of small groups of learners in three different classrooms working collaboratively on open-ended mathematics tasks. The analysis centers on identifying the different ways students were positioned at various times during the interactions. The study reveals some of the possibilities the use of positioning theory will provide for further classroom interactions and useful guidance for teachers and students. However, it is evidenced from our review of related literature that no research work has utilized the framework of positioning acts to delineate how language is exploited by politicians in the negotiation and construction of identities and this is the gap the study stands to fill - to use this theory for further explication of language use in political discourse

METHODOLOGY

The data for the study are five excerpts that are randomly selected from thirty-two online-transcribed discourses from the interactional sections between two participants: APC candidate (Prof. Yemi Osibanjo) and PDP candidate (Mr Peter Obi), in December 14, 2018 vice presidential debate downloaded from Channels TV YouTube; the study excludes the other four debate participants in the debate sessions. The excerpts are analysed using insights from Harre and Langenhove (1999) Positioning Theory. Sentences to be analysed are numbered in each excerpt for easy identification and comprehension. Method of data analysis is descriptive and qualitative.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

According to Langenhove and Harre (1999: 1), positioning theory is "the study of local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations

of speaking and acting". It an analytical framework that aims to account for how people dynamically produce and explain the everyday behaviour of themselves and others in their communicative acts. They posit that the theory forms an explanatory guide to the study and understanding of discourse and its relation to various psychic and social phenomena. In their view, the concepts of 'position' and 'positioning' have several sources depending on field, for instance, in the field of marketing, positioning refers to communication strategies that allow one to 'place' a certain product amongst its competitors, but within the field of social sciences, to which their own view of the concept is embedded, position can be specified by reference to how a speaker's contributions are hearable with respect to these and other polarities of character, and sometimes even of role…… Conversations have storylines and the positions people take in a conversation will be linked to these storylines. They further assert that "a position in a conversation is a metaphorical concept through reference to which a person's 'moral' and personal attributes as a speaker are compendiously collected. One can position oneself or be positioned as powerful or powerless, confident or apologetic, dominant or submissive, definitive or tentative, authorized or unauthorized, and so on" (Langenhove and Harre, 1999:17).

According to them, the concept of 'positioning' in social sciences was first introduced by Hollway (1984) in her analysis of the construction of subjectivity in the area of heterosexual relations. Holloway, focusing on gender differentiation in discourses, spoke of 'positioning oneself' and 'taking up positions'; discourses make available positions for subjects to take up. These positions are in relation to other people. Like the subject and object of a sentence…women and men are placed in relation to each other through the meanings which a particular discourse makes available (Holloway cited in Langenhove and Harre 1999). Consequently, "within the person's/conversations grid, positioning can be understood as the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have specific locations…. Thus, the act of positioning refers to the assignment of fluid 'parts' or 'roles' to speakers in the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts" (Langenhove and Harre 1999:17). Additionally, Boston (2015:136) avers that "positioning theory stipulates that people in conversation or action with one another assume ways of being that are situated within particular discourses and discursive practices that include assumptions about rights, responsibilities and entitlements". Also, Harre and Langenhove cited in Barnes (2004:1) opines that "positioning theory is based on social constructionism, and assumes among other things that human behaviour is goal-directed and constrained by group norms, and that human subjectivity is a product of the history of each individual's interactions with other people".

Langenhove and Harre (1999:24) are of the view that their notion of positioning focuses "on the adoption of certain discursive practices as the means through which the display of identity is accomplished". They further purport that "positioning is a discursive practice…thus, within a conversation each of the participants always positions the order while simultaneously positioning him or herself" (22). They state that their theory makes use of Austin (1961) distinction between the illocutionary force of an utterance and its perlocutionary force, and propose some analytical distinctions that define forms in which positioning can occur in discursive events and which help to differentiate amongst three typical kinds of positioning in which people position themselves, others and are positioned by them in return. The analytical distinctions are first order, second order and third order positioning. Langenhove and Harre posit that the most basic distinction is the one between first and second order positioning. According to them, first order positioning has to do with the way people locate themselves and others within an essentially moral space by using several discursive practices, the second order occurs when the first order positioning is challenged and requires negotiation, in other words, second order positioning occurs when first order positioning is not taken for granted by an individual(s) involved in the discussion. This challenging can be done either within the same conversation or through another conversation but with reference to the first conversation; both of these are forms of accountive one because they involve discussion on the ongoing talk. Practically, if one tries to impose a second order positioning in ritual, then the person trying to do so will be said to 'break' the ritual. In these analytical forms of positioning, there is somewhat similar though not identical distinction between what is called performative and accountive positioning. In first order positioning, people position themselves and others within the discursive practice. The acts make determinate immediate perlocutionary effect unlike the second order or reflexive positioning when such act is subject to challenge. Additionally, a third order positioning occurs when accountive positioning occurs outside the initial discussion, but this does not involve persons outside the original discussion.

First and second order positioning acts breed some other modes of positioning accounted for in the theory. They are: moral and personal, in which people are said to be positioned with regard to the moral orders in which they perform social actions. Individuals can be positioned morally or with regard to their attributes and particularities; self and other positioning – in this mode, each of the participants always positions the other while simultaneously positioning him or herself. Thus, in any discursive practice, positioning constitutes the initiator and the others in certain ways, and at the time, it is a resource through which all persons involved can negotiate new positions thereby implicating the individuals' identities; tacit and intentional - here, Langenhove and Harre assert that most first order positioning are of a tacit kind, but persons who act in a Machiavellian way such as lying, teasing etc. can be done intentionally but still within the first order, while second and third are always intentional where people involved will position themselves or others in an intentional or even conscious way.

The theory also identified four distinct types of intentional positioning that are relatively identified by the discursive situations of occurrence. These are: deliberate self-positioning which occurs when one wants to express his/her personal identity by stressing one's agency by referring to one's unique point of view, for example, through one's choice of grammatical devices appropriate to that act, or by referring to events in one's biography, for example, by using pronouns; forced self-positioning – the initiative of this kind is somebody else who demands some response from the person involved to make self-report. Persons requested for to account for their behaviour in certain events are required to position themselves as agents. Here, one can offer excuses as a way of explanation in a bid to resist an accusation of guilty or adopts the position of being helpless that requires a right to special treatment; deliberate positioning of the others – this can be done in discursive events that involve the present or absent of the others being positioned. When the other is present, as creating a place in speaker's storyline which may or may not be taken up by the person positioned and can as well be seen as a form of moral reproach to the other. But when the other is absent, it is termed gossip and finally, forced positioning of the other which can occur in the presence or absence of the person being intentionally positioned. This kind occurs in discursive event that involves more than two individuals in which the speaker will demand the third person to make contribution or position the second person based on the ongoing discussion. (see Langenhove and Harre, 1999).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the findings reveals that first and second order performative and accountive positionings are exploited by the candidates in positioning selves/group and others, but the use of second order accountive is found to be mostly employed by the candidates. The forms of positioning utilized are moral and personal, intentional, deliberate self and other and forced self-positioning. The discursive practices adopted in the discursive events are such that are strategically manipulated to divulge the individual's identities and attitudes in socio-economic and political values of the nation, thereby implicating the following identities: scrupulous, dogged, loyalist, competent and committed (self/group) identity and corrupt minded, incompetent, failure and uncommitted (others) identity.

Excerpt 1

This excerpt is from APC (Osibanjo) candidate's opening remark.

> [S1]Today, we have begun, perhaps one of the largest infrastructure projects in the history of our country. [S2]We are building railways between Lagos and Kano. [S3]Develop that medium, that medium gauge railway, we expect that the first phase of it, that's Lagos-Ibadan part of it will be ready in January. [S4] At the same time, we have done the Aladja-Warri. [S5]What we are left with is the supply of fits doors. [S6]Kano-Makurdi rail, which is one of the oldest commercial routes in our country, has just been given. [S7]In every state of Nigeria today, we have a major rail project. [S8]Practically, 16 years after the Lagos-Ibadan express way was

abandoned, [S9]we are dealing with that today and we are building that Lagos-Ibadan express road everyday today. That's the major road out of the commercial nature of Nigeria.

Findings and discussions

The Use of First order Performative Positioning Act Strategy

The excerpt contains moral and personal positioning and intentional positioning of the other through first order positioning act of the discursive practice of the storyline. Sentences 1-7 and 9 exemplify moral and personal positioning of group while sentence 8 is intentional positioning of the other, in this case, the PDP party group. Langenhove and Harre (1999) opine that when a person is acting in a Machiavellian way, the first order positioning can be intentional and this is the case with sentence number 8, where Osibanjo alludes to the number of years in order to mock others in reference to the number of years wasted for the country.

In sentences 1-7, Osibanjo positions the activities of his group at the right moral order in which any rational being or group in power is expected to exercise his social duty in society with regard to the roles that are expected for the betterment of the citizens and for national development. Here, he lists the achievements of his party in terms of national development thereby demonstrating his party's functional and operational role in the country as well as typifying their conscientious regard for what is morally right for the citizens. His utterances are strategically constructed to achieve a goal – to appeal to the audience to vote them (APC) again in the next election for them to continue in the development of the country they are already in to – thus, locating his party group at the positive side and implicating the group's scrupulous identity. In trying to do so, he adopts first order performative positioning. The perlocutionary effect of the construction of self/group as being scrupulous in national development is, however, not taken for granted by the opponent. It is challenged using second order accountive positioning in his opponent's utterances in his opening remark in excerpt 4.1.2.

In sentence 8, the storyline is shifted from moral and personal positioning to intentional positioning of the other using first order positioning act. Contextually, as a Nigerian, and exploiting our experiential background knowledge of political system in the country, one understands that his reference to 16 years implies PDP's 16 years in power. This is because APC took over power from PDP just barely four years to the debate time. The utterance, however, strategically positions PDP as being a failure in terms of the country's development. To achieve this, he employs a discursive practice that accounts to the negligence of what is expected from them (PDP) with regard to their role in the country. This has the illocutionary force of informing the audience of the identity of the other as failures.

Excerpt 2

This is from PDP (Obi) candidate's opening remark.

Mr. vice president, fellow candidates (silence) we are into a country where we have the highest number of poor people in any nation, 87million and growing 6%every minute. That country today has the highest number of out of school children in the world. Our HER had dropped from 152 to 157. Our global competitive index has dropped from 124 to 127. In terrorism, we have moved from 7 to number 3, just behind lran and Afghanistan. Our inequality has worsened. Our misery index has worsened. Our stress index, we are now 148/149. If you look at all these, it seems only two things form studies and that is education and unemployment. Our unemployment has moved from 24 as you know to 40 today… millions of our children out of school are doing nothing….

Findings and discussions

The Use of Second Order Accountive Positioning Strategy

In this excerpt, Obi makes use of second order accountive positioning. The storyline is his strategy to counter his opponent's view on what national development is and the constructed identity of his party group. Conclusively, Langenhove and Harre (1999) is of the view that second order positioning occurs when the first order is not taken for granted. Consequently, Obi does not take Osibanjo's discursive strategy for granted; he challenged it in order to reposition his (Osibanjo) group. He (Obi) uses another conversation, though still within the ongoing conversation to perform the act. Perhaps, his storyline takes the position as a result of Osibanjo's discursive strategy in his opening remark in which he positions his party group as promoting good morals in terms of nation's development or as result of the presentation of the other (PDP party group) as failure in that regard. He repositioned them by emphasizing the grounds for moral order in a national development. For him (Obi), there is no logical rationality in concentrating mainly in the country's infrastructures and agriculture when the citizens are uneducated and unemployed, thus, viewing Osibanjo's ideology as barbaric.

Excerpt 3

APC candidate: This excerpt is a response from Osibanjo to the interviewer's inquiry on how tasking the role of vice president has been on him since he assumed office.

> Thank you very much. I am quite sure (laughs) that those that know me know quite well that my hair was very dark; it was not this grey when I started out in 2015. So really, it has been tasking. It has been tasking but it has also been 'aaaaaaaa', an incredibly rewarding experiences especially on the point of view of the ability to do the things that one wanted to do all along as an individual. But the role is one where you are in many senses the chief adviser to the president of the country and possibly the one person that will represent him even just when he is absent for a meeting, even when he is absent for longer period. So, there is a sense in which the role of the vice president is one that very closely mirrors the role of the president in many profound ways. But our vice presidency is different from the vice presidency of other countries because unlike other countries, even countries that have similar constitutions, our own constitutions actually specifies the roles of the vice president.

Findings and discussions

The excerpt contains second order accountive, forced self-positioning is employed by both the interviewer and

interviewee (Osibanjo). Here, the interviewer positions himself as having the moral right to inquire from Osibanjo how he has worked for the national growth. He, as well positions Osibanjo as one who has the role to give the audience his achievements since he assumed office three and a half years ago. Osibanjo's response shows his committed identity. He, rhetorically, positions himself as an agent that has worked hard to the growth of the nation. He states "I am quite sure that those that know me know quite well that my hair was not this grey when I started out in 2015". This, however, is a metaphorical way of implicating his doggedness in life and in national development. He positioned himself as someone who has doggedly worked for the nation even to the detriment of his health. This is a forced self-positioning using second order positioning act which calls for compensation in the sense of voting him again for his selfless work for the country. According to Zelle (2009:4), "forced self-positioning occurs as an obligatory response to the request of an external power". Langenhove and Harre (1999:26) opine that "the demand for positioning can also come from a person who represents an institution and then it may take more pressing forms". They further state that "when an institution has the power to make moral judgements about persons and about their behaviour, it asks people to account for what they are doing or not doing". This is hoped to help the audience make decisions about the individual in question. In this case, the interviewee tactically states that the role has been too tasking but he has always had an aspiration for that, thereby, implying that even at that, he is not complaining. This implicates his dogged identity.

Excerpt 4

PDP candidate: (The interviewer tells the PDP candidate that he has seen vice presidents fall out with their principals and inquiries from him how he would handle the situation should this happen to him if he wins the forthcoming.)

> [S1]Well, I assure you that that won't be, that won't be case because it is clearly stated, vice president has a role and the role of vice presidents should be, is the most critical role because you are talking about the economy of the country. [S2]The main problem of this country today is the economy. [S3]The economy is on the nymphs and because it is not working, it is not creating jobs, it is not doing anything. [S4]The vice president is in charge of regaining this economy and rebuilding it to where you can create jobs, to where you can be able to ensure that there is finance in various areas of our government. [S5]The vice president is in charge of, for example, debt management. [S6]Today, we have virtually (pause) at the level where our debts are unsustainable because we are using over 50% of our revenues to service debts. [S7]Which means we don't even have enough to be able to do infrastructural projects that are highly needed in this country.… [S8]So the vice president has a role to build the economy, to create jobs, to make the country work. So, it is critical role. [S9]In falling out with the president, if you are doing the right thing, you can't fall out with anybody. [S10]I can assure you of that if you continue to do the right thing because the president who chose you chose for a reason that you have something to deliver. [S11]So you are not there, you are to (pause) be loyal to him and serve Nigeria faithfully. So, I don't have any problem. [S12]I have never had any problem in government so it won't start with him because we work together and start making Nigeria work again.

Findings and discussions

The Excerpt is also a case of second order accountive positioning. The interviewer's question is the one in which Obi is expected to explicitly account on how to manage should there be a situation where misunderstanding occurs between him and his principal. Practically, his answer is implicit and intentional. However, in borrowing Grice 1975 cooperative principle assertion in which one is expected to make one's conversational contribution as informative as is required, the response flouts quantity and manner maxims for being under-informative and involving unnecessary prolixity. This is a strategy to opt out of the demand of the question. Thus, in sentence 1, he uses deliberate self and others positioning acts to implicate his and the other's identity. Here, he assures his interviewer that there will be no misunderstanding between him and his principal, because he knows his position as the vice president and will absolutely be cognizant of it. By the utterance, he presents and positions himself as being knowledgeable in political matters as well as being conscious of his roles and to abide by them, thus, implicating his competent and religious identity. His utterances from sentences 2 to 8 is a deliberate positioning of the other (Osibanjo) as lacking in his role as the vice president. The storyline accounts to the role of the vice president in a country while implicitly positioning the current vice president as having completely failed in that aspect. He says, "the main problem of this country today is economy. The economy is on the nymphs and because it is not working, it is not creating jobs, it is not doing anything. The vice president is in charge of regaining this economy and rebuilding it to where you can create jobs…" This means that the vice president has the responsibility of seeing to the growth of the economy as well as in creating jobs. But in the country, quoting Obi's assertion, the economy of the country is not working and is not creating jobs as well. These utterances have the illocutionary force of informing the audience that Osibanjo is not delivering at all as the vice president, thus, portraying his uncommitted/incompetent identity. In sentences 9 – 12, he positions himself as one that possesses the moral integrity to make Nigeria work again. The sentences intensify his assurance in sentence 4.1.4.1 above and sustain his moral position as a loyal and faithful subordinate, thus, portraying his loyalist identity.

Excerpt 5

APC candidate: (The excerpt is a response to the interviewer's inquiry from Osibanjo on how the problem of the aggregate investment in Nigeria economy which has not risen beyond 16% in the last 10 years could be tackled.)

[S1]Our country over the past 16 years has suffered a major infrastructural deficit. So, we don't have rail, we don't have roads, power you know, when we came into office in 2015, power was at 4,000 megawatts, that is 16 years, in 16 years. [S2]So you need strong infrastructure and nobody can make excuses about that, infrastructure, which is one of the major focuses of our administration's policy in putting in place the right infrastructure. [S3]The second thing is that you cannot have a driving economy if you allow the type of brand corruption that has

taken place in Nigeria in the past 16 years. [S4] I have heard one of the candidates say that fighting corruption is not an economic policy, but with all due respect, if you don't have resources, if you don't have money, if the resources have been stolen, then you cannot possibly even generate job, you cannot even build infrastructure. [S5]In the past, in the past three years, the government of President Muhammadu Buhari has spent 2.7 trillion in capital and that is the highest ever in the history of Nigeria despite earning 60% less. When oil was at 100 dollars to 140 dollars a barrel, no infrastructure was built. Today oil is at sub 60. When we came into office, we are 28 dollars going into 30 dollars, yet, we spent more on capital and on infrastructure. The second thing is that you must have poverty if you don't have some social investment scheme.

Findings and discussions

In this excerpt, Osibanjo uses deliberate self-repositioning and positioning of the other to inform his audience what has been the cause of the nation's economic problem. His utterance in sentence 1 points to lack of infrastructural facilities and corruption in the country as the cause while seriously alluding to past16 years as when the problem started and that was during the PDP's time in the office thereby positioning PDP group as the cause of the poor economic system in the country. Sentence 2 typifies the use of deliberate self-positioning to inform the audience that even though the country's infrastructural development has been neglected for the past 16 years, his group's main focus now is in putting them in place again. He uses sentences 3 and 4 to counter and challenge his opponent's moral order in emphasizing job creation as the base for economic development thereby strengthening his group's moral order in curbing corruption as an economic policy. His subsequent utterances in the excerpt are his strategy to strengthen his constructed scrupulous identity in his opening remark.

CONCLUSION

This study is an analysis of identity construction through positioning act strategies in language use by two vice presidential debate candidates, Prof. Yemi Osibanjo of APC party and Mr Peter Obi of PDP in December 14, 2018 vice presidential debate. It aims at finding the participants/group's identities and stance on the nation's development and the forms of positioning acts employed for each construction. The findings reveal that inasmuch as first order performative and second accountive positioning acts are employed by the participants in the positioning and re-positioning of selves and the others by adopting discursive practices that (re)negotiate in order to shift and re-modify identities imposed by the other, second order accountive positioning is mainly adopted. The forms of positioning manifested in their discursive practices are moral and personal, intentional, deliberate self and other, and forced self-positioning. These strategies are used to implicate selves and party group's moral value for the national development and the other's failure in that respect, to resist an imposed identity by the other and to influence and inform the audience to vote them in the next presidential election. The identities revealed by these forms

of discursive practices are scrupulous, loyalists, dogged, competent, religious and committed self\group identity and failure, corrupt minded, incompetent and uncommitted other's identity.

The study, therefore, concludes that the knowledge of the concepts of positioning and its applicability to the understanding of political discourse in discursive events is essential for the understanding of the politicians' attitudes and identities as well as their stance on the nation's growth. Generally speaking, this will help the masses in the choice of their leaders for better nation.

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