

Persuasive Strategies of 2015 Inaugural Speeches of Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Using Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and the practice of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study demonstrates how ideas and thoughts are represented in selected speeches the governor of Rivers State. This personality is analysed to have certain ideologies as made manifest in his use of language. Recognising that situation actually determines what to say, recognition is equally given to the language features of the speeches in relation to the functions in particular contexts. The study revealed that Wike's speeches open with words of appreciation God and humanity. In second step, intentions are declared by the governor who assures the people of Rivers State that their suffering has already gone into history. The governor is seen to have neglected the needs for international relations and foreign policies. He unveils his plans for his administration like restoring the legislature's autonomy, restoring and enhancing independence of the judiciary, appointing and re-opening of the state's chief judge and courts, amendment of chieftaincy laws among others. The grammar of the speech is featured frequently with we-pronoun, which is not merely a discourse feature but a sign of collectivity and togetherness. The governor also appeals for unity and cooperation from all the citizens of the state. He feels that the state is in deep trouble which requires careful plan to tackle it. In a similar fashion, he promises to equally cooperate by returning power to the people in the conduct of common affairs.

Keywords: Ideology, Context, Speeches, Political Discourse, Language Use.

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is ever regarded as a key to the success of any business of a man. It represents information passage, and language is the most effective instrument for the transfer of information from one source to another. The importance of language thus becomes obvious in human creation. That important nature of language shows its powerful nature on human lives. It fuels crisis, causes death and influence decision of different kinds. This is similar to Wood's position (2006) that "language has a fundamental role in the conveyance of political goals to the audience in order to provoke, prevail and persuade the audience towards the intended goals and meanings" (In Kazemian 2).

But language is not powerful in isolation. That means that the phenomenon – language does not stand alone to possess the power it is said to have possessed. That an utterance is powerful and has influence on someone or something means there is a powerful person behind it, perhaps an orator, a politician, a preacher or a public relations officer. This explains why language, at

an instance, can be studied closely as it is associated with an influential person.

A kind of discourse to be analysed may be social, religious, political, or media-related. Of relevance to our present study is the political form of discourse. This is an area of discourse that is politically motivated. It may refer to a debate, a speech, or a hearing that is meant for a political forum as the phenomenon of interest. Such a discourse is an information exchange of reasoned views as to which of several alternative courses of actions should be taken to solve a societal problem. More specifically, the study is concerned with inaugural speeches, which are political in nature. Political speeches generally are excellent evidence that demonstrates the natural development not only of language itself but also of the society, culture and religion to which they belong. Furthermore, an inaugural address is not just political but a ceremonial speech, made by a newly elected personality to an official position, making a new term. Relatedly, six inaugural speeches are chosen for this research: they are

inaugural addresses by newly elected governors in Nigeria, making a new governorship term.

Generally, inaugurals mark the end of election campaigns as well as the beginning of new administration. It has already become a tradition that such speeches are made after every four years before the take-over of new office. The inauguration is held as a celebration witnessed by many who care, and are interested in what the new officer has in stock for them. This is found very important for what those speeches expose on the fundamental political values and certain political principles with which their political meanings become clear. Again, those inaugural addresses try to persuade the natives of a nation or state that the elected figure is fit for the political office, and can accomplish their set objectives. This calls for loyalty and support to the political regime from both other power holders in the political system and the public at large in the over-all process of administration.

The motivation for this study is linked with the skilful political rhetoric of those selected speeches, as well as their oratorical content: the language in the speeches is observed to be persuasive or influential and quite impressive, and the speech makers have shown their skills of making powerful speeches. Consequently, the analysis focuses on those devices and strategies that are distinctive and peculiar to a particular discourse, and can be identified with certain functions in a given context. A text, for example, would contain technical words and phrases, images, metaphors and some other aspects of grammar that are used for an unusual or interesting effect and, to some extent, are capable of providing aesthetic satisfaction. The aim of this research is to examine the persuasive strategies of a Nigerian governor's public speaking and how these strategies enshrine his ideologies.

Conceptual Clarification

Persuasive Strategies in Discourse

Persuasion is a case of social influence pursued through communication where a speaker aims at influencing the listeners with the target of achieving some goals while leaving them free to adopt it or not, and presenting an argument on how the goals are in the speakers' interest. Such a speaker usually employs certain strategies in terms of a rhetorical device so as to be able to convince their audience. By rhetorical devices, "we mean those elements of language that you can use to make your speech, they also enhance the credibility and clarity of your message. But that's not all: Rhetorical devices help to provoke and retain the attention of your audience, as well as emphasize the content of the speech's vivid, stylist, colourful and, above all, memorable" (Alimole 37). These devices not only add colour and variety to one's speech; they also enhance the credibility and clarity of message.

Analysing Discourse

It may be clear from our introduction that the study of language was beyond studying the sentence. As much as a sentence can be studied, an entire discussion comprising number of sentences can be exposed to some kinds of analysis, and this presents the idea of Discourse Analysis. It may be defined as a method of analysing how particular features of language help in the interpretation of texts in their contexts. Discourse Analysis looks at a picture wider than the sentence, which makes it different from other grammatical analyses, which tend to concentrate on smaller units like phrases and sentences. The study of discourse is found very important in the discipline of linguistics. Its importance, as some authors would say, "stems from the fact that individual sentence commonly includes elements whose interpretation can only be determined with the help of information in preceding utterances" (O'Grady and Katamba, 197). They provide for us an example in the following text:

A little girl went for a walk in the park.

While there; she saw a rabbit. Since it was injured, she took it home

In that particular passage, each of the underlined words depends on information encoded in a preceding sentence for its interpretation.

The Nature of Inaugural Speeches

An inauguration is a formal ceremony to mark the beginning of a major public leader's term of office. The "inaugural address" is a speech given during this ceremony which informs the people of his/her intentions as a leader. Political inaugurations often feature lavish ceremonies, in which the politician publicly takes his or her oath of office in front of a large crowd of spectators. The equivalent ceremony in another jurisdiction may be called a "swearing-in". A monarchical inauguration is similar to what in another jurisdiction may be called a coronation or enthronement.

Other than personal inaugurations, the term can also refer to the official opening or beginning of an institution or structure, for example the inauguration of a new government. The historical source of the word "inauguration" stems from the Latin *augur*, which refers to the rituals of ancient Roman priests seeking to interpret if it was the will of the gods for a public official to be deemed worthy to assume office. An inauguration site is a ceremonial site that is for someone of a public figure.

The inauguration of Nigerian governors takes place after every four-year tenure of previous administration. The ceremony has only one mandatory element, which is the swearing of the oath of office by the governor-elect. However, over the years, other celebratory elements have been added to this ceremony, creating an entire day of special events. Aside from a

parade or a dance ball in the evening, the newly sworn governor also delivers a speech, called an inaugural address. With the Chief Justice, the Deputy Governor and the public as witnesses, the new governor delivers his address, during which his plans for the new term are stated.

Empirical Review

This section contains a review of past studies in the subject of discussion. Research has actually shown that a number of persons have carried out numerous researches on topics related to the one at hand.

In the first place, Kazemian (2014) had carried out a discourse analysis on Obama's 2012 speeches. The researcher builds his findings on ideational Grammatical Metaphor (IGM) as captured within systemic functional linguistics as proposed by Halliday (1994). In addition, he considered critical discourse analysis (CDA) as well as rhetorical strategies.

The major objectives of that study was to inquire into IGM, rhetorical tropes, pasivisation, modality and their respective frequencies and function in the corpus comprises five political addressed. The choice of the speeches was on the basis of their skillful political rhetoric and oratory with certain criteria for selecting these strategies.

In a similar fashion Wang (2010) adopted the theory of systemic functional linguistic (SLF) to analyse two of Barack Obama's presidential speeches from the point of modality and transitivity. In effort to find the frequencies and percentage of the processes researcher presented the result that the use of the material processes; the most frequent processes used in Obama's speeches demonstrate his attempts to present government achievement to the audience, as well as their future plan.

In 2010 Hana Bellova wrote on the evolution of Means of Persuasion; discourse analysis of sample inaugural speeches of U.S Presidents 1833-1997. Based on the findings from the analysis, the means of persuasion were located and evaluated. It was then determine whether or not the language of persuasion had evolved over time.

In the theoretical part, the discourse analysis and its levels and methods were described in detail under the headings of graphology, phonetics, lexis, stylistics, discourse and pragmatics as well as the history of rhetoric and inaugural speeches.

In the practical part of the work all six discourses are analysed, using levels and methods as described in the theoretical part. The information from the speeches is often illustrated by chants and tables that illuminate the most important results. The aim of

the work is to find and analyze means of persuasion in the speeches and determined whether and how they have changed during the period 1833-1997.

Halmari (2005) is identified to have analyzed Bill Clinton and Ronal Reagan's addresses at US "State of the Union" in trying to discover persuasive strategies that were employed by these men to influence the audience. The study produced the results that the speeches contained rhetorical questions, appeal to authority, appeal to logic, superlatives, figures of alliteration, metaphor, humour etc. It was concluded that both the form of the language and its content contributed to the overall persuasive effect of the speech.

The review of literature shows also that Loudenslager (2012) examined three ceremonial speeches that propelled Lincoln to presidency to find out the persuasive techniques used by Lincoln. Using Aristotelian approach of rhetorical analysis, Loudenslager (2012) found that the persuasive devices Lincoln used include figures of speech such as repetition to unite the listeners to end expansion of slavery, alliteration, metaphor and allusion to elucidate and further his arguments against slavery. Loudenslager (2012) also concluded that Lincoln establishes themes that develop his arguments on slavery and intensifies that by means of contrasting slavery with the principles set out in the Declaration of Independence. And affirmative dealing with adverse argument, hyperbolic/exaggeration, rhetorical questions, and using plain and descriptive language to stir emotion of the listeners and describe his feelings were found by Loudenslage (2012) to be among other persuasive techniques used by Lincoln. Loudenslager's (2012) study failed to illustrate the explicit theoretical framework incorporated in his study. Although, Aristotelian rhetorical theory was announced as the approach taken in Loudenslager's (2012) study, the study failed to be conscious of discussing the findings within the theoretical approach taken for the study.

Theoretical Frame Work

Two models of linguistic study have been considered for this research:

a) Critical Discourse

This is an approach to the study of discourse that considers language as a form of social practice. It is generally assumed under this theory that social and linguistic practices constitute each other, and focus on investigation on how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use.

Critical discourse analysis emerged from 'critical linguistics' developed at the in the 1970s, and the terms are now often interchangeable. It was first developed by the Lancaster school of linguists of which Norman Fairclough was the most prominent figure. In addition to linguistic theory, the approach draws from

social theory and contributions were made by other philosophers to examine ideologies and power relations involved in discourse. Language connects with the social through being the primary domain of ideology, and through being a site of, and a stake in, struggles for power. Ideology has been called the basis of the social representations of groups, and, in psychological versions of CDA developed by Van Dik and Ruth Wodak, there is assumed to be a sociocognitive interface between social structures and discourse structures. The historical dimension in critical discourse studies also plays an important role.

Norman Fairclough developed a three-dimensional framework for studying discourse, where the aim is to map three separate forms of analysis onto one another: analysis of (spoken or written) language texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice. Particularly, he combines micro, meso and macro-level interpretation. At the micro-level, the analyst considers various aspects of textual/linguistic analysis, for examples syntactic analysis, use of metaphor and rhetorical devices. The meso-level or "level of discursive practice" involves studying issues of production and consumption, for instance, which institution produced a text, who is the target audience, etc. At the macro-level, the analyst is concerned with intertextual and interdiscursive elements and tries to take into account the broad, societal currents that are affecting the text being studied.

b) Systemic functional linguistics (SFL)

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is an approach to linguistics that considers language as a social semiotic system. It was developed by Michael Halliday, who took the notion of system from his teacher, J.R Firth. Whereas Firth considered systems to refer to possibilities subordinated to structure, Halliday in a certain sense "liberated" the dimension of choice from structure and made it the central organising dimension of this theory. In other words, whereas many approaches to linguistic description place structure and the syntagmatic axis in the foreground, Hallidean systemic functional theory adopts the paradigmatic axis as its point of departure. The term *systemic* accordingly foregrounds Saussure's "paradigmatic axis" in understanding how language works. For Halliday, a central theoretical principle is then that any act of communication involves choices. Language is a system, and the choices available in any language variety are mapped using the representation tool of the "system network".

Systemic functional linguistics is also "functional" because it considers language to have evolved under the pressure of the particular functions that the language system has to serve. Functions are therefore taken to have left their mark on the structure

and organisation of language at all levels, which is said to be achieved through metafunctions. The term *metafunction* is particular to systemic functional linguistics. The organisation of the functional framework around systems, i.e., choices, is a significant difference from other "functional" approaches, such as, for example, Dik's functional grammar (FG, or as now often termed, functional discourse grammar and lexical functional grammar. Thus, it is important to use the full designation—systemic functional linguistics—rather than just *functional grammar* or *functional linguistics*.

For Halliday, all languages involve three generalised functions, or metafunctions: one construes experience (meanings about the outer and inner worlds); one enacts social relations (meanings concerned with interpersonal relations), and one weaves together of these two functions to create text (the wording). Because these functions are considered to come into being simultaneously—viz., one cannot mean about the world without having either a real or virtual audience—language must also be able to bring these meanings together: this is the role of structural organisation, be that grammatical, semantic or contextual. These three generalised functions are termed "metafunctions".

METHODOLOGY

The research collected and analysed data from specific Governor Nyeson Wike's inaugural addresses in the 2015 political term. These speeches were all delivered on the same day and at a time that the country was generally unstable as a result of some economic and political factors. For the sake of adequacy and convenience, just a total number of six are chosen out of 30 speeches delivered by thirty governors on the 29th of May, 2015. The researcher had employed random sampling to choose the speeches, which have been made available on the Internet. The method is said to be random because every speech as documented had equal opportunity of being selected.

Analysis

Wike's Inaugural Speech of 29th May, 2015

Nyesom Wike's speech of 29th May, 2015, marked his official inauguration as the Executive Governor of Rivers State for a single term of four (4) years. It is a speech of 53 paragraphs; about 301 lines with a total number of about 5, 117 words.

Appreciation

The entire speech opens with words of appreciation to God and humanity. The governor acknowledges God as the maker of the universe and all that happen therein. In addition, he claims to be appreciative of the people's trust that paves the way for him to serve as the governor of Rivers State. In the words of the speaker:

It is with great humility and gratitude to God Almighty who makes all things well that I address you today. I

feel so humbled, blessed and grateful to God, whose holy hands in my life and the trust you have in me, provided the opportunity for me to serve as your Governor for the next four years (page 1).

This kind of opening marked a deviation from the norm of speech delivery at great occasions because protocol usually precedes appreciation. In this case, not only that the acknowledgement of dignitaries at the kick-off stage in line with the protocol is not just skipped but found to be completely absent in the speech. Ordinarily, one would expect that the speech maker would break down after the appreciation to follow the protocol. Contrary to expectation, what follows from paragraph 3 on to paragraph 13 is an assembly of expressions strictly meant to castigate the previous administration.

Declaration on Intentions

In the next step, the governor assures the people of Rivers State that their suffering has gone into history: "But the good news is that it is over ..." (Par. 14). He then declares in several ways his intention to restructure their state. In the first place, the governor expresses their aim of making the state a peaceful and prosperous place with numerous opportunities and possibilities devoid of discrimination.

Our goal is to make Rivers State a land of peace and prosperity with boundless opportunities and possibilities – a place where no one is left behind because of his or her station and everyone who works hard can achieve his or her life's dream (par. 17).

Mention is made of education and health institutions, occupations, infrastructure, among others, which form specific intention of the new government. The summary of all intentions according to them is that all that were missing in the previous administration will be filled-up by the present government. The speaking governor challenges the challenges that might be encountered in the course of governance, expressing confidence that solution would be advanced based on the nature of every problem:

For us, the problems and challenges that any government is confronted will also define the kind of solutions advanced in their resolution (par. 20)

The whole aim is that new opportunities be provided to maximally touch the lives of the people of Rivers State.

International Relations and Foreign Policies

It is common that a new government explains plans pertaining to international or group relations and foreign policies in an inaugural speech. For Governor Wike of Rivers State, the relations among states and developmental contributions from foreign policies are not very important. This would have been captured in his speech but what we see in the entire body of the

speech is the contrary. The speaker is only weak at recognizing the government of the federation towards the end of his address:

At this point, let me also assure our people that our government and indeed Rivers State, will not be on a war path with the federal government. We will cooperate and meaningfully engage the federal government to develop the Port-Harcourt International Airport to accommodate additional international routes and flight frequencies ... (par. 51).

Nothing before, or after that is seen in the speech as a whole. The governor only believes in ability of Rivers State to continuously serve as the treasure base of the nation and the government's determination to ensure that the beautiful people of the state will be equal partakers of the resources of the land.

Unveiling of Plans and Ideologies

It is usual for a new government to highlight the future tasks and unveil the plan of tackling them. This is what we find at certain stages in the speech. In paragraph 24 of the speech, the governor promises to restore the state legislators' autonomy that is claimed to be lost in the previous administration. In the words of the speaker:

I shall on Monday, June, 2015, proclaim the opening of the 8th session of the Rivers State House of Assembly in its proper location and venue to enable our elected legislators to perform their law-making and oversight function. Under my watch, never will the Rivers State House of Assembly be subjected to sitting at Government House or any other improper venue in utter disregard of its autonomy.

In the following paragraph, he plans to restore the independence of the judiciary and enhance justice delivery in the state by ensuring full financial autonomy. The welfare of judiciary officers shall be prioritized. Part of this is that judges would be enabled to retain their residential accommodation upon retirement for life. In paragraph 26, a state chief judge is to be appointed with courts re-opened. In paragraph 30, a plan is set-up for amendments of the state's chieftaincy laws to ensure that justice, prestige and respect is restored to the natural rulers.

From paragraph 31-51, plans are made for: restoration of civil and public service welfare, making of Rivers State economically strong and self-reliant, promoting investment in partnership with private investors, developing tourism centres, etc.

The pronoun 'we' as well as its objective case runs through almost all the paragraphs. This depicts the fact that the governor believes in unity of purpose and collective responsibilities. An extract from the 50th paragraph represents the others:

... We shall need your wisdom, prayers, and support in diverse ways because working together we can do and

achieve much more. We shall also call on you to make necessary sacrifice so that collectively, we can make Rivers State the place that we can all be proud of ...

As part of the new measures to reform democracy, the governor recognizes the power of the people but within the limit of the constitution. The new administrator pledges with emphasis that all challenges would be tackled to ensure responsibility and accountability at all angles of governance.

Appeal for Unity

The governor also appeals for unity and cooperation from all the citizens of the state. He feels that the state is in deep trouble which requires careful plans to tackle it. The speaker is blunt that the people of Rivers have been going through pervasive poverty and hardship. He is particular on: falling public education, unemployment, weak-economy, unpaid salaries, autocratic governance, disregard for legislative, judicial and traditional institutions and a number of other shortcomings in the previous administration. According to the governor, the out-gone government has failed without a single positive legacy. Such a situation can only be revived with the cooperative efforts of all citizens. He therefore, calls on the well-meaning people of Rivers to imbibe the spirit of unity as they put in their best for the upliftment of the state. In his words:

We call on every one of us, and in particular, our workforce in the civil and public service, to get ready to work with patriotic spirit, commitment, devotion to duty and honesty to restore dignity to our state and our public institutions battered and demoralized (Par. 22).

The speaker promises to equally cooperate by returning power to the people in the conduct of common affairs.

The End

On a final note, the governor expresses his gratitude and appreciation to the immediate past president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as well as the first lady with whom he is pleased. In addition, he recognizes the presence of his wife and then reaffirms the commitment of his administration to hit the ground running on the march to meaningful progress.

CONCLUSION

The present study has also attempted practically to show how discourse analysis has contributed to the understanding of the relationship between choices within the sentence and the organization and interpretation of the discourse as a whole. Discourse analysis helps not only a speaker/writer to select right choices of words, syntax and utterances according to particular situations but it supports also a hearer/reader to interpret and infer the right meaning of discourse. It provides access to what a speaker/author intends, or how sincerely he is behaving in the production of a discourse fragment. Discourse

constitutes ubiquitous ways of knowing, valuing and experiencing the world. It is used in everyday local texts and talks for building productive power and knowledge and for purposes of regulation and normalization, for the development of new knowledge and power relations. Only to know what discourse is not sufficient but one must also know how it is produced and understood. This was also considered in the course of our analysis. Discourse analysis has presented a fundamentally different way of looking at language compared with sentence-dominated models, one in which the traditional elements of grammar, lexis and phonology still have a fundamental part to play, but one which is bigger and more immediately relevant. There will, no doubt, be some other things that can be said about those inaugural addresses, for discourse analysis is so wide analysing a discourse of any kind is somewhat a subjective exercise. More so, people's knowledge of how language occurs in its natural contexts is growing all the time. What is more, one now knows more about what people actually do with language when they speak and write, and no longer has to rely on classical - based notions of what 'good' usage is. People know more about the delicate relationship between language forms and particular contexts and users; such knowledge can only be immensely valuable. It is believed that the analysis of discourse, undertaken in the manner presented in this dissertation, will not only provide the reader with insights into the workings of his own language, but also encourage him to think afresh about the nature of discourse and the general principles of its practice.

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