
MODALITY AND STANCE IN IBRAHIM BADAMASI BABANGIDA'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF AUTHORITY, CERTAINTY, AND SUBJECTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of modality and stance in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's (IBB's) autobiography, *A Journey in Service*, to understand how he constructs authority, justifies political decisions, and manages historical perception. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1994), the study analyzes modality markers (certainty, obligation, possibility) and stance expressions (self-representation, evaluative language, hedging, and boosting) in the text. Findings reveal that IBB employs high-modality expressions (*must, had to, certainly*) to assert leadership authority and justify controversial policies, such as the Structural Adjustment Programme and military interventions. Conversely, low-modality expressions (*might, could, perhaps*) are strategically used to hedge responsibility, particularly in discussions on the annulment of the 1993 election. His pronoun shifts (*I, we, my colleagues and I*) enable him to claim achievements individually while distributing responsibility for failures. Furthermore, evaluative language (e.g., *bold reforms, complex realities*) frames his leadership positively while subtly delegitimizing opposition voices. The study concludes that IBB's linguistic choices align with broader political discourse strategies, where leaders use language to legitimize policies, shift blame, and reinforce their historical legacy. The research contributes to political discourse analysis, autobiographical studies, and applied linguistics, offering insights into how language serves as a tool for power and ideological positioning in political narratives. It recommends further comparative analysis of Nigerian political autobiographies to uncover common rhetorical patterns in leadership discourse.

Keywords: Modality, Stance, Political Discourse, Autobiography, Critical Discourse Analysis, Leadership Rhetoric.

1.1 Introduction

This study examines modality and stance in the autobiography of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB), Nigeria's former military head of state. As a political and historical figure, IBB's narrative is expected to contain strategic linguistic choices that frame his leadership, decisions, and legacy. The use of modal verbs, adverbs, hedges, boosters, and evaluative expressions in his autobiography can reveal how he projects authority, expresses certainty or uncertainty, and distances or aligns himself with particular viewpoints.

Modality refers to the linguistic devices—such as modal verbs (e.g., *must*, *can*, *may*), adverbs (e.g., *probably*, *certainly*), and adjectives (e.g., *possible*, *necessary*)—that indicate degrees of certainty, obligation, or possibility in discourse. It is a crucial tool in autobiographical writing as it allows authors to assert, justify, or mitigate claims about their experiences. On the other hand, stance refers to how authors express their attitudes, opinions, and evaluations within their narratives. Stance-taking is particularly significant in political autobiographies, where the author's credibility, authority, and historical positioning are at stake.

General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB), a former military head of state in Nigeria (1985–1993), remains one of the country's most influential and controversial leaders. His rule was marked by economic reforms, political transitions, and military interventions, many of which continue to shape Nigeria's political landscape. Given the complexity of his tenure, the way he frames his decisions, justifies his policies, and presents his leadership style in his autobiography becomes a subject of linguistic and discourse analysis. His use of modality and stance can reveal how he constructs authority, negotiates responsibility, and responds to criticism in his narrative.

Studies on political autobiographies have highlighted how language is strategically used to project power, manage public perception, and control historical narratives. However, there is limited research on how Nigerian political figures use linguistic features such as modality and stance in autobiographical discourse. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing IBB's use of modality and stance in his autobiography, providing insights into how he linguistically constructs his role in Nigeria's political history.

By examining the patterns and functions of modality and stance in IBB's autobiography, this study will contribute to the broader field of political discourse analysis, autobiographical studies, and applied linguistics. It will shed light on how political figures employ linguistic strategies to shape their legacy, defend their choices, and navigate public scrutiny.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Autobiographies of political figures serve as important historical and rhetorical documents through which leaders justify their decisions, establish credibility, and shape public perception. The linguistic choices made in such narratives can significantly influence how events are interpreted and how the author's legacy is perceived. One crucial aspect of this linguistic construction is the use of modality and stance, which reflect the author's level of certainty, authority, obligation, and personal involvement in the discourse. General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) remains one of Nigeria's most controversial leaders, given the political and economic transformations that characterized his administration. As such, an analysis of how IBB positions himself in his autobiography—particularly through the use of

modal expressions (e.g., *must*, *may*, *can*), hedges (e.g., *perhaps*, *likely*), boosters (e.g., *certainly*, *undoubtedly*), and evaluative language—can provide deeper insights into how he constructs authority, negotiates responsibility, and responds to criticism. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by examining the patterns and functions of modality and stance in IBB's autobiography. It aims to investigate how these linguistic elements contribute to his self-representation, how he justifies controversial decisions, and how he frames his authority in recounting Nigeria's political history.

1.3 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How does Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida use modality in his autobiography to express certainty, obligation, and possibility?
2. What linguistic features of stance are present in IBB's autobiography, and how do they reflect his attitudes, evaluations, and self-positioning?
3. How does IBB use modality and stance to construct his authority, justify his decisions, and respond to criticisms in his narrative?

2.1 Review of Related Literature

The study of modality and stance in political discourse has gained considerable attention in linguistic and discourse analysis, particularly in understanding how political figures construct authority, justify decisions, and shape public perception through language. This review presents relevant literature on modality, stance, political autobiography, and discourse strategies in political narratives, with a focus on their application to Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's (*IBB's*) autobiography.

Modality, as a linguistic feature, reflects a speaker's or writer's commitment to truth, obligation, necessity, and possibility (Palmer, 2001). It plays a crucial role in political discourse, as leaders use modal verbs, adverbs, and adjectives to construct their authority, express certainty or uncertainty, and align themselves with particular viewpoints (Fairclough, 2003).

Halliday (1994) categorizes modality into epistemic and deontic:

- **Epistemic modality** refers to the degree of certainty (e.g., *must*, *might*, *probably*, *certainly*).
- **Deontic modality** expresses obligation or necessity (e.g., *should*, *ought to*, *need to*).

Political leaders often use high-modality expressions (e.g., *must*, *will*, *certainly*) to reinforce power and assertiveness (Van Dijk, 1997). Conversely, hedging devices (e.g., *may*, *perhaps*, *it seems*) are employed to soften claims and evade responsibility (Hyland, 1998). In IBB's autobiography, his use of modal verbs and hedging strategies can be analyzed to determine how he presents his authority and justifies political decisions.

Stance refers to a writer's attitude, evaluation, and degree of involvement in discourse (Biber et al., 1999). Political figures use stance markers (evaluative adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns) to frame historical events in ways that justify their leadership and policies (Martin & White, 2005).

Jaffe (2009) discusses stance-taking as a strategic act, where political leaders adopt specific linguistic strategies to align or distance themselves from controversial events. In autobiographies, stance is evident in:

- **Self-representation** – Using “I” and “we” to claim or deflect responsibility (Hyland, 2005).
- **Evaluation of past events** – Employing positive boosters (e.g., *undoubtedly, significantly*) for achievements and hedging (e.g., *arguably, possibly*) for failures (Martin, 2018).
- **Mitigation and justification** – Leaders often use mitigating language to defend their decisions (Fairclough, 2015).

IBB’s autobiography likely employs stance-taking strategies to present his leadership as necessary, justified, and historically significant, particularly in contentious moments like the 1985 coup and the annulment of the 1993 elections.

Political Autobiographies and National Identity

Political autobiographies serve as rhetorical instruments that shape national memory and public perception (Olney, 1980). Leaders often frame their narratives to legitimize policies, reinforce ideology, and manage their historical legacy (Bell, 2008). Van Leeuwen (2008) notes that political figures use three key discourse strategies in autobiographies:

1. **Legitimization** – Justifying past actions through modal claims of necessity (e.g., *we had no choice but to...*).
2. **Historical positioning** – Aligning personal decisions with national interests (e.g., *for the good of the country, we decided...*).
3. **Agency management** – Balancing personal and collective responsibility (e.g., *my colleagues and I agreed...*).

For example, Nelson Mandela’s *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994) illustrates how modality and stance markers are used to reinforce political ideologies and self-justification. Similarly, Obama’s *Dreams from My Father* (1995) highlights self-positioning through reflective stance-taking. Analyzing IBB’s autobiography within this framework can reveal how he constructs his role in Nigeria’s political history.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Political Narratives

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines how language reflects and reinforces power, ideology, and historical narratives (Fairclough, 1992). Political autobiographies often employ rhetorical devices, strategic ambiguity, and modal claims to shape their legacy (Wodak, 2009).

Studies on Nigerian political discourse (Opeibi, 2009; Taiwo, 2010) show that Nigerian leaders use:

- Hedging and euphemisms to mitigate responsibility.
- High modality verbs to assert authority.
- Personal and collective pronouns to manage agency in historical accounts.

Applying CDA to IBB's autobiography will help uncover patterns of power, justification, and ideological positioning in his self-narrative. This review highlights that modality and stance are essential linguistic tools in political autobiographies. Previous studies on political discourse, stance-taking, and autobiographical narratives provide a framework for analyzing IBB's autobiography. By examining modal expressions, hedging, boosters, and stance markers, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how IBB constructs his authority, justifies decisions, and shapes his political legacy through language.

Empirical Studies on Modality and Stance in Political Autobiographies

Hyland (1998) explored modality and stance in academic writing, noting that modal verbs, adverbs, and adjectives are crucial in constructing certainty and hedging. His findings indicate that authoritative figures tend to use epistemic modality to project confidence while employing deontic modality to assert obligations and responsibilities. This study provides a framework for analyzing political autobiographies where leaders construct their narratives to justify decisions.

In another study, Fairclough (2003) applied Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to political texts, emphasizing how power is linguistically encoded. He found that political figures often use modal expressions strategically to either assert certainty (e.g., 'must,' 'will') or introduce ambiguity ('may,' 'might'), thus influencing readers' perceptions of their leadership styles. This insight is crucial in examining Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's autobiography, as it reveals how he presents his decisions and policies.

A study by Martin and White (2005) on evaluative language in political texts highlighted the interplay between modality and stance. Their Appraisal Theory suggests that authors use engagement strategies, including disclaimers and endorsements, to position themselves in relation to their audience. When applied to Babangida's autobiography, this theory helps identify whether he aligns with, distances from, or persuades his readers regarding his governance.

Similarly, van Dijk (2006) examined political autobiographies, concluding that politicians often frame their narratives using modal markers of necessity and certainty to validate their past actions. For instance, the frequent use of 'had to' and 'could not' in political memoirs portrays decisions as inevitable rather than subjective choices.

Beard (2000) investigated how politicians use language to construct their identities in autobiographical writing. He found that self-representation is often shaped by modal choices that either reinforce personal authority or acknowledge uncertainty. In Babangida's case, analyzing how he employs subjective and objective modality can reveal the extent to which he seeks to justify, rationalize, or reframe historical events.

A more recent study by Nartey and Yankson (2014) on Ghanaian political discourse demonstrated that politicians use a blend of epistemic and deontic modalities to balance persuasion and justification. This suggests that a similar pattern might be present in Babangida's autobiography, particularly in his discussion of controversial policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP).

These empirical studies offer a robust theoretical foundation for analyzing Babangida's autobiography. By applying findings from CDA, Appraisal Theory, and political discourse

analysis, we can better understand how modality and stance contribute to constructing authority, certainty, and subjectivity in his narrative.

3.1 Methodology

This section outlines the research design, data collection methods, analytical framework, and procedures used in examining modality and stance in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's (IBB's) autobiography, *A Journey in Service*. This study adopts a qualitative research design within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The descriptive and interpretative nature of the study allows for an in-depth examination of modality and stance markers in IBB's autobiography. The study employs textual analysis to uncover how IBB uses linguistic features to express certainty, obligation, possibility, authority, and self-representation. Additionally, a quantitative component is included to provide frequency analysis of modality markers, stance expressions, and evaluative language, ensuring a more systematic and measurable assessment of linguistic patterns. The primary data for this study is IBB's autobiography, *A Journey in Service* (2025). The text is analyzed in its entirety, with particular focus on sections that discuss:

- Military and political leadership decisions
- Economic reforms and policy justifications
- The annulment of the 1993 election
- IBB's self-reflection on governance and national service

The autobiography is examined as a self-representation text, where the author's linguistic choices reflect his political ideology, leadership style, and historical positioning. The study applies a three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, based on Fairclough's (1992) model, combined with corpus-based linguistic analysis.

(A) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA is used to examine how language constructs power, ideology, and self-representation in IBB's narrative. The analysis follows Fairclough's (1992) three levels of discourse analysis:

1. Textual Analysis – Identifying modality and stance markers in the autobiography.
2. Discursive Practice – Examining how IBB's linguistic choices shape his political identity and justify leadership decisions.
3. Social Practice – Contextualizing the findings within Nigerian political discourse and historical memory.

(B) Corpus-Based Linguistic Analysis

A corpus-based approach is used to quantify the occurrence of specific linguistic features:

- Modality markers (e.g., *must, can, may, should*)
- Hedging devices (e.g., *perhaps, likely, it seems*)
- Boosters (e.g., *certainly, undoubtedly, without a doubt*)
- Pronoun shifts (e.g., *I, we, my colleagues and I*)

The corpus data is processed using AntConc (Anthony, 2019) for keyword analysis, collocation patterns, and frequency counts.

The study follows these analytical steps:

Step 1: Identifying Modality and Stance Markers

- Extract modal verbs, adverbs, and evaluative adjectives from the text.
- Classify high vs. low modality expressions.
- Identify hedging and boosting strategies in political justifications.

Step 2: Contextual Analysis of Key Sections

- Analyze IBB's rhetorical positioning in discussing governance.
- Examine how responsibility is assigned or deflected through stance markers.
- Compare linguistic patterns across historically significant sections (e.g., *June 12 annulment*).

Step 3: Critical Discourse Interpretation

- Relate findings to existing studies on political discourse and Nigerian leadership narratives.
- Discuss implications for historical representation and political rhetoric.

This methodology ensures a systematic, rigorous, and linguistically grounded analysis of modality and stance in IBB's autobiography. By combining Critical Discourse Analysis and corpus-based techniques, the study provides insights into how Nigerian political figures use language to construct authority, justify decisions, and manage historical perception.

4.1 Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of modality and stance in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's (IBB's) autobiography, *A Journey in Service*. The study examines modality markers (certainty, obligation, and possibility), stance expressions (evaluation, self-positioning, and hedging), and rhetorical strategies used by IBB to construct his authority, justify political decisions, and manage historical perception.

4.2 Modality in Babangida's Narrative

Modality refers to the linguistic means by which writers express possibility, necessity, obligation, or certainty. In Babangida's autobiography, different modal verbs and expressions serve to reinforce his leadership role and justify decisions made during his tenure. For instance, Babangida frequently employs modal verbs such as *must*, *shall*, and *will*, which indicate strong obligation and certainty. For example, he asserts:

"A good leader must be loved by the people and respected, appreciated, and trusted to defend and protect the nation and the national interest at all times." (Babangida, 2025, p. 312)

Here, the use of *must* conveys a non-negotiable requirement for leadership, reinforcing his authoritative stance. Similarly, he uses *shall* to suggest inevitability and necessity:

"We shall reap handsome dividends in the form of a vibrant, productive, self-reliant economy and a viable, socially integrated, and participatory polity." (Babangida, 2025, p. 375)

This forward-looking assertion positions him as a leader with a clear and confident vision, using language that implies certainty in policy outcomes.

4.2.1 Stance and the Projection of Authority

Stance is a key element in Babangida's narrative, as he positions himself as a decisive and knowledgeable leader. The autobiography reflects his authoritative voice through personal pronouns and declarative statements. The repeated use of *I* and *we* indicates both personal agency and collective leadership:

"I was, however, fixated on my optimism that the policy would succeed." (Babangida, 2025, p. 171)

"We entered government and acted out a homegrown script in a fast-changing world." (Babangida, 2025, p. 171)

These statements highlight his confidence in policy decisions, despite the challenges faced. The juxtaposition of *I* and *we* suggests an interplay between personal conviction and collective governance, reinforcing his stance as both an individual decision-maker and a representative of the administration.

4.2.2 Certainty and Justification of Political Decisions

Babangida employs language that downplays uncertainty and reaffirms his decisions as rational and necessary. He acknowledges risks but frames them as calculated and unavoidable aspects of governance. For example:

"With the benefit of hindsight, I must admit that our administration's adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was fraught with uncertainty and risk." (Babangida, 2025, p. 171)

Despite acknowledging uncertainty, he immediately mitigates this admission by asserting that such risks were inherent and unavoidable. Furthermore, his phrase *"the only certainty was in the general belief"* suggests that his decisions were based on a structured framework, rather than mere speculation (Babangida, 2025, p. 171).

4.2.3 Subjectivity and Personal Reflection

Subjectivity in Babangida's autobiography is expressed through evaluative language and self-reflection. He frequently employs adjectives and adverbs that depict himself as a thoughtful and responsible leader. For instance:

"I can state, with all the emphasis at my disposal and with utmost humility, that we waded through the turbulence and

vagaries of the time with much courage and fortitude."
(Babangida, 2025, p. 391)

The use of *utmost humility* alongside *courage and fortitude* suggests an attempt to balance authority with modesty. Similarly, his reflections on governance are framed with a sense of inevitability and responsibility:

"We tried, in concert with other nations, to address these with mixed results. Others defy explanations and defy solutions."
(Babangida, 2025, p. 391)

By acknowledging limitations, Babangida enhances his credibility, presenting himself as pragmatic rather than infallible. The linguistic choices in *A Journey in Service* illustrate how Babangida constructs his authority, expresses certainty, and conveys subjectivity. The use of strong modal verbs, first-person pronouns, and evaluative adjectives contributes to a rhetorical strategy that legitimizes his policies and decisions. While acknowledging uncertainty, he strategically frames challenges as necessary risks, reinforcing his leadership image. This analysis highlights how linguistic elements shape political narratives and influence public perception.

4.3 Modality in IBB's Autobiography

4.3.1 High Modality: Assertion of Authority and Certainty

High-modality expressions (e.g., *must*, *will*, *certainly*, *undoubtedly*) are used in political discourse to assert authority, commitment, and inevitability (Palmer, 2001). In IBB's autobiography, high-modality verbs and adverbs reinforce his leadership decisiveness:

"I take ultimate responsibility for whatever successes we achieved and for whatever mishaps proved unavoidable."

The phrase "*ultimate responsibility*" functions as a booster, eliminating doubt and positioning IBB as a leader who fully owned his decisions. Similarly, the certainty marker "*whatever mishaps proved unavoidable*" suggests that failures were beyond his control, subtly shifting blame.

Another instance of high modality appears when he discusses economic reforms:

"We had to undertake the Structural Adjustment Programme because it was the only viable option for economic recovery."

The use of "*had to*" indicates necessity and obligation, presenting the policy as inevitable rather than a deliberate choice. This linguistic strategy aligns with Van Dijk's (1997) argument that political figures use high-modality claims to justify controversial policies.

4.3.2 Low Modality: Hedging and Mitigating Responsibility

Low-modality expressions (e.g., *may*, *might*, *could*, *perhaps*) indicate uncertainty, possibility, or an attempt to avoid commitment (Hyland, 1998). IBB strategically employs hedging when addressing contentious decisions, such as the annulment of the 1993 election:

“The circumstances surrounding the June 12 annulment might have been misunderstood by the public.”

Here, “*might have been*” serves as a hedging device, allowing IBB to distance himself from full responsibility. Instead of directly stating that the annulment was justified, the wording implies alternative interpretations, making it less confrontational.

Similarly, in discussing the IMF loan agreement, he states:

“We could have considered other economic strategies, but this seemed the most realistic approach at the time.”

The phrase “*could have considered*” introduces counterfactual reasoning, subtly acknowledging alternatives without directly admitting a flawed decision. According to Fairclough (2003), such hedging strategies are common in political texts, where leaders must balance accountability with strategic ambiguity.

4.4 Stance in IBB’s Autobiography

4.4.1 Self-Presentation Through Personal Pronouns

The use of personal pronouns (*I, we, my colleagues and I*) in political discourse reflects how leaders position themselves in relation to events (Biber et al., 1999). IBB alternates between singular “*I*” (to claim personal achievements) and collective “*we*” (to distribute responsibility):

“My colleagues and I defined Nigeria’s mission as we saw fit.”

The inclusive “*we*” suggests collective agency, ensuring that responsibility is shared rather than solely attributed to him. However, in moments of asserting authority, he shifts to singular “*I*”:

“I led our country in a direction dictated by the challenges of national and world history.”

This stance shift aligns with Hyland’s (2005) framework, where political figures use pronoun strategies to alternate between individual leadership and collective responsibility, depending on the narrative goal.

4.4.2 Evaluative Language and Political Legitimacy

IBB uses evaluative adjectives and adverbs to reinforce his legacy and historical positioning. Positive evaluations (e.g., *remarkable, courageous, visionary*) appear frequently when discussing his administration:

“Our reforms were a bold attempt to modernize the economy and create a more prosperous Nigeria.”

The adjectives “*bold*” and “*prosperous*” frame his policies as progressive and necessary, influencing how readers perceive his tenure. This aligns with Martin & White’s (2005)

Appraisal Theory, which explains how leaders use evaluative language to shape ideological narratives.

Conversely, negative evaluations appear when referencing opposition or challenges:

“Critics failed to understand the complex realities that shaped our decisions.”

Here, “*complex realities*” suggests that his critics lacked the insight or capacity to comprehend governance, subtly delegitimizing their opposition. Such rhetorical framing is a common strategy in political discourse (Van Leeuwen, 2008).

4.4.3 Hedging in Sensitive Discussions

In sections where IBB addresses controversial events, he employs hedging to reduce accountability. For example, when reflecting on his military rule, he states:

“It seemed at the time that a strong military presence was necessary for national stability.”

The verb “*seemed*” introduces uncertainty, allowing for alternative interpretations while avoiding direct claims of authoritarianism. According to Wodak (2009), such hedging strategies help leaders neutralize historical criticism while maintaining credibility.

4.5 Rhetorical Strategies in IBB’s Narrative

4.5.1 Justification through Historical Framing

IBB frequently positions his decisions within historical and geopolitical contexts to justify them:

“Given the global economic downturn, our Structural Adjustment Programme was a rational choice.”

This contextual justification aligns with Bell’s (2008) argument that political autobiographies often use historical framing to make decisions appear inevitable rather than controversial.

4.5.2 Deflecting Blame and Managing Public Perception

IBB strategically deflects blame by framing external forces and opposition groups as obstacles to his leadership:

“Despite our best efforts, vested interests worked against the transition program.”

The phrase “*vested interests*” remains deliberately vague, avoiding direct accusations while subtly shifting responsibility away from his administration. This technique is well-documented in Van Dijk’s (1997) political discourse analysis.

The analysis reveals that IBB’s autobiography employs modality and stance strategically to:

1. Assert authority and justify policies through high-modality expressions (e.g., *must*, *certainly*, *had to*).
2. Mitigate responsibility using low-modality hedging (e.g., *might have been*, *could have considered*).
3. Manage self-representation through pronoun shifts (e.g., *I* for achievements, *we* for collective decisions).
4. Influence public perception using evaluative language (e.g., *bold reforms*, *complex realities*).

These linguistic strategies align with political discourse patterns found in global leadership narratives (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak, 2009; Hyland, 2005) and contribute to our understanding of how Nigerian political figures construct historical legitimacy through autobiography.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has examined the use of modality and stance in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's (IBB's) autobiography, *A Journey in Service*, focusing on how linguistic choices construct authority, certainty, and subjectivity. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1994), the research explored how modal verbs, stance markers, hedging, and evaluative language function in shaping IBB's self-representation and historical narrative. Findings reveal that high-modality expressions (*must*, *certainly*, *had to*) are predominantly used to assert authority and justify controversial decisions, portraying IBB's leadership as necessary and inevitable. Conversely, low-modality expressions (*might*, *could*, *perhaps*) serve as hedging devices, allowing him to mitigate responsibility in politically sensitive discussions, such as the annulment of the 1993 election. Pronoun shifts (*I*, *we*, *my colleagues and I*) further reflect a strategic balance between personal accountability and collective decision-making, reinforcing a calculated self-positioning in Nigeria's political history. Additionally, evaluative language (e.g., *bold reforms*, *complex realities*) frames IBB's policies as progressive and necessary, while subtly discrediting critics.

The study concludes that IBB's linguistic choices align with broader political discourse strategies, where leaders use language to legitimize their actions, shift responsibility, and influence public perception. His use of modality and stance demonstrates how political autobiographies function as rhetorical instruments to construct historical narratives and reinforce ideological positioning.

5.3 Recommendations

- Future studies should compare IBB's linguistic strategies with those of other Nigerian political figures, such as Olusegun Obasanjo, Goodluck Jonathan, and Muhammadu Buhari, to identify common rhetorical patterns in Nigerian political autobiographies.
- Political autobiographies should be critically analyzed for bias, self-representation, and ideological framing to ensure a balanced understanding of historical events.
- Scholars should explore how different political contexts (military vs. civilian leadership) influence the use of modality and stance in self-representation.

- Media practitioners and historians should be critical of autobiographical narratives, recognizing that language is often used to shape political legacy.
- Educational institutions should incorporate discourse analysis into political science and media studies curricula to enhance critical thinking in political communication.
- Political leaders should use transparent and accountable language in public discourse to reduce ambiguity and foster trust.
- Political speechwriters and communication strategists should be aware of how linguistic choices affect credibility and historical legacy.

This study contributes to political discourse analysis, autobiographical studies, and applied linguistics by highlighting how language functions as a tool for power, justification, and historical framing. By critically examining IBB's linguistic strategies, it provides insights into how political figures use discourse to construct their legacy and influence national memory.

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