

# AN INVESTIGATION OF DEICTIC EXPRESSIONS IN NASIRU AHMED EL-RUFAl'S INTERVIEW ON ARISE TV NEWS

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to explore the use and functions of deictic expressions in interview of the Former Governor of Kaduna State, Nasiru Ahmed El-Rufai, on Arise TV News regarding his ministerial nomination by President Bola Tinubu to understand their role in constructing political narratives and managing public perception as well as shaping political discourse. The objectives set out to identify and classify the deictic expressions employed in El-Rufai's interview and explore the relationship between deictic expressions and the framing of El-Rufai's responses to criticism and controversies. Adopting a qualitative approach, eight of the responses were purposively identified and analysed from the online transcript of the interview on Arise TV News online Newspaper. The study was grounded on Levinson's (1983) pragmatic theory and Critical Discourse Analysis championed by Fairclough (1995) as a complementary method to explore linguistic and socio-political dimensions of the interview. The findings reveal that the dominant use of personal pronouns "I" and "we" are to establish authority as well as solidarity, whereas temporal deixis "now" and "then" served to frame incidents in a politically strategic manner. The study concludes by shedding light on the interplay between language, power, and identity in Nigerian political discourse.

**Key Words:** Deictic Expressions, Language, Interview, ministerial nomination, media Pragmatics, CDA.

## Introduction

The interview of the Former Governor of Kaduna State, Nasiru Ahmed El-Rufa'i, on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025, aired on Arise TV News, provided a comprehensive platform for him to speak about his ministerial nomination by President Bola Tinubu. The interview attracted widespread public and academic interest for its significant political implications and El-Rufai's reputation as a touchy and outspoken political actor.

Language is critical role in influencing political communication, manipulating public understanding, and framing ideological positions. Politicians, in their words and interviews, often adopt linguistic strategies to persuade, assert authority, and connect with their audience. One of the strategies is of deictic expressions, which refers to words and phrases that derive their meaning from the context in which they are used, such as this, that, here, now, we and they. Deixis allows speakers to anchor this Discourse in the temporal, spatial, and social context of their communication, making it a power tool or instrument for political rhetoric. Nasiru Ahmad El-Rufai's use of language, particularly deictic expressions during the interview offers insight into how he framed his responses, aligned himself with certain groups and distanced himself from others. This study seeks to explore the use of deictic expressions in Elrufai's Interview, focusing on how this linguistic element functions to place him within the political landscape, manage his image, and address public concerns about his nomination, by examining the temporal, spatial and social deixis used in the interview.

Interviewing has been studied in a variety of approaches, depending on the area of interest of the researchers. Scholars and linguists have looked at it from different perspectives. From the sociological point of view, sociologists analyse how interviews replicate or challenge power hierarchies such as the dominance of the interviewer or the influence of societal expectations on the interviewee's responses. Psychologists, also view it from 'cognitive Load' in which

interviews, especially high-stakes interviews, impose cognitive demands on the interviewee, who must process questions, recall information, and formulate responses. From the political perspective, politicians looked at it from 'Agenda Setting' in which interviews shape public discourse by underscoring specific topics.

However, linguists view it from the psycholinguistic aspect where cognitive processes such as memory, attention, and perception influence language use in interviews. From anthropological linguistics point of view, scholars like Dell Hyme (1972) explored how speech events including interviews, reflect cultural communication patterns. From Critical Discourse Analysis, linguists, like Van Dijk (1993) explored how interviews can reveal hidden ideologies and power asymmetries via language. This concept has been viewed from other perspectives. The new lens this research brings in addition to knowledge is in viewing how Nigerian politicians, particularly El-Rufai', employ deictic expressions to construct narratives and manage public perception during high-stakes interviews using Pragmatic and Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks.

## **Related Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **The Concept of Deixis**

Deixis is a technical word borrowed from Greek to refer to pointing or indicating. Deixis, according to Yule (1996), as cited in Fareed and Mariam, is a way of pointing through language. To Levinson (1983), the most noticeable way in which the relation between language and context revealed in the structures of languages themselves is through the phenomenon of deixis. Cruse (2006) emphasises that deictic terms constitute a subcategory of definite referring expressions. In addition, the usage of the term differs. Still, most naturally, it refers to pointing to something, and they include pronouns and adverbials such as "I", "you", here, etc. and are to be used chiefly where the context is known to the speaker and the person spoken to. For instance, I flew

over there last week for a quick visit. Last week, I and there was deixis -referencing time, speaker, and place. According to Chapman (2011), deixis refers to a category of expressions whose main purpose is to connect; deixis refers to a category of expressions whose main purpose is to connect the use of language to the context in which they appear. Lo Castro (2012,) as cited in Fareed and Mariam, opines that in English, demonstrative pronouns, and adjectives, first and second personal pronouns, and sometimes place adverbs can be employed through the speaker to point. This means that the speaker and listener share the same context. From the definitions of deixis by different scholars we learnt that:

All the definitions emphasised that deixis is inherently tied to the context of the utterance. This means that deictic expressions lose their meaning without knowledge of the situation. Highlights that deixis is speaker-entered with speaker's location, time, and perspective, serving as a reference point. Deixis also facilitates dynamic interaction between speakers and listeners, adapting meaning to the immediate communicative environment. Deixis also connects abstract linguistic systems with the concrete, situational aspect of reality, showing how language is rooted in human experiences.

### **Types of Deixis**

Levinson (1983), in his seminal work on Pragmatics, classifies deixis into five classifications. These are:

Person Deixis: This according to Levinson, relates to the participants in a conversation, primarily indicated through personal pronouns below:

First Person: This refers to the speaker, using pronouns such as: "I" "we" "me" and "us"

Second Person: Refers to the addressee, using pronouns such as "you" and "your"

Third Person: This pertains to others who are neither the speaker nor the addressee, using pronouns like "he" "she" "they" "him" and "her".

However, Yule (1996) argues that person deixis involves three-part division represented by the pronouns by the pronouns for first person that "I" and "you" refer to are continually altering, as the interactants exchange roles during the talk. It is important to note that with the "we", the speaker can include the addressee with the speaker explicitly in the activity. This is to say that "we" can be inclusive or exclusive, depending on the intended meaning. Lo Castro as cited in Fareed and Mariam (2012), differentiates between inclusive and exclusive "we", where he emphasises the difference these two sentences: Let's go to the library and let's see you next Friday. Briber (2013) adds that in a person deixis, a linguistics expression is utilised to pick out a particular individual in the context who may not have already been linguistically provoked. For instance, the use of I and you.

Spatial/Place Deixis: This according to Levinson (1983), refers to the specification of locations relative to anchorage points in the speech events. This is to say that spatial deixis relates to the spatial location relative to the speaker and addressee. It includes demonstratives and adverbs that indicate proximity or distance such as "This", "that" "here" and "there". But Yule (1996) argues that when considering spatial deixis, it is essential to keep in mind that location from the speaker's point of view can be fixed with mentally and physically. Hence, momentarily away from their home location will habitually continue to use "here" to mean the physically distant home location as if they were still in that location.

Time/Temporal Deixis: This concerns the temporal aspects of an utterance, referencing specific time relative to the moment of speaking. Examples include "now", "then", "today", "yesterday", and verb tenses that indicate time. According to Yule (1996), the use of the

proximal "now" signifies both time coinciding with the speaker's utterance and the time of speaker's voice being heard. Dissimilar to "now", the distal expression applies to both past and future time relative to the speaker's present time as in: November 22nd, 1963, I was in Scotland then, Dinner at 8:30 am on Sunday? Okay I'll see you then.

Discourse/Textual Deixis: According to Levinson (1983), involves references within the discourse, pointing to earlier or forthcoming parts of the text or conversation. Expressions like "In the next session," as mentioned earlier," "this," and "that" are used to navigate the discourse structure.

Social Deixis: This according to Levinson (1983), this reflects the social relationships and relative statuses of the participants in a conversation. It's often expressed via titles, honorifics or specific forms of address that convey social hierarchy or familiarity, such as Mr. Chairman, Mr. President, your highness etc.

### **Language versus Interview**

Language plays a central role in interviews, particularly in the political sphere, where it serves as a powerful instrument for communication, persuasion, and narrative construction. Political interviews are quite different from other forms of interviews or discourse, which allow politicians to present their views, respond to public issues, and persuade public opinion. Scholars have extensively investigated how language functions in interviews to achieve various rhetorical and ideological purposes.

The role of language in interviews is dynamic and context-dependent, shaped by the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. According to Fairclough (1995), interviews are dialogic requiring participants to negotiate meaning and manage power relations through language. He further went ahead to mention the key characteristics of language in interviews. The first one is that it is interactional in nature which involves turn-taking. Here, language is

used to respond, clarify and or challenge statements. The second one is the strategic use of language, which allows the politicians to frame narratives strategically, avoid controversy, or highlight their achievements. The last one is audience targeting which allows the interviewer to craft language with a broader audience in mind, often reflecting the speaker's awareness of public perception.

### **Deictic Expressions in Interviews**

Deictic expressions are context-defendant linguistic elements that anchor language to the speaker, audience, and discourse. Levinson (1983) came up with five categories of deixis –person, spatial, temporal, discourse and social often used in interviews. Deictic expressions in interviews serve to construct identity. This means that, person deixis such as "I" and "we" are used to assert individual authority or create a sense of collective identity. It also helps direct audience interpretation. In other words, discourse deixis like "This" and "that" refer to specific parts of conversation, directing the audience's focus.

Therefore, the role of language in interviews is dynamic and is shaped by the interaction between the interviewer and interview. To Fairclough (1995), interviews are dialogic in nature requiring participants to negotiate meaning and manage power relations through language.

### **Deictic Expressions in Nigerian Politics**

The use of language in Nigerian politics has been a subject of interest to scholars. Scholars such as Adegbija (1995) and Bamgbose (2000) investigate how politicians manipulate linguistic elements to connect with diverse audiences. In the Nigerian political milieu, deixis is often used to navigate the country's multifaceted ethnic, cultural, and political divides. The inclusive "we" may be used to foster national unity, whereas spatial deixis such as "this government" or "that regime" can underscore contrast between administrations. Nasiru Elrufa'i known

for his assertive and sometimes polarising rhetoric, provides a rich case for studying deixis in the context of Nigerian political communication.

Therefore, political discourse relies heavily on deixis to create relationships with the audiences, frame ideological positions and convey authority. This aligns with Chilton's (2004) view that politicians use deixis strategically to ascertain inclusivity or exclusivity, such as using "we" to refer to solidarity or "they" to establish opposition. Cap (2008) expands on this by investigating how spatial deixis (here and there) can underscore proximity or distance, both physically and ideologically, in political rhetoric.

### **Empirical Review**

Many scholarly works employed the tools or elements of deictic expressions, deixis, in political discourse and Nigerian political communication.

To start with, Adebija (1995) examined the Pragmatics of Nigerian political language, identifying strategies such as the use of inclusive "we" to unify diverse audience. He employed Pragmatic theory as his theoretical standpoint. His findings reveal the importance of linguistics choices in navigating Nigeria's multicultural and multi-ethnic landscape. Bambose (2000), explored the speeches of Nigerian leaders, discussing how deixis is employed to frame political narratives. The findings of the study reveal that deixis often reinforces authority and emphasizes ideological contrast between "us" (the government) and "them" (opposition group).

Cap (2008) examined spatial deixis, political speeches, illustrating how terms such as "here" and "there" create ideological boundaries. The study reveals how deixis can evoke proximity or distance, shaping understandings of inclusion or exclusion amongst European political leaders. Wodak (2015), explored the use of deictic expressions in constructing political narratives. The findings reveal that temporal deixis such as "now" and "then" are frequently used to

juxtapose past administration with the current governance. O'keeffe et al. (2011) conducted research on the use of deixis in discourse, highlighting how speakers use person deixis such ("I" and "we" to align themselves with their audiences. The study highlights the strategic use of deixis in creating solidarity or asserting authority.

While there is limited research on deixis in political interviews. In addition to knowledge, this research work intends to fill these gaps. Most of the existing literature on pragmatics and deixis concentrates on general communication rather than political rhetoric in the Nigerian context. This research paper intends to fill this gap by investigating how Nigerian politicians, particularly El-Rufai employ deictic expressions strategically to influence public perception.

Moreover, many Studies on political discourse either concentrate on Pragmatic Analysis (examining meaning in context) or Critical Discourse Analysis (analysing power, ideology, and persuasion. There are inadequate studies combining both approaches to explore how deictic expressions serve linguistic and ideological functions in political communication. This research paper intends to fill this gap by employing both pragmatics and Critical Discourse Analysis to provide more all-encompassing perception of deixis in Nigerian politics.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The suitable theory for this research paper is pragmatic /deixis theory, specifically focusing on deixis championed by Levinson (1983) and supported by Fill More (1997). In addition, a secondary theoretical framework could be Critical Discourse Analysis just to explore the socio-political implications of Nasiru Elrufa'i's use of deictic expressions. The pragmatic /deixis theory examines how meaning is derived from context, which is vital for analysing deictic expressions. Deixis theory is a subset of pragmatics, focusing on words or phrases whose interpretation is context-dependent, such as personal pronouns "I" and "we", spatial terms "here" and "there", temporal markers "now"

and "then". Levinson (1983) classifies deixis into, person, spatial, temporal, social and discourse. This theory is essential for analysing how Elrufai employs deictic expressions to position himself within the political discourse, frame his arguments and respond to his audience. On the other hand, Critical Discourse Analysis was pioneered by Fairclough (1995) and developed by Fill More (2015). It examines how language reflects and shapes power dynamics, ideologies, and social relations. CDA Provides a framework to analyse how Elrufai's use of deictic expressions not only conveys meaning, but also constructs identity, negotiates power relations, and addresses controversies surrounding his ministerial nomination. This theory complements deixis theory by situating the linguistic analysis with the broader socio-political context of Nigerian politics. The justification for employing these theories is that while pragmatics/deixis theory provides the instruments for a linguistic analysis of deictic expressions, CDA situates these linguistic choices within the broader socio-political context, ensuring holistic analysis.

## **Methodology**

The study adopts a qualitative approach with a focus on Discourse Analysis. The qualitative approach is appropriate for examining deictic expressions' contextual meanings and functions in Nasiru El-Rufai's interview. Specifically, the study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis as complementary method to explore the linguistic and socio-political dimensions of the interview. The study sourced its data from primary sources. The data was sourced from the transcript of Nasiru El-Rufai's interview on Arise TV News on the 24th of February 2025. The interview was transcribed and published online by Arise TV News for analysis to ensure accuracy and reliability. Relevant excerpts containing deictic expressions will be extracted for detailed examination. The justification for using qualitative approach in this research paper enables the researcher to analyse implicit meanings,

speaker's intentions, and listener's reception, which cannot be quantified, and the study relies on textual data (transcripts of El-Rufai's interview), which are best examined via qualitative content analysis rather than statistical approach.

The research adopted a purposive sampling technique that allows the researcher to select excerpts from the interview. The focus is on the parts of the interview that contain deictic expressions. These excerpts will be chosen based on their relevance to the research questions. The justification for adopting purposive sampling Technique is that this research paper examined deictic expressions in a specific interview. This entails that only relevant speech data from El-Rufai's interview is necessary.

The method of data analysis suitable for this research paper is pragmatic Analysis. This will be done by using of deictic expressions in the selected excerpt to identify and categorise them based on the types of deictic expressions. Examples are person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, discourse deixis and social deixis based on Levinson's (1983) standpoint. The contextual meanings of these expressions will be examined to understand how they function in constructing El-Rufai's narrative and framing his responses.

Moreover, the socio-political implications of the identified deictic expressions will be explored using Fairclough's (1995) and Wodak (2015) approach to CDA. The analysis will focus on how Deixis reflects power relations, ideological positioning as well as rhetorical strategies employed in El-Rufai's responses.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The data is presented and analysed critically using the extracted interview. The analytical tools employed for this paper are pragmatic and supported by CDA frameworks in Nasiru El-Rufai's interview on Arise TV News on February 24, 2024, regarding his ministerial nomination by President Bola Tinubu.

**Excerpt 1:**

Former Kaduna State Governor El-Rufai says Tinubu, not the National Assembly, rejected him as minister.

The texts employ various types of deictic expressions. Personal deixis such as person deixis. "El-Rufai": Refers to the speaker, positioning him as the subject of the narrative. "Tinubu": Refers to President Bola Tinubu, the individual being addressed as responsible for rejecting El-Rufai. "National Assembly" refers to a third party, specifically the legislative body of Nigeria, contrasting them with Tinubu. "Him": Refers to El-Rufai, identifying him as the object of rejection. Discourse deixis are present in word like "Not": Serves to negate the assumption or claim that the National Assembly was responsible, shifting focus entirely to Tinubu. Social deixis "Minister" indicates a prestigious social role, emphasizing the high stakes involved in the rejection. Lastly, temporal deixis is the rejection that is implicitly situated in a recent timeframe, though no explicit temporal deixis (e.g., "now," "then") is present.

This text identified several rhetorical strategies through deictic expressions. They clarified and reframed El-Rufai as an important person in Tinubu's government plan. By explicitly naming "Tinubu" as the rejecting party and negating the "National Assembly" involvement, El-Rufai reframes the narrative to focus on Tinubu's agency and decisions. Contrast and Responsibility Shifting. The use of "not the National Assembly" creates a sharp contrast, removing blame from one institution and placing it solely on Tinubu. This rhetorical strategy shifts public focus from procedural rejection (by the legislative body) to personal rejection (by Tinubu). The assertion of facts is another rhetorical strategy that can be found in the interview. This means that the directness of the statement projects confidence and authority, positioning El-Rufai as someone who presents clarity amidst potential misinformation.

The text contributes considerably to the perception of deixis by focusing accountability on Tinubu. The person deixis "Tinubu" places direct responsibility for the rejection on the President, potentially influencing the audience to scrutinise Tinubu's motives and decision-making process.

By using the discourse deixis "not", El-Rufai clears the National Assembly of any perceived culpability, directing attention away from procedural processes and toward Tinubu's personal judgment. The deixis "him" and the emphasis on rejection frame El-Rufai as the subject of an adverse decision, potentially evoking public sympathy or sparking discussions about fairness in political appointments.

### **Excerpt 2:**

The former governor of Kaduna State, Nasiru El-Rufai, has debunked reports that he was rejected during his ministerial screening by the National Assembly, and has said it was President Bola Tinubu himself who, for reasons best known to him, changed his mind after publicly begging him to serve as a minister in his administration.

The text utilises several types of deictic expressions. One important deictic expression is person deixis as suggested by the name "Nasiru El-Rufai" which refers to the speaker, identifying him as the central figure in the narrative. "President Bola Tinubu in this context refers to the individual being accused of rejecting El-Rufai, emphasizing his authority and agency in the decision. "Himself" refers to Tinubu, emphasising his involvement in changing the decision. "Him" refers to Tinubu again, anchoring the responsibility for the decision solely on him. "Me" refers to El-Rufai, focusing on his role as the subject of Tinubu's actions. Another deictic expression that can be found is temporal deixis, which can be found in a phrase "Changed his mind". This indicates a shift in decision-making, anchoring the event in the

past. Another deictic expression that can be found is social deixis, evident in "Minister". This deictic expression refers to a high-status role in the administration, highlighting the prestige and significance of the position. "His administration" is another instance of social deixis which refers to Tinubu's government, emphasizing ownership and responsibility. Lastly, discourse deixis can also be identified in a phrase "Publicly begging". This expression refers to a specific past event within the discourse, emphasizing Tinubu's initial insistence.

Generally, the text employs various rhetorical Strategies through deictic is reinforcing agency and responsibility. By using "President Bola Tinubu himself", the statement explicitly emphasizes Tinubu's personal responsibility for the decision, reducing ambiguity. Rhetorical strategies can also be identified in the text by contrasting narratives as in the phrase "debunked reports". This refutes alternative narratives (e.g., rejection by the National Assembly), shifting the blame entirely to Tinubu. The juxtaposition of "publicly begging" and "changed his mind" creates a rhetorical contrast, portraying Tinubu as inconsistent and potentially unreliable. The deixis "me" and "a minister" frame El-Rufai as a willing participant who was unfairly treated, potentially evoking public empathy.

These deictic expressions influence public perception of El-Rufai's responses to controversies surrounding his nomination by reframing responsibility. This means that by attributing the rejection solely to Tinubu ("President Bola Tinubu himself"), the statement shifts focus away from the National Assembly and highlights Tinubu's role, influencing public discourse to scrutinize his motives. The deixis "debunked reports" also positions El-Rufai as a credible figure clarifying the situation, challenging misinformation, and controlling the narrative. They also evoke emotional reactions as evident in the phrases like "publicly begging him to serve" which emphasize Tinubu's prior actions, portraying El-Rufai as someone initially valued but later discarded. This could lead to public sympathy for El-Rufai and criticism

of Tinubu's decision-making. They also create a narrative of Injustice in the mind of a reader as depicted in the text. The temporal deixis ("changed his mind") and social deixis ("minister in his administration") frame El-Rufai as a victim of an unjust and abrupt decision, further influencing public perception to view the situation as unfair.

### Excerpt 3:

I have no issues with Tinubu's administration. People say I'm a critic of the administration. I have never said a word about Tinubu's administration. My comment in a panel on democracy in Nigeria had to do with APC. I've never, since I left office and the president begged me publicly to come and serve in his government—I had my plans, and I told President Tinubu from day one when he asked me to support him, I said I would, but I don't want anything, because politics in Nigeria is always about what I get for giving you support."

The text employs various types of deictic expressions. Person Deixis, which is manifested in the pronoun "I". This is depicted to represent El-Rufai, emphasising his personal perspective, agency, and involvement. Another instance is "Tinubu" and "President Tinubu" which refers to President Bola Tinubu, focusing on his actions and relationship with El-Rufai. "People" is also depicted to represent the general audience or critics, highlighting external perceptions of El-Rufai. Another type of deixis found in the text is temporal deixis, evident in the phrase "Since I left office" This anchors the statement in time, referring to El-Rufai's post-governorship period. "From day one" is another instance used to represent the initial point when Tinubu sought El-Rufai's support. The next type of deixis found in the text is social deixis, evident in the expression "The president". This signifies Tinubu's role and authority in the administration. "APC" here represents the political party, situating the statement within Nigeria's

socio-political context. Lastly, discourse deixis, is illustrated in the statement "My comment". This deictic expression symbolises a previous statement made by El-Rufai, clarifying its context, and addressing misconceptions.

The rhetorical strategies identified through deictic expressions refute and clarify issues. This can be understood through the repeated use of "I have never" serves to deny allegations that E-Rufai criticised Tinubu's administration, distancing himself from such claims. Moreover, by stating "I told President Tinubu from day one...I don't want anything", El-Rufai projects an image of selflessness, contrasting with the common perception of transactional politics in Nigeria. The phrase "the president begged me publicly" reinforces the importance of El-Rufai's role while subtly highlighting Tinubu's dependence on his support. The statement "politics in Nigeria is always about what I get for giving you support" critique transactional politics, positioning El-Rufai as someone who rises above such practices.

The influence of deixis on public perception of El-Rufai's responses to controversies surrounding his nomination is that they shape perceptions of loyalty. This is evident in the use of person deixis ("I") and repeated emphasis on "no issues with Tinubu's administration" portrays El-Rufai as a loyal and non-confrontational figure, countering narratives that label him as a critic. They also highlight non-transactional politics. The deixis "I don't want anything" and the critique of Nigerian politics frame El-Rufai as an altruistic leader, enhancing his public image as principled and above personal gain. They also reinforce credibility and integrity. Temporal deixis ("since I left office", "from day one") creates a timeline of consistent behavior, reinforcing El-Rufai's integrity and commitment to his stated principles. They also clarify misunderstandings. The discourse deixis "my comment in a panel on democracy" serves to redirect public attention to the actual context of his statements, distancing them from criticisms of Tinubu's administration.

**Excerpt 4:**

"I think along the line, either the president changed his mind or something else, because please don't believe the story that the National Assembly had nothing to do with it. The president didn't want me in his cabinet; he changed his mind. Whatever it is, frankly, I don't care, and I told him I moved on. I have not said a word, I have not granted any interview, I have not commented on the government, but it is within my right as a founding member of APC, as one of the 34 people that signed the INEC form that got the party registered, it is within my right to ask why my party is not functioning, and that's all."

The texts use several expressions to describe how President Tinubu changed his mind over Elrufai's ministerial nomination. Person deixis such as "I" is portrayed to refer to El-Rufai, centring the narrative on his experiences, thoughts, and rights. Another instance is "The president" which refers to Bola Tinubu, emphasising his role in changing the decision regarding El-Rufai's cabinet appointment. "Him" in this context refers to Tinubu again, anchoring the discussion around their relationship. The phrase "My party" refers to the APC, aligning El-Rufai with the party and emphasising his stake in its functionality. Temporal deixis, such as "Along the line", represents a past, unnamed moment when Tinubu's decision changed. "I moved on" is a subsequent action in response to the decision. Social deixis is, therefore, evident in "founding member of APC. This establishes El-Rufai's commanding position inside the political party. "Thirty-four people that signed the INEC form", refers to a specific group of individuals, emphasising his initial role in registering the APC. Lastly, discourse deixis as suggested by the expression "The story that the National Assembly had nothing to do with it. This is portrayed as a specific narrative circulating in the public sphere, which El-Rufai disputes.

The text employs several rhetorical strategies through deictic expressions. A central rhetorical strategy is demonstrating indifference, as suggested by the statements like "Whatever it is, frankly, I don't care" and "I moved on", symbolising a sense of detachment, suggesting that El-Rufai is not personally affected by the decision and is focused on broader concerns. It can also be identified through critiquing party functionality. The question "Why is my party not functioning?" shifts the focus from personal grievances to systemic issues within the APC, portraying El-Rufai as concerned with institutional accountability rather than individual conflicts.

Overall, the use of deixis influences public perception by shifting blame and responsibility. This is evident in the statement, "The president didn't want me in his cabinet; he changed his mind". The person deixis shifts full responsibility for the rejection to Tinubu, distancing the National Assembly from any involvement. They also reinforce commitments to APC. This can be understood in the repeated use of "my party" and references to his role in its formation emphasise El-Rufai's dedication to the APC, enhancing his image as a loyal and principled member. They can also be framed as a concerned statesman. The discourse deixis "why is my party not functioning?" portrayed El-Rufai as someone focused on the health of the APC rather than personal setbacks, appealing to party members and the public. In addition, they also help build transparency and detachment. By stating "I moved on" and emphasising his lack of public commentary, El-Rufai portrays himself as someone who avoids unnecessary conflicts, focusing on constructive issues instead.

Excerpt 5: When asked about Tinubu changing his mind on the agreed Ministerial position, as the national assembly has said that he failed to meet the Ministerial criteria based on insecurity issues, El-Rufai said noted, what was the security issue? I had been a governor for eight years in one of the most difficult states in the country, okay? I have been a minister 20 years earlier. I have been in public life for the last 25, 26

years. What's the security issue? Where is the report? Where the ministers are far less qualified, far less experienced, with huge controversies around them that scaled through because the President made a call? So please, leave that aside; I don't want to focus too much on that. The president is a human being, and he is entitled to change his mind and it not an issue. It is a job I don't want in the first place. So, the slightest opportunity I had, the security thing was a good thing for me because it enabled me to say Mr. President, I'm gone, and I went home with my life. Now since then, has anyone released that report?

The above text employed several types of deictic expressions. The primary type of deictic expression used here is person deixis as represented in "I" which refers to El-Rufai, centring the discourse on his personal experiences and decisions. Another reference is the use of "The president" which is portrayed to refer to Bola Tinubu, emphasizing his agency and authority in the decision-making process. "Mr. President", this is direct address to Tinubu, highlighting the formal relationship and deference. "Ministers far less qualified, far less experienced" this is depicted as anonymous individuals, contrasting their circumstances with El-Rufai's qualifications. Temporal Deixis is another type of deixis employed in the text, evident in a phrase "20 years earlier". This type of deixis is represented El-Rufai's tenure as minister, emphasizing his age-old experience. The phrase "The last 25, 26 years" also symbolises his public service career within a specific time frame. "Since then," is another instance which refers to the period after the controversy regarding his nomination. Spatial deixis can be identified in expression like "Home". This indicates a physical and metaphorical retreat from political contention, signalling personal resolution. Discourse Deixis such as "What was the security issue?" represents a specific accusation or narrative being addressed. The phrase "That report" also symbolises an alleged security report that was never made public, casting doubt on its existence or validity.

The text employs various rhetorical strategies through deictic expressions. This can be understood through questioning legitimacy, repeated rhetorical questions ("What was the security issue?", "Where is the report?") challenge the credibility of the accusations against him, framing them as baseless. Another rhetorical strategy is appealing to authority and experience references to his tenure as governor, minister, and public figure ("I have been in public life for 25, 26 years") reinforce his qualifications and position him as an experience leader. They can also be identified by highlighting inconsistencies. By mentioning "ministers far less qualified, far less experienced", El-Rufai contrasts his situation with others who were approved, implicitly questioning the fairness and integrity of the process. By minimizing personal stake, we can also understand a statement like "It is a job I didn't want in the first place" and "I went home with my life" downplay the significance of the rejection, portraying El-Rufai as indifferent and unaffected. They also help shift focus through the phrase "So please, leave that aside, I don't want to focus too much on that" redirects attention away from personal grievances and towards broader questions about fairness and transparency.

The influence of deixis on public perception is that the accusation as evident in discourse deixis ("What was the security issue?", "Where is the report?") creates doubt in the minds of the readers about the validity of the security concerns raised against him, framing them as unsubstantiated and possibly fabricated. They also building credibility as in temporal deixis ("20 years earlier," "the last 25, 26 years") portrays El-Rufai's career within a long timeline of public service, enhancing his credibility and experience. They elicited sympathy as depicted in an express "I went home with my life", El-Rufai portrays himself as someone who has moved on from the controversy, subtly presenting himself as a victim of an unjust process. By critiquing the political system, the comparison with "ministers far less qualified, far

less experienced" critiques the selective and possibly arbitrary nature of the nomination process, shifting the focus to systemic flaws.

**Excerpt 6:**

What's the security issue, what's that. The only reason I'm talking about this is because anytime I make any comment about the party is running or not running - oh, I visit a friend of mine, Tinubu's hacks go on, oh it's because he didn't get a Ministerial Nomination. Guys, I was minister, I was not interested. He appealed to me, begged me and gave me a challenge. What was the challenge? Nobody has sorted out electricity, no president has defeated the electricity mafia, you and I work to defeat it. It was the challenge the made me accept. Now, I had an opportunity to serve my country, and the person that gave me that opportunity, changed his mind, and it's okay. I have moved on with my life.

The text provided employs several deictic expressions. A famous deixis is person deixis, evident in "I" who refers to El-Rufai, centering his experiences and opinions. "He" is another instance which also represents President Tinubu, emphasising his role in offering and later retracting the ministerial position. Furthermore, "You and I" symbolise the audience and collaborators, creating a sense of inclusivity and shared effort. In addition, "Tinubu's hacks" portray individuals allegedly spreading false narratives about El-Rufai's motivations, with a dismissive tone. The second type of deixis is temporal, as illustrated in an expression "Anytime I make any comment" which refers to recurring instances, emphasising the persistence of the accusations. Another expression that illustrates temporal type is "now" which depicts the present statement, emphasising that El-Rufai has moved on. Social deixis, is also manifested in the expression "The electricity mafia" that symbolises a specific group or system of interests obstructing progress in the electricity sector, situating the discussion in Nigeria's socio-

political context. Discourse deixis, such as "What's the security issue? What's that?". These expressions challenge a specific narrative, directing attention to the perceived lack of substantiation. The phrase "The challenge" portrays Tinubu's task of reforming the electricity sector, emphasising its significance and difficulty.

The provided text employs various rhetorical Strategies through deictic expressions. One of the strategies employed is refuting misconceptions, such as the phrase "Guys, I was minister. I was not interested", which directly counters allegations that El-Rufai's criticisms stem from personal grievances, projecting detachment from the ministerial position. Another rhetorical strategy is appealing to shared responsibility. This aligns with the statement, "You and I work to defeat it", El-Rufai fosters a sense of collaboration and shared national responsibility for tackling systemic challenges. Furthermore, highlighting experience and integrity is one of the strategies employed to show his capacity in handling the electricity sector. The reference to his past ministerial role and Tinubu's appeal to him as someone who could address the "electricity mafia" underscores his qualifications and commitment to national service. Personal stakes as exemplified in the phrases like "The person that gave me that opportunity changed his mind", and "it's okay" downplay the personal impact of Tinubu's decision, portraying El-Rufai as magnanimous and focused on more significant issues. In addition, critiquing political discourse is another rhetorical strategy employed. The dismissive reference to "Tinubu's hacks" critiques the tendency of political actors to reduce meaningful critiques to personal grudges, framing El-Rufai's comments as objective and issue-based.

Overall, the deictic expressions contribute to the perception of El-Rufai's responses to controversies surrounding his ministerial nomination by shifting the narrative as exemplified in the discourse deixis "What's the security issue?" and "What's that?" challenges the credibility of the accusations, positioning El-Rufai as a victim of

unfounded Claims. In addition, reinforcing public service ethos is another way that contributes to public perception of El-Rufai's response to controversies as demonstrated in the phrase "the electricity mafia" and his willingness to accept the challenge symbolise El-Rufai as motivated by national interest rather than personal ambition. Framing as objective critique is another way that contributes to the understanding of response to controversies surrounding his nomination. This is illustrated in the expression "The only reason I'm talking about this" frames El-Rufai's comments as issue-focused rather than driven by personal dissatisfaction, enhancing his credibility. Highlighting acceptance and maturity as exemplified in the temporal deixis ("Now", "I have moved on with my life") signals closure, portraying El-Rufai as someone who accepts decision gracefully and avoids unnecessary conflicts.

#### Excerpt 7:

The former governor was then asked if he had responded, "We have met at Baba Akande's birthday anniversary last year, and the president asked me to come and see him. I met him once; we discussed, and you know, let's find ways. I said Mr. President, I don't have a problem. I'm fine, and life is good. He said You know, we still have to find ways to work together, I said I'm waiting. You tell me how we can work together, but I want to assure you as I told you even before the election starts, I am fine. I have a private life which predates politics, and I am pursuing life. Look at me; do I look like I'm stressed? I have put on weight, I sleep better, I don't have to read security reports about bandit attacks here. I'm at peace.

The above excerpt uses different expressions to show that life is treating him well even without ministerial challenge. The most prominent deixis here is person deixis, exemplified in the expression "I" represents El-Rufai, focusing on his interactions, feelings, and state of mind. "The

president" here represents Bola Tinubu, emphasising his role in initiating a potential collaboration. In addition, "You" addresses the audience, inviting their perception of his well-being. Whereas "We" describes El-Rufai and Tinubu, it indicates a collaborative and cordial Relationship. Another type of deixis employed in the interview is temporal, as illustrated in the phrase "Last year". This situates the meeting with Tinubu in a specific time frame, grounding the interaction in the recent past. "Before the election starts" also describes a period when El-Rufai assured Tinubu of his independence and contentment. Spatial deixis is also employed as represented in "Here" to refer to unspecified locations affected by bandit attacks, emphasising the stress El-Rufai previously endured. Social deixis is also manifested in the text as depicted in "Mr. President", which represents respect and formality in addressing Tinubu, reflecting the hierarchical nature of their relationship. "Baba Akande's birthday anniversary" in this context, symbolises social and political event, situating their interaction in a shared communal space. Discourse deixis is also present as exemplified in "Look at me". This directs the audience's attention to his physical state as evidence of his well-being. "As I told you" Refer back to his prior assurances about being content with his private life.

The provided text employs different rhetorical strategies. The primary one is reaffirming contentment. This can be justified in a phrase like "life is good", "I am fine", and "I'm at peace" emphasise El-Rufai's satisfaction with his current life, downplaying any perception of personal grievances. It can also be identified through highlighting independence, which can also be manifested in a statement: "I have a private life which predates politics". El-Rufai underscores his ability to thrive outside of political roles, framing his engagement with Tinubu as voluntary rather than obligatory. Moreover, inviting empathy and observation is also a rhetorical strategy that can be identified through deictic expression, evident in the question "Do I look like I'm stressed?" which engages the audience directly, inviting them to perceive his well-

being as a reflection of his contentment. Acknowledging cordiality is another strategy that can be justified in using "we" and "let's find ways". These represent a sense of mutual respect and potential collaboration, softening any perception of animosity between him and Tinubu. Contrasting past and present references to "bandit attacks here" and "security reports" contrast the stress of his gubernatorial role with his current state of peace, highlighting the benefits of his private life.

The text under analysis contributes to understanding deixis by fostering a positive image. This is justified in the consistent use of deictic expressions to affirm his well-being ("life is good," "I sleep better"), which projects El-Rufai as someone who is thriving and unaffected by political setbacks. It could be understood through reinforcing independence. This can be demonstrated in statements, like "I am pursuing life", and "I have a private life which predates politics", positioning El-Rufai as self-reliant, countering narratives that portray him as overly reliant on political appointments. Promoting a collaborative outlook, as suggested by the discourse deixis ("Let's find ways," "we discussed") portrays El-Rufai as open to collaboration, emphasising his willingness to work with Tinubu despite past disagreements. In addition, humanising leadership challenges is another rhetorical strategy, evident in the expression "The president is a human being". This expression acknowledges Tinubu's right to change his mind, reducing the perception of conflict and emphasising a mature, pragmatic perspective.

### **Discussions of Research Findings**

The study unearthed a predominant use of personal pronouns such as "I" and "we" to establish authority and connection with listeners, alongside temporal deixis ("now" and "then") to frame political narrative strategically. In addition, the strategic use of temporal deixis "now" portrayed an effort to frame the nomination as timely and necessary, aligning with the political narrative of progress promoted by the

government of President Bola Tinubu. The frequent use of spatial deixis "here" symbolised El-Rufai's relationship to local contexts, reinforcing credibility and relatability to his listeners. El-Rufai's use of demonstrative deixis "this" and "that" in the interview was meant to distance himself from past controversies while focusing on future-oriented goal. Moreover, the analysis highlights how deictic expressions serve as an instrument or tool for persuasion, enabling political actors to shift focus between personal accountability and collective responsibility. The persistent use of personal deixis, particularly "I", not only asserted El-Rufai's competence, but also positioned him as a central figure towards national development. By revealing how deictic expressions are employed to negotiate complex political landscape, this study contributes to the growing body of research on the intersection between language, power, and politics in Nigeria.

Nasiru El-Rufai's use of language in the context of this study is analysed to understand how he employed deictic expressions to place himself within the Nigerian socio-political setting. He also adopts deictic expressions to frame his responses to questions regarding his ministerial nomination by President Bola Tinubu. Lastly, he adopts deictic expressions to construct a narrative that impacts his audience while addressing controversies within his political profession. In essence, language in interviews is therefore neutral, but it is strategically employed to achieve rhetorical and political objectives.

## Conclusion

This research paper aimed to explore the use and function of deictic expressions in Nasiru Elrufa'i's Interview to reveal their linguistic and pragmatic significance. The analysis uncovered a dominant use of person deixis such as "I" and "we" to establish authority as well as solidarity, whereas temporal deixis, such as "now" and "then" served to frame incidents in a politically strategic manner. This finding highlights how deictic expressions function not only as linguistic markers but also

as an instrument for persuasion, enabling the speaker to align himself with certain narratives and audiences.

This study contributes to the perception of political discourse in Nigeria, discussing how deictic expressions can influence public understanding, especially during high-stake interviews. This paper focuses on the deictic from two-pronged points of view: Pragmatic and CDA. Given this, future studies should focus on expanding the scope of the research by analysing deictic expressions across larger data set of political interviews. This can help identify consistent patterns in using deixis in Nigerian politics. In addition, it should also focus on comparing the use of Deixis by various political actors to understand the individual rhetorical styles and their influence on public perception.

The study concludes that by revealing the strategic use of deictic expressions, it sheds light on the interplay between language, power, and identity in Nigerian political discourse.

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