

**A Critical Discourse Exploration of Self-Presentation Strategies in the
Computer-Mediated Political Discourse of Female Ghanaian Presidential
Candidates**

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Abstract

Studies have ignored the roles of the digital media in promoting the political activities of female presidential candidates in Ghana. This study, therefore, investigates how Ghanaian Female Presidential Candidates (GFPCs) utilise their computer-mediated political communication for self-presentation and ideological nuancing. The study appropriates perspectives from Jones and Pittman's (1982)³ self-presentation theory and Fairclough's (1995)⁴ CDA to describe, interpret and explain the manifestations of self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation and supplication as the recurring strategies used by GFPCs. The findings show that the female presidential candidates use self-promotion strategy the most to validate their presence and present their accomplishments for public validation, and exemplification to portray themselves as deserving to be elected. They deploy the five self-presentation strategies to express their political/gender ideologies and to project themselves as significant participants within Ghana's political space, against the backdrop of sociocultural realities. The study concludes that although the digital/Internet media allows the GFPCs to project themselves better than the traditional media, they are conscious of traditional patriarchal stereotypes in their bid to promote themselves.

Keywords: Self-presentation, ideology, computer-mediated communication, critical discourse analysis, Ghanaian Female Presidential Candidates.

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³ Jerry Suls (ed.), Jones E and Pittman T, Toward a General Theory of Strategic Self-Presentation. In Psychological Perspectives on the Self (Erlbaum, Hillsdale 1982) pp 231-262.

⁴ Fairclough N, Critical Discourse Analysis: the critical study of language. (London: Longman, 1995)



Introduction

One of the ways through which politicians construct a political identity (Mackenzie, 1978 and Muhammad & Muneam, 2023)⁵ for themselves as well as enact their political ideologies (Akinmameji, 2017 and 2020b)⁶ is through the machinery of language. Zheng (2000)⁷ describes language as a powerful tool which is used as a means of controlling or shaping the thoughts of others, and a weapon that is required to win public support. They posit further that language is a powerful tool in the struggle of community against community, worldview against worldview, ideology against ideology. Similarly, Zaidi (2007)⁸ draws a nexus between language and ideology by affirming that “ideology is understood in its roles as a promoter of language” (p. 71), and that it is almost impossible to find a site of social practices where language and ideology do not play a major role. Consequently, studies, especially, from the linguistic perspective, (e. g. Jarell, 2011; Lamidi & Akinmameji, 2013⁹; Akinmameji, 2020a¹⁰; Aschale, 2013¹¹; Opeibi, 2013)¹² have looked at the way politicians deploy language to serve different political goals. Taifoor (2010)¹³ undertakes a critical discourse analysis of the speeches of Hillary Clinton, Angela Merkel and Julia Gillard on immigration and argues that the three female political actors pushed their anti-racism ideologies through their linguistic choices. Gadalla (2012)¹⁴ investigates the ideological strategies used by Barack Obama in his speech at Cairo, Egypt leveraging aspects of van Dijk’s critical discourse analysis. The study affirms that Obama uses a wide range of strategies and techniques to “unconsciously reflect his ideological agenda” (Gadalla, 2012: 39), including emphasizing the

⁵Mackenzie W, Political Identity. (Manchester: Manchester University Press (1978)

⁶Akinmameji O, Power Expressions and Persuasive Strategies in Selected Speeches of Former Nigerian Presidents OlusegunObasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan (PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, 2017)

⁷Zheng W, Understanding power and persuasion in China’s cadre evaluation system (New Jersey: Middle Tennessee University Press, 2000)

⁸Zaidi A, Language and ideology (USA: JB Publishing Company 2007).

⁹Lamidi M and Akinmameji O. O, “Feminist interpretation of naming in selected plays of Femi Osofisan” *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies, Nigeria* (2013), 23.pp 51-70

¹⁰Akinmameji O, “Proverbs and figurative expressions as markers of feminist ideology in selected Femi Osofisan’s plays” *LinguistikOnline* 101, 1/20,(2020a) pp 99-113.

¹¹Aschale. A, “A critical discourse analysis of Barack Obama’s speeches vis-a-vis middle east and north

Africa” <<https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/168385/CDA%20of%20PBO%20in%20ME%20%20N-Africa%20%20By%20Aalign%20A%20.pdf>> (2013)

¹²Opeibi, B. *Good Governance and Civic Engagement in an Emerging Democracy* (Saarbrücken, Germany.Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013) 60pp.

¹³Taifoor A, *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Hillary Clinton, Angela Merkel and Julia Gillard’s Speeches on Immigration, Masters dissertation* (College of Education, Al-Qadisiyah University, 2010)

¹⁴Gadalla H, *Ideological Strategies in Barack Obama’s Cairo Speech: A Critical Discourse Analysis*. (Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts: Assiut University, Egypt, 2012) 41 no 1, pp 9-45.

good properties and actions of himself, his country and the West, and mitigating their bad properties and actions. Danquah (2020)¹⁵

undertakes a critical discourse analysis of three selected speeches of Ghana's President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, and affirms that Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo reiterates the ideologies of the New Patriotic Party through the three speeches from various perspectives, and posits that language serves as a critical tool for power assertion and ideological nuancing. Jaworska's (2021)¹⁶ study of Angela Merkel's Covid-19 speech reveals that the success of her televised performances depended not just on the use of specific discursive devices but also on the contrast that they created with her usual impersonal approach. In a related study, Umaraj and Hasan (2021)¹⁷ investigates the way Hilary Clinton uses her speech for positive self-representation and negative other representation, and posits that Clinton's speech is not completely different from that of her male contemporaries whose speeches also evoked similar 'us' versus 'them' ideology(ies). Even though several studies, some of which have already been presented, have investigated the way politicians, from the global south to the north, utilize language for ideological positioning, none of these studies have examined the way female presidential candidates in Ghana use their computer mediated political rhetoric for self-presentation. This study fills this gap by investigating the way Ghana's three female presidential candidates deploy their political communication for self-presentation, vis-à-vis to construct their political identities as well as advocate gender inclusivity in Ghana's democracy. Thus, the study contributes to the growing literature on the voice and framing processes of female leaders in Ghana's democracy. It also provides insight on the nature of women's participation in Ghana's presidential elections which has been substantially underreported in scholarship.

Women in Ghana's Political Landscape

Ghana's democracy is predominantly patriarchal (Madsen, 2019)¹⁸, and the lack of support for female politicians stems from both male as well as fellow females. It is, therefore, not surprising that Ghana's president Nana Akufo-Addo, during an international conference in Canada, describes Ghana's female politicians as lacking the dynamism to govern. The president's speech was greeted by a lot of affirmations in the comments section on *YouTube* suggesting widespread skepticism about the capabilities of Ghana's female politicians. Also, one of the female presidential candidates in Ghana's 2020 as well as the last presidential

¹⁵Danquah G, *A critical discourse analysis of three speeches of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. Masters' dissertation*, (Dept of Communication and Media Studies, University of Education, Winneba, 2020)

¹⁶Jaworska S, "Competence and collectivity: The discourse of Angela Merkel's media communications during the first wave of the pandemic. *Discourse, Context & Media*" *Volume 42(2021)*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2021.100506>

¹⁷Umaraj, K. & Hasan, "A Critical discourse analysis speech of Hillary Clinton through the American Election" *The Creative launcher* (2021), 5 no 6, pp 1-7.

¹⁸Madsen D, *Women's political representation and affirmative action in Ghana policy: Note no 1* (Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet/The Nordic Africa Institute, 2019)

election, Brigitte Dzogbenuku expresses the challenges that female politicians, like herself, face in an emerging democracy like Ghana. According to her:

I am not surprised that majority of women do not come out to vie for public offices. The feedback is not usually encouraging. You try to monitor the feedback on the comments I have made on this channel today and you will see the way people will attack me. Unfortunately, when a woman is attacked, fellow women would not come out to defend you. They would not care that you are defending the course of women. Sometimes, you even get attacked by women as well. Not all women can take all the side attacks arising from political involvement (Dzogbenuku, 2020).

Further, Lartey (2019)¹⁹ identifies the Ghanaian systems and structures of socialization and religion as responsible for the negative perception of women in Ghana's politics stating that rather than encourage women, they are lampooned and represented from the perspectives of "witchcraft, whoredom, sex starvation and other such things Ghanaians like to ascribe to activists on gender" (p. 1). In Ghana, the female politicians are considered as jokers or at best, prostitutes - individuals with no respectable identities - who depend on their 'political boyfriends' to make meaning of their lives (Donkoh, 2016)²⁰. Needless to say, therefore, that male dominance in Ghana's democracy (Madsen et. al., 2020) inhibited the active participation of women in politics. In thirty-two (32) years of unbroken democracy, only three women have attempted to vie for the highest political office of Ghana's presidency.

The political ambition of these women: Nana Konadu Rawlings (former first lady and wife of late President John Jerry Rawlings), Brigitte Dzogbenuku, and AkuaDonkor are considered insignificant. In spite of their attempt at breaking into Ghana's male-centric presidential position, Diabah and Agyepong (2022) argue that Ghanaians first saw the 'real possibility of having a female vice-president' with the candidacy of Jane Naana Opoku-Agyeman. This extends the stereotyping of women as only good for the deputizing position/second or subordinate to men and, plausibly, explains why the political rhetoric of these women have been underexplored. This paper, therefore, aims to examine how the Ghanaian Female Presidential Candidates (GFPCs) deploy their computer mediated political discourse to construct distinct political identities/gender ideologies for themselves in a male-centric democracy. A critical discourse analysis of the political speeches of these female presidential candidates is, therefore, not only crucial in bringing the political cultures of the women to limelight but has implications for political debates on gender inclusion in

¹⁹Lartey N, "On Gender parity and lack of dynamism from Ghanaian women"
<https://citinewsroom.com/2019/06/on-gender-parity-and-lack-of-dynamism-from-ghanaian-women-article/> (2019)

²⁰Donkor C, *Mediating gendered politics: Ghanaian politicians and news discourse*.
 (Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Liverpool, 2016.)

emerging democracies considering Ghana's position as the "role model for democracy" in Sub-Saharan Africa (Madsen, 2019: 3²¹; Djaba, 2023)²².

Computer-mediated discourse and the visibility of Ghana's Female Presidential Candidates (GFPCs)

Computer mediated communication, also digitally-mediated communication (Zao & Ling, 2020)²³ and Internet-mediated communication (Thorne, 2002)²⁴ refers to the way people use computers and networks to communicate with one another. This makes communication across great distances and different time zones convenient, eliminating the time and geographic constraints of in-person communication. Globally, computer-mediated communication has reasonably impacted the activities of everyday communication in professional, educational, and interpersonal dimensions (Castells, 2007)²⁵. Thus, Eid and Ward (2009)²⁶ posit that millions of people, through social networking are recently building online local, regional, and global communities to communicate their shared interests and activities, disseminate information, and interact through a variety of web-based tools. The use of computer-mediated [social] networks is believed to have implications for society, culture, and politics. Hence, studies such as Thornton (2002)²⁷, Banda (2010)²⁸ and Opeibi (2011) have substantiated the argument that in emerging democracies, new technologies, including the social media and its various platforms, are being deployed to initiate and circulate messages, engender advocacy initiatives, shape public opinion and influence public perceptions of political issues as well as bridge communication gaps between citizens and their leaders. Lately, many political actors within the West African political space have adopted the Internet-based technologies (including social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Blogs, Twitter and Snapchat) as tools for projecting their political messages to the masses (Chiluwa, 2010²⁹; Ifukor,

²¹Madsen D, *Women's political representation and affirmative action in Ghana policy: Note no 1* (Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet/The Nordic Africa Institute, 2019)

²²Djaba O, "Wake Up, Ghana. Act Now on Gender Equality" <https://ghanacompact.com/op-eds/wake-up-ghana-act-now-on-gender-equality/> (2023)

²³Zao M & Ling R "What Is Computer-Mediated Communication?—An Introduction to the Special Issue, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*", 25 no 1 pp 4–8. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmz027> (2020)

²⁴Thornton A, "Does Internet Create Democracy?" <http://www.zipworld.com.au/~athornto/thesis2.html> (2002)

²⁵Castells M. (ed.), *The Network Society: a cross-cultural perspective* (Surrey: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2004)

²⁶Eid M and Ward S, "Ethics, New Media, and Social Networks". *Global Media Journal: Canadian Edition* (2009). Volume 2, Issue 1 pp 1-4.

²⁷Thornton A, "Does Internet Create Democracy?" <http://www.zipworld.com.au/~athornto/thesis2.html> (2002)

²⁸Banda F, *Citizen Journalism & Democracy in Africa: An Exploratory Study SA* (Highway Africa, 2010)

²⁹Chiluwa I, "Nigerian English in Informal Email Messages" *English World-Wide* (2010). 31 no 1 pp 40-61.

2011)³⁰. Unlike the mainstream media which reinforce patriarchal framing of politics in these emerging democracies (see Ette, 2017)³¹, the digital media has been used by women to reject negative stereotypical representation, thereby helping to resist 'the symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media' (Tuchman, 2000). Indeed, the Internet offers female politicians the voice to challenge traditional patriarchal stereotypes and disrupt certain narratives (Chiluwa, 2022)³². Although the Internet can also be used to silence women (Lumsden & Morgan 2017)³³, it greatly enhanced the visibility of the female presidential candidates in Ghana's 2020 elections. But for the Internet, for example, it may have been difficult, especially for researchers outside Ghana, to access the political discourse of GFPCs which were easily culled from their individual and political websites as well as on *YouTube*. The voices of these female aspirants could also have remained unheard. The present study, therefore, aims to examine how female politicians in Ghana deploy Internet-based platforms to reconstruct their media representations in order to establish their voices in a male-dominated political domain. The study employs the only three female presidential candidates in the 2020 elections as case studies. The study progresses from introduction and review of related literature to the methodology and data analysis.

Theoretical Framework

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) explains the relationship that holds among language, power and ideology (van Dijk, 2001 & 2006)³⁴. It proposes that the ways people use language in speech are socially conditioned and have social effects, and propels the investigation of the biases and imbalance in political discourse with a view to describing how participants navigate them (Fairclough & Wodak 1997; van Dijk 2001; Fairclough, 2013³⁵; & Igwebiuke and Chimunya, 2023). Specifically, Fairclough's (1995) approach to CDA emphasises the socio-cultural import of language use and advances three levels of analysis which are categorised as the description, interpretation and explanation stages. The description stage focuses on the formal properties of the text, including how the vocabulary, metaphors, grammatical structures and modes of a text can be utilized for ideological nuancing. The interpretation stage explains the relationship between text and interaction, in which case the text is considered as the product of a process of production, and a resource in the

³⁰Ifukor P, "Linguistic Marketing in a market place of ideas: Language Choice and Intertextuality in a Nigerian virtual community" *Pragmatics & Society* (2011). 2 no 1 pp 109-147.

³¹Ette M, "Where are the Women? Evaluating Visibility of Nigerian Female Politicians in News Media Space." *Gender, Place & Culture* (2017). 24 no 10 pp 1480-1497

³²Chiluwa I, "Women's Online Advocacy Campaigns for Political Participation in Nigeria and Ghana" *Critical Discourse Studies* (2022). 19 no 5 pp 465-484.

³³Lumsden K and Morgan H, "Media Framing of Trolling and Online Abuse: Silencing Strategies, Symbolic Violence, and Victim Blaming." *Feminist Media Studies* (2017) 17 no 6. pp 926-940.

³⁴Deborah Tannen, Deborah Schiffrin, and Heide Hamilton (eds) Van Dijk T's "Critical Discourse Analysis: In Handbook of Discourse Analysis" (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) pp 352-371.

³⁵Teun van Dijk (ed.), Fairclough N and Wodak R's *Critical Discourse Analysis. In Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, (London: Sage. 1997) pp 258-284. Fairclough Norman, *Language and Power* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. 2013)

process of interpretation (Fairclough, 1995). The explanation stage deals with the relationship between text and social contexts/practices.

The thrust of Fairclough’s (1995) CDA, in terms of how language is used to express ideological biases in socio-cultural contexts, resonates with Jones & Pitman’s (1982) idea of self-presentation. Jones and Pittman (1982) articulate five self-presentation strategies with which text producers create positive impression of themselves. These include self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication. Self-promotion is deployed when people announce their accomplishments to highlight their capabilities, while ingratiation occurs when people try to win the approval or acceptance of others by engaging in flattery or affectionate greetings. Exemplification refers to how people go beyond the expected to be perceived as committed or hardworking. Intimidation occurs when individuals project their power, strong stance or ability in order to be viewed as powerful. Supplication, which is the fifth strategy, refers to when people present their weaknesses in order to receive compassion (see also Igwebuike & Chimuanya, 2023)³⁶. These strategies are actualized through the various linguistic choices adopted by the text producer(s) as represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Self-presentation strategies in the computer mediated political discourse of Ghana female presidential candidates (additional information from Igwebuike and Chimuanya, 2023).

S / N	Self-expression strategy	Discursive realization
1 .	Self-promotion	-Announcing accomplishment -Showcasing capabilities
2 .	Exemplification	-Use of first-person personal pronoun and adverbs -Use of statistics, listing/highlighting - illustrating with facts, figures and dates
3 .	Supplication	-Reference to women’s vulnerability -Soliciting for gender inclusiveness
4 .	Intimidation	-Use of words of authority and power such as stance verbs
5 .	Ingratiation	-Use of greetings, acknowledgements, appreciation, kinship and endearment terms -Subtle reference to pledge/making promises/expressions of commitment

³⁶Igwebuike E and L Chimuanya, “Self-promotion, ideology and power in the social media posts of Nigerian Female Political Leaders” *Journal of Language and Politics* (2023). 23 no 1 pp 67-90.

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Figure 1 offers insight into the analytical model for the study. It shows the connections of self-presentation (and the accompanying strategies) and ideology, as well as the metalanguage of the model (as recommended by Jones and Pitman, 1982) which will form the fulcrum of analysis. This study seeks to explore the manifestations of these strategies in the political discourse of GFPCs with a view to revealing the ideological underpinnings and sociocultural realities expressed in the texts.

Data and Methods

The data comprises political text produced by the three female presidential candidates in Ghana's 2020 presidential election. The female candidates: Nana Konadu-Agyeman Rawlings (the first female presidential candidate in Ghana, often teased as the Hilary Clinton of Africa), Brigitte Dzogbenuku and Akua Donkor were candidates of the National Democratic Party (NDP), Progressive People's Party (PPP) and Ghana Freedom Party (GFP) respectively. Notably too, both Konadu Rawlings and Akua Donkor are the founders and leaders of their political parties. Excerpts from their political communication produced in the wake of the 2020 Ghana presidential election, between 2018 and 2020, were culled from individual and party websites as well as on YouTube. The choice of the websites and YouTube is borne out of the fact that they are largely patronized by these female politicians. Information about their political engagements which are accessible to the public especially on Twitter and Facebook are scanty and may not provide sufficient data for analysis. In fact, one of the candidates, Akua Donkor has only about two posts on Facebook and does not have a Twitter handle. Two political texts each, which mostly project the manifestoes and gender ideologies of the presidential candidates, were purposively sampled from the links attached to this footnote ³⁷

The political texts include four written speeches, and interviews/translated texts (Akua Donkor's speeches were originally constructed in a Ghanaian indigenous language but were later translated into English by a professional translator). It is important to note that the texts are considered to emanate from the female leaders since it was often impossible to distinguish between texts written by the politicians and those written by their designated speech writers and media managers. Therefore, the study is not interested in the actual writers of the speeches but focuses attention on how they convey the ideologies of the presidential candidates. The data are classified and categorised using the initials of the three GFPCs as in Nana Konadu-Agyeman Rawlings (KD), Brigitte Dzogbenuku (BD) and Akua Donkor (AD). Relevant excerpts from the texts were analysed from the perspectives of Fairclough's (1995) CDA and Jones and Pitman's (1982) self-presentation. The choice of the theoretical anchor for the study is appropriate because it provides the framework for interrogating the

³⁷<https://www.nkarawlings.com/>, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Election-Desk-PPP-s-Brigitte-Dzogbenuku-speaks-on-her-chances-of-becoming-first-female-president-1102285>, <https://www.pppghana.org>, <https://justiceghana.com>, https://youtu.be/Xx4YBk_CutI, and <https://youtu.be/vBPJpaNOBSE>.

way GFPCs (un)consciously promote themselves and expose their socio-political realities in a male dominated democracy.

Data Presentation and Discussion

This section presents the manifestation of the five self-presentation strategies: self-promotion, exemplification, ingratiation, supplication and intimidation in the political texts being investigated. The frequency distribution of the five self-presentation strategies in the computer-mediated political communication of GFPCs is presented in Table 1. Samples of the contextual deployment of each of the strategies are, then, described, interpreted and explained from the perspective of Fairclough (1995) CDA.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of self-presentation strategies in the computer-mediated political discourse of Ghana female presidential candidates

S/N	Self-representation Strategy	Names of female presidential candidates/ Frequency distribution and percentages in the data					
		Bridget Dzogbenuku		Konadu Rawlings		Akua Donkor	
		Frequency	% Frequency	Frequency	% Frequency	Frequency	% Frequency
1	Self-promotion	15	31.9	12	40	20	71.4
2	Exemplification	12	25.5	6	20	0	0
3	Ingratiation	10	21.3	6	20	0	0
4	Supplication	8	17.0	4	13.3	3	10.7
5	Intimidation	2	4.3	2	6.7	5	17.9
	Total	47	100	30	100	28	100

Table 1 presents the distribution of the self-presentation strategies used by the three Ghanaian Female Presidential Candidates (GFPCs) whose computer-mediated political communication are being investigated. Notably, individual styles vary which impacted on the frequency of the strategies in the selected speeches. The volume of the political texts also varies, and this affected the distribution of the strategies in the speeches. In spite of these, out of the five self-presentation strategies identified by Jones and Pitman (1982), i.e., self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, supplication and intimidation, self-

promotion is mostly deployed. The high frequency of this strategy cuts across the political discourse of the three female presidential candidates. The frequency in the computer-mediated political communication of Dzogbenuku, Agyeman-Rawlings and Donkor are 31.9%, 40%, and 71.4% respectively. A possible reason for the frequent deployment of self-promotion is because of the need for the GFPCs to project themselves and their accomplishments as well as authenticate their political identity, especially in a male dominated democracy like Ghana where the female politicians are expected to go the extra mile before their voices can be heard. Among other linguistic categories, the GFPCs copiously deployed the first-person personal plural 'I' to portray themselves as the subject of discussion, i.e., draw attention to themselves, thus, corroborating Hellinger & Bußmann's (2002)³⁸ assertion that personal pronouns have emerged as a central issue in debates about language and gender because they constitute a 'culturally significant lexical field' used to communicate about the self and to transmit positive attitudes.

A cultural perspective to the use of self-promotion is the tendency for politicians to praise themselves before external accolades, especially during political campaigns (see Osisanwo, 2021)³⁹. Hence, the use of personal pronouns and other linguistic categories by GFPCs reflects the social reality of the Ghanaian political terrain where politicians embark on self-praise as part of campaign strategy to enjoy wider acceptance. Coming after self-promotion in the political communication of the GFPCs is exemplification which involves the use of exaggerated statistics and illustrations to prove one's effectiveness in order to enjoy wider acceptance among the electorate. In the sample data, the frequency of exemplification is 25.5% and 20% in the speeches of Dzogbenuku and Agyeman-Rawlings respectively. Exemplification in the sampled speeches manifested in the description of accomplishments and deployment of self-praise adjectives. Explicit examples of this strategy cannot be identified in Donkor's political communication. The third frequently deployed strategy is ingratiation which has 21.3% and 20% frequency in the speeches of Dzogbenuku and Agyeman-Rawlings respectively.

This strategy involves the use of flattery words and terms of endearment such as: my brothers and sisters, my people or even local dialect to show solidarity and to gain wider acceptance among the electorate. While there is no difference in the frequency distribution of exemplification and ingratiation in Agyeman-Rawling's speech, there are also no concrete instances of the deployment of ingratiation in Donkor's political communication. This may not be unconnected with the fact that her political texts are translated versions of the original Twi rendition. The translation may have (in)significantly impacted on the manifestation of these strategies in her political text (see Badran, 2001)⁴⁰. The fourth frequently deployed strategy in the sampled texts of the GFPCs is

³⁸Hellinger M and Bußmann H (eds), *Gender across languages: The linguistic representation of women and men in Gender Across Languages*. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing 2002) pp 1-26.

³⁹Osisanwo A "Self-Praise, Other Assault: Representations in Selected Political Campaign Songs in Southwestern Nigeria" *Ghana Journal of Linguistics* (2021), 10 no 1, pp 228-250.

⁴⁰Badran D, "Modality and Ideology in Translated Political Texts" *Nottingham Linguistic Circular* (2001). 16 no 1, pp 47-51

supplication. This strategy occurred at a frequency of 17.0%, 13.3% and 10.7% in the political communication of Dzogbenuku, Agyeman-Rawlings and Donkor respectively. This strategy affords female presidential candidates the opportunity to maximize their vulnerability as women to appeal for higher level of tolerance. In other words, GFPCs use supplication as a strategy to cushion the effect(s) of any lapses in their political character or manifestoes/points of view. This manifests in “forms of appeal to the supposedly perceived gender weakness, while sentimentally fronting projects that pertain to women, youths and children to garner solidarity both for the present and the future” (Igwebuiké and Chimuanya, 2023:5). Intimidation is the fifth frequently deployed strategy in the sampled texts of Dzogbenuku and Agyeman-Rawlings at 4.3% and 6.7% respectively. The strategy involves the manipulative use of words to instill fear and submission. It is the least deployed in the sampled texts of the two female presidential candidates. This may not be unconnected with the cultural expectations of society towards gender, where women, no matter their social status or attainment, are expected to be submissive. Hence, Dzogbenuku and Agyeman-Rawlings, plausibly, deployed this strategy in order to appeal to socio-cultural sentiments. This approach is, arguably, deployed to boost their acceptability in a male-dominated Ghana democracy. Conversely, intimidation is not the least frequently deployed strategy in Donkor’s political texts. It enjoys a higher frequency than supplication. This may not be unconnected with the fact that she is often regarded as ‘unlettered’ and most unqualified among the GFPCs (Ayoka, 2015)⁴¹. It is, therefore, possible that she adopts this strategy as a form of self-validation in order to change public perception of her. Samples of the contextual deployment of the various strategies will be presented described, interpreted and explained in the following section.

Self-Promotion

Self-promotion, which focuses on how politicians announce their accomplishments, draw attention to their political character and advertise their political activities, is deployed by the three female presidential candidates in this study. Samples from their deployment of self-promotion are presented:

1. I have unity to offer. We are so divided right now along party and ethnic lines and the PPP is planning to offer an inclusive government if voted into power. We are not just trying to show off, we are there to make contributions to the development of the country... I am a mother, I am also a sports enthusiast, I am a businesswoman and have worked with a lot of women in the Volta region. I am a woman who has an NGO that has trained and mentored about 500 girls. (BD, 2020a).
2. When the nation was in a very fragile state, my organization, the 31st December Women’s Movement, was founded on the

⁴¹Ayoka J “The revolt of Akua Donkor”<https://www.modernghana.com/news/632009/the-revolt-of-akua-donkor.html> (2015)

belief that when you empower a woman, you empower a nation. We have come a long way since then. And today Ghana is considered a shining star in Africa and we are proud of the progresses made... Ladies and Gentlemen: I firmly believe the transformation of Africa rests largely on inclusive development—and that is why Empowerment and the Sustainable Well-being of the African Woman is at the heart of my mission (KR, 2018).

3. It's been long I started politics. I have been here since 2012, and I am bringing my own style into governance, regardless of what others (women) have done. I was an Assembly woman. We govern a country with wisdom and courage, not by speaking English. I don't owe the government. My records are clean (AD, 2020a).

In sample one, Bridget Dzogbenuku deploys the personal pronoun 'I' to ideologically establish her political identity as the person of focus. Furthermore, she deploys the assertion 'I have unity to offer' to express her political commitment (see Masia, 2020)⁴² and to portray herself as a politically competent candidate, i. e., someone who already has a blueprint of the kind of governance she intends to represent and not a political gambler (see also Akinmameji, 2018)⁴³. Dzogbenuku's deployment of this assertion is, plausibly, because of the need to sound as convincing as possible considering the patriarchal outlook of politics in Ghana. In the expression 'we are so divided right now...', she hints at the political crisis within the Ghanaian democracy. This way, she subtly negatively represents successive male-led administrations in Ghana by portraying them as unable to offer the kind of 'inclusive government' which she promises to offer. Thereby, projecting herself as a better presidential candidate. Also, Dzogbenuku utilises the personal pronoun 'I' to project her credentials as in: 'I am a mother', 'I am a sports enthusiast', and 'I am a businesswoman'. These assertions are deployed to portray her as a dynamic individual who can venture into and succeed in numerous endeavours. This is reinforced in the claim that her she has worked with several other women and has an 'NGO that has trained and mentored about 500 girls'. The reference to her being a mother is a way of ideologically representing herself as a selfless and loving.

These are leadership ideals that are required for a democracy to thrive. Thus, by deploying these expressions, BD presents herself as one who possesses leadership acumen. The strategy is engaged in order to boost her acceptance and likability in Ghana's political terrain. Similarly, in text 2, KD speaks of 'my organisation' which sees to women empowerment. The use of 'my' in the expression suggests possession. It is an attempt by KD to take the credit for her efforts at ensuring that Ghana receives adequate support 'when the nation was

⁴²Masia V, "Presupposition, assertion and the encoding of evidentiality in political discourse" *Linguistik online*, 102 no 2 pp 129-153(2020)

⁴³Akinmameji O, "Power expressions in the inauguration speeches of Olusegun Obasanjo" *Ibadan: Journal of Communication and Language Arts* (2018). 9 no 1, pp 211-233.

in a fragile state'. Thus, she portrays herself as a nation builder. She reiterates her contribution to the progress of Ghana by referring to her 'my' mission which is to see to the sustainable development of the African women. In text 3, AD establishes her political suitability by deploying a series of assertions. Like BD, she uses the personal pronoun 'I' to portray herself as the subject of focus. She constructs a distinct political identity for herself by hinting at bringing her 'own style' into governance. She reiterates her political experience by asserting that she was an Assembly woman suggesting that she has an idea of how governance is done. This is reinforced by her reference to possessing the required 'wisdom and courage'. She also substantiates her political credibility by saying she has clean financial records. The electorate is usually interested in the financial records of their prospective leaders considering the challenges of misappropriation and corruption which bedevils emerging democracies like Ghana. It is noteworthy that the need for inclusive government recurs in the sampled texts of the GFPCs in this subsection. With the exception of Akua Donkor, the GFPCs emphasised their contributions to women empowerment and their decision to provide an inclusive government. On one hand, this is deployed as a self-promotion strategy to highlight what they (GFPCs) intend to do differently; that is, what previous administrations could not achieve/ignored, or better still, their determination to challenge the status quo. This orients with Sarfo-Kantankah's (2021)⁴⁴ study which affirms that the presence of women in the decision-making process could 'strengthen gender-based interests'. On the other hand, it reveals the depth of the socio-political culture of gender marginalisation in Ghana's democracy and reveals the yearning for political emancipation among Ghana women, represented by the GFPCs.

Exemplification

Exemplification manifests when politicians use language to portray themselves as having gone the extra mile or done beyond what is primarily expected of them. This strategy is often deployed in order to depict themselves as committed or hardworking. Just as in self-promotion, politicians often utilise the first-person pronouns and statistics to highlight their achievements. They also substantiate their claims with facts, figures and dates. In samples 4 and 5, GFPCs deploy personal pronouns and adverbs for self-praises and self-evaluations in order to construct themselves as committed, hardworking and competent.

4. It was in 1979, that I learnt of party politics... By age 10, I had learnt and experienced Ghana's political volatility in many ways...I went to Wesley Girls High School from 1981-1988. This is where I was taught to "Live Pure, Speak True, Right Wrong and Follow the King." I learnt to respect teachers, sisters (seniors) and peers alike; I was taught decorum and polite speech. I learnt boldness, discipline,

⁴⁴Sarfo-Kantankah K, "The discursive construction of men and women in Ghanaian parliamentary discourse: A corpus-based study" *Ampersand*, 8 no 1, pp 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2021.100079>

responsibility, dignity and pride. I was taught values (BD, 2020b).

5. As an African woman who has spent her last 30 years working tirelessly with, and on behalf, of our nation's women and children at the grassroots... I chose to engage in meaningful political activity at a time when women were confined to the expectations of managing the household, raising the children and supporting their husbands. I chose to speak out on public platforms when it was still unpopular for women to do so (KR, 2019).

There is a copious deployment of the first-person personal pronoun 'I' in sample 4. In the excerpt, BD uses the pronoun 'I' to portray herself as a perfect example of a thorough bred politician and an ideal leader. She begins by making recourse to '1979' which is a year of historical/political significance in Ghana. It was in 1979 that Ghana's fourth revolution happened. During all of these military/political hiccups, BD claims to have 'learnt of party politics'. This presents her as possessing the requisite political experience to take the lead and that she is not a novice. She also refers to her educational experience at 'Wesley Girls High School from 1981 to 1988'. On one hand, the use of dates in BD's speech is a strategy to lend credibility to her claims. Credibility is regarded as an important attribute in emerging democracies like Ghana where politicians are perceived as insincere and liars (Yaa, 2023)⁴⁵.

On the other hand, BD highlights the various values she was taught in school including: 'live pure', 'speak true', 'right wrong'. She also claimed to have learnt: 'decorum' 'boldness', 'discipline', 'responsibility' 'dignity', 'pride' and 'value'. These are sterling qualities, befitting and expected of a leader. BD highlights these attributes to portray herself as above board/ an example of what a politician should be. Highlighting these values is strategically deployed to create a positive image for herself and to counter the stereotyping of Ghana women as politically inadequate/inefficient. Similarly, in excerpt 5, KR draws attention to her political experience by claiming to have spent the 'last 30 years working tirelessly' on behalf of Ghana women and children. She uses herself to exemplify the resilience of the typical African woman. This is reinforced in the use of 'tirelessly' which also portrays KD as someone who offers sacrificial leadership. Also, 30 years is significant in Ghana's democracy, which is 32 years old as at 2024. Presenting herself as someone who has been actively engaged in nation building for the past 30 years depicts KD as an accomplished/experienced politician. Furthermore, KR deploys the personal pronoun 'I' to portray herself as a pioneer and catalyst who sets the example for other female politicians/female presidential candidates to follow, considering that she (KR) is the first woman to attempt to contest for the position of president in Ghana.

⁴⁵Yaa T, "YaaTiti highlights how Ghanaian politicians are liars to their public"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KU5DUEDZgM>> (2023)

Ingratiation

As a self-presentation strategy, ingratiation occurs when an individual attempts to influence another person by becoming more likeable to their target. In samples 6 and 7, GFPCs use acknowledgements, name calling and other techniques as a means of ingratiation, in order to gain wider acceptance/likeability among the Ghana public.

6. I am grateful to the executives and delegates of the Progressive Peoples' Party and I am truly honoured to know that following my role in August 2016 as Running Mate to our Founder, and then Flagbearer, Dr. Papa KwesiNduom, you have entrusted me with this huge role to fill his shoes and lead the party... I am particularly grateful to Mr. William Doworkpor who so graciously stepped down for me to take up the position, without contest and in the best interest of the party... I do not take it for granted; I recognize the enormity of the task ahead of us, and with God's help, I am ready to take the bull by the horns and forge boldly ahead... (BD, 2020b)
7. YourExcellencies, The Chairman of the NDP, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Dear Delegates, Members of the NDP, party supporters, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Today's Congress represents the dawn of a new era and the launching of a new Party, the National Democratic Party – a Party born out of a need to transform our nation's future now and put Ghana, our great nation, back on the right track... I am – and always will be – guided by moral obligation to support the needs of the people over the interest of politics (KR, 2019).

Brigitte Dzagbenuku and Konadu-Rawlings utilised ingratiation as a self-presentation strategy in their political communication. This manifests in their use of greetings, appreciation and acknowledgements. In excerpt 6, for example, BD expresses her gratitude to the 'executives and delegates' at the political event in question. She proceeds to recognize important individuals in her political circle including the 'Founder, and then Flagbearer, Dr. Papa KwesiNduom' of the Progressive Peoples' Party (PPP). She also appreciates 'Mr. William Doworkpor who so graciously stepped down for me to take up the position'. Gratitude and acknowledgements are cultural indices of the Ghanaian society which engender solidarity. Like BD, KR, in excerpt 7, appropriates greetings and acknowledgements to show affinity and to construct an in-group identity with the people whom she seeks to lead. In addition, GFPCs deploy subtle oath/pledges and promises to assure the people of their commitment to deliver good governance if elected into office. For instance, BD in excerpt 6 promises to 'take the bull by the horns and forge ahead boldly' in delivering on the mandate of the political party she represents. Ingratiation is also explicit in expressions like 'I do not take this for granted' and 'I recognize the enormity of the task ahead (as in excerpt 6). Also, in sample 7, KD pledges to 'always be guided by moral obligations' to support the needs of the people. By putting the

interest of the people over politics in her speech, KD portrays herself as selfless and pro-masses and also evokes a feeling of security in the masses. In Ghana, political leaders utilise ingratiation as a strategy, to win the trust and support of the masses. Such a tool portrays the political leaders as people who are willing to go all the way to protect the interest of their people as well create the feeling of being loved and protected in the minds of the followers. Thus, GFPCs use ingratiation as a tool to portray themselves as decisive and intentional leaders, who are worth investing in politically. They deploy ingratiating linguistic trends to boost their likeability among their supporters and the Ghanaian electorate.

Supplication

Supplication, as a self-presentation strategy, occurs when individuals and politicians present their weaknesses or deficiencies in order to receive compassion and assistance from others. Supplication is one of the tools deployed by GFPCs to appeal to draw attention to women's vulnerability as well as appeal for a fair/compassionate treatment of women in a predominantly male-centric Ghanaian democracy. Examples from their texts are presented below.

8. Let us give credits to women in their capacity in respect of what they can contribute to society and not in terms of their gender...You cannot conclude that women would not do better in politics because you have not let the women into power. If you allow the women, pass the affirmation bill, elect the women into parliament, things would be better ... we women have a style of governance. We have a way of bringing our emotional intelligence, which most men do not have into governance. Women are more in-depth in their approach to governance. Women are carers and usually less corrupt. Women know how to do things better (BD, 2020a).
9. Women are 51% of Africa's 1 billion people, and they still make up the majority of its poor. These women often suffer the most, especially in times of crisis and unrest. For the masses of women, Africa is rising – but slowly and unevenly – and, unfortunately, many women are not rising with it... I would, therefore, like to end here with a Call to Action... please make sure to pay attention to how your business impacts a nation's people, especially the women and children of local communities (KR, 2018).
10. Women should be courageous. All women should consider themselves being the creation of God. So, if you are a woman, God created us. God's hand is really upon you (AD, 2020a).

In excerpt 8, BD appeals to stakeholders to give room for gender balancing. She subtly counters the gender stereotyping of women as opportunists who enjoy

certain privileges as a result of their gender. Further, she positively presents women as capable of making political exploits as a result of their inherent emotional intelligence, thoroughness, and financial responsibility. She rejects the profiling of women as lacking political direction or dynamism especially when they have not been given the political platform to show what they have to offer. She subtly throws a jab at patriarchy by asserting that women are 'usually less corrupt'. This reveals an endemic social reality with successive administrations led by men, which is corruption (Nsia-Peptra, 2017)⁴⁶. She identifies the strengths of women and the weaknesses of patriarchy in order to present women as better alternatives and as such, should be given a chance to lead the government. She appeals for the proper enactment of the affirmation bill which would see to the adequate inclusion of women in governance. This is coming at a time which has been adjudged as "unable to meet the minimum UN recommended threshold of 30 per cent women's representation in decision making processes" (Zaney, 2024)⁴⁷. In excerpt 9, KR presents women as victims of poor government legislation. She observes that their overwhelming population in Africa has not translated to improved living conditions and 'calls to action' among stakeholders to pay special attention to the welfare of women. Furthermore, in sample 10, AD appeals to women to be courageous. She appeals to the religious sensibilities of the addressee by admonishing women to see themselves as God's creation and that God's hand is on the women. On one hand, she seems to encourage the women to take their destinies into their hands, look to God for help, and aspire for political greatness regardless of what patriarchy throws at them. On the other hand, her appeal reveals the marriage of religion and politics as being practiced in Ghana (Dovlo, 2006)⁴⁸.

Intimidation

Intimidation involves the use of power expressions, especially stance verbs, in order to express authority or show powerfulness. Even though this strategy was least deployed in the political communication of GFPCs in this study, their deployment of intimidation suggests the usefulness of the Internet media in allowing GFPCs to make their voices heard and to project themselves as having the ability to express their political authority.

⁴⁶Nsia-Peptra K, "Flawed Democracy: The Bane of Ghana's Success in Curbing Corruption" *ASPJ Africa & Francophonie*, 8 no 2, pp 62-78.

⁴⁷Zaney G, "When will the Affirmative Action Bill become Law" <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1309025/when-will-the-affirmative-action-bill-become.html> (2024)

⁴⁸Dovlo E, "Religion and the Politics of Fourth Republican Elections in Ghana (1992, 1996)" *Ghana Journal of Religion and Theology* (2006). 1 no 1 pp 3-19.

⁴⁸Xhemali M, "The importance of the English language in public diplomacy and international relations. *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*" *Institute for Research and European Studies* (2022), 8 no 1, pp 322-339. DOI - 10.47305/JLIA2281322x

11. I bring a new kind of leadership that empowers others for the benefit of their communities, willing and bold enough to cede power into the hands of the people without fear because “Power to the People” is not to bring or keep others down as we have known (BD, 2020).
12. I have never been one to back down in the face of difficulty or criticism. I have never been one to settle and take the easy road out. I have never been one to do what’s popular over what’s right to gain quick political points for personal gain. No! That is not me and that’s Never been my style (KR, 2019).
13. I will stop the speaking of English in Ghana so that we can speak our Ghanaian Languages... I’m coming to dissolve the parliament. I will bring in new parliamentarians, who will encourage the use of Asante, Twi and other Ghana local languages (AD, 2020b).

Apart from stance verbs such as ‘bring’, ‘have never’, ‘stop’ and ‘dissolve’ (in samples 11, 12 and 13) used in the political texts of GFPCs, intimidation is realised in the political texts through the use of assertions and imperatives. BD, in sample 11, asserts, ‘I bring a new kind of leadership’ to express her determination to change the status quo. She also uses words with forceful evocation such as bold and fearless to describe her political ambition. While she seeks a positive representation of herself, she subtly discredits previous administration which ‘bring or keep others down’, dwarfs their political programmes and ideologically represent them as anti-democratic. This is reinforced by the claim that her government will, indeed, return power to the people unlike past governments which are afraid to empower the electorate. Like BD, KR asserts that she does not back down in the face of difficulty. She reiterates this by an imperative ‘no!’ for emphasis. This is to present herself as a strong-willed personality who does not yield to undue pressure. From her linguistic trends, AD constructs self-representation of an enforcer/avenger. She vows to upturn a number of legislations made by her predecessors including the legislation on national language. The desire to legislate against English as the official language may be as a result of the backlash that Donkor’s political ambition has suffered due to her lack of formal education and inability to speak English. This may also be the reason why she plans to ‘dissolve’ the Ghana parliament, plausibly, because the parliament is responsible for formulating the policies that Donkor considers unfavourable.

Conclusion

This study has examined how GFPCs utilise their computer-mediated political communication for self-presentation and ideological nuancing. The study appropriates perspectives from Jones and Pittman’s (1982) self-presentation theory and Fairclough’s (1995) CDA to describe, interpret and explain the manifestations of self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation and supplication as the recurring strategies used by GFPCs. The findings show that the female presidential candidates use self-promotion strategy the most to

validate their presence and present their accomplishments for public validation. This strategy, as well as exemplification, helps them to assert themselves, by using the personal pronoun 'I', and to portray themselves as examples worthy of followership. They deploy ingratiation to show solidarity as well as express their commitment to live up to expectation. GFPCs use supplication to appeal to gender sentiments in order to garner public support for their political ambition. They also use intimidation, though sparingly, to portray themselves as strong-willed. Thus, GFPCs deploy the five self-presentation strategies to express their political (gender) ideologies as well as to project themselves as significant participants within Ghana's political space, against the backdrop of sociocultural realities. Although the digital/internet media allows the GFPCs to project themselves better than the traditional media, they are conscious of traditional patriarchal stereotypes in their bid to promote themselves, hence their low patronage of intimidation, as a self-presentation strategy.

This study does not explore the suitability or otherwise of the GFPCs for the post they contested for but sheds light on how the internet/digital media enables them to construct themselves as active participants in Ghana's democracy. Regardless, it is arguable that the inability of some of the GFPCs, e. g. Akua Donkor, to establish a formidable political presence on the digital media may indicate inadequate preparation for the socio-political realities in Ghana, considering the roles that the internet media now plays in shaping political cultures in both advanced and emerging democracies. Moreover, the English language is largely perceived as the language of politics, globally (Xhemaili, 2022)⁴⁹. Hence, inability to effectively communicate in the English language may mean inadequate preparation to take a frontline position on the Ghanaian political stage. It is unlikely that political texts constructed in indigenous languages will receive a wide acceptance, especially when the translated versions of such texts are not immediately available/accessible. [Digital] illiteracy on the part of some of the GFPCs may be one of the factors responsible for the 'lack of dynamism' claim made by the Ghanaian President while describing the political character of female politicians in Ghana. It may also be one of the reasons why female presidency is considered unripe.

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