

Lexical Analysis of the First Inaugural Speech of Nigerian Former President Olusegun Obasanjo

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ABSTRACT

A political speech is to inform the audience, seek facts from people to enrich the political leader's information bank, or persuade people to accept the political leaders' views on some issues. Hence, a political speech is expected to appeal, neutralize, persuade, elaborate, educate, control, regulate, and inform the masses. In essence, political speeches are laden with various linguistic features. The author examines the linguistic features (as espoused in lexical cohesion) of the first inaugural speech of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. The method used for this study contains sampling and reading the selected inaugural presidential speech. The lexical features are repetition, synonym, antonym, hyponymy, and collocation. The author uses discourse analysis to drive home her point. The findings reveal that President Olusegun Obasanjo made much use of repetition. In essence, politicians emphasize words showing that the electorate or audience is more convinced when ideas are repeated. Synonym came closely to repetition.

KEYWORDS

Lexical Analysis, Inaugural Speech, Discourse Analysis, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of a speech depends on many factors; the ability of the speaker, the topic of the speech, and the content of the speech. People at the helm of political affairs especially; use language in a manner that affects the common people in diverse ways. Language is used as a tool or weapon to defend, express, or project. Olusegun Obasanjo's speech was a sensitive one because, in Nigerian politics, the transition from the military era to the civilian era is noteworthy.

Several scholars (Olateju, 2006, Adegbite, 1996, Maree, 2010, Wilson, 1990) have worked on English Language and linguistics cohesion in general. Notably among them are Halliday and Hassan (1976) and Quirk et al. (1972). Their studies on cohesion were based on the relation of meanings. Cohesion can simply be defined "as the set of linguistic resources for constructing relations in a discourse which transcend grammatical structures" (Halliday, 2002).

However, Halliday and Hassan (1976) limit their study to relations of meaning between elements found across sentence boundaries and connect sentences. They further identified the devices used for inter-science connection and then developed a technique for examining these devices in texts. These devices are grouped into lexical and grammatical devices; the lexical devices are repetition antonyms, hyponymy, and collocation, while the grammatical devices are references, ellipsis, substitution, and conjunctions.

This study ascertains how language was used by President Olusegun Obasanjo in his inaugural speech using the lexical features to analyze his speech. However, the study is driven principally by the need to objectively study the linguistic features of politics as espoused in this political speech and would not be derailed by other socio-political considerations. Thus, this study is aimed at understanding the role of linguistic communication in the functioning of socio-political units.

Language and Politics

According to Ayeomoni (2005), language and politics are interconnected; language is considered the vehicular expression of politics. It is how politics or political discourse, and ideas are widely disseminated. Sobola (2013) believes that language can achieve political aims in society, and one cannot engage in political activity without language. Salamini (1982) in Sobola (2013) says, "language is a political fact and instrument of politics." Hence politics is known through language. Ayodabo (2005) opines that language "is the most important point of entry into habits of thought of its people." In the same vein, Harris opines that "political words have a powerful effect' (Harris 1979).

Similarly, Harris informs that Orwell sees political language as being designed to make her sound truthful and murder respectable. Harris adds that "language is how political ideas are transmitted to the community" Ayeomoni (2002) concludes that language is the key factor in political behavior, concerning mobilizing people to

support and accept; it is this relatedness of language and politics that justifies the need for research to identify and highlight features inherent in the language of Nigerian civilian Presidents. The natural connection between language and politics has been recognized by linguist, social and political scientists. The language as used by politicians is often labeled “Political propaganda” or ‘political words” because it is mainly designed to influence our opinions without providing any legitimate Linguist, social and political scientists have recognized the natural language and politics had provided linguistic study or analysis of the language of politics in Nigeria. In recent years, linguistic research has proven to be very useful to political interests in several ways. This can be bolstered by the fact that a good number of language researchers who had delved into the language of politics had shown how useful these analyses are, where language and politics are concerned.

It is a fact that language comes to life only in the context of the situation, implying that a language pattern acquires meaning when it is used in a situation. This type of meaning is different from the formal meaning that a language has by its language pattern. Consequently, every situation exhibits linguistic features that are referred to or identifiable within such a situation.

A political speech is to inform the audience, seek facts from people to enrich the political leaders’ information bank, or persuade people to accept the political leaders’ views on some issues. Hence, a political speech is expected to appeal, neutralize, persuade, elaborate, educate, control, regulate, and inform the masses. Therefore, we have such features as repetition, hyponym, synonym, collocation, and antonyms as lexical cohesion.

This study comes in, that is, to unravel the meanings of this political speech since the politicians pay no attention to the meanings of their speeches. Consequently, there is a need to investigate the content of the speeches of some of our political leaders, which will spur the need to discover some hidden meanings in these speeches.

Hence, the research is motivated by the need to fill the gap left by the previous researchers on political speeches.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify and analyze the features of lexical cohesion in the selected political speech, examine the functional role of each of the features within the contexts of the selected political speech, and examine the pattern of the lexical cohesion in the selected political speech.

METHODOLOGY

The method used for this study contains sampling and reading the selected inaugural presidential speech. The political speech is downloaded from a website on the internet

which represents electronic support in media monitoring.

This research is library-based because most of the materials were gathered from online libraries and books. The research design adopted is a simple random sampling.

There is also the use of qualitative and quantitative procedures to analyze the selected political speech of President Olusegun Obasanjo's inaugural speech on May 29, 1999, which consists of 7 pages with 2879 words.

FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework adopted in the study is Systemic Functional Theory (SFT). Discourse Analysis is embedded in this theory. Discourse Analysis focuses on the structure of a spoken language as found in conversations, interviews, and speeches. It is thus envisaged that Discourse Analysis enhances the inherent meanings of the speeches.

Initially, scholars saw discourse analysis as generally restricted to conversations or the conversational of texts. It had, however, been seen by many scholars from other dimensions. Stubbs (1983) sees discourse as above the clause. Fasold (1990) opines that the study of discourse is seen as an explicit, systematic account of any aspect of language use. Jaworski and Coupland (1999) see Discourse Analysis as language use relative to social, political, and cultural formation. Discourse Analysis has the interest of political scientists and many others. It is a key to understanding language itself. Discourse Analysis talks about cohesion and coherence in any communication act or text. Ayeomoni (2003) sees Discourse Analysis as dealing with what is communicated in a discourse situation.

Discourse analysis complements the grammatical level though it is not restricted to the interpretation of isolated sentences. The language can connect sentences in stretches of discourse to form a meaningful whole. The connections that exist are physical and explicit (for example, reference, ellipsis, synonyms, conjunctions, Antonyms, and parallel structures). These linguistic features provide the network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations, which provide links and semantic unity between various parts of a text.

The research is carried out within the framework of Systemic Functional Grammar of Halliday (2004). Linguists have long recognized the complementary relationship between discourse analysis and Systemic Functional Grammar (hereafter referred to as SFG). Regarding Fowler, Kress, and Hodge, Hart states that the linguistic subfield of discourse analysis has traditionally drawn upon Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, which is primarily concerned with the function of language in the social structure.

Halliday and Hassan (1976) recognized the following cohesive features: Reference, substitution, Ellipsis, Conjunction (grammatical) and collocation, repetition, synonym, hyponym, and antonym (lexical).

The Concept of Cohesion

Cohesion has been described as the linguistic means by which a text functions as a single unit. Cohesion in text or discourse has to do with how actual texts are held together lexically and grammatically (Osisanwo, 2003). In other words, cohesion concerns how words in a text are related or relations of meaning within a text (Olateju, 2006). Besides, Halliday and Hasan (1976:4) note that cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another. Certain linguistic devices used in relating different parts of a text to one another are called cohesive devices. Every language in the world possesses so many of these devices that help different link parts of a text together to form a unified whole. Bex (1996) points out that “cohesion can be seen as present in the semantic and grammatical resources of the language. Likewise, Halliday and Hasan (1976) have argued that “texts achieve their status as communicative events through the use of cohesive devices.” They point out further that a text may be defined as a unit bound together by various types of cohesive devices. A text, according to them, is realized by or encoded in sentences. For Halliday and Hasan (1976), a text refers to “any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that forms a unified whole.”

Lexical Cohesion

Lexical cohesion generally plays a pivotal role in structuring a text and making it a coherent whole (Zhao, Yan, & Zhou, 2009). It is expressed through the vocabulary used in text and semantic relations between the words. Lexical cohesion is achieved using certain lexical devices. These devices entail making use of the characteristics and features of words and the group relationships among them (Osisanwo, 2003). Lexical devices for achieving cohesion in text encompass reiteration and collocation.

Reiteration

Reiteration is the repetition of a lexical item, or the occurrence of a synonym of some kind, in the context of reference; that is, where the two occurrences have the same referent. In other words, reiteration involves saying or doing something several times (Osisanwo, 2003). It can be realized in three ways: Repetition, Superordinate/Hyponym, Synonym, or Near Synonym. Repetition is the use of the same lexical item several times in a text.

Superordinate/Hyponyms

Superordinate items have been used as umbrella terms and encompass several other items under them.

Synonyms\ Antonyms

Synonyms or near-synonyms are those words that have the same meanings or that are nearest in meaning, while antonyms are those words that are opposite in meaning.

Collocation

Collocation has been described as cohesion achieved via some lexical items that regularly occur in discourse. Some lexical items naturally or regularly occur together in discourse to the extent that mentioning one recalls the other one or members of their group (Osisanwo 2003). Those words that naturally or regularly go together are said to collocate. They, therefore, form a kind of collocational pattern in a language. For instance, Sadeghi (2010) notes that we might expect banks (where money is kept) to have a high probability of co-occurrence with cheque, cashier, account, transfer, ledger low probability co-occurrence with a saucepan, apple, etc. Collocation also encompasses pair of words drawn from the same order series. Lexical items involved in collocation are always, to some degree, mutually predictable (Crystal, 1995)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The speech was analyzed by using Halliday and Hassan's (1976) Cohesion Linguistic Framework. For easy identification, each lexical cohesion item or feature bears a code shown below:

<u>Lexical features</u>	<u>Code</u>
Repetition - -----	LR
Collocation -----	LC
Antonym -----	LA
Synonym -----	LS
Hyponym-----	LH

Table 1: Lexical Analysis

Sentence	No of	Lexical Items	
Numbers	items		Types of Lexical Features
3&4	2		
3&4	2	This Day "God", "destiny" "this day" "•u/ioh"	Repetition (LR) Synonym (LS)
9&10	2	"Wish" "thank"	Repetition (LR) Synonym (LS)
11&12	1	"tyranny" "terrorism"	Antonym (LA)
15&16	1	"Today"	Synonym (LS)
17&18	1	"gentlemen"	Collocation (LC)
25&26	1	"The citizens"	Synonym (LS)
27 & 28	2	"Government officials"	Synonym (LS)
		"Government" "became"	Repetition (LI)
29 & 30	1	"bribe"	Hyponym (LH)
33 & 34	1	"chaos" and "near despair"	Hyponym (LH)

Sentence	No of	Lexical Items	
35&36	2	“challenge” “challenge” “task ahead” “daunting scene”	Synonym (LS) Antonym (LA)
37&38	2	“beginning”, Renaissance Re”Renaissance”	Synonym LS, Antonym Antonym (L3)
43&44	1	“sacrifice” “patience”	Repetition (LR)
45&46	1	“This time”	Synonym (LS)
51 &52	1	“corruption”	Repetition (LR)
53 & 54	1	“corruption” “society”	Repetition (LR)
55 & 56	1	“unchallenged” “ignored”	Synonym (LS)
59&60	1	“corruption”	Synonym (LS)
61&62	2	“enforce” “restored”	Repetition(LR) Synonym (L4)
61 &62			
63&64	2	“transparency” “integrity”	Repetition(LR) Antonym (L3)
63&64			
65 &66		“integrity”	Antonym (LA)
65&66	2	“restore confidence in	Antonym (LA)
67&68			
69&70	3	governance” “development” “reforms”	-Repetition (LR) Collocation (LC) Synonym (LS)
69&70		“corruption”	Repetition (LR)
71 &72	3	“The police”, “help” twice) “security”	Repetition (LR) Synonym (LS)
71 &72		“security” “protection”	Antonym (LA)
73&74	3	“crime” “corruption” “water supply” “energy” “food supply” and food security”	Repetition (LR) Reference (LR) Hyponym (L5)
75&76	1	“measures”	Repetition (LR)
75&76		“This administration”	
79&80	1	“My cabinet”	Repetition (LR).
81 &82	1	“high public position”	Synonym (LS)
83&84	2	“rending dedicated ,)	Antonym (LA)
83&84		service”, “appointed to”	Repetition (LR)
85&86	1	“This administration” “being	Repetitions (LR)

Sentence	No of	Lexical Items	
87&88	1	administers” “cabinet”	Repetition (LR)
89&90	1	“Council”	Repetition (LR)
91 &92	1	“Ministers”	Repetition (LR)
93&94	2	“other public officers” “hand of Fellowship” “hand of fellowship”	Antonym (L3) Synonym (L4)
95&96	1	“development”	Repetition (LR) -
99 & 100	2	“Liberia” “Sierra Leone” ECOMOG	Hyponym (LH) Repetition (LR)
101 &102	1	“Sierra Leone”	Repetition (LR).
103 &104	2	“United Nations, “OAU”, The common wealth “a well -respected country”	Synonym (LS) Antonym (LA)
105 &106	1	“our” “Restore Nigeria fully of nations”	Repetition (LR) Antonym (LA)
107 &108	2	“Today” “democracy”	Synonym (LS) Repetition(LR)
111 & 112	2	“military”	Repetition (LR)
113 &114	1	“our country” “military”	Synonym (LS) Repetition (LR)
115 &116	2	“military”	Antonym (LA)
117&118	1	“military”	Repetition (LR).
119 & 120	3	“Legislators” “ministers” “struggle ahead” “to be committed politicians”	Hyponym (LH), Repetition (LR) Synonym (L4) Repetition (LI). Repetition (LR)
121 & 122	1	“integrity”, “Legislator”, “civil servants”, institution”	Antonym (LS) Hyponym (LH)
123 & 124	2	“legislators, civil servants institutions”	
127 &128	1	“Confidence”	Antonym (LA).

Table 1 shows the linguistic devices were identified and analyzed. This analysis aspect combines classification and explanation of data using lexical cohesion tools or devices in analyzing the data obtained for the study. The political speech was analyzed

using a simple percentage to bring out the features of the lexical cohesion. The features comprise repetition, hyponym, synonym, antonym, and collocation.

Table 2: Summary of the Lexical Features

Lexical Features	Text	Number of occurrences	Percentages of occurrences
Repetition	29	$\frac{29 \times 100}{128}$	22.6
Collocation	2	$\frac{2 \times 100}{128}$	1.6
Antonym	13	$\frac{13 \times 100}{128}$	10.3
Synonym	19	$\frac{19 \times 100}{128}$	14.8
Hyponym	6	$\frac{6 \times 100}{128}$	4.7

Of all the lexical features analyzed, Repetition (LR) was the most frequent feature used in the political text. Repetition was used for emphasis. So, politicians lay more emphasis on words. In the speech of President Obasanjo, the words 'I,' 'me,' 'my' and "corruption" were repeated severally to achieve his purpose. This is because Obasanjo's speech was based on the actions and inactions of the past administrations, especially corruption that has bedeviled the entire nation and how he (Obasanjo) personally assures Nigerians of the various measures his administration intends stamping out corruption, no wonder the speech contained copious use of repetition. This is a political strategy. Repetition has 22.6% having twenty-nine (29) occurrences through the text. Synonym was 14.8% with nineteen (19) occurrences; next was Antonym, having 10.3% with thirteen (13) occurrences, and next to it was hyponym with six occurrences and with 4.7% frequency. The least was Collocation with 1.6% and with two occurrences in the text. The low occurrence of hyponym is that superordinate/hyponym in its indirect nature always includes several other items under them. Politicians want their audience to understand their utterances independency and not by way of an umbrella term.

From the percentages of the lexical features the followings were found.

1. Repetition, Synonym, Antonym occur more frequently than others.
The reasons for their high frequencies were evidenced in the text.
2. President Olusegun Obasanjo used repetition, showing that the electorate or audience is more convinced when ideas are repeated. From our analysis, we ob-

served that language had much need for precision (being careful) so that there is no likelihood of being misinterpreted. Therefore, politicians would rather repeat certain lexical items or phrases several times than other words, which may be interpreted differently than those intended. Another reason for the frequent use of repetition is the need to emphasize important points.

3. Synonym came closely to Repetition. Political speeches are marked with lengthy expressions joined together with conjunctions and making use of words having almost the same meanings to express and explain their ideas to convince their electorate. Antonym (LA) is next with thirteen (13) occurrences or 10.3%.
4. The lexical feature of Hyponym (LH) and collocation (LC) were not as frequently used as others in the text analyzed.

The reasons for this are that politicians are more detailed in their electorate expressions to understand the main ideas in their speeches fully. Collocations were also sparingly used by politicians because of their indirect nature and that their meanings were tied to the company of words they keep. Collocation deals with meaning relations that exist between individual words and others that habitually co-occur within a language. This does not have a surface meaning. Such words make meanings when they are used with others. It is only for the highly enlightened audience. But it is not useful to a political gathering that usually comprises both the literate and non-literate (or less literature) audience. Collocations are usually referred to as idiomatic expressions, which are not easily understood on the surface meaning. Such expressions do not attract the attention of politicians and their electorates.

CONCLUSION

This study was made possible out of the interest in how we make meaning out of political speeches. This study has explored the political speech of President Olusegun Obasanjo, seeing that much attention has been paid to other forms of formal speeches.

However, it must be stated that this study is not all-exhaustive as far as political language is concerned, and a lot of research work can still be carried out on political language using other linguistic levels of analysis. But we hope that this research work will be viewed in respect of having discussed lexical cohesion devices in a political speech based on the selection of the maiden or inaugural speech of President Olusegun Obasanjo.

The present study has attempted to contribute to existing knowledge in several ways. First, to the best of our knowledge, it serves as one of the complementary efforts to study the cohesion of political discourses in Nigeria.

Second, the study has also contributed to the increasing works on textual analysis in general and has shown the importance of cohesion, how lexical cohesion features can be used to make meaning in political speeches of the selected work.

It is hoped that this study will provide further insight into the language of politics in Nigeria and the world at large.

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