

A Stylistic Analysis of Language of Politics in the Acceptance Speech of President Goodluck Jonathan

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Abstract

This research, on stylistic analysis of language of politics, is specifically carried out within the confine of selected acceptance speech, to give insight on the stylistic analysis of language of politics. It is believed that style is explored by politicians in an attempt to solicit for the supports of the electorates through language. This research was conducted based on the influence of language used by the politicians. Attention was paid to the special features that differentiate language of politics from other forms of language use in advertisement, religion, science and technology etc. These features were stylistically discussed and recommendations were made for other researchers.

Introduction

According to Nagar (2008:1), “Stylistic is the study of variation of language, the properties of which positions that is, language in context, for example, the language of advertising, policies, religion and individual authors, etc. the language of a period in time, all being in a particular situation”. Stylistic analysis in linguistics refers to the identification of pattern of usage in speech and writing. Stylistic may also be classified as a sub-branch of linguistics used to determine the correction between the form and effect within the variety of a particular language. Stylistics looks at what is going on in a particular context.

It is widely believed that language and politics are interconnected, language is for instance, considered the vehicular expression of politics. It is the means by which political discourse and ideas are widely disseminated, Mazrui (1975:48) corroborates this when he writes that: ‘Language is the most important point of entry into habit of thought of people. If embolden within itself circulative association derived from the total experience of its people’

In the same spirit, Harris asserts that ‘In politics, words have a powerful effect’ (1979:58). Harris further asserts that George Orwell is interested in demonstrating how political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respect (1999:58). In his discussion of Disraeh, Harris opines that he (Disraeh) is of the view that “with words we govern men” (pg 53), and in his own contribution to the issue of language and politics, Harris opines that “Language is the means by which political ideas are transmitted to the community” (pg 56).

Ranney (1975:130) in a separate study, submits that; “our hostile newspaper were the equivalent of 100, 000. Every troop on the field of battle entertaining the extent to which political language is itself a weapon” He posits further that every political authority will lead to justifying itself by an appeal to language in the symbolic or realistic sense. Politicians are creative in terms of creativity in language usage (Daniel 2004:243), at campaign rallies, political speeches are made in one language or the other, which in most of the time, the proficiency of a fluent speaker has a greater positive effect on the audience (Electors), who believe that in a changing world, the affairs of the states should be entrusted in the hands of the literates (Omoniyi 2004:112). Language such as English language in Nigeria has proof of tremendous value to Nigerian politicians.

It is apparent that according to various opinions stated above, language is the key factor in political behavior intended to mobilize the people to support and vote for them during elections. It is this relatedness of language and politics that justifies the conduct of this research.

Statement of the Problem

Existing studies abound on stylistic analysis of language of politics. Amongst these are: A stylistic analysis of the language of political party election manifestoes, with the submission that language of politics is preoccupied with elements of achievements and sect congratulation, promises with disclaimer and condition; so also scholars have researched into the language of

politics an evident in political campaigns of political parties. Stylistics has also be studied ed on by some scholars which include stylistic analysis in linguistics, which refers to the identification of the patterns of usage in speech and waiting. None of the above mentioned studies focused on a stylistic analysis of the acceptance speeches of President Goodluck. Therefore, this research intends to concentrate on this existing gap.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research work are to

- i. identify how President Goodluck Jonathan politically emphasis language in transmission of political ideas to the electorates;
- ii. stylistically account for the language of politics; and
- iii. attempt a discussion on the function of language in the realm of politics.

Research Questions

In the stylistic analysis of language of politics, the following questions are generated;

- i. Do politicians have their own variant of language in the universality of language?
- ii. How well do politicians use language?
- iii. What are the features that differentiate language of politics from other languages?

Research Methodology

The stylistic analysis of language of politics in the selected acceptance speech, will be analyzed using the linguistic field of stylistics as the frame work for the analysis. Stylistics is described as the description and analysis of the variability of linguistic forms in actual language. Kamil (2007), describes stylistics as the study of style of language usage in different contexts, this context can be linguistic or situation. The approach of style is employed in analyzing language of

politics in the selected acceptance speech. Style may be personal or individual in nature. It is based upon the fact that every phenomenon has many possible alternatives. Davy and Crystal (1973), see style on the effectiveness of an expression made which is achieved by saying the right thing in the most effective way, politicians therefore, make use of language especially in making speeches to arouse emotions.

The selected acceptance speech would be stylistically reviewed and analyzed, showing the distractive features that distinguishes language of politics from others such as language of religion, advertisement and language of technology etc.

Literature Review

According to Dadzie (2009), the concept of style dates back to the beginning of literary thoughts in Europe. There is a general feeling that style should be regarded as a part of the technique of persuasion, hence style came to be studied under oratory. In ancient Europe, rhetoric distinguishes between political, ceremonial and forensic oratory, each having its own distinctive and appropriate occasion and its own repertory devices. To Olapade (2004), language is the dress of thought, as style is the particular act and fashion of the dress. Lucas (1995) defines style as the effective use of language, especially in prose whether to make statement or to arouse emotions.

Style therefore may be personal or individual in nature. The concept of style as is predicated upon the fact that every phenomenon has many possible attentions. It may be a deviation from normal norm or regulation in the use of words. The deviation may occur both at lexical and syntactic levels.

The concern of stylistics is to study, criticize and expose the tangible manifestations of the style through both description and interpretation judgments (Cluett and Kampeas 1979). Fowler (1975:11) posits that “Focus on style entails close attention to the surface structure of literary texts and on assumptions that phonology, syntax, everything which makes up rhetoric’s, are of

paramount importance in determining the identity of the literary works". Hence, stylistic analysis according to Fowler has been reduced to a statement on the graphological, phonological, syntactic, lexical and semantic description of the distinctive characteristic features that give a literary work its identity,

Phonological analysis is carried out by describing the delicate and deliberate combination of sounds that produce effects such as assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia. The syntactic analysis examines the sentence structure employed by the writer or speaker, such as simple, compound, complex and compound complex sentence and the effectiveness of same toward realizing the objective of the text. Semantic analysis under this concept, covers words and sentences that are considered from all perspectives of meaning that is denotative, connotative, emotive and contextual meaning.

Politics

Politics is the practice or the art of directing and administering state or other political units. (McLean 2009:13). Lincidn Allison, an Emeritus Professor of Politics at University of Warwick London (1999:3) is of the view that the definition of politics is highly contentious on the ground that there is considerable disagreement on which aspect of social life are to be considered political.

Language and Politics

George Siwell (1984) maintains that the vision of a society in which that state does control people through its deliberate manipulation of language is possible by introducing a turgid and jargonistic form of English, though laced with political propaganda.

The language of politics can be seen in the language of electioneering campaigns, speeches made by politicians in political gatherings, acceptance speeches upon seeming political mandate or

ticket to run for a political office. At times the electorates may expect their candidate to be vast in language and to be able to convince his audience (electorates) with the power of oracy. Though, English language is the language of politics in Nigeria, it is also important to employ the local language where the need be, especially in a developing nation like ours Nigeria (Omoniyi 2004:112).

An interesting aspect of this function of English language is the fact that certain terminologies and expressions have become synonymous to Nigerian Politics, examples are expressions like “Man of timber and Calibers”, “Caterpillars and judgment” etc. at official campaign rallies in Nigeria, speeches are made in English language in which the proficiency of the fluent speaker has greater effect on the audience (electorates)

Data Presentation and Analysis

Functionally, President Goodluck Jonathan’s acceptance speech is highly loaded with a Thousand, One hundred and Seven (1,107) words, including about twenty seven attributive adjectives linguistically employed. As a language of politics, it can be x-rayed in the following order;

a. **Achievement and Self Congratulation:** - These are common in all language of politics. The following extracts evidence the achievements and self congratulations as used by President Goodluck Jonathan;

“...We are stable.....”

“...We have reaffirmed our unity.....”

“...We are all winners.....”

“...We are capable of holding free, fair and credible election.....”

All these extracts show one of the features of language of politics as used by President Goodluck Jonathan in his acceptance speech.

b. Promises

Language of politics are epitomes of promises, though not necessarily going to be achieved. Below extracts reveals evidence of promises in president Goodluck's speech.

"...We will not let you down....."

"...We, continue to assure you....of free and fair elections....."

"...We, will continue to run a government that is committed to fairness, equity and justice for all...."

"...We shall create a great nation welded in unity and harmony....."

"...We will build a new economy..."

"... We will remark our society..."

"... I promise to run an all-inclusive government..."

In the above extracts, President Goodluck carefully and stylistically employed language to show commitment to the electorates.

c. Propaganda

Language of politics cannot be devoid of propaganda as politicians are considered to be propagandists, when it comes to the employment and choice of words during political speech making or at campaigns. It can be seen in Goodluck speech as follows;

"...The will of the people is the foundation of governance...."

"...This is the victory for the substance of our democracy...."

“...I congratulate the candidate of the other political parties, I regard them not as opponent but as partners....”

“...I had no enemy..... I have no enemy to fight....”

All these extracts above portray President Goodluck as a propagandist, having employed language stylistically to arouse emotions from his opponents and the electorates at large.

Recommendations

The political language must be able to present a mental picture in the mindset of his audience about his vision and mission. Therefore, his language strategy as a politician or political speech writer must be able to arouse the feelings and collective excitement and sentiment of the followers and audience, to sustain their support and loyalty. Other recommendations are;

1. Politics of advocacy should be employed rather than politics of attack.
2. Emotive words should be employed. This choice of grammar and the length of the speech are to be determined by the disposition and responses of the audience.

Conclusion

This research has shown that politicians are stylist when it comes to their ability to use language to convince their audience (electorates) and to arouse their emotion while soliciting for their supports. Also, this study shows that the ability of the politicians to convince his audience is far from charms and magical power, other than the ability to employ words convincingly. Without language, it will be politically impossible to convince followers or electorates. Hence, there is a magical power in the language of politics effectively employed by the players of the game.

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