



Pragma-Syntactic Analysis of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2025 Budget Presentation: A Study in Political Discourse

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Abstract

This paper provides a pragma-syntactic analysis of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2025 budget presentation to the Nigerian National Assembly, emphasizing the intersection of syntax and pragmatics in political discourse. Delivered under the theme "The Budget of Restoration: Securing Peace, Rebuilding Prosperity," the speech articulates the administration's fiscal policies while addressing Nigeria's socio-economic challenges. This study aims to uncover how the speech's linguistic and pragmatic elements are strategically crafted to persuade, inform, and inspire. Using Speech Act Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as theoretical frameworks, the study examines the use of declarative sentences, rhetorical devices, and inclusive language to enhance the speech's communicative impact. The analysis reveals how syntax underscores authority and clarity, while pragmatic strategies, such as repetition and appeals to shared values, foster national unity and stakeholder confidence. Themes of restoration, resilience, and hope are woven into the speech to address pressing issues like security, economic recovery, and human capital development. The findings show that Tinubu's speech is a well-constructed rhetorical instrument, effectively balancing optimism with realism. It demonstrates how political leaders use language to build trust, mobilize support, and advance policy agendas. By focusing on pragma-syntactic elements, this study contributes to the broader understanding of political communication and the critical role of language in governance.



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INTRODUCTION

In modern governance, budget presentations are critical moments that blend policy discourse with rhetorical performance (Blommaert, 2008). Beyond the technicalities of financial projections, these presentations provide a platform for political leaders to articulate their vision, inspire confidence, and rally stakeholders around shared goals. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2025 budget presentation exemplifies this dual purpose, offering a roadmap for Nigeria's socio-economic development while addressing ongoing challenges. Delivered to a joint session of the National Assembly on December 18, 2024, the speech is titled "The Budget of Restoration: Securing Peace, Rebuilding Prosperity."

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This presentation comes at a pivotal moment for Nigeria. Eighteen months into Tinubu's administration, the country faces complex challenges, including economic recovery, security threats, and institutional reforms. The 2025 budget speech, therefore, serves not only as a financial document but also as a narrative of resilience and renewal. Through its rhetorical and linguistic choices, the speech aims to reassure citizens, inspire hope, and secure the cooperation of key stakeholders, including lawmakers, the private sector, and the general populace.

Political discourse analysis is an important study that highlights how language is used strategically to achieve goals such as persuasion, mobilization, and governance (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 1997). In the context of budget speeches, language plays a role as a tool for policy advocacy as well as a means of communication with various stakeholders. Syntax contributes to the effectiveness of political speech, where declarative sentences are often used to assert authority and provide clarity, while interrogative structures create engagement with audiences (Fairclough, 2013; Leech, 1983). In addition, pragmatic strategies such as inclusive language, repetition, and rhetorical questions strengthen the speaker's credibility as well as emphasize the main message (Yule, 1996).

Budget speeches in Nigeria reflect the socio-economic realities as well as the country's political priorities (Okoro & Onyebuchi, 2020; Opeibi, 2009). However, although previous research has examined political rhetoric in Nigeria, few have specifically examined the pragmatic-syntactic features of budget speech. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing President Tinubu's 2025 budget speech using the theoretical framework of Speech Action (Searle, 1969) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2013).

Speech Theory explains that language not only conveys information but also performs certain actions, such as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and changes reality (Halliday, 1994; Searle, 1979). In political speech, the act of illocution speech becomes significant because the leader aims to convince, convince, and move the audience. Meanwhile, the CDA highlights the relationship between language, power, and society, suggesting that political speech is not neutral, but rather a means to legitimize authority and shape public opinion (Fairclough, 2013).

Political speeches have long been a subject of linguistic and rhetorical analysis. Scholars have explored how language is used to assert authority, construct narratives, and engage audiences. In the context of budget presentations, syntax and pragmatics play critical roles. Syntax, the study of sentence structure, contributes to clarity and coherence, ensuring that complex ideas are communicated effectively. Pragmatics, which focuses on language use in context, examines how speech acts, rhetorical devices, and other strategies influence audience interpretation and response. Together, these elements form the basis of what this paper terms "pragma-syntactic analysis."

While much has been written about political rhetoric in Nigeria, few studies have focused specifically on the pragma-syntactic features of budget speeches. This paper seeks to fill that gap by providing a detailed analysis of Tinubu's 2025 budget presentation. The study examines how linguistic structures and pragmatic strategies are used to achieve the speech's communicative goals, focusing on themes of restoration, resilience, and hope. By situating the speech within the broader context of Nigeria's socio-political realities, the paper also highlights the interplay between language and governance.

This study aims to analyze the pragmatic-syntactic features of Tinubu's speech, focusing on how the syntax of his speech contributes to clarity and authority, pragmatic strategies used to engage the audience as well as convey the main message, as well as linguistic choices that reflect and respond to socio-economic challenges in Nigeria. By examining Tinubu's 2025 budget presentation through a pragmatic-syntactic approach, this study seeks to identify the rhetorical strategies used and place the theme of the speech in the context of political communication in Nigeria. The results of this study are

expected to provide deeper insight into the use of language in shaping public discourse and policy in the country.

METHOD

Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative research design, focusing on the textual and contextual analysis of the speech. The qualitative approach is suitable for exploring the nuanced interplay between syntax and pragmatics in political discourse.

Data Collection

The primary data for this study is the full text of Tinubu's 2025 budget presentation, delivered on December 18, 2024. The speech was obtained from official government sources to ensure accuracy and authenticity. Secondary data, including scholarly articles and previous studies on political discourse and budget speeches, were also reviewed to provide contextual insights.

Analytical Approach

The analysis is divided into two main components:

1. **Syntactic Analysis:** Examining sentence structures, clause types, and linguistic features such as repetition, parallelism, and rhetorical questions.
2. **Pragmatic Analysis:** Identifying speech acts, rhetorical strategies, and the use of contextual cues to engage the audience and achieve communicative goals.

Step 1: Text Segmentation

The speech was divided into thematic sections, such as "Introduction," "Budget Overview," and "Key Priorities." This segmentation allowed for a focused analysis of each part's pragma-syntactic features.

Step 2: Syntax Analysis

The syntactic analysis focused on the following elements:

- a. **Sentence Types:** Declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences.
- b. **Sentence Length:** Short sentences for emphasis versus long sentences for detailed explanations.
- c. **Rhetorical Devices:** Parallelism, anaphora, and antithesis.

Step 3: Pragmatic Analysis

The pragmatic analysis identified:

- a. **Speech Acts:** Assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.
- b. **Audience Engagement Strategies:** Use of inclusive language, appeals to shared values, and evocation of collective identity.
- c. **Contextual Cues:** References to Nigeria's socio-economic realities, such as security challenges and economic recovery.

Step 4: CDA Application

Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to link the linguistic features to broader socio-political contexts. This involved examining how the speech constructs power relations, legitimizes policies, and aligns with the administration's political agenda.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The pragma-syntactic analysis of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2025 Budget Presentation reveals several significant findings that demonstrate how the strategic use of syntax and pragmatics

enhances the speech's communicative effectiveness. The findings are categorized into thematic insights and their implications for governance and public communication.

Strategic Use of Syntax

1. Declarative Dominance:

The speech's reliance on declarative sentences establishes the President's authority and credibility. By presenting facts, outlining policies, and making commitments, the declarative tone provides clarity and instills confidence.

Example: "The 2025 Budget seeks to consolidate the key policies we have instituted to restructure our economy."

2. Sentence Length Variation:

The deliberate alternation between short, impactful sentences and longer, explanatory ones creates a balance between emotional appeal and informational depth. Short sentences, such as "This is an ambitious but necessary budget to secure our future," emphasize urgency and importance. Longer sentences provide comprehensive explanations, ensuring that complex ideas are effectively communicated.

3. Repetition and Parallelism:

Repetition of key phrases such as "restoration," "hope," and "prosperity" reinforces the central themes of the speech. Parallel structures like "Securing peace, rebuilding prosperity, and restoring hope" enhance rhythm and memorability, ensuring the message resonates with diverse audiences.

4. Rhetorical Questions:

The use of rhetorical questions engages the audience, prompting reflection and fostering a sense of inclusion. For example, "How else can we secure a brighter future if we do not act decisively now?" encourages the audience to align with the speaker's vision.

Pragmatic Effectiveness

1. Speech Acts:

The speech performs multiple illocutionary acts, including:

Assertives: Provide factual information to establish credibility (e.g., "Our economy grew by 3.46 percent in the third quarter of 2024").

Directives: Call for action and collective responsibility (e.g., "We must build on the progress we have made in the past eighteen months").

Commissives: Demonstrate commitment to policy implementation (e.g., "Our administration will continue to empower security forces").

2. Audience Engagement:

The inclusive use of "we" and "our" fosters a collective sense of responsibility and unity, aligning the audience with the government's vision. Appeals to patriotism and resilience, such as "The unstoppable Nigerian spirit will lead us," evoke emotional responses and inspire confidence.

3. Contextual Relevance:

The speech is grounded in Nigeria's socio-economic realities, such as insecurity, inflation, and economic restructuring. By addressing these challenges directly, the speaker establishes a connection with the audience's lived experiences, enhancing trust and relatability.

Thematic Insights

1. Restoration and Hope:

The speech frames the 2025 Budget as a roadmap for “restoration” and “renewed hope,” emphasizing progress, resilience, and a brighter future. This thematic focus aligns with the administration’s broader narrative of national transformation.

2. Economic Stability and Growth:

Detailed discussions on economic achievements, such as growth in GDP and increased foreign reserves, highlight the government’s commitment to economic stability. Policies aimed at boosting trade, investment, and infrastructure development underscore a vision of long-term growth and sustainability.

3. Security as a Foundation:

The prioritization of security funding reflects the administration’s understanding that peace and stability are prerequisites for national development. The speech emphasizes the need to protect citizens and restore confidence in governance.

4. Human Capital Development:

Record investments in education and healthcare demonstrate a focus on empowering citizens and addressing inequalities. Initiatives such as the Nigeria Education Loan Fund and Universal Health Coverage reflect a commitment to inclusive development.

Socio-Political Implications

1. Legitimization of Policies:

The speech uses syntax and pragmatics to legitimize the administration’s policies, presenting them as necessary for national progress. The repeated emphasis on reforms and transformation underscores the urgency and importance of the government’s agenda.

2. Nation-Building:

The inclusive and motivational tone of the speech fosters a sense of unity and collective responsibility. By appealing to shared values, the speech seeks to inspire citizens to contribute to nation-building efforts.

3. Public Accountability:

The detailed presentation of economic achievements and budget allocations reflects a commitment to transparency and accountability. This approach builds trust in governance and reinforces the administration’s credibility.

Effectiveness of Rhetorical Strategies

1. Emotional Appeal:

The speech effectively combines emotional and logical appeals, using stories of resilience and progress to inspire hope while presenting data and policies to establish credibility.

2. Call to Action:

The speech concludes with a strong call to action, urging citizens, institutions, and leaders to collaborate in achieving the administration’s vision. This approach reinforces the speech’s motivational impact.

Discussion

The discussion provides a detailed analysis of the pragma-syntactic features in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2025 budget presentation. Using the frameworks of Speech Act Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this section examines how syntax and pragmatics are utilized to achieve the speech’s communicative goals and its socio-political impact.

Syntactic Analysis

The syntactic structure of the speech is carefully crafted to convey authority, evoke emotions, and foster clarity. Tinubu employs specific syntactic strategies to emphasize key messages and engage his audience.

1. Sentence Types

The speech predominantly uses declarative sentences to assert facts, outline policies, and reinforce commitments. For example:

“Our economy grew by 3.46 percent in the third quarter of 2024.”

Declarative sentences provide a sense of certainty and authority, essential for instilling confidence in the audience. Imperative sentences are sparingly used but serve a motivational purpose, such as rallying the audience toward collective action:

“We must keep faith with the process to arrive at our collectively desired destination.”

Interrogative sentences are occasionally employed rhetorically to provoke thought and engage the audience:

“How else can we secure a brighter future if we do not act decisively now?”

2. Sentence Length

Tinubu alternates between short, impactful sentences and longer, descriptive ones. Short sentences are used for emphasis:

“This is an ambitious but necessary budget to secure our future.”

Longer sentences provide detailed explanations of policies and contextual background, enhancing the speech's informative value.

3. Parallelism

The speech frequently employs parallelism to create rhythm and reinforce key themes. For instance:

“Securing peace, rebuilding prosperity, and restoring hope.”

This stylistic device not only enhances the speech's memorability but also aligns with the Renewed Hope Agenda's tripartite focus.

4. Repetition

Repetition is a prominent syntactic feature, particularly of keywords such as “restoration,” “hope,” and “prosperity.” This strategy reinforces the central message of the speech and creates a cohesive narrative.

5. Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions are used to engage the audience emotionally and intellectually:

“Is there any greater call to action than the urgent need to restore our nation's economy?”

These questions serve as a persuasive tool, encouraging the audience to align with the speaker's vision.

Pragmatic Analysis

The pragmatic dimension of the speech is analyzed through the lens of Speech Act Theory, focusing on the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts performed.

1. Illocutionary Acts

Assertives: Tinubu asserts the administration's achievements, such as economic growth and increased foreign reserves, to build credibility and instill confidence.

Example: “Our Foreign Reserves now stand at nearly 42 billion US dollars.”

Directives: The speech includes directives aimed at motivating collective action, such as calls to support reforms and policies.

Example: “We must build on the progress we have made in the past eighteen months.”

Commissives: Tinubu makes explicit commitments to policy implementation, such as increasing funding for security and infrastructure.

Example: “Our administration will continue to empower security forces.”

Expressives: The speech conveys gratitude and empathy, acknowledging the sacrifices of Nigerians.

Example: “I thank every Nigerian for embarking on this journey of REFORMS and TRANSFORMATION with us.”

Declarations: The act of presenting the budget itself is a declaration, as it signifies a formal commitment to governance and accountability.

2. Audience Engagement Strategies

Tinubu uses inclusive language, such as “we” and “our,” to foster a sense of collective responsibility and unity.

Example: “We must rewrite the narrative of this nation together.”

The speech also appeals to shared values, such as patriotism and resilience, to inspire confidence and hope:

Example: “The unstoppable Nigerian spirit will lead us on as we work to rebuild the fabric of our economy.”

3. Contextual Cues

The speech is rich in contextual references to Nigeria’s socio-economic challenges, such as insecurity, inflation, and economic restructuring. These references ground the speech in the lived realities of the audience, enhancing its relevance and impact.

Example: “The road of reforms is now clearly upon us, and... this less-travelled road has not been easy.”

Critical Discourse Analysis

Using Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, this section examines how the speech reflects and shapes socio-political realities.

1. Text Analysis

At the textual level, the speech employs formal and authoritative language, reflecting its institutional context. Key lexical choices, such as “restoration,” “rebuilding,” and “renewed hope,” construct a narrative of progress and resilience.

2. Discursive Practice

The speech is situated within the tradition of budget presentations, which serve as a platform for governments to outline policies and justify expenditures. Tinubu’s speech aligns with this tradition while emphasizing the administration’s unique focus on reforms and transformation.

3. Social Practice

The speech reflects broader socio-political dynamics, such as the need to address economic disparities, restore security, and rebuild trust in government. By framing the budget as a “restoration” initiative, Tinubu seeks to legitimize his administration’s policies and rally public support.

Impact of Syntax and Pragmatics on Communicative Goals

The interplay between syntax and pragmatics enhances the effectiveness of the speech in achieving its communicative goals. For example:

1. The use of declarative sentences and assertive speech acts establishes credibility and authority.
2. Inclusive language and commissive acts foster trust and solidarity.

3. Repetition and parallelism reinforce key themes, ensuring the speech's message is memorable.

Central Themes and Objectives of the Speech

At its core, the speech is anchored on themes of restoration, renewed hope, and collective action. By repeatedly emphasizing these themes, the President seeks to inspire optimism while reassuring citizens of the government's commitment to addressing Nigeria's socio-economic challenges. The speech is not merely a technical document but a call to action, urging all stakeholders—citizens, public officials, and private sector actors—to contribute to nation-building.

The objectives of the speech are multifaceted:

1. To inform: The presentation outlines budgetary allocations, economic performance metrics, and projections for 2025, offering transparency and accountability.
2. To inspire: Through motivational language and thematic consistency, the speech seeks to energize citizens and reinforce confidence in the administration's vision.
3. To legitimize: By referencing past achievements and current economic realities, the speech justifies the administration's policies and future plans.

Significance of Syntax in Achieving Communicative Goals

The syntactic structure of the speech plays a crucial role in its effectiveness. Declarative sentences dominate the speech, offering clear and authoritative statements that leave little room for ambiguity. The strategic use of sentence variation—alternating between short, impactful sentences and longer, explanatory ones—ensures that the speech balances emotional resonance with informational depth.

The syntax also enhances thematic consistency. Parallel structures and repetition of key phrases such as “restoration” and “renewed hope” create a rhythm that reinforces the speech's central messages. This approach not only aids in audience retention but also lends a sense of urgency and importance to the discourse.

Pragmatic Strategies for Audience Engagement

The speech's pragmatic features demonstrate a deep understanding of audience dynamics. The inclusive use of pronouns such as “we” and “our” fosters a sense of shared responsibility, aligning the audience with the government's vision. Appeals to patriotism, resilience, and collective effort evoke emotional responses, inspiring citizens to support the administration's agenda.

Speech acts—assertives, directives, and commissives—are skillfully employed to convey information, call for action, and demonstrate commitment. For example, statements such as “We must build on the progress we have made in the past eighteen months” combine assertiveness with a directive tone, urging the audience to remain steadfast in their support.

Thematic Insights and Their Implications

The speech is structured around five major themes: restoration, economic stability, security, human capital development, and national unity. These themes reflect the administration's strategic priorities and provide a roadmap for achieving long-term development.

1. Restoration and Hope:

The speech positions the 2025 Budget as a tool for national restoration, emphasizing progress and resilience. This narrative aligns with the administration's broader agenda of transformation and renewal.

2. Economic Stability and Growth:

Detailed discussions on economic achievements and projections underscore the government's commitment to stabilizing the economy. By presenting data on GDP growth, foreign reserves, and trade surpluses, the speech builds confidence in the administration's economic policies.

3. Security as a Foundation:

The prioritization of security funding reflects the government's understanding that peace is a prerequisite for development. By addressing concerns about insecurity, the speech reassures citizens and underscores the administration's commitment to safeguarding lives and property.

4. Human Capital Development:

Investments in education, healthcare, and social services highlight the administration's focus on empowering citizens and addressing inequalities. These efforts are framed as essential for building a prosperous and inclusive society.

5. National Unity and Collective Responsibility:

The speech emphasizes the importance of collaboration among citizens, leaders, and institutions in achieving the administration's vision. This theme fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose, reinforcing the speech's motivational impact.

Broader Implications for Public Communication

The pragma-syntactic features identified in the speech offer valuable lessons for effective public communication:

1. Clarity and Precision:

By using declarative sentences and clear language, the speech ensures that its messages are easily understood by a diverse audience.

2. Thematic Consistency:

The repetition of key themes and phrases reinforces the central message, making it more memorable and impactful.

3. Emotional and Logical Appeals:

The speech balances emotional resonance with factual information, ensuring that it appeals to both the audience's emotions and intellect.

4. Audience-Centered Approach:

By addressing the audience's concerns and aspirations, the speech establishes a strong connection with its listeners, enhancing its persuasiveness.

Implications for Governance and Nation-Building

The speech demonstrates how language can be a powerful tool for governance and nation-building. By effectively communicating policies, addressing challenges, and inspiring collective action, leaders can foster trust, unity, and collaboration. The analysis of President Tinubu's speech highlights the following implications for governance:

1. Transparency and Accountability:

Detailed presentations of budgetary allocations and economic performance metrics enhance transparency, fostering public trust in governance.

2. Visionary Leadership:

The speech's focus on long-term goals and strategic priorities underscores the importance of visionary leadership in addressing complex challenges.

3. Unity and Collaboration:

By emphasizing shared responsibility and collective effort, the speech fosters a sense of unity and collaboration among citizens and leaders.

4. Motivation and Inspiration:

The motivational tone of the speech demonstrates how leaders can inspire hope and resilience, even in challenging times.

Implications for Public Communication

The pragma-syntactic features identified in the speech highlight best practices for effective public communication. These include:

1. Clarity and Precision: Using declarative sentences to convey clear and concise messages.
2. Audience Engagement: Employing inclusive language and rhetorical questions to foster connection and inspire action.
3. Thematic Consistency: Repeating key themes and using parallel structures to reinforce the central message.
4. Relevance and Empathy: Addressing audience concerns and realities to build trust and relatability.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2025 Budget Presentation effectively utilizes pragma-syntactic features to achieve its communicative goals. The speech not only informs but also inspires, fostering trust, unity, and collective action.

CONCLUSION

The pragma-syntactic analysis of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's presentation of the 2025 Budget of Restoration demonstrates the intricate relationship between language structure, pragmatic intent, and communicative effectiveness. The speech transcends its immediate purpose of presenting budgetary allocations to serve as a rhetorical tool for national motivation, unity, and trust-building. This conclusion synthesizes the findings of the analysis and explores their broader implications for public communication, governance, and socio-political discourse.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's presentation of the 2025 Budget of Restoration exemplifies the power of language in shaping public discourse and fostering national unity. Through its strategic use of syntax and pragmatics, the speech effectively communicates the administration's vision, inspires hope, and motivates collective action.

As Nigeria continues on its journey of transformation, effective communication will remain a critical tool for building trust, fostering collaboration, and achieving long-term development. The analysis of this speech serves as a valuable case study, highlighting the importance of language in governance and nation-building and also as a foundation for continued progress, unity, and hope for a brighter future for Nigeria.

Limitations and Future Research

While the pragma-syntactic analysis provides valuable insights into the speech's communicative strategies, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The analysis focuses primarily on the linguistic and rhetorical features of the speech, without exploring audience reception or the broader socio-political context. Future research could address these gaps by examining how different segments of the audience interpret and respond to the speech.

Additionally, comparative studies of other presidential speeches could provide a broader understanding of pragma-syntactic strategies in political communication. Such research could identify patterns and trends, offering insights into how leaders use language to achieve their communicative goals.

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