

LINGUISTIC POLITENESS STRATEGY OF PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU'S INAUGURAL SPEECH OF MAY 29, 2023

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Abstract

The Language analysts have examined various presidential inaugural speeches from a number of language levels: syntax, stylistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and discourse. However, the linguists have paid little or no attention to the linguistic politeness strategies of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Inaugural Speech of May 29, 2023 using linguistic maxims' theory of Leech. Therefore, there exists a wide lacuna in language studies and literature. To narrow the vacuum, this study is aimed at identifying the linguistic politeness strategies deployed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (PBAT) on May 29, 2023. The research obtains data from the widely circulated inaugural speech of the Nigerian president as published by The Nation, a widely read Nigerian Newspaper. The study employs Leech's theory of politeness to outline the linguistic politeness strategies PBAT applied in presenting himself as intelligible, accommodative and godsent president of Nigeria. The study reveals that PBAT applied tact maxim, approbation maxim, generosity maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim to convince Nigerians over his ability to deliver on polite governance with strict adherence to rule of laws. The study therefore recommends that public figures should equip themselves with politeness tactics in order to be admired speakers and acceptable leaders in the society.

Keywords: Politeness, Politeness Strategies, Politeness Behavior, Politeness Maxims, Inaugural Speech.

Introduction

Speeches, most especially, presidential inaugural speeches are always structured to influence the audience and the general public of the country of a given geographical location. The politicians communicate their intending policies in the speeches using various linguistic and non-linguistic mechanisms. The linguistic strategies employed in the speeches disclose the politicians' emotional feelings, competences, intentions, methods, ideas and personal beliefs. Akinseye (2015) reports that the politicians' ideas are presented in a manner that the ideas appeal to the sense of humour, justice and integrity of the audience and the general public. Akindele (1989) observes that political discourse entails persuasive senses of group of people through the use of manipulative language forming the communication environment of the society. Anwar (2021) notes that impolite language use is fraught with blasphemy and scorn resulting in provocation and destructiveness of social actors. The impolite language use is traceable to the power-drunk personalities in the developing countries whose

motive is flaunting their unnecessary power (Ogundeji 2023).

Watts (2003) submits that political discourse is a very good instrument of interaction in a conveniently recognizable geographical location as a political environment. In the course of subjecting the political discourse to linguistic analysis, the applied linguists place major interests on the transactional and interactional features of the language use. In accordance with Wardhaugh (2006) when language is used, it is not merely constructed to make people understand the users' feelings or thoughts. But the language is used in a subtle manner to define social relationship among the interactants. As a result, there must be constant choices of what is said and how it is said. Consequently, all the language users are consciously selecting dictions or lexicons which allow them to establish or sustain relationship, influence behaviour, and express their views on the issues of the world as well as make a change in the beliefs of others in the world-over.

Therefore, this study deploys politeness strategies within the framework of pragmatic

theories to investigate how polite is the 16th Head of State, Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu through his inaugural speech of May 29,2023. This research identifies the employed politeness maxims by the recently sworn-in Nigeria's president in his delivered speech at Eagles Square, Abuja on May 29,2023. The used linguistic features have, therefore, portrayed him as politely responsible and accommodative interactant in the exchange of information between him and other Nigerians.

Review of Related Literature

A number of researches have been conducted on political discourse deploying various linguistic theories in Nigeria and world-over. Odeunmi (2009) examines politeness in print media's political interviews in Nigeria. In the study, he mainly adopts Locher and Watt's relational work, a more recent and contextually based politeness theory for the analysis. In the data culled from sixty editions of two news magazines: TELL and The News published between 2000 and 2004, the scholar points out verbal behaviour, polite verbal behaviour and impolite verbal behaviour. The finding reveals that some verbal behaviours are political oriented. He notes that they need to be treated as appropriate to the situation.

Bamgbose (2016) studies a comparative analysis of politeness among teachers of private and public schools in Ibadan, Oyo State. The study culls data from both private and public schools in Ibadan. Brown and Levison's politeness strategies as well as Locher and Watt's relational works are adopted for the analysis. The study shows that all of the four proponents' politeness strategies are deployed by the teachers in public and private schools with a view to coordinating the activities of the classroom. Also, the results reveal that the teachers use instances of the politic-verbal behaviour in bearing of their daily responsibilities.

Shaika (2015) identifies the interpersonal metafunction of Nelson Mandela's presidential inaugural speech at Pretoria on May 10,1994. His investigation is from the point of view of social-semiotic issues. The investigation reveals that the architecture of Mandela's speech archives his political purposes and fulfills its interpersonal meaning by corresponding with its lexico-

grammar and considering the textual factors such as the need to reflect the economic and socio-political situations of the country at large.

Akinseye (2015) examines an interpersonal investigation of President Muhammadu Buhari's inaugural speech of May 29, 2015. The study employs the interpersonal metafunction with the framework of Systemic Functional Grammar to investigate Buhari's inaugural speech. The study identifies interpersonal roles assigned to the president and how the choice of interpersonal devices positions him as a responsible agent in the exchange of information.

Daramola (2008) examines President Olusegun Obasanjo's farewell speech to identify the linguistic and political understandings with the use of pragmatic theory. Also, Opeibi (2005) works on hidden ideologies in Nigerian political speeches. He discovers that Nigeria's politicians concentrate on praising themselves and apportioning direct attacks on out-group instead of discussing the positive issues of the national interest.

This research sets up the linguistic strategies in motion to contribute to knowledge by finding to identify the politeness strategies or maxims which President Bola Ahmed Tinubu deploys in the delivered presidential inaugural speech of May 29, 2023.

Methodology

The study deploys qualitative and quantitative approaches to the data collection. It adopts descriptive method of data analysis because the content of the data collected needing description of choice and context of the language use to show the polite behaviour of the interactant. The data of the study are culled from the published presidential inaugural speech of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu from The Nation Newspaper published on May 30,2023. Some expressions in the speech are categorized and analyzed in accordance with the politeness maxims which suit them. The analysis is done using Politeness Maxims of Leech.

Theoretical Framework

This study deploys politeness strategies of Leech's (1983) politeness principle. Leech (1983) maintains that the politeness principle is a

fundamental supplement to Gricean Pragmatics of Cooperative Principle. Therefore, Leech proposes a set of politeness maxims which are aimed at describing the interactional principles underlying language use. The maxims comprise Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim.

Tact Maxim hinges on premise that one should minimize cost to other or maximize benefits to other. This principle can mean that one should consider others first, giving due respect, regards to others and seeing them as better than oneself as a way of showing politeness to them especially in one's utterances or speeches. Generosity Maxim says that the speaker should minimize benefit to himself or maximize cost to himself. This simply means the speaker should displease himself to please others in his utterances. Approbation Maxim is defined that interactant should minimize dispraise of others or maximize praise of others in his expressives and assertives in the speech (Levinson 1983). This can give meaning to the act of avoiding making unpleasant comments about others. Modesty Maxim emphasizes that the interlocutor should minimize praise of self or maximize dispraise of others. This maxim frowns at self-praise, self-boasting and claiming glory for oneself. But it encourages interactant to give preference to others in recognition and praise at his own expense. Agreement Maxim stresses the need for interlocutor to minimize disagreement between him and others or maximize agreement between him and others. This can be interpreted that one should not break cord of friendship, but rather fasten and strengthen it. Sympathy Maxim states that the speaker should minimize antipathy between himself and others. He should maximize sympathy between him and others

Politeness as Behaviour

Jeremy (2007) sees politeness as as interactant's behaviour which does not only consist of choice of words but also involve his tone of voice. All the language users possess the behaviour of selection of diction from their linguistic repertoire to suit the purpose and effect so desired to achieve using the language. In this cause, they may choose to be polite or impolite. In

the submission of Penelope (2002), politeness involves assumptions about the repertoires of participants and their attitudes. Adepoju (2005) posits that no competent adult in the society does not possess positive values which he/ she effectively claims for himself/herself. This behavior is popularly known as FACE. It is categorized into two namely negative face and positive face. Each of these two categories of face is matched with appropriate politeness. Many pragmatists refer to face as public self-image which every competent adult strives to project. The descriptive part of the public self-image comprises body image, social class, occupation, sex and age which are assessed by semantic differentials. Many people in society, most especially, the politicians place themselves very higher than other nomenclatures in the society. So, they want other members of the community to worship them like indomitable gods when they address or are addressed. This behavior is nothing but self-esteem. It is mostly evaluative and assessed by behavior scale. Both self-esteem and self-image are associated with motivational forces in the personality. Mills (2003) notes that politeness is the expression of the speaker's intention to alleviate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts towards another. Therefore, to be polite is an attempt to save face for another. Positive face is possible to be sustained by interactants to show politeness and treat people with respect they are due for. Though politeness is a behavior which the speakers choose to possess and develop in.

Strategy of Displaying Politeness

Mills (2003) propounds different ways of displaying politeness in the transaction of utterances, by extension, speeches. The strategies are:

Expression of uncertainty and ambiguity through hedge and indirectness.

Polite lying.

Euphemism which includes use of ambiguity as well as connotation.

Preference of question tag to direct statements.

Modal tag request information of which the speaker is uncertain.

Affective tags which invites the addressees to comment on the request being made.

Data Presentation

Maxims of politeness deployed in BAT's Inaugural Speech

Tact	Generosity	Approbation	Modesty	Agreement	Sympathy
But this day does not belong to me.	Our shall govern on your behalf but never rule over you.	<i>Victory does not render me any more Nigerian than my opponents.</i>	<i>The country has been shaped by the prayers of millions, and the collective sacrifice of us all.</i>	My opponents shall forever be my compatriots.	<i>We have shouldered the heavy burdens...</i>
It belongs to you, the people of Nigeria.	We shall consult and dialogue but never dictate.	<i>Nor it renders them any less patriotic.</i>	<i>We have long ago decided to march beyond the dimness of night into open day of renewed national hope.</i>	They represent important constituencies that wisdom dare not ignore.	<i>Our enduring faith...</i>
May God bless you and may He bless our beloved land.	We shall reach out to all but never pull down a single person.	<i>They have taken their concerns to court.</i>	<i>Today, Fate and Destiny join together to place the torch of human progress in our very hands.</i>	Our government shall work with the National Assembly.	<i>...Nigeria's critics have trafficked the rumours that our nation will break apart, even perish.</i>
	Security shall be the top priority.	<i>Seeking redress is their right and I fully defend their exercise of the right.</i>	<i>We dare not let it slip.</i>	I shall serve with prejudice towards none but compassion and amity towards all.	<i>Our burdens may make us bend.</i>
	We target higher GDP growth to significantly reduce unemployment.	<i>Mr. President, you have been honest, patriotic leader...</i>	<i>We lift high this touch...</i>	... Niger Delta,... North Savannah,...Lagos,...Abuja, ...Onitsha, you are all my people.	<i>To effectively tackle "security" menace.</i>
	Our administration, your government shall renew complaints of foreign investors.	<i>You are worthy partner and friend!</i>	<i>Our administration...</i>		
	Agriculture hub shall be created.	<i>Political colouration has faded away.</i>	<i>We shall reach...</i>		
		<i>All I see are Nigerians!</i>	<i>The election that brought us to this juncture...</i>		
			<i>...who came before us.</i>		

Discussion of the Findings

Tact Maxim of Politeness in PBAT's Speech

Tact maxim of politeness hinges on the premise of maximising benefits to others rather than to oneself. PBAT satisfactorily considered masses the most important subjects to his emergence as the 16th substantive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In his inaugural speech, he gave due regards to Nigerians respecting and seeing them as better than he (is). He considered the power vested in him as trust Nigerians intentionally reposed in him for the betterment and progress of the citizenry and the country. The linguistic act which shows politeness in BAT's speech are obtainable in the excerpts below:

*But this day does not belong to me
It belongs to you, the people of Nigeria.
May God bless you and may He bless our
beloved land.*

The tact maxim shown in the excerpts from the BAT's speech were to dedicate the victory he secured as number one citizen of Nigeria to Nigerians. Actually, he was supposed to so feel on the top of the world that he could claim the glory for himself but he did not. Also, to show to Nigerians that he holds them in the high esteem and places them above himself on the drawing table of governance, he supplicated blessings from God on Nigerians and Nigeria respectively.

Generosity Maxim of Politeness in PBAT's Speech

Generosity maxim of politeness stresses the principle of displeasing oneself with a view to pleasing others. BAT deployed generosity maxim of politeness in his speech to please Nigerians who were anxious to hear from him the policies of his governance titled renewed national hope in the new administration. Epitome of the generosity maxim of politeness in the speech included but not limited to:

*Our shall govern on your behalf but never
rule over you.
We shall consult and dialogue but never
dictate.
We shall reach out to all but never pull down
a single person.
Security shall be the top priority.*

*We target higher GDP growth to significantly
reduce unemployment.*

*Our administration, your government shall
renew complaints of foreign investors.*

Agriculture hub shall be created.

BAT's lexical choice: "govern but never dictate", "reach out but never pull down", "top priority", "significantly reduce unemployment", epitomized immense generosity of the president in his speech. The lexical choice was aimed at pleasing Nigerians who have suffered enough of dictatorship, inordinate rule, security challenge, economic crunch, unemployment, hunger, mediocrity and a host of others. BAT maximized the cost of assuaging the pains of Nigerians to his administration. This fulfills the condition of Leech's principle of politeness in relation to generosity maxim that states that the speaker must maximize cost to self. Therefore, BAT's speech has depicted him as generous president deploying generosity maxim of politeness to communicate to his people.

Approbation Maxim of Politeness in PBAT's Speech

The approbation maxim emphasizes the minimizing the expressions of beliefs which express dispraise of others; but maximizing the expressions of beliefs which express approval or praise of others. BAT, in his speech took caution to minimize dispraise of his opponents in the general election that emerged him the winner and president of Nigeria. Also, he maximized the praise of his predecessor, President Muhammadu Buhari despite the allegedly political grudge existing between them. He strived to hide the emotional turbulence and praised his predecessor. The examples are:

*My victory does not render me any more
Nigerian than my opponents.
Nor it renders them any less patriotic.
They have taken their concerns to court.
Seeking redress is their right and I fully
defend their exercise of the right.
Mr President, you have been honest, patriotic
leader...
You are worthy partner and friend!
Political colouration has faded away.*

All I see are Nigerians!

The above excerpts depict PBAT as polite fellow and leader in whom power can be trusted. The utterances did not show that he harboured any hatred against his opponents. He rather praised them for embarking on the rightful exercise of seeking redress from courts of law over noticed concerns about electoral irregularities. In the same vein, he did not use abuse language against his predecessors who allegedly refused to support BAT from the inception of the electoral race. He even hyped President Muhammadu Buhari and addressed him as "honest and patriotic leader; worthy partner and friend!". BAT avoided saying odious things about the intra-party and inter-party frenemies. He disclosed in the speech that he had set aside the party colouration, seeing nothing but Nigerians.

Modesty Maxim of Politeness in PBAT's Speech

The modesty maxim of politeness submits that the speaker should minimize the self-praise expressions and maximize the self-dispraise expressions. BAT abstained from self-boasting. He desisted from using personal first person singular pronoun 'I' in subjective case and "me" in objective case where the need for the use of the grammatical units was inevitable. He applied modesty maxim as he either used "we or us" in the subjective and objective cases to avoid self-boasting on the power and authority invested in him as the president of Nigeria. He also substituted possessive adjective "my for our" to claim that the seat of president belongs to him and other Nigerians. But he only possessed the privilege to represent Nigerians on the seat at the moment. Examples of modesty maxim in the speech are:

The country has been shaped by the prayers of millions, and the collective sacrifice of us all.

We have long ago decided to march beyond the dimness of night into open day of renewed national hope.

Today, Fate and Destiny join together to place the torch of human progress in our very hands.

We dare not let it slip.

We lift high this touch...

Our administration...

We shall reach...

The election that brought us to this juncture...

...who came before us.

In the excerpts, BAT opted for "prayers of millions... collective sacrifice of us all, we..... our very hands, we dare not..., we lift..., our administration..., we shall..., ... brought us to this juncture, ...who came before us" were symbols of modesty maxim of politeness employed by BAT in his speech to minimize self-praise expressions. He used the first person plurality of possessive adjectives to include all Nigerians in the celebration of his victory and administration.

Agreement Maxim of Politeness in PBAT's Speech

Agreement maxim of politeness posits that the speaker should endeavour to minimize disagreement between himself/herself and others. BAT created maximum sense of minimizing disagreement with the people who Nigerians thought BAT might fight. BAT stuck to agreement maxim of politeness in his inaugural speech. Take for instance:

My opponents shall forever be my compatriots.

They represent important constituencies that wisdom dare not ignore.

Our government shall work with the National Assembly

I shall serve with prejudice towards none but compassion and amity towards all .

... Niger Delta,... North Savannah, ...Lagos, ...Abuja, ...Onitsha, you are all my people.

Evidently with facts and figures, BAT maximized agreement using language of politeness in his inaugural speech with a view to be polite to his opponents, lawmakers and other categories of Nigerians. The last sentence of the excerpts illustrates that BAT would see Nigerians across geo-political zones, ethnic groups, political affiliations, and religious divides as his people. He was portrayed as one who has no disagreement with anyone.

Sympathy Maxim of Politeness in PBAT's Speech

The sympathy maxim of the politeness states that the speaker should minimize antipathy between oneself and others; rather he/she should maximize sympathy between himself/herself and others. BAT displayed the politeness strategy when some of his utterances in his inaugural

speech recorded that he presented himself as one of Nigerians needing to be sympathetic with one another over issues which called for the sympathy. These are examples:

We have shouldered the heavy burdens...

Our enduring faith...

... Nigeria's critics have trafficked the rumours that our nation will break apart, even perish.

Our burdens may make us bend.

To effectively tackle "security" menace.

The above expressions suggested that Nigerians have gone through a hell on their fatherland. As one of Nigerians, BAT sympathized with himself and sympathized with other Nigerians over heavy burdens the Nigerians have shouldered and the hardship they have endured.

Conclusion

This study has been conducted to systematically, scientifically and pragmatically

analyze inaugural speech of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of May 29, 2023 with a view to providing insights into Tinubu's choice of language use in the cause of his first interaction with the citizenry of Nigeria as president. The analysis which was made by the use of politeness maxims identified politeness theories. The study analyzed the politeness maxims found in the speech through the choice of words and expressions of the interactant. The article found that the president used six politeness maxims to portray himself as a polite, patriotic, and ready-to-serve president. The politeness strategies employed in the speech were: tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim. The study recommends that all political functionaries in Nigeria should choose to be polite even in the face of difficulty. Also, other politeness strategies be employed for analysis of many other political speeches in Nigeria.

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