

A Stylistics Analysis of Some Selected Speeches of Shehu Shagari

Msuega Ahar, Ogbene U. Onaji & Myom Orkeghen

Department of Languages and Linguistics
Benue State University, Makurdi

Abstract

This paper hinges on the stylistics analysis of five selected speeches made by President Shehu Shagari between 1982 and 1983 at different occasions during his regime. Some of these selected speeches focused on search for peace, economic development, technological advancement, social integration, among others. The researchers have used the Speech Act Theory which looks at the role of utterances in relation to the behaviour of speaker-hearer in interpersonal communication as a template for the analysis of the selected speeches. The secondary source of data collection has been used, and it has been analyzed using interpretative, evaluative and analytical approaches to unravel the linguistics style of the speaker. The researchers observed that President Shehu Shagari manipulated language as a tool for effective administration. The President employed dynamic linguistics skills in addressing the audience at varying occasions. Language was simply constructed but persuasively used to build gravity and compelling force to convince the masses. The speeches are characterised with for grounding, repetition, cohesion and coherent features. The study concluded that President Shehu Shagari is seen as a leader with a creative ability to use language dynamically and skilfully in administration to convince, compel and command followership to his credit. The researchers however, recommend that these speeches should be further analyzed from the morphosemantics perspective.

Keywords: Foregrounding, Language, Speeches, Style, Stylistic

Introduction

Human history and contemporary experience have revealed practically that language has ever being a tool of manipulation in the hand of users for the accomplishment of different purposes. Anytime language is used, a manner is expressed, and anytime a manner is expressed, a style is established. The variegated nature of human endeavour has placed the demand on language as a tool for interaction to adopt different styles as used by men in the society. Because its variegated nature and functions, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, computer scientists, mass communicators have all had a stake in language use as human characteristics (Yina, 2014). As much as reason for which people used language differs so is the manner and style of language is ever unique and can be accounted for looking at the various features. Details of word choice - syntax or pronunciation reveal in to be members of a particular speech community or group of people who share social conventions, or sociolinguistic norms, about language use (O'Grady, Archibald & Katamba, 2011).

The form manner of language used at a given time is influenced by the means of communication. The choice of an appropriate form is influenced not by the personal relationship

between speakers alone, but the formality of the context and relative roles and statuses within that setting (Holmes, 2008). People choose to use a formal or informal language expression, depending on the subject matter and what purpose it is to accomplish. A speech pattern may be distinguished from another in terms of simplicity or the complicity of the language, others use figurative expression which create mental pictures to aid good understanding by the audience. In summary a speech at a given time is a linguistic architect who has the idea of what to achieve from the audience using a particular medium of communication and manner of style best seem to him. Language is therefore, carefully, creatively and purposefully used with the goal in mind.

Stylistic generally depict manner, way or style, among others. It could be seen as an umbrella term used in analysing the distinctiveness in language use, language variation among other. It is one of the recent developments in linguistic studies which has assumed a fascinating basis for language analysis both in literary and non-literary text. The researchers have upon this premise embarked on the stylistics analysis of some selected speeches made by Shehu Shagari during his regime as the president of the Nigeria as published by Federal Department of

Information entitled *The challenge of change: Selected speeches of President Shehu Shagari*. These speeches include; “The Search for Solution for Peace in Africa”, “Economic Development is Vital to Technological Advancement”, “Youth Service Corps has enhanced Nigerian Social Integration”, “The Value of Mass Literacy and the Role of Children in Nation Building among others. Having identified the use of language in a peculiar manner, the researchers’ intents is to carefully analysed the manner of language used in these various speeches.

Conceptual Clarifications

Stylistics: Stylistics is a linguistic concept upon which language analysis is made for the purpose of interpretation, explanation as well as description. For Malnkjer and Anderson (2000), stylistic analysis of a given spoken or written would describe the text at all the traditional levels of linguistic description. That is sound, form, structure and meaning, but it will not typically look at patterns created by long stretches of text. In stylistics analysis items and structures are isolated and described using terminologies and descriptive frameworks drawn from whatever school of descriptive linguistic the stylistician subscribed to or find most useful for a give purpose. This is because stylistic analysis has to be carried out with a defined purpose in the mind of the stylistician. Olusegun (2008) contributes that it can be defined as the linguistic study of style it is believed to be, the writers personal way of expressing himself. The above reveals that speakers have their individual linguistics abilities which are demonstrated in daily communications in the society. Every human being uses language, but no two individuals can use language in a completely the same way.

Ogah and Amos (2009) assert that stylistics studies which speech or writing in appropriate to which situation and tries to develop our awareness and control of these variations. It is obvious from the insight given by the above scholars that, speech varies; the variation in speech could depend on the variation in context or purpose. The assessment of the speech is determined by what purpose, occasion it was made for. And again, a speech can be in a spoken or written form in which case the pattern or manner

of the speech should agree with the means through which it is communicated. Igyo and Ahar (2020) opine that, stylistics as a linguistic concept relates to style. It is associated with the study of style.

Stylistic analysis has two different types which includes linguistic stylistic and literary stylistic. Linguistic stylistic is simply the analysis of the language and style in a given speech either spoken or written. Obaden (2017) remarks that linguistic stylistic has to do with a stylistic study that relies heavily on the scientific role of language in its analysis, such role embrace lexical, grammatical or figures of speech, context and cohesion categories. It described the elements of language used in conveying a certain subject matter on the contrary literary stylistic looks at style of literature, the element of three genres of literature; prose, poetry and drama. The focus of analysis here is the various element of literature are the finite and definable number of possible constructional techniques which make any work literature. The element of literature are those yardsticks/criteria with literature is judged and analysed (Msadu 2017). Crystal (2011) agrees that literary deals with the variation characteristics of the literature as genre and of the style of the individual author. This research however hinges on the linguistics stylistics analysis of some selected speeches of Shehu Shagari. Though they constitute a non literary text the language used in them is the basis for this analysis.

Style: Style could simply mean the way of dressing, cooking, playing, and talking among others. Mathews (2007) establishes that in the ordinary scenes of a style appropriate to a specific genre of writing or one characteristics of an individual. This reveals that, there is style which may be more fitting for a particular expression in language. A style in this sense could emphasis the either poetic, narrative approach of an expression depending on the content and context. This is why Jackson and Amuela (2006) argued, that whenever we speak and write we adjust our style to the context and audience of our communication. The note we leave for a friend confirming a social engagement is not the same as an easy written for course assessment. The discussion of the football match in the bar is not in the same style as a committee meeting. These differences in the

various speeches are determined by certain factors which may not necessarily be linguistic but paralinguistic in nature. Fabb (1997) maintains that a person's linguistic behaviour can be classified into speech styles with each speech style characterised by its own set of formal features; vocabulary, syntactic structure, phonological roles, phrasal phonology, modification of voice among others. Language is a unified system but the individuals who use it differs considerably. Thus, typical features that characterise and individual speech become items for linguistic analysis.

Cohesion and Coherent: These two concepts play a strategic role in determining a particular text in linguistic analysis. According to Orjime (2016), cohesion is a matter of contextual appropriacy of language form that is sentences and their parts. While in the case of coherence, we infer the covert propositional connection from an interpretation of the illocutionary act. People's way of speaking can be assessed to have contrary bearing features to what the aim of discussion could be all about. Speeches of various kinds are studied to establish the agreement of various utterances made by the speaker to context or situation upon which such utterances are made. The audience in any linguistic context also receives a force by what interpretation they give to utterance made by speakers in given situation. Toolan (1998) similarly observes that, the linguistic means by which sentences are woven together to make text, a process called cohesion. The starting point for such a study is the view that texts are made up of sentences, just as houses are made up of bricks, post, beanie, and so on.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks are the various postulations given by scholars which are relevant for explanation or analysis of linguistics structures. Language studies have many theories; this research however considers the speech act theory for the analysis of the selected speeches. The concept "speech act" rests solely on the assumption that the meaning of an utterance is its intended social function. In other words, the initiator of the frameworks believes that we perform actions when we use language. This theory has three basic components, they include; Locutionary, Illocutionary and perlocutionary acts

(Ndjiribe 2016). Locutionary act could be seen as the "actual words of the message". Every message is passed to the audience using words which are carefully chosen by the speaker to encode the intended message. Illocutionary act entails the intended communication. It has to do with what the speaker accomplishes by saying what is expressed using words. For instance, the speaker may give a command through a linguistic construct. It could be a threat using words among others. The last but important component of speech act theory is perlocutionary act. This speaks of the hearer's reactions to the speaker's message.

The theory examines what interlocutors do with words within a discourse situation (Omachonu, 2011). This submission reveals that language is not just spoken merely by speakers, but speakers use language as a means of doing certain things they want to do. This is the reason why language is constructed differently by individuals. The aim of using language is always the underlying basis for the choice of words. It is on this note that researchers have chosen to use this theory. The theory is actually relevant to the analysis of the speeches made by Shehu Shagari as it is obvious that each of the speeches were made with the aim to do something in the life of hearers. Moreover, it is a speech act theory and it compasses good grounds upon which speeches can be analysed meaningfully to achieve the goal for the analysis.

Methodology

The research is aimed at accounting for the linguistic style demonstrated by Shehu Shagari. The data collection is made from choice selected speeches made by the speaker during his regime as presented in various occasions. These speeches include: "Search for Solution for Peace in Africa", 1982, "Economic Development is Vital to Technological Advancement", 1983, "Youth Service Corps has Enhanced Nigeria's Social Integration", 1983, "The Value of Mass Literacy", 1982, and "The Role of Children in Nation Building", 1982. These speeches were delivered at the Patron's Dinner of Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, the Foundation Stone-laying Ceremony for the Onne Nitrogenous Fertilizer Project, the passing-out parade of the 10th Batch of Corps Members held at Tafawa

Balewa Square, the Lurching of the National Mass Literacy Campaign, and at the Enrolment of New Recruits of the Girls Guide, Brownies, Cubs respectively. The researchers used evaluative/analytical approaches as well as interpretative approach in revealing the content of speeches. The aim is not only to bring about the understanding of the speeches alone. But it is also to classify, qualify the speaker in question with unique linguistic skill which should certify a particular linguistic competence of the speaker. The discussion would encompass five different speeches. The approach will consider one speech after the other.

Discussion and Analysis of Shehu Shagari's Style

Search for solutions for peace in Africa: A close look at this speech reveals that various linguistic features are displayed in presenting to the audience. One of the prominent linguistic feature in this speech is noted by researcher is for grounding. For grounding is the opposite of background while the latter entails part of the past, behind or historical picture, the former implies the present, front picture or prominence of a thing, situation that helps in giving more understanding. For Malmkjer and Aderson (2006), the way to make world strange through text is by foregrounding certain aspects or feature of it. Ajah and Igiligi (1997) opine that for grounding is the creative use for language in such a way that the medium attracts our attention over the message. In other words, the speaker's intension is projected or fronted in the manner of presentation more than the message itself.

The speech opens with the following:

At the beginning of this administration promised the people of this country that mine will be an open government. I pledged that I would share with them my thoughts and views on all issues of national importance. I promised that this administration will hide nothing that is permitted to be communicated by the constitution from the millions of Nigerians who voted us into office so that we may serve them (Federal Republic of Nigeria, n. d.:17).

As observed earlier, the Shagari in trying to speak on the topic; "Search for Solution, Peace in Africa", began by revisiting the promised for transparency, accountability among others to the people of Nigeria. This is contrary to the norms or general pattern for speech presentation. However, it reveals consistency and the respect for the people who voted them into power. Imagine that, the beginning does not include the formal salutation people would normally begin with the idea projected here is that they have maintain their promised to the masses, in fact, in pp17 paragraphs three the president said "I am glad to stay that I have kept my promise". The above reveals the approach to first win the heart of the audience before speaking on the topic which everybody must have been eager to hear what the administration had done so far. The recollection and presentation of the promise made and the affirmation of fulfilling the promise as projected in the speech before addressing the people on the topic under consideration is a linguistic technique to win their acceptance on what could be said on the main topic. According to Carnegie (1998), to succeed in public speaking you need to get an arresting opening something that will seize the attention of people immediately. Such a thing can be a story, quotation or what even depending on the topic, the audience and the speaker.

Repetition: The speech is marked with certain phrases repeated severally in its content. As shown below:

I promise the people, first line

I promised that

This administration pp 17 line 1

This administration pp 17 line 4

This administration pp 18 third paragraph

This administration pp 19 third paragraph

Repetition is simply made for emphasis. The language used reveals that the speaker are not thoughtless of the promises. This idea could make people pay a close attention knowing that the speaker is mindful of the pending promises. The emphasis on the administration is majorly distinguishing on the Shagari's administration. It implies that, if people have hanging feelings about government and governance, this administration should be seeing with a different. The emphasis could mean that his administrations and was aimed

to be different from other administrations and should be disassociation as such. Lawal (1997) argues that many utterances are produced not with any intention to be true or false but to perform an actions. This has agreed with the claims of speech act theory. Language is used in the manner that the audience would remain receptive because of the effect of the utterance on them.

Appeal is also reflected in the speech. Where the speaker said “Mr, Chairman, Distinguished Guest permit me to begin with the issues of more concern pp 18. Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman, if I go to such length, it is because of my desire to set records straight pp 20. These are simply appeals to peoples’ emotions. The language is constructed to convince the people. The appeal is of more a request to gain more cooperation or attention from the audience. This could be understood from the context of when the speaker actually began the speech and the time he was beginning to touch on the main topic of speech.

Economic Development is Vital to Technological Advancement: The Locutionary act of this speech looks very simple and easy for the understanding of the audience. One of the first things to consider is the assessment of the opening sentences comparing the first speech that has been analysed and this very speech. Both contain the word “at the beginning” or “at the inception” of this administration, the register is commonly associated with governance and peculiar to administrators. However the use of compound sentences as feature in the speech is very obvious. For instance, (i) Nigeria today has the largest size of arable land in the world, at 71 million hectares, constituting 77% of our total space. (ii) The Nigerian farmer now uses less than 10 kilogrammes of fertilizer per hectare (iii) Thirty six months have been stipulated as a period for the completion of this project pp 29. These sentences are not too long and complicated for the understanding of the speech. This is deliberate because “speech is not an automatic reflex like sneezing or a spontaneous expression of emotion like laughing; if is skilled work” (Hudson, 2003). Adetugbo (1999) observes you say must be meaningful, logical and easy to understand. You should know your audience and adapt to them.

From this, one may conclude that the speaker seen to have understood the audience such that the use of language is simple, straight and easy to understand. The reason is, speeches are meant to be understood, communication would not be achieved where the utterance; words, phrase sentences are complicated, understanding may be affected and the purpose of the communication may be defeated.

Youth Service Corps has Enhanced Nigeria’s Social Integration: Building on the three on the three basic components of speech act theory, linguistics elements as expressed by speakers contain a force which perform the action the speaker has in mind to achieve from the audience. Consequently, every linguistic construction does not only carry a literary meaning but also contains the intended meaning. Looking at the topic of the above speech, one may conclude that Shagari was reporting the integration that has been accomplished through the scheme of Youth Corps. But the manner of presentation also serves as a reorientation for Nigerians toward more integration. The opening paragraph gives information about how the NYSC began, the few numbers, and the attendant challenges associated to the Youth Corps Scheme as a government policy. These phrases below highlighted the opening paragraph:

Amidst adverse criticism PP95 resentment from pioneer
Corps members and parents PP95
National Youth Service Corps strove among others PP95

Why would the speaker choose to bring the past close to speaks about the present? This manner of expression induces the sense of accountability, well informed of the speaker and a patriotic mentality as well as commitment to the task of governance which the masses can easily applaud. It reveals how government policies are easily criticized by the people. The criticism highlighted is also symbolic, in that it is common with the masses to disregard new inventions. However, the speaker further stated how good the policy of Youth Corps and the contribution it has made on Nigerians. The praise given to the ministry of youth and social development is actually the praise given to the administration

under which the speaker is the president. And a credit to the administration as contained in that phrases is actually a credit to the government as stated below:

At the beginning if the administration, we have given ... PP94

We have given constant support PP94

Have contributed in no small way PP94

To the rapid development PP94

The above highlights have in a brief manner shows that Shagari at the 10th celebrations of Youth Corps Scheme used language to remobilized Nigerians towards embracing government and government policies. This speech has the capacity of bringing caution to masses who would normally criticize government policies. The use of language in governance has a key role in every administration. Alagh (2018) asserts that:

The problem of governance in most underdeveloped or developing nations lies in the infective use of both human and natural resources. As such, language which is a fundamental natural resource through which other resources are brought together is not efficiently utilized to harness efficiency and accountability in governance.

The Value of Mass Literacy: In line with the illocutionary act as an aspect of speech act theory, it is noted that a speaker performs action using language. Shagari in simple language expression create awareness of the value, governmental role of education to the society and Nigerians in particular. In attempt to achieve this, Shagari employed historical statistics, of government efforts in ensuring the attainment of education in the country. For example; in 1976 the Universal Primary Education programme was launched PP13. As a result of the U.P.E scheme, millions of children are learning beyond the primary school and throughout their adult lives. PP 13

This speech seems to protect what government has done in time past to remedy the challenge of a literacy. In PP14 there is statistical account by the speaker to show the literacy level both in the rural and urban areas in the country as stated below: The federal government office of statistics show that in 1979 among persons aged 15 and above

there was in rural areas a literacy percentage of only 30.7% PP14.

The average percentage in urban areas was slightly higher at 52.1%

These statistics presented in the speech are not just meant to account or inform the masses of what level literate situation in the country was. The intention is also to challenge and mobilized the masses for the new programme the government was bringing. It is very clear that the language is very simple, but motivating to move the people towards the acceptance and enrolment in the programme the government was advertising. It was a form of campaign as indicated PP14.

As an administrator, there is always a praise link as to what government is doing to promote the policy under her administration; the speech was an attempt to reflect what the government has done rather than an exposition on what mass literacy is all about. For instance:

In 10 years, a target which the Federal government has set for itself in recognition of the right of citizens to formal education ... PP14

The Federal government in February this year set up a national literacy task force ... Pp 14

The Federal is also organizing a National literacy programmes PP15

This day, throughout the nation in every state government people are celebrating the launching of the National mass literacy campaign PP15

The various accounts of what the Federal government has achieved as stated above are more than information but indeed a means to enable the people to know what the government has done; such that people would build confidence in the government policies.

The Role of Children in Nation Building:

The language used by Shagari in this short speech is simple and fatherly. It has the capacity to induce in the children or the audience a sense of importance. Looking at the topic alone, the children are bound to feel they also have a role to play in nation building. They are considered as co-workers in building their own country. The children are endeared by the choice words that they are important, future leaders and nation builders. It also reveals that the speaker has been longing to have interaction with them as children. These can be seen in the following sentences:

- a. My delight in welcoming you stands from two main considerations, Firstly, as a father to all Nigerian children pp11.
- b. I always look forward to an opportunity to meet with you and exchange ideas with you pp 11.
- c. And I will continue to do in the area of character training for our children who will be the leaders of Nigeria.
- d. To young men and women who have just been enrolled today, I congratulate them. Praise their courage and urge them to face the demands of the task they have set for themselves pp 12.

The above sentences are simply expressed but carry they great meanings. The children who were coming from different quarters and experience sees the president who identify with them as their father. Also, he expecting to have time with them for exchange of ideas. This could not really mean that the speaker has been longing to have interaction with the young people. However, the opportunity he had with them must be properly used to build in caution and to make them have a sense of belonging which is capable of transforming their character. Thus, the choice and use language here is so influencing that can make

their behaviour to change for good of the society. Amah, Iro and Kasun (2015) reveal “language is the most important and unique property of man because it enhances communications as a basic requirement in the life of any group of people. Human beings use language as a powerful tool to ensure peace and security”. The basic matter here is language is used for communication to achieve many things and in this speech, Shagari has succeeded in identifying with all Nigerian children in the language is used. The human community is distinguished by the sophistication of its mode of communication (Popoola, 2014).

Conclusion

In nutshell, stylistic is a sub branch of linguistics which looks at the style of language use by different speakers. The study establishes that language use in some selected speeches by Shagari was characterized by simple styles of expression, using foregrounding, repetition, appeals, among others to perform various actions among the audience of varying kinds. The simplicity of language notwithstanding, Shagari uses language dynamically according to situations to persuasively and confidently endeared and convinced the audience.

References

- Adetugbo, A. (1999). *Communicative English and study skill*. University of Lagos Press.
- Agbedo, C. U. (2015). *General linguistics: A historical and contemporary perspectives*. Kumlee and Ntache Press Inc.
- Ajah, G. O. & Igiligi, E. C. (1997). *Stylistics and varieties of English*. Jopax Publishers.
- Alagh, E. I. (2018). Language as a potent tool for accountability in governance: The Nigerian perspective. In Nelson O. Alyebo & Mary N. Ikima (ed.), *Languages, literature and humanities*.
- Amah, K.M., Iro, B.L & Kasim, H.U. (2015). National peace and security in Nigeria: The role of linguistic translation. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Business Strategies and Management*. ISSN Hard print 2354-4236 online 235404244.
- Asadu, A. N. (2017). Literary stylistics. In B. M. Mbah (ed.), *Theories of contextual linguistics*, Amalia Dreams Ltd.
- Carnegie, D. (1998). *How to develop self-confidence and influence people by public speaking*. Rhema Research Institute for Successful Living.
- Crystal, D. (2011). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*, Six ed. Blackwell Publishing.
- Fabb, N. (1997). *Linguistics and literature, language in the verbal arts of the world*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Federal Department of Information (n. d). *The challenge of change: Selected speeches of President Shehu Shagari*. Civiletis Nigeria.
- Holmes, J. (2008). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (3rded). Person Education Limited.
- Hudson, R. A. (2001). *Cambridge textbook in linguistics, sociolinguistics* 2nd Edition. Cambridge

- University Press.
- Igyo, P.s and Ahar, M. (2020). A stylistic analysis of some selected works of Gbile Akani. In *Fudma Journal of Arts (FUDJ ARTS)*, 4(1), pp, 117-124.
- Jackson, H. &Amvela, E. Z. (2006). *Words, meaning and vocabulary: An introduction to modern English lexicology*. Continuum.
- Lawal, A. (1997). Pragmatics in stylistics: A speech act analysis of Soyinka's Telephone conversation. In Adebayo Lawal (ed.), *Stylistics in theory and practice*, Paragon Books.
- Malkmkjer, K. & Anderson, J. M. (2006). *The linguistics encyclopaedia*. Routledge.
- Matthews P. H. (2007). *Oxford concise dictionary of linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Ndiribe, M. O. (2016). Speech act theory. In B. M. Mbah (ed.), *Theories of linguistics*, University of Nigeria Press Ltd.
- O'Grady, W., Archibald, J. &Katamba, F. (2011). *Contemporary linguistics: An Introduction*. Pearson Education Limited.
- Obaden, I. M. (2017). Linguistics stylistics. In B. M. Mbah (ed.), *Theories of contextual linguistics*, Amalia Dreams Ltd.
- Ogah, A.T. & Amos, A. (2009). *Aspects of applied Linguistics for schools and Colleges*. Aboki Publishers.
- Omachonu, G. S. (2011). *NSUK texts in general linguistics 1*, Rossen Publications Limited.
- Popoola, M. (2014). The language Factor in Nigeria's Development: A Development Communication Perspective. *JOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(3), Pp84-91
- Shim, O. D. (2016). *Rudiments of applied linguistics*. Selfer Academic Press Ltd.
- Yina, G. (2014). An exposition on the nature of language and linguistics. In Bamidele Rotimi Badejo, Godwin Yina, Christie OgomaAnyogo& Joshua Agbo (eds.), *Linguistics: An introduction*. Apex Books Limited.