

**A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE MOTTOS OF SELECTED
DEPARTMENTAL ASSOCIATIONS AT OBAFEMI AWOLOWO
UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE**

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the Degree of Master of Arts (English Language)**

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CERTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

This study identified linguistic features of the mottos of departmental associations in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; described the underlying ideological issues in the mottos, and related the ideological representations to the larger Nigerian university context. This was done with a view to critically analysing the mottos of selected departmental associations in the university.

The study employed both primary and secondary data. The primary data comprised fifty mottos of students' departmental associations at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Fifty mottos were purposively selected for the study in view of their captivating phrases and clauses reflecting various ideological leanings. The data collected were from the associations' notebooks, logos and signposts from different faculties in the university. The secondary data were analysed using Fairclough's textual theory with insights from Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar.

The results showed that phrases and clauses are prominent linguistic features in the departmental mottos. It also revealed that the underlying ideological issues in the mottos centred on national development, service to humanity, preservation of the environment, promotion of religion and culture. The results further showed that the ideological representations in the mottos could be linked to the larger Nigerian university context, and addressed the social inequality, injustice, discrimination, and power relation in the Nigerian society.

The study concluded that the mottos of departmental associations played important roles not only in stimulating people's awareness about the associations but also in enhancing political consciousness and social commitment in the Nigerian society. It also showed that through the knowledge of language, hidden meanings in the mottos can be used to reveal the message of the associations.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Students' associations are not new in the society. They enable the coming together of students with common interests, dedicated to social and organisational activities of the students' community. Students' association is one of the important parts of the university system. Due to large size of membership and differences of interests and career focus, the entire student body in higher institutions is usually broken down into smaller units, based on common identities such as belonging to related academic fields like Sciences, Arts, and Social Sciences, among others. As a result, students automatically belong to departmental and faculty associations. This study takes a look at the language ideologies of departmental mottos at Obafemi Awolowo University from their historical and contextual points of view.

These associations of students having the same interests express their principles, goals or ideas with a brief statement (in form of a sentence, clause or phrase) which is referred to as motto. Motto serves as the maxim that guides students' conducts as members of their various associations; it portrays a unique spirit among them and reflects their ideologies. In addition, students' associations' mottos can reveal the basic reasons behind the establishment of these associations, with linguistic and contextual clues that show the history and tradition of the associations.

Since identifying with students' associations has become a usual practice among students, the mottos of these associations have played important roles not only in stimulating people's awareness about the association, but also in enhancing political consciousness and

social commitment. Therefore, a critical discourse analysis of the mottos of these associations, using Norman Fairclough's textual model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), would add to the existing body of knowledge in language study, and also be of great interest and benefit to the society at large.

Thus, this research briefly introduces the definitions, structures and functions of mottos, and then points out the similarities and differences between mottos and slogans. Also, this study undertakes a critical discourse analysis of the linguistic features deployed in the mottos, eliciting the underlying ideologies in them. It also attempts to check the consistencies of each of these associations with the general aim and objectives of University education in Nigeria.

1.1.1 Students' Associations at Obafemi Awolowo University

Students' associations within the Nigerian university system are no longer new. The associations protect the interest of their members. Run by students elected or appointed into different positions, though, at times, with the supervision of lecturers, students' associations provide platforms for students to relate, participate in extra-academic activities, and build themselves for the future. This helps them to display their leadership and administrative acumen. However, authorities in higher institutions expect the associations' executives to be mature and responsible since they serve as crucial link between the students and the authorities. The students' associations therefore enjoy support from the authorities, lecturers and their alumni.

Mumby (1987) notes that language is a principal means by which institutions create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are. In this effect, language becomes a tool for mediating power relations and also identity construction. This

explains the role of language in the creation of mottos. The language used by the students' associations for creating their mottos form part of the discourse that becomes shared in the institution as a community practice. Language use in associations' mottos helps to identify *self*, and to distinguish *self* from *others*.

Since mottos reveal the guiding principles of human groups, it is a common phenomenon among students' associations. Although mottos of associations are mostly formed by the first set of the executives, pioneer lecturers or influential persons at the earliest periods of the association, there is always room for a change or modification as the need arises. Students' associations use their mottos for a number of purposes, part of which can be: moulding of the associations' image, creation of a sense of belonging, arousing feelings of loyalty and commitment among its members. In addition, mottos can be used as a means of solidarity with academic movements globally. They are means of communication, channels and representation tools, providing political, social and cultural trademark for the societies in which they are used.

Therefore, through a critical consideration of the linguistic paradigmatic and syntagmatic forms employed in the construction of a particular motto, it can be deduced that the message the associations pass across can be understood by others, and can also be used to discover the objectives of the associations, which portray them and distinguish *them* from *us*. Going by this, departmental mottos of Obafemi Awolowo University, for instance, can be said to have reflected self-identification and promotion, as possessing high productivity, superb tendencies, unique skills specialisation, social viability and relevance, among others.

1.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (2014) notes that critical discourse analysis is concerned with how power is exercised through language. He explored the imbrications between language and social

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