The Speech of Ambassador George Obiozor: A Novel Position Paper

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Abstract

Communication in society happens paramountly by means of language either by speech or writing. This study aims at analyzing one of the speeches of Nigerian diplomat, Professor George Obiozor, a former Nigerian Ambassador to Israel, High Commissioner to Cyprus, Ambassador of Nigeria to the United States of America and currently the president of Ohaneze ndi Igbo, an apex socio-cultural group. The study adopts the Speech Acts Theory by J.L. Austin with a particular reference to the five Illocutionary act classification. It is discovered by the researchers that over the years, only speeches of presidents, governors, military heads of state etc. have been investigated by scholars with little or no attention paid to speeches of other government officials like Senators, Members of the House of Representatives, Honourable Ministers, High Commissioners, Ambassadors, Local Government Chairmen etc. Hence, this paper is interested in discovering the speech acts of the Ambassador as the ambassador's speech exhibits a high level of communicative import. For statistical purpose, the simple percentage is used to compute the frequency of the Illocutionary acts present in the speech. Our findings, therefore, show that the expositives were preponderant in the Ambassador's speech.

Keywords*: Discourse Analysis, George Obiozor, Speech Act.*

Introduction

Shaffner (1997:2) posits that the classification of a political tent can be based on functional and thematic antenna. The author adds that political texts or speeches are all the consequences of political involvement and that they have different roles they play as we see in different political speeches like manifestos, concession speeches, inaugural speeches, press briefings to mention but a few.

A public lecture by a politician and astute professor to a university community like other political speeches is indeed a rare opportunity and avenue to discuss with the citizens / democrats, listen to their views and importantly, educate and enlighten the listeners on the happenings in the political sector and government. The reason is because leaders should be accountable to their subjects or those they are representing. This is the case as the Nigerian Ambassador to the United States of America, Prof. George Obiozor educates, informs and even 'entertains' his audience (University Community) with his humorous speech.

The primary motivation of this study is borne out of the noticed dearth of scholarly works using the Ambassador's speech as a case study, as the Ambassador is known for his high level of language manipulations. Furthermore, Professor Obiozor holistically presented a lecture on Nigeria-U.S Relations as a country's representative which he is. In addition, the speech shows how responsible and protective the Ambassador is towards his country, Nigeria and region, Africa. As earlier stated, only speeches of presidents, governors, military heads of state etc. have been investigated by scholars with little or no attention paid to other government officials like Senators, Members of the House of Representatives, Honourable Ministers, High Commissioners, Ambassadors, Local Government Chairmen etc. Hence, this paper

is interested in discovering the speech acts of the Ambassador as the ambassador's speech exhibits a high level of communicative import.

Studies On Political Speeches

Ehineni (2014) investigates the Critical Discourse Analysis of modals in Nigeria political manifestos. He uses the electioneering campaign manifestos of Dr. Olusegun Mimiko of the Labour Party (LP) now All Progressive Congress (APC) during the 2012 gubernatorial election in Ondo State. Ehineni (2014) critically observes how these politicians use the modals will, shall, must, can etc to win the people's support. Also, Ehineni notices and finds out that politicians use 'will' to demonstrate political will and commitment on their own part to reflect a sense of responsibility they have to the state in terms of transformational agenda. Finally, he concludes that politicians use 'will' in their speeches to reveal their master plan for the state.

Ehineni (2014) also researches for other modals respectively. So, for the researcher, these modals are not just linguistic elements but are political devices and ideological tools used in political discourse. They particularly accentuate focus in Nigerian political rhetoric.

Ahmed and Eje (2015) discuss the Discourse Analysis of President Goodluck Jonathan's response to the kidnapping of the Chibok girls using Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) Theory of Arguementation. The findings of their arguement reveal that Jonathan's silence after the kidnap was normatively deficient. The president's speech was towards blaming the Boko-Haram on economic disparity as opposed to the inability of the Federal government to fight the extremist through his argument. This research by Ahmed and Eje (2015) point out that politics and political realities are rooted in language since every political

situation is evoked by language. Also, the researchers show how a political speech could be used in politics to connote a lot of things other than the use of political power as used in President Jonathan's speech to the local and international community two weeks after the kidnap.

Shamdama (2015) carries out a Critical Discourse Analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's Inaugural Speech using the Fairclough's three Dimensional Analytical Model. It is discovered by the researchers that the president's speech has a revelation of plans and hopes embedded in it.

Okoye and Mmadike (2008) in same vein, research on the concession speech by President Goodluck Jonathan. The framework adopted by the researchers is the Speech Acts Theory under the Illocutionary Act of Searle's classification of the Speech Act. The finding by the researchers is that there is a preponderance of 'Assertives' in the concession speech with a total percentage of 52.3%, followed by the expressives 33.3%, directives and commisives turned out to be 9.5% and 4.7% respectively.

A similar research by Waya(2013) is been carried out as he adopts the Speech Act Ttheory for the analysis of President Goodluck Jonathan's victory and inaugural speeches which the author posit are mostly 'Assertives' as identified also by Okoye and Mmadike (2008). The researcher goes further to say that politicians perform different speech acts through their political speeches in different situations.

An analysis of thematic prominence in selected Nigerian inaugural political speeches research by Ezeifeka (2016) uses two speeches of Nigerian past leaders for analysis. The researcher adopts Halliday and Matthiessen's formulation of the lexicogrammatical feature of theme found in the textual Meta functions in Systemic Functional Grammar. Ezeifeka finds out that the textual

metafunction realised in the lexicogrammatical feature of theme serves as a resource for speakers to manipulate meanings to suit their ideological ends and calls for critical language awareness which locates the work within the Critical Discourse Analysis paradigm.

Theoretical Framework
The Speech Acts
        Mey (2001:92) posits that the Speech Acts Theory is purely a philosophical enterprise. Here, scholars tried to investigate the philosophy of language usually referred to as Ordinary Language Philosophy. The speech act has its origin and trace to Oxford philosopher, Austin John in his 1962 posthumous work titled 'How to do things with words'.

Austin's Speech Acts
According to Ezeifeka (2018) Austin isolates three basic senses of speech. When a speech is made three events occur simultaneously. They are the Locutionary Act, Illocutionary Act and Perlocutionary Act.
The Locutionary act: This act simply means the actual speech made, words uttered.
The Illocutionary act: Here, the force or intentions behind the words are emphasized.
The Perlocutionary act: This is the effect the words uttered has on the hearer or listener.
 'It's cold in here' can be used to give a clearer understanding of Austin's speech act.

Analysis:
Locutionary act: The actual words uttered

Illocutionary act: this means that the speaker needs something. It could be hot air, hot coffee, to mention but a few.

Perlocutionary act: Haven said that there is a force in the Illocutionary Act, it is this force that in turn has an effect on the hearer or the person addressed. The hearer will then on the heater, close the window etc.

Classification of the Illocutionary Act by Austin

1. **Expositives:** Talks about how the utterance relates to an argument. Ezeifeka (2018) says it is referred to as 'metalinguistic' because, it projects the speaker's thought. For instance, I reply that…, I assert that…, I illustrate… , I assume…, I postulate that…'

2. **Excersitives:** This has to do with the exercise of power, right, position etc. Examples are imperative statements, warnings and others.

3. **Verdictives:** Involves issuing a verdict about something. It could be a recommendation, criticism or even an appraisal.

4. **Commisives:** When a speaker is committed to further acts like promises and oaths. For instance, I promise to love you forever.

5. **Behavitives:** Basically talks about emotions like sympathy, empathy, happiness.

Searle's Classification of the Speech Acts: A Revisit

Searle's classification of the Speech Acts was spurred up by the irregularities, incompleteness, inconsistency which he saw in Austin's (1962) classification Mey (2001:119). The five speech acts identified by Searle are the representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaration. The following subsection reviews works by scholars.

Methodology

The data for this study is the lecture of Professor George Obiozor, Nigerian's Ambassador to the United States of America (2004-2008). It was retrieved from YouTube, Birmingham Young University (BYU) Kennedy Center. The speech was delivered to the University Community inclusive of staff and students. The academic lecture comprises of about forty-four sentences named extracts 1-42. These extracts represent the different Illocutionary acts. The simple percentage was finally employed to compute the percentage of the speech acts with the aim of discussing the preponderant Illocutionary act classification. The formulae for speech is

No of Illocutionary acts   x 100

Total no. of extracts   1

Data Presentation and Analysis

Expositives: The expositive type of the Illocutionary act classification basically talks about how an utterance relates to an argument. It gives information on topics. Ezeifeka (2018) refers to it to be metalinguistic because it projects the speakers thoughts, ideas, etc.

Forty Sentences of the Ambassador:

Expositives

1. I bring you greetings from President Olusegun Obasanjo, the President, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
2. It is my pleasure to be here at Birmingham Young University.

3. I will tell you what Nigeria has done within the international community
4. Nigeria's population is about 150 million
5. We have about 250 ethnic groups
6. We have so many newspapers in Nigeria
7. Here in the United states, I strand between CNN and Fox, that is what choice is
8. Many people are very curious about religion in Nigeria
9. My own concept of religion in Nigeria is that we are approximately 40% Christians, 40% Muslims and 20% that are in search of other religion.
10. In Nigeria, religion is there but ethnicity is stronger.
11. Nigeria since independence has been involved in peace keeping and peace observing
12. Nigeria is a responsible international actor in the search for peace and stability within the international community.
13. I want to summarize using a triad
14. At the military strategic level, Nigeria and the U.S are getting along
15. At the political diplomatic level, we don't have too much problem
16. The period of political problem was during the civil war
17. Nigeria is the 5th largest producer of petroleum in the world
18. Today, whenever they say what is OPEC going to do?, I know the American officials will ask, hope Nigeria will attend.
19. As a catholic, our greatest prayer is lead us not into temptation
20. Nigeria is one of the largest importers of U.S wheat
21. It is clear to the two countries that they need each other
22. Nigeria is an aspiring regional power

23. The united states interest in Africa has three approaches
24. I mentioned that Nigeria is currently the fifth largest importer of U.S wheat
25. The issue I want to mention before I leave everything for questioning
26. The government of Nigeria is not happy with the letter writers
27. There is an agency called the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
28. In 1999, a country of about 120/130 million people, we had only 400,000 telephone lines, one telephone company, a monopoly
29. When the present administration come into power
30. It is my pleasure to let Nigerians know that from 400, 000 telephone line, today we have up to 25 million
31. You should clap for Mr. President on my behalf so I will tell him that some Nigerians clapped for him in Birmingham Young
32. In that area and other areas, we have recognized that an individual can make a difference in a nation
33. Democracy in Nigeria is going on well
34. What we need is a president and particularly a leader that is nature and capable of treating citizens when they and want to jump over the fence
35. The united states will do much better
36. Africa deserves attention
37. Crisis attracts this kind of disturbances
38. Africa is also one of the battle grounds indeed for terrorism
39. That is the conclusion
40. Fire with your questions.

ANALYSIS
Expositives

The ambassador greatly employs pronouns in the speech. This can be seen in extracts 1-6. The pronouns were used consequently. The pronouns are also discovered in extracts 9,13,21,24,30 & 31. Furthermore, the expositive contained lots of conceptual metonyms like in extracts 11,12,22,35 and 36. A whole was used to represent a part in the concept of contiguity.
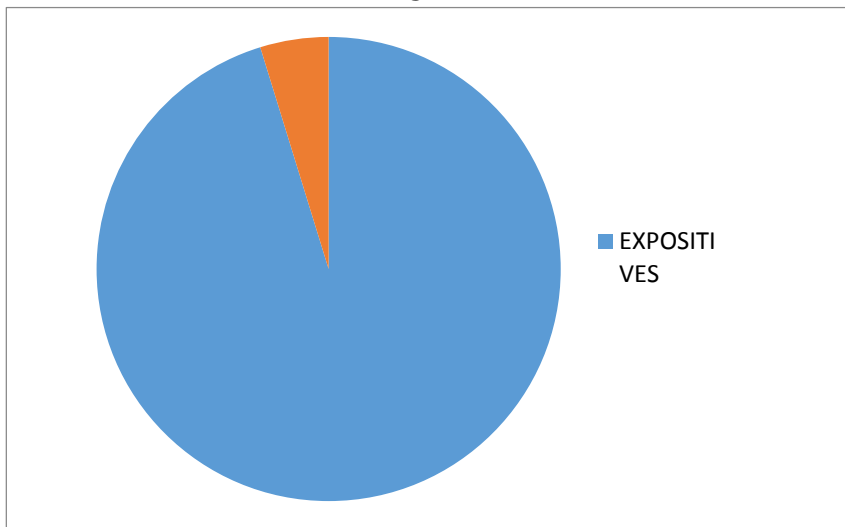
Behavitives

Behavitives investigates the sympathy, joy, empathy, happiness, etc. employed in a speech.

41. It is my pleasure to be here
42. I'm glad it's the last.

PIE CHART

■ EXPOSITIVES

Findings and Conclusion

The researchers after a careful study discover that there is a preponderance of the expositives in the lecture. This is in line as it is a lecture. The ambassador who doubles as a diplomat, educates his audience with the goal of informing them on a particular discourse and that is what the ambassador did as an astute Professor of International Affairs. Moreover, the topic of the lecture is the subject of his doctoral dissertation. This implies that the ambassador is a responsible actor within the international community, as he informs the university the development and positive changes that have been going on in the country. This especially with the advent of the democratic system of government, having Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, as the first democratic president. The expositives are **95.24%** while the behavities are **4.76%** .

In conclusion, the research attempted an analysis of the lecture by Nigerian's one time ambassador to the United States of America, Prof. George Obiozor at Birmingham Young University, America. So far, this paper has tried to account for the Illocutionary acts present in the lecture. Our findings show that there is a preponderance of expositives like where the ambassador made mention that 'Nigeria since independence has been involved in peace keeping and peace observing' and 'Nigeria is a responsible international actor in the search for peace and stability within the international community', few behavitives, absence of excersitives, commisives and verdictives. This study is significant in the sense that it has paved has paved a way for other speeches and it has shown that other speeches, and not only the governors and presidents speeches worth studying and analyzing. From the study as a bedrock, one can evidently postulate what a Nigerian ambassador's speech content looks like, showing its different nature from the governors / presidents and other leaders speech.

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