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DISCURSIVE AWAKENING AND THE POLITICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: A PRAGMA-DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DELE FAROTIMI'S "DO NOT DIE IN THEIR WAR"

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Abstract

*The Nigerian political landscape has long been characterized by citizen disengagement, elite capture of institutions, and the normalization of systemic corruption. In recent years, public intellectual texts have emerged as counter-discursive interventions aimed at mobilizing civic consciousness. This study examines the discursive effects of Dele Farotimi's political treatise *Do Not Die in Their War* through a pragma-discursive lens. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and pragma-linguistic frameworks, the paper analyses how Farotimi constructs narratives of political awareness, citizen agency, and systemic critique. Anchored in the theoretical contributions of Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, Teun van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to discourse, and Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse, the study investigates selected textual passages to demonstrate how the book functions as a counter-hegemonic discourse that challenges dominant narratives within Nigeria's political culture. The analysis reveals that Farotimi deploys metaphor, rhetorical questioning, intertextual references, and moral positioning to reframe citizenship as an ethical obligation and political engagement as a necessity. The findings suggest that the text serves not merely as political commentary but as a discursive instrument for awakening national consciousness and stimulating public deliberation. The study contributes to scholarship on African political discourse by illustrating how intellectual texts can operate as catalysts for democratic awareness and citizen mobilization within fragile political systems.*

Keywords: discourse analysis, political consciousness, Nigeria, critical discourse analysis, citizenship, Dele Farotimi

Introduction

Across many postcolonial societies, the relationship between citizens and the state remains fraught with tensions rooted in historical legacies of colonial governance, institutional fragility, and elite domination. Nigeria exemplifies such a context where democratic institutions coexist with pervasive political

disillusionment and civic apathy. Within this environment, intellectual interventions frequently serve as platforms for contesting dominant narratives and mobilizing citizens toward greater political engagement.

One such intervention is Dele Farotimi's *Do Not Die in Their War* (2019), a political treatise that critiques Nigeria's governance structures and urges citizens to cultivate political awareness. Farotimi positions the Nigerian state as a system captured by entrenched elites while simultaneously emphasizing the responsibility of citizens to challenge this order. The text therefore represents a discursive attempt to provoke civic awakening. From a discourse perspective, such texts are not merely descriptive accounts of political realities; they are performative acts that shape public understanding and influence political consciousness. As Fairclough (1995) argues, discourse constitutes a form of social practice through which power relations are produced and contested.

Similarly, Habermas (1984) emphasizes the role of communicative rationality in enabling democratic deliberation, while van Dijk (2008) highlights the socio-cognitive processes through which discourse shapes ideological beliefs. This study examines Farotimi's book as a discursive artifact that seeks to reshape the cognitive and ideological orientation of Nigerian citizens. Through a pragma-discourse analysis, the research explores how linguistic strategies within the text construct political consciousness and mobilize readers toward critical engagement with the state.

Specifically, the study addresses three questions:

1. How does Farotimi linguistically construct the Nigerian political system and its actors?
2. What pragma-discursive strategies are used to awaken political consciousness among citizens?
3. How does the text function as a counter-hegemonic discourse within Nigeria's political communication environment?

Literature Review

Political Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines how language reproduces or challenges power relations within society. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse operates simultaneously as text, discursive practice, and social practice. This tripartite model allows scholars to analyze linguistic features, interpret their meaning within communication contexts, and understand their broader societal implications. Van Dijk (2008) extends this perspective by emphasizing the role of discourse in shaping ideological cognition. Political discourse, in this sense, structures how individuals interpret political events, construct group identities, and evaluate authority structures. Within African political contexts, discourse analysis has revealed how language constructs narratives of legitimacy, nationalism, and resistance (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Intellectual texts and activist writings often function as counter-discourses that challenge dominant political ideologies.

Political discourse functions as a key site where ideological struggles, power relations, and civic consciousness are constructed and negotiated. Within the Nigerian sociopolitical context, political language often operates as a mechanism through which elites shape narratives of governance, citizenship, and legitimacy. In *Do Not Die in Their War*, Dele Farotimi deploys political discourse not merely as descriptive commentary but as an intervention aimed at transforming citizens' understanding of political agency and national responsibility. Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the book can be read as a counter-hegemonic text

that seeks to disrupt dominant narratives surrounding Nigerian politics and mobilize a more critically conscious citizenry.

CDA, as articulated by scholars such as Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (1998), and Wodak and Meyer (2016), views discourse as a form of social practice that both reflects and reproduces power relations. Political texts therefore do not simply communicate ideas; they structure how social actors perceive political reality. Farotimi's discourse operates within this framework by exposing what he portrays as the ideological manipulation embedded in Nigerian political rhetoric. His argument foregrounds the notion that citizens are frequently drawn into conflicts, rivalries, and partisan battles that ultimately serve elite interests rather than collective national development.

From a CDA perspective, one of the most striking features of Farotimi's discourse is his use of discursive reframing. Reframing occurs when an author reconstructs familiar political concepts in ways that challenge established interpretations (Lakoff, 2004). In Nigerian political discourse, electoral competition is often framed as a necessary democratic contest. However, Farotimi reframes political rivalry as a struggle among elites that ordinary citizens are encouraged to participate in without meaningful benefit. This reframing is evident in the central metaphor implied by the title itself: citizens are warned not to "die in their war," suggesting that political conflicts are not truly the people's battles but rather elite struggles for power. Such framing aligns with Fairclough's (2003) notion that discourse can transform social relations by redefining the meanings attached to political events. By positioning citizens as potential victims of elite manipulation, Farotimi destabilizes dominant narratives that portray political participation solely as partisan loyalty. Instead, he promotes a discourse of critical citizenship, urging readers to question the motivations behind political mobilization.

Another important discursive strategy in the text is the construction of collective identity. Political discourse often relies on the creation of in-groups and out-groups in order to structure ideological alignment (van Dijk, 2006). Farotimi constructs two primary social actors within the narrative: the political elite and the Nigerian people. The elite are frequently depicted as strategic actors who manipulate political structures for personal gain, while citizens are portrayed as individuals whose political potential has been undermined by misinformation, apathy, or manipulation. This discursive dichotomy is typical of oppositional political rhetoric. However, Farotimi's approach is not purely antagonistic; it also includes a strong pedagogical dimension. His discourse attempts to educate citizens about the structural dynamics of Nigerian politics. In this sense, the book can be understood as what Habermas (1989) describes as a contribution to the public sphere, a communicative space where critical debate can challenge entrenched power structures.

Habermas' theory of communicative action emphasizes the importance of rational-critical debate in democratic societies. According to this perspective, political legitimacy emerges when citizens are able to deliberate freely about public issues (Habermas, 1984). Farotimi's text can be interpreted as an effort to stimulate such deliberation by encouraging readers to critically interrogate political narratives that are often accepted without question. The book therefore operates as a discursive intervention intended to expand the scope of democratic debate. From a pragma-linguistic standpoint, his political discourse also demonstrates extensive use of directive and assertive speech acts. Directive speech acts are

designed to influence the behavior of the audience, while assertive acts present propositions as truths about social reality (Searle, 1969). Throughout the text, he combines these speech acts to both describe and challenge political structures. Assertive statements present critiques of Nigeria's political system, while directives encourage readers to reconsider their role within that system.

The combination of these speech acts strengthens the persuasive force of the discourse. By presenting critiques as factual assertions and coupling them with calls for civic awareness, the author creates a rhetorical structure that moves from diagnosis to prescription. This structure mirrors the argumentative patterns commonly found in political advocacy literature, where identifying systemic problems is followed by appeals for public engagement. A further dimension of the book's political discourse lies in its ideological exposure of elite narratives. Van Dijk (1998) argues that ideology in discourse often becomes visible through patterns of emphasis and omission. Political elites typically highlight narratives that legitimize their authority while suppressing alternative interpretations of events. Farotimi counters this process by foregrounding perspectives that challenge official narratives about governance, corruption, and political conflict.

For instance, the text frequently questions the sincerity of political alliances and electoral campaigns. Through rhetorical questions and evaluative commentary, Farotimi encourages readers to examine the motivations underlying political promises and partisan mobilization. This strategy reflects what Wodak (2009) describes as the discursive deconstruction of political legitimacy, where the author exposes contradictions within dominant political narratives. Additionally, the book employs interdiscursivity, a concept central to Fairclough's model of CDA. Interdiscursivity refers to the mixing of multiple discourse types within a single text (Fairclough, 2003). Farotimi's writing combines elements of political commentary, civic education, historical reflection, and moral exhortation. This blending of discourses enhances the text's persuasive impact by addressing readers not only as political actors but also as moral agents responsible for the future of their nation.

The discursive strategy of moral appeal is particularly significant in the Nigerian context, where political discourse frequently intersects with ethical and communal values. By framing political consciousness as both a civic duty and a moral responsibility, Farotimi situates his argument within broader cultural narratives about justice, accountability, and collective welfare. Such moral framing aligns with the persuasive strategies identified in political rhetoric studies, where ethical appeals are used to strengthen calls for social change (Charteris-Black, 2011). Another notable feature of the discourse is its use of narrative examples to illustrate systemic patterns. Rather than relying solely on abstract analysis, Farotimi often contextualizes his arguments within specific political events or experiences. Narrative discourse serves an important role in CDA because it humanizes structural critiques and makes complex political dynamics more accessible to readers (van Dijk, 2015). Through storytelling, the author demonstrates how individual experiences of governance reflect broader systemic issues within Nigerian politics.

These narrative strategies also contribute to the construction of what van Dijk (2006) describes as mental models, cognitive representations that readers use to interpret political reality. By presenting vivid examples of political manipulation or elite rivalry, the text encourages readers to reinterpret familiar political events through a critical lens. Over time, such reinterpretation can reshape

public perceptions of political legitimacy and citizen agency. Importantly, Farotimi's political discourse does not merely criticize existing structures; it also articulates a vision of political transformation rooted in citizen awareness. The text repeatedly emphasizes the importance of national consciousness, suggesting that meaningful political change requires citizens to recognize their collective power. This emphasis aligns with the normative goals of CDA, which seeks not only to analyze discourse but also to contribute to social emancipation (Fairclough, 2013).

Within this framework, the book can be understood as an example of transformative discourse, a form of communication designed to challenge ideological domination and inspire collective action. By encouraging readers to question political narratives and prioritize national interests over partisan loyalties, Farotimi constructs a discourse of civic empowerment. This discourse aims to reposition citizens from passive spectators of political conflict to active participants in democratic accountability. Furthermore, the text's emphasis on national consciousness resonates with broader debates in African political thought concerning the relationship between citizenship and governance. Scholars such as Mbembe (2001) and Ake (1996) have argued that postcolonial political systems often reproduce hierarchical structures that limit genuine democratic participation. Farotimi's critique echoes these concerns by highlighting how elite competition can overshadow the substantive interests of ordinary citizens.

Through the lens of CDA, therefore, *Do Not Die in Their War* emerges as more than a political commentary. It represents a discursive intervention that challenges dominant ideologies and seeks to reshape the cognitive and moral frameworks through which citizens understand Nigerian politics. By exposing the rhetorical mechanisms that sustain elite power and by promoting critical national consciousness, the text contributes to ongoing conversations about democratic accountability in Nigeria.

In sum, the political discourse within Farotimi's work exemplifies the complex relationship between language, power, and civic identity. Through strategies such as reframing, ideological exposure, narrative illustration, and moral appeal, the author constructs a powerful critique of political manipulation while advocating for a more informed and engaged citizenry. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, the book demonstrates how language can function as both a tool of domination and a catalyst for political awakening.

Political Consciousness and Civic Engagement

Political consciousness refers to the awareness of political structures, power relations, and civic responsibilities within a society. Habermas (1984) argues that democratic societies depend on active public spheres where citizens engage in rational debate about governance. However, in many developing democracies, structural inequalities and media manipulation often limit such engagement. As a result, intellectual interventions become important catalysts for stimulating public debate and encouraging civic participation. Political consciousness is a central element in the development of democratic societies, particularly in contexts where political institutions are often shaped by elite interests and structural inequalities. In Nigeria, the relationship between citizens and political power has historically been mediated through complex networks of patronage, ethnic mobilization, and partisan loyalty. Within this environment, civic engagement frequently occurs without a corresponding level of critical political awareness.

Dele Farotimi's *Do Not Die in Their War* intervenes in this dynamic by constructing a discourse that seeks to awaken political consciousness among citizens and encourage a more reflective form of civic participation. Political consciousness can be broadly understood as the degree to which citizens are aware of political structures, power relations, and their own role within the political system (Freire, 1970). It involves not merely awareness of political events but also a critical understanding of how social, economic, and ideological forces shape political outcomes. From a discourse-analytical perspective, the cultivation of political consciousness often occurs through communicative practices that challenge dominant narratives and expose hidden structures of power (Fairclough, 1995). In *Do Not Die in Their War*, Farotimi's discourse operates as a mechanism for raising such awareness. The central argument of the text suggests that Nigerian citizens frequently become participants in political conflicts that ultimately serve the interests of elite actors rather than the collective good. Through this critique, the author invites readers to reconsider their relationship to political processes and to recognize the structural dynamics that shape political mobilization.

From the standpoint of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this effort can be interpreted as an attempt to disrupt ideological hegemony. According to van Dijk (1998), ideology often functions through discourse to shape how social groups perceive their interests and identities. Political elites may therefore construct narratives that encourage citizens to identify strongly with partisan or ethnic divisions, even when such divisions obscure broader structural inequalities. Farotimi's text challenges these ideological constructions by highlighting the ways in which citizens may be manipulated into supporting political struggles that do not serve their long-term interests. The book's discourse repeatedly emphasizes the need for citizens to develop a national consciousness that transcends narrow political affiliations. National consciousness, in this context, refers to an awareness of shared civic identity and collective responsibility for the development of the state. This emphasis reflects broader debates within African political thought regarding the relationship between citizenship, governance, and national development (Ake, 1996; Mbembe, 2001). Scholars have long argued that democratic stability in postcolonial states requires citizens who are not only politically active but also critically aware of the structural conditions shaping governance.

Habermas's (1984) theory of communicative action provides a useful framework for understanding how political consciousness can emerge through discourse. Habermas argues that democratic legitimacy depends on the existence of a public sphere where citizens can engage in rational-critical debate about political issues. In such a sphere, discourse becomes a tool through which individuals collectively evaluate political authority and hold institutions accountable. Farotimi's text contributes to this process by encouraging readers to question prevailing political narratives. Rather than presenting politics as a domain reserved for elite actors, the book frames political awareness as a civic responsibility. This framing transforms readers from passive observers into potential participants in democratic deliberation. In doing so, the discourse aligns with Habermas's notion that democratic societies depend on informed citizens capable of engaging in critical public dialogue.

Another key dimension of the book's discourse is its focus on civic disengagement as a political problem. Political apathy is often

discussed in terms of voter turnout or participation rates, but Farotimi's argument suggests that disengagement may also stem from a lack of political understanding. When citizens perceive politics as a domain dominated by elite struggles, they may either withdraw from participation or engage in partisan conflicts without recognizing the broader implications of their actions. Through rhetorical critique, the author attempts to reframe civic engagement as a form of collective empowerment. This reframing involves shifting the focus from loyalty to political actors toward loyalty to national ideals such as justice, accountability, and democratic governance. Such discursive strategies resonate with Freire's (1970) concept of conscientization, which refers to the process through which individuals develop a critical awareness of social and political structures and become motivated to transform them.

From a pragma-linguistic perspective, Farotimi's discourse employs several linguistic strategies that reinforce the theme of political consciousness. One such strategy is the use of collective pronouns, particularly forms equivalent to "we" and "our," which construct a shared identity among readers. The use of inclusive deixis positions the author and the audience within the same national community, thereby emphasizing the collective nature of political responsibility. Deictic expressions are significant in discourse analysis because they establish relationships between speakers, audiences, and social contexts (Levinson, 1983). In political discourse, inclusive deixis often functions to mobilize solidarity by reminding audiences that political outcomes affect all members of the community. In the case of Farotimi's text, such linguistic choices reinforce the argument that citizens share a common stake in the political future of Nigeria.

Another pragma-discursive feature of the text is its reliance on modal expressions that convey obligation and necessity. Modal verbs and modal constructions are frequently used to articulate normative claims about political behavior. Expressions implying necessity or duty highlight the urgency of developing political awareness and encourage readers to reconsider their approach to civic participation. In discourse analysis, modality is often associated with the speaker's stance toward the proposition being expressed (Fairclough, 2003). By employing strong modal expressions, Farotimi constructs political consciousness not merely as an optional intellectual exercise but as an ethical and civic obligation. The language of necessity therefore strengthens the persuasive force of the text by framing awareness as a prerequisite for meaningful democratic engagement.

The book also makes strategic use of presupposition, a linguistic phenomenon in which certain assumptions are embedded within statements and treated as given (Levinson, 1983). Presuppositions are powerful tools in political discourse because they shape the interpretive framework through which readers understand political issues. For example, when discourse presupposes that citizens are frequently manipulated by political actors, it encourages readers to evaluate political events through a more skeptical lens. In Farotimi's narrative, such presuppositions subtly guide readers toward recognizing patterns of elite manipulation and structural inequality. By embedding these assumptions within broader arguments, the text gradually constructs a critical perspective on Nigerian politics without relying solely on explicit accusations. This discursive strategy reflects what van Dijk (2006) describes as the cognitive dimension of ideology, where discourse influences how individuals mentally represent social realities.

Civic engagement, as envisioned in the text, therefore emerges not simply from political participation but from informed participation. The distinction between participation and informed participation is crucial for understanding the transformative potential of political consciousness. Citizens who engage politically without critical awareness may inadvertently reinforce existing power structures, whereas those who participate with a deeper understanding of political dynamics are more likely to demand accountability and institutional reform. Within the Nigerian context, this emphasis on informed civic engagement carries significant implications. Political mobilization has historically been shaped by factors such as ethnic identity, regional affiliation, and patronage networks. While these factors remain influential, the emergence of digitally mediated public spheres and civil society movements has begun to create new opportunities for political awareness and citizen activism. Farotimi's discourse can therefore be seen as contributing to an evolving culture of civic critique in Nigeria.

From a CDA perspective, the significance of the text lies in its potential to reshape the ideological foundations of political engagement. By challenging narratives that normalize elite domination, the book encourages readers to adopt a more critical orientation toward political authority. This orientation aligns with the broader emancipatory goals of critical discourse analysis, which seeks to reveal the hidden mechanisms through which power operates in language and society (Fairclough, 2013). Moreover, the discourse highlights the importance of agency in political transformation. Rather than portraying citizens solely as victims of political manipulation, the text emphasizes their capacity to reshape political outcomes through awareness and collective action.

This emphasis on agency reflects a shift from deterministic interpretations of political structures toward a more dynamic understanding of democratic participation. Ultimately, Farotimi's discourse positions political consciousness as the foundation of meaningful civic engagement. Without such consciousness, political participation risks becoming an extension of elite power struggles. With it, however, citizens can begin to challenge existing structures and demand governance that reflects the collective interests of the nation. In this sense, *Do Not Die in Their War* contributes to an emerging body of political literature that seeks to bridge the gap between discourse and democratic practice. By encouraging readers to interrogate political narratives and recognize their role in shaping national destiny, the text promotes a form of civic engagement grounded in critical awareness, collective responsibility, and democratic accountability.

Discursive Activism in African Political Writing

Discursive activism has emerged as an important dimension of African political writing, particularly in contexts where conventional political participation is constrained by structural inequalities, institutional weaknesses, or elite domination. Within such environments, intellectuals, writers, and public commentators often employ discourse as a form of resistance and social intervention. Through language, they challenge dominant political narratives, expose ideological manipulation, and encourage citizens to develop critical awareness of political power structures. In this regard, Dele Farotimi's *Do Not Die in Their War* can be situated within a broader tradition of African discursive activism, where political writing functions not merely as commentary but as a catalyst for civic consciousness and democratic engagement. Discursive activism refers to communicative practices

that intentionally seek to reshape public understanding of social and political realities (Fairclough, 2013). Unlike conventional activism, which may rely primarily on institutional political participation or street mobilization, discursive activism operates through rhetorical strategies, narrative framing, and ideological critique. Its objective is to transform the cognitive frameworks through which audiences interpret political events and power relations. By altering these frameworks, discursive activism can influence both public opinion and patterns of civic engagement.

In African political contexts, discursive activism has historically played a significant role in challenging authoritarianism, colonial domination, and postcolonial political crises. Intellectuals and writers have often used essays, books, journalism, and literary works as platforms for articulating critiques of political power. Such interventions are particularly significant in societies where institutional avenues for political accountability may be limited. Through discourse, writers can create alternative spaces for political debate and public reflection. From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, discursive activism represents an effort to challenge ideological hegemony. Fairclough (1995) argues that discourse both reflects and shapes social power relations, meaning that dominant political groups frequently attempt to control public narratives in order to maintain legitimacy. Discursive activists therefore seek to disrupt these narratives by revealing their ideological foundations and exposing the interests they serve.

Farotimi's text exemplifies this form of intervention. By critiquing the dynamics of Nigerian political competition, the book constructs a discourse that questions the legitimacy of political mobilization strategies often used by elites. The title itself—*Do Not Die in Their War*—functions as a powerful discursive statement that reframes political conflict as an elite struggle in which ordinary citizens are encouraged to participate at their own expense. Through this reframing, the text challenges the assumption that citizens must unquestioningly align themselves with partisan political battles. This discursive strategy aligns with van Dijk's (1998) conception of ideology as a system of socially shared beliefs that shapes how groups perceive political reality. Political elites often employ discourse to encourage citizens to internalize narratives that legitimize existing power structures. By contrast, discursive activists attempt to reveal the contradictions within such narratives and encourage audiences to adopt a more critical perspective.

The power of discursive activism lies partly in its ability to reshape collective cognition. According to van Dijk (2006), discourse influences the mental models through which individuals interpret social events. When political writing presents alternative explanations for political phenomena, it can gradually alter these mental models, thereby influencing how citizens understand governance, authority, and civic responsibility. In Farotimi's work, this cognitive transformation is pursued through a combination of critique and moral appeal. The text repeatedly emphasizes the importance of national consciousness and civic responsibility, encouraging readers to evaluate political events from the standpoint of collective national interest rather than narrow partisan allegiance. Such appeals resonate strongly with traditions of African political thought that emphasize communal responsibility and ethical governance.

Discursive activism in African political writing is also closely connected to the concept of the public sphere. Habermas (1989) describes the public sphere as a domain of social life where

citizens engage in rational-critical debate about issues of common concern. While the idealized public sphere may not always fully exist in practice, political writing can contribute to its development by stimulating critical dialogue and encouraging citizens to question established power structures. Farotimi's text contributes to this process by encouraging readers to engage critically with political narratives that are often accepted uncritically in public discourse. Rather than presenting political elites as unquestioned authorities, the book invites readers to scrutinize their actions and motivations. This invitation reflects the broader goal of discursive activism: to democratize political knowledge and empower citizens to participate more effectively in public debate.

Another important feature of discursive activism is its reliance on rhetorical strategies that provoke reflection and critical engagement. Political writers frequently employ rhetorical questions, metaphors, and narrative examples to challenge audiences' assumptions about political reality. Such strategies are particularly effective because they encourage readers to actively interpret the discourse rather than passively receiving information. The metaphor embedded in Farotimi's title is especially significant in this regard. By describing political conflicts as "their war," the author constructs a symbolic distinction between political elites and ordinary citizens. This metaphor not only critiques elite power struggles but also warns citizens about the potential consequences of uncritical political participation. As Charteris-Black (2011) notes, metaphors in political discourse often serve to simplify complex political realities while simultaneously shaping ideological interpretation.

In addition to metaphoric framing, discursive activism often relies on narrative storytelling to illustrate broader political patterns. Narratives provide concrete examples that make abstract political critiques more accessible to readers. They also enable authors to connect structural political issues with the lived experiences of individuals. Through narrative discourse, writers can demonstrate how large-scale political dynamics affect everyday life. In African political writing, such narrative strategies frequently highlight the gap between political promises and political realities. By exposing these contradictions, discursive activists aim to undermine the credibility of dominant political narratives and encourage citizens to demand greater accountability from their leaders. Farotimi's text reflects this tradition by presenting critiques that reveal the structural dynamics underlying Nigerian political competition.

Discursive activism also intersects with pragma-linguistic strategies that enhance the persuasive impact of political writing. Directive speech acts, for example, can be used to encourage readers to reconsider their political behavior or attitudes. Similarly, evaluative language allows authors to express moral judgments about political actions and institutions. These linguistic choices play a crucial role in shaping the ideological orientation of the discourse. In Farotimi's work, directive language is frequently used to emphasize the importance of political awareness. Statements that encourage readers to question political narratives or to prioritize national interest over partisan loyalty function as subtle calls for civic transformation. Such speech acts contribute to the text's broader objective of promoting informed political participation.

Furthermore, discursive activism in African political writing often carries a strong normative dimension. Rather than merely describing political realities, writers frequently articulate visions of what political systems should look like. These visions may

emphasize values such as accountability, justice, transparency, and democratic participation. By presenting normative ideals alongside critical analysis, discursive activists seek to inspire readers to imagine alternative political futures. In the Nigerian context, this normative dimension is particularly important. The country's political history has been marked by periods of authoritarian rule, corruption scandals, and contested democratic processes. Within this environment, discursive activism provides a platform for articulating aspirations for political reform and institutional transformation.

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, the significance of discursive activism lies in its capacity to expose hidden power relations embedded in language. Fairclough (2013) emphasizes that CDA seeks not only to analyze discourse but also to contribute to social change by revealing how language can reproduce or challenge inequality. Political writing that encourages critical reflection on governance and power therefore plays a vital role in advancing democratic ideals. Farotimi's work exemplifies this transformative potential. By challenging dominant narratives about political loyalty and participation, the text invites readers to reconsider their role in shaping the political future of Nigeria. It emphasizes that citizens must develop political consciousness in order to resist manipulation and demand accountability from political elites.

Ultimately, discursive activism in African political writing represents an important form of intellectual engagement with democratic governance. Through rhetorical critique, ideological exposure, and appeals to civic responsibility, writers can influence how societies understand and respond to political power. Farotimi's *Do Not Die in Their War* contributes to this tradition by offering a discourse that seeks to awaken political awareness and inspire citizens to participate more critically in the democratic process.

In doing so, the text illustrates the broader potential of discourse as a tool for political transformation. Language, when deployed strategically, can challenge entrenched power structures, reshape public consciousness, and open new possibilities for democratic participation. Discursive activism therefore remains a vital component of contemporary African political thought and civic engagement.

Theoretical Framework

This study integrates three complementary theoretical perspectives.

Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas (1984) posits that democratic societies depend on communicative rationality—dialogue oriented toward mutual understanding rather than strategic manipulation. Farotimi's text can be interpreted as an attempt to initiate such communicative engagement by encouraging citizens to critically interrogate political realities.

Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Model

Van Dijk (2008) emphasizes that discourse influences mental models that shape political beliefs. Through repeated rhetorical patterns and ideological framing, texts can alter how audiences perceive political actors and institutions.

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

Fairclough's model provides the methodological structure for this study. Analysis occurs across three levels:

1. Textual analysis – examining linguistic features.
2. Discursive practice – interpreting communicative strategies.
3. Social practice – understanding broader political implications.

Methodology

The study employs qualitative discourse analysis of selected passages from *Do Not Die in Their War*. Passages were purposively selected based on their thematic relevance to political consciousness and citizen engagement.

Analytical focus includes:

- rhetorical devices
- metaphorical constructions
- pragmatic implications
- ideological positioning

The analysis integrates pragma-linguistic examination with CDA principles to explore how meaning is constructed within the text.

Textual and Pragma-Discourse Analysis

Constructing Systemic Failure

Farotimi frequently frames Nigeria's political system as structurally defective. For instance, he argues:

“The system itself... encourages everything ailing our society.”

From a pragma-discursive perspective, this statement performs several functions.

First, the phrase “the system itself” shifts blame away from individuals toward structural conditions. This aligns with van Dijk's notion of ideological framing, where discourse shapes how readers interpret causality within political systems.

Second, the declarative structure of the statement conveys epistemic certainty. Rather than presenting corruption as accidental, the text portrays it as systemic.

Third, the pragmatic implication of the statement invites readers to reconsider their own complicity within the system.

Metaphor and the Politics of Awakening

Metaphorical language plays a significant role in constructing political urgency. Farotimi writes:

“Nigeria is heavily pregnant... what Nigeria will birth is yet unknown.”

This metaphor frames the nation as undergoing an inevitable transformation. From a discourse perspective, such imagery functions as a predictive narrative that mobilizes readers to anticipate political change.

In Habermasian terms, the metaphor serves as a communicative strategy aimed at stimulating collective reflection about the nation's future.

Discursive Construction of Citizen Responsibility

A central theme in the book is the responsibility of citizens to challenge oppression. Farotimi asserts:

“It is up to the oppressed to throw off the oppressor.”

This statement exemplifies what Fairclough describes as ideological recontextualization, where readers are repositioned from passive observers to active political agents.

The pragmatic force of this statement lies in its imperative tone. Rather than merely describing political realities, the text encourages action.

Rhetorical Questioning as Cognitive Provocation

Farotimi frequently employs rhetorical questions:

“What kind of justice are we really talking about?”

Rhetorical questioning serves as a cognitive strategy that prompts readers to critically evaluate political narratives. According to van Dijk, such discursive techniques influence the mental models through which individuals interpret political institutions.

Discursive Critique of the Middle Class

Another significant discursive theme involves criticism of the Nigerian middle class:

“The Nigerian middle class has been a resounding disappointment.”

Here, the discourse shifts from criticizing elites to interrogating societal complicity. The pragmatic implication is that civic transformation requires collective responsibility rather than reliance on political leaders.

Discussion

The analysis reveals that Farotimi's text operates as a counter-hegemonic discourse that challenges dominant narratives about governance and citizenship in Nigeria.

Through metaphorical framing, rhetorical questioning, and ideological positioning, the text constructs a narrative of systemic failure while simultaneously encouraging citizen agency.

From a Habermasian perspective, the book contributes to the formation of a public sphere where political realities are openly debated. The discourse invites readers to engage in critical dialogue about governance structures and national identity.

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework helps explain how the text reshapes mental models by reframing corruption as systemic rather than individualistic. This reframing encourages readers to view political change as requiring structural transformation.

Fairclough's model highlights how the text functions simultaneously as linguistic expression, communicative practice, and social intervention.

Ultimately, the discursive strategies within the book transform it from a political commentary into a tool for civic awakening.

Conclusion

This study examined the discursive effects of Dele Farotimi's *Do Not Die in Their War* through a pragma-discourse analytical framework. The analysis demonstrates that the text functions as a powerful counter-discursive intervention aimed at awakening political consciousness among Nigerian citizens. By employing rhetorical strategies, metaphorical imagery, and ideological framing, Farotimi constructs a narrative that challenges dominant political narratives while encouraging civic engagement. The findings highlight the significance of intellectual discourse in shaping democratic awareness within postcolonial political systems. Future research may extend this analysis by examining

how such texts circulate within digital public spheres and influence political activism among Nigerian youth.

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