

The Use of Insults/Intemperate Language in Political Discourse in Ghana: a Critical Discourse Analysis

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The focus of my research hinges on the realization of insults in Ghanaian political discussions and its social implications. In recent years, politics in Ghana has become characterized by personal attacks, vilifications, bickering, and insults. There have been calls from civil societies, leaders of political parties, chiefs, opinion leaders, and the clergy to put a stop to this alien practice, which is infiltrating into Ghanaian political discourse. Various attempts have been made to stop the politics of insults in Ghana. This is spearheaded by Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) that releases a weekly report to the general public shaming politicians who are involved in politics of insults. If a country could go to the extent of shaming politicians involved in politics of insults then it shows how deeply the issue of intemperate language has taken an entrenched position in Ghanaian political discussions.

Insults in politics have reached an all time high in recent political discussions, a phenomenon that is not Ghanaian. This prompts the question when and how did the political arena in Ghana become a space for insults and counter insults? Many have attributed this infamous development to the proliferation of broadcast media and believe to have a major role to play in the recent surge of insults. This research therefore seeks to analyze the recent development of insults in Ghanaian political discussions.

My summer 2013 research trip to Ghana offered me the opportunity to collate preliminary data for this research. I collected data from both radio and television stations, and newspapers. I also got the opportunity to interact with the Deputy Director of Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), Mr. Sulemana Braimah, who updated me on the progress of

‘shaming politicians project’ and promised to release some of their data to me. In addition, I established contacts with the Ghana Media Commission (GMC), Ghana News Agency (GNA), and Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA), and some private newspapers, such as The Daily Guide, The Informer and The Democrat. The most fascinating of all, is that, I visited



the Parliament House of Ghana and interacted with some members of Parliament to get their take on politics of insults.

This trip undoubtedly has had a significant impact on my Ph.D. dissertation. It has given me a needed direction and focus. Some of the topics and areas that I will be exploring in my dissertation are 1) tracing political discourse in Ghana from independence to the era of ‘pink sheets’; 2) inter-party political insults; 3) intra-party political insults; and 4) insults between and among politicians and others-religious leaders, media, civil society, and chiefs. I will also discuss how critical discourse analysis exposes inequalities of insults in public political discourse in Ghana, naturalization

of insults in the media, and the potentially serious social implications of insults.

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