

## Some Rhetorical Tools in Nwaubani's 'I do not come to you by Chance'

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### Abstract

This paper identifies and describes the prominent linguistic and Rhetorical elements as techniques for persuasion in the text 'I do not come to you by Chance' and also relates such techniques to its thematic issues. Thirty (30) relevant linguistic items (metaphors, proverbs and rhetorical questions) are selected and examined in the course of the analysis. Anchoring on the Systemic Functional Linguistics, the paper observes that linguistic techniques such as metaphors, proverbs and rhetorical questions are preponderant in the discourse for the purpose of influencing and controlling the thoughts and actions of the other participant(s) in the discourse. In order to explore the properties of language employed coupled with the fact that the study is text-bound, text description method is adopted. From the analysis, it is evident that language use in persuasion is usually laced with rhetoric. Having noted that metaphor, proverb and rhetorical question are effective relevant tools in rhetoric and the exercise of ideological manipulation, this study demonstrates that rhetorical tools are strategic to the language of persuasion. It further establishes that speakers employ these tools differently at different contexts.

**Keywords,** Rhetoric, Rhetorical Question, Persuasion, Proverb.

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## 1. Introduction

Language is a set of words or linguistic items intentionally employed to express our ideas to others Hashmi (1988). It is a means through which we express our thoughts without which we cannot express our minds. It is a socially based tool in the sense that individuals interact with one another and behaviours are regulated through language use. Language comprises sounds, words and sentences that are employed either to persuade, to convince, to encourage or to dissuade. In the word of Okesipe & Okolo (2013), language can be exploited in different contexts for different purposes. The paper explores how textual rhetorical strategies are exploited by participants to control and manoeuvre the minds and thoughts of other participants or characters in the prose text 'I do not come to you by chance'. Halliday (1985,15) opines that,

The linguistic analysis enables one to show how, and why, the text means what it does. In the process, there are likely to be revealed multiple meanings, alternatives, ambiguities, metaphors and so on. Halliday further explains that the analysis of a text is a means of revealing what a text is or what is not, in what respects it succeeds and in what respect it fails, or is less successful.

The ability to persuade an audience has been linked to Aristotle's three forms of appeal, ethos, logos and pathos (Alo, 2013). Ethos is concerned with speaker's ability to display a personal character which makes the speech credible. Logos deals with the ability to provide rational argument through reasoning while pathos is concerned with the speaker's power to arouse emotions in the audience. Despite the power of rhetoric in persuasion, in most cases, speakers exploit their oratory power to lure innocent minds to bad acts. The text under consideration in this paper is a hypothetical example. 'I do not come to you by Chance' illustrates the travails of Kingsley Ibe who has a good education and a promising career ahead of him. Life however does not go according to plan with the economic crisis which makes it next to impossible to get a job even for first class graduates. Things eventually fall apart for Kingsley when his father falls ill and the family is unable to afford the treatment needed to save his life. His sweetheart dumps him because he cannot provide for her and thus sees no future in their relationship. Kingsley, after series of power play from the use of powerful rhetoric meant to change his mind-set

from his uncle, decides to join him in the 419 business. This serves as a milestone achievement for his uncle, Boniface, aka Cash Daddy who is keen about luring Kingsley into his illicit business. Thus, this situation sets the major conflict of this story. The major theme that pervades this fictional work is that of social challenges and their attendant influences. Other major thematic preoccupations of this text include poverty and the internet fraud. Ordinarily, Kingsley Ibe, a holder of a good university degree holds strongly the opinion that one should not engage in any shady deal that can tarnish one's name and integrity. His family economic challenges unavoidably presented his uncle the opportunity to manoeuvre him. The power play of language changed completely Kingsley's orientation about life. This paper therefore examines some of the linguistic strategies that are exploited especially by Cash Daddy in an attempt to lure and convince Kingsley into sharing his ideology of life

## 2. Review of Related Studies

Wague (2004) posits that rhetoric is the study of how writers and speakers employ words and expressions to influence an audience. The basic intention behind the use of rhetoric is to influence certain ideologies and thoughts at certain points during a discourse. It has also been demonstrated that rhetoric performs designated function(s). Ukwuegbu (2002) asserts that a metaphor explores the indirect comparison of two items. Metaphors are means of understanding a target domain in terms of the source domain. The use of metaphor in speech illuminates a clear and convincing picture of situation being described.

Egblewogbe (1980), Webster (1982) and Mieder (1985) define proverbs as short philosophical sentences or phrases that contain general truths about life. This truth may be local or universal. According to Okpewho (2004,227), every proverb, like oral literature, must have started as a product of an artist's genius but came to be appropriated by a community because they contain some truth about life. Nwachukwu-Agbada (2002,50) opines that proverbs have the capacity of having more than one meaning. This he says is based on the contextual differences.

Akinbode (2009) describes a rhetorical question as a kind of interrogation by the speaker without necessarily expecting an answer from the audience. Speakers usually explore this linguistic strategy for the purpose of emphasising their contentious arguments.

Available related linguistic research works on rhetoric have revealed that different scholar's poetry has actually investigated the exploration of different rhetorical tools in an attempt to influence the thoughts. Yusuf (1997) examines the social conceptions about certain proverbs that concern women. He calls for a change in such wrong conceptions since the research has shown that they are not true. Our present study differs since we have a broad focus. Nwagbara (2010) investigates as a form of creation and rhetorical enterprise. From the basis of speech act theory, he posits that certain communicative act are performed through the artful and contrived metaphorical language. The present study is different since we do not intend to analyse any poem. In addition, our focus transcends just the aspect of a metaphor.

Alo (2013) examines the use of English modality as a rhetorical tool in Nigerian Political Manifestoes for the purpose of persuading the voting masses to their advantage. He observes that the deployment of such modal auxiliaries constitutes a strong factor in the appraisal of political actors while in office. This study, however, differs as we are not concerned about modality and political manifestoes. Babatunde and Aremu (2017) investigate the aspect of conceptual metaphor in obituary announcements in Nigerian Print Media. They reveal that obituary announcement in Nigerian English is often characterised by the mapping of death as destroyer, a terrible or injurious being, a passage and a thief. They conclude that in order to understand the conceptual metaphors in obituary announcements, one needs to first understand the socio-cultural, situational, and linguistic contexts in which they are used. This present study is different since we examine a novel and not obituary announcements. This study therefore aims at filling the gap by investigating, from the linguistic point of view, the deployment of rhetorical strategies for the basic reason of achieving persuasion.

## 2. Methodology

Since the research is text-bound, Nwaubani's 'I do not come to you by Chance' was carefully and critically examined while taking note of the rhetorical features in the text. The instances of these features were identified and served as data for our analysis. Thirty (30) relevant linguistic items (metaphors, proverbs and rhetorical

questions) were randomly identified and examined as samples for analysis. The samples were carefully investigated and described in relation to the major thematic issues in the text.

### *Theoretical Perspectives*

The sample texts used in our analysis in this study represent linguistic devices used mainly for the purpose of persuasion. To this end, the Systemic Functional Linguistics is relevant to this study.

### *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)*

Malinoswski, Firth and Whorf greatly influenced the view of M.A.K. Halliday in the origination of the Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory (SFL), Byram (2000). The theory is viewed as a theoretical explanation of how language operates in systems, M. A. K. Halliday (1985). Lock (1996) is of the opinion that SFL is a system of communication which sees language as a whole system that seeks to analyse how language users express meaning. Bloor and Bloor (2004) opine that utterances are used to perform different communicative functions based on their contexts. The study adopts systemic functional ethnographic descriptive perspective so as to relate some of the identified linguistic structures of the text under study to their communicative functions. The notion of language as a code and language as a behaviour are brought together by using each to explain the other, and by interpreting language in relation to its place in people's lives, Halliday (1984). In this, a systemic description attempts to interpret simultaneously both the code and the behaviour.

Functions of language that fulfil the range of human needs are categorised under the umbrella of three 'metafunctions', ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions. The ideational function relates to the ability to construe human experiences, naming entities and building up categories and taxonomies. The interpersonal metafunction allows people to enact personal and social relationships with each other while the textual metafunction reinforces the enabling of text construction in order to facilitate the other two metafunctions. Hence, both the ideational and textual metafunctions of language are relevant to this study.

### *The Concept of Rhetorical Strategy*

A rhetorical analysis is an essay that breaks a work of fiction or non-fiction into parts and then explains how the parts work together to create certain effects -whether to persuade, entertain or inform. A rhetorical analysis can be conducted on visual argument such as cartoon or advertisement, or an oral performance such as a speech. Rhetorical strategies have been the focal point of attention in linguistic research over the years, both in Nigeria and beyond. In fact, scholars have investigated the use of different rhetorical devices in communication

## **4. Data Analysis and Discussions**

### **Data Analysis**

#### *The use of Metaphorical expressions*

Oni and Oni-Buraimoh (2017) are of the opinion that there are two views on the notion of metaphor, the classical and contemporary view. The classical theorist views metaphor as a matter of language where metaphorical expressions abound in different literary works. Hence, they are not common in everyday language. Contrary to this opinion, the contemporary theorists within the cognitive linguistics provides that metaphoric expressions exist in thought and therefore metaphor abound in everyday language. Speakers use this strategy for the purpose of driving home their points in most cases. The text under study is no exception as some of the instances of the use of metaphor are identified and discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

- i. They returned armed with Masters Degrees.
- ii. To my parents, education was everything ...the ticket to eternal life.
- iii. Charity had a good head on her shoulders.
- iv. The Igbos are the niggers of Nigeria...
- v. ... long-leg was about to work in my favour.
- vi. ...money-miss-road people,...
- vii. ...and gave him another United Nations hug.
- viii. These white people were harmless.
- ix. Cash daddy had enough clout to keep the police eyes closed and ...
- x. It's time for you to fly out of the nest.

Text i - They returned armed with Masters Degrees- demonstrates the use of metaphor to explain the condition of Kingsley's parents as at the time they arrived from abroad. The writer explores the metaphorical expression to capture Mr and Mrs Ibe's level of educational which contradicts their present economic condition. In the text ii- To my parents, education was everything ...the ticket to eternal life- education is metaphorically seen as a guarantee that one cannot be poor in life, the recipe for wealth. Though this metaphorical expression sounds ironical with the poor state of things in the life of Mr and Mrs Paulinus Ibe who are both educated to the University level. However, the expression strongly explains the kind of premium that Kingsley's parents pay on education. To them, 'any of their children who decides to be useless and not go to university has his own self to blame for whatever their life turns out to be'. To this end, each of their children is persuaded to take education as a life-time achievement. Text iii- Charity had a good head on her shoulders- simply implies that Charity is not only brilliant but very clever and has the ability to take care of herself at tempting periods in life.

Kingsley makes this statement to console himself and allay the fear that Charity, his younger sister could be led into going astray by boys. He is of the opinion that Charity can always apply wisdom to avert taking wrong decisions while under tempting situations. In text iv, the term 'niggers' is deliberately used to address the black people in America that were (are) second class human beings. Hence, the term is used metaphorically to appeal to the sense of pity of the addressee who ignorantly is being cajoled to believe in the 'sincerity' of the speaker and in the subject of discourse. The metaphorical expression in v implies using connection to get favour or undue support one can get. In essence, Kingsley relies on the assumption that Cash Daddy's connection would definitely help him secure a decent and lucrative job. Text vi is metaphorically relevant since it refers to the rich ones that people believe do not worth it. Aunt Dimma's intention here is to persuade Kingsley's mother to seek financial assistance from Cash Daddy not minding the source his wealth. To Dimma, no matter how bad someone may be, such will definitely be useful in one way or another. Though Cash Daddy's source of wealth may not be clean, his assistance at a time like this cannot be ignored.

In the case of text vii, Kingsley refers to the expression -United Nation hug- as a form of encouragement and persuasive tendency towards the unsuspecting Mr Hooverson who is about to be duped. Kingsley believe that a white man that is swindled can fight back by harming the swindler. In a form of assurance, Cash Daddy debunked this belief in a metaphorical way that 'white people are harmless' in text viii. However, Kingsley, eventually caves in. The metaphorical meaning of the statement in text ix is that the police will pretend as if they are not aware of the fraudulent activities of Cash Daddy. It's a statement meant to persuade and also assure Kingsley of police's protection in the illicit business. It further exposes the view that the police is also culpable in the commission of most of the crimes. That usually, they are collaborators. Text x, implies that Kingsley should be ready to travel out of the country on 419 business trip. On one hand, such a move is meant to give Kingsley the feelings that he has actually arrived as an international person. On the other hand, it is also meant to encourage him to stay glued to the '419' business.

One of the major thematic preoccupations in the text under study is the internet fraud. By and large, metaphor has been vehemently deployed in the text with the aim of affecting the mind-set of the concerned audience. Kingsley is eventually lured into the illicit internet fraud business with Cash Daddy having fallen victim of the power of his rhetoric. Consequently, the importance of the knowledge of metaphorical expressions to achieve varied purposes in our language use is brought to the fore at this juncture. Metaphorical expressions have therefore contributed to the promotion of the internet fraud business of Cash Daddy eventually wins Kingsley Ibe's attention to his side.

### ***The use of Proverb/Idiom***

Proverbs have been described as special expressions borne out of cultural experience. They usually encapsulate lengthy explanation to a succinct one. Proverbs are expected to be studied and learnt for proper interpretation. As a rhetorical strategy, writers and speakers exploit this to woo their audience into believing them.

- i. Wisdom is better than gold.
- ii. Any child who claims that he knows as many proverbs his father should be prepared to pay as much tax as his father does.
- iii. A fart becomes a stench only when there are people around.
- iv. When one sees a dog playing with somebody it's familiar with, it looks as if the dog cannot bite.

- v. It is only the fly that doesn't have advisers that ends up in the coffin with the corpse.
- vi. When the eye weeps, the nose also weeps.
- vii. One does not refuse the food being offered without first opening the pot.
- viii. Mind you, no one gets a mouthful of food by picking in between another person's teeth.
- ix. Don't be like grass cutter who likes eating nuts but doesn't like climbing palm trees.
- x. Whatever the python gives birth to must eventually be long.

### Discussions

The simple message of encouragement in the immediate text i above- Wisdom is better than gold - is to seek for wisdom as against ignorance and laziness. It is expected to ginger one to action as intended by Kingsley's father, Mr Paulinus Ibe. He opines that the success of every human endeavour is a factor of the extent of wisdom one can deploy. Therefore, wisdom is a necessary virtue that must be sought first. Text ii - any child who claims that he knows as many proverbs his father should be prepared to pay as much tax as his father does- is a typical proverb meant to warn any ignorant person toiling with fire. Cash Daddy compares himself with fire thereby uses this proverb as a sign of warning to anyone contesting a woman with him. That such an individual should be prepared for a big big contest. Text iii - A fart becomes a stench only when there are people around- proverbially illuminates the condition of whoever is in the public eye. It emphasizes the notion of being modest especially in the public places. Cash Daddy tries to initiate Kingsley into the modest king of a behavior that suits their caliber, i.e. the rich and affluent ones in the society.

The proverb in iv- demonstrates the level of connivance and collaboration of the security operators in the perpetration of crime in our society as reflected in the text. Cash Daddy always pays homage to police to secure their protection in his fraudulent business. In v, the proverb implies that the police is always in support of Cash Daddy's swindling activities. Text vi is a deliberate use of proverb by Cash Daddy to prepare Kingsley's mind to see each other as confidants. This is basically giving Kingsley the assurance that he will not be lonely or left in the lurch in the so-called internet fraud business. That Cash daddy is always there for him in time of need as a reliable 'partner in businesses. In a related manner, excerpt vii is a proverb of persuasion in the sense that it is employed strategically to lure Kingsley into putting up a trial at the fraud business. Since Kingsley seems to be adamant and not disposed to engaging in internet fraud business, Cash Daddy believes strongly that only through serious persuasive language can Kingsley change his mind. In the same vein, the proverbs in the texts viii – x are tailored by Cash Daddy towards making Kingsley to stay glued to the illicit internet fraud business.

To this end, proverb, as Mowarin (2013) explains, is 'the palm oil with which words are explained. It has been judiciously explored in the text 'I do not come to you by Chance' to drive home the theme of *internet fraud* as exemplified in the mentioned text. In essence, proverbs not only illuminate but also facilitate better understanding of expressions.

### The Use of Rhetorical Questions

Taiwo (2005) is of the opinion that interrogative forms are usually employed in discourse to make point clearer. In short, it is a strategic expression as it moves and gingers the audience to act in a special way. The text under consideration in this study is no exception as the use of rhetorical question abound.

- i. Is honesty an achievement?
- ii. So what has your father achieved?
- iii. How much money is he leaving for you when he dies?
- iv. And all the things they stole from Africa, have they paid us back?
- v. Would he shoot himself afterwards or live to tell the story?
- vi. What would my mother say when she saw it?
- vii. ...about what could happen if he is caught?
- viii. Kings, what do you mean by thanking me?
- ix. And guess what?
- x. Is there any law that says she must shave?

The rhetorical question in (i) above is a deliberate attack on Kingsley Ibe who confidently boosts of his preparedness to remain honest as nothing is comparable even though life is unpalatable for him and his family members. A question like this poses serious psychological torture to the mind of the addressee who may end up



in a dilemma. In (ii), Kingsley Ibe is asked to ruminate over the poor life his father lived and also get ready to take up the internet fraud business as a means of securing his own better future. The remaining texts iii – x have also been used by the writer for the purpose of persuading Kingsley to be committed and see the said business as a means of living a better life. In essence, rhetorical question is one of the effective language devices that are explored in the business of rhetoric.

In a nutshell, rhetorical question as a strategy has been exploited by the writer in order to emphasize *poverty* as one of the major thematic preoccupations of the text. It brings to the fore that poverty can actually lead one to jettison one's principle as reflected in Kingsley Ibe. He becomes an easy prey to the powerful rhetorical questions that act on his psyche due to his poor economic condition.

## 6. Conclusion

This work has investigated how rhetorical strategies are deployed by the writer in the text in order to gain control of the mind-set of the reader. The paper, by undertaking rhetorical analysis of the text under study, we have not only been able to expand the discourse around the linguistic phenomenon of discourse strategies but has also shown that rhetorical strategies like metaphor, proverb and rhetorical question are effective tools in the use of language especially for persuasion. In essence, the paper has demonstrated its consonance with previous related studies such as Fairclough (1989), Edwards (2006) and Alo (2013) that speakers deploy strong rhetorical strategies to gain unfettered access to the mind of their audience.

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