
AFRREV LALIGENS

An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Vol. 2 (1) February, 2013:170-190

ISSN: 2225-8604(Print)

ISSN 2227-5460 (Online)

Analysis of Experiential Meaning in Selected Inaugural Political Speeches in Nigeria

Ezeifeke, R. Chinwe, Ph.D.

Department of English Language and Literature

Nnamdi Azikiwe University

Awka, Nigeria

E-mail: chiezeifeke@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper analyses two inaugural speeches of two Nigerian past leaders; Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979) and General Olusegun Obasanjo (1999), using the systemic functional grammar model propounded by Halliday. The paper looked at the lexicogrammatical choices and how these systemic choices realize the experiential meaning; meaning as content or as a representation of reality. Since language is a resource for making meaning by choosing from a wide range of potential options available in the linguistic system, the actual choices speakers and writers make are said to be constrained by how they are positioned in terms of power, their ideologies and other purposes which they wish to accomplish in the various contexts of situation. The paper offers explanations for the actual linguistic choices made as against the potential choices which could have been made, and how these choices portrayed the power relations and ideological positions of these past leaders. The findings aim at creating awareness to readers to strive to decode hidden

meanings from naturalized and commonsense discourses. This stance locates the present work within the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Key words: experiential meaning, systemic functional grammar, critical discourse analysis, power relations.

Introduction

Language encodes the individual and collective experiences of its users by the meaningful choices they make out of the totality of the potential choices made available to them by the network of options in the linguistic system. The actual choices language users make manifest in the form of texts, which Halliday (1978:40) referred to as “the actualized meaning potential”. Texts contain the speakers’/writers’ experiences and worldviews; that is, the angle of reality which they wish to project as the “truth”, how they wish to be positioned in that text, the power relations, ideological positions and roles they wish to assign to themselves in relation to others. The study of texts from a critical linguistic perspective usually aims to locate the text within its context of situation, the historical perspectives which frame such texts and the large sociopolitical concerns within the speech community in which such texts are produced, distributed and consumed. This approach to textual analysis is termed “the discourse-historical approach” to critical discourse analysis (Wodak, 2004:63-75). Against this premise, we present a brief historical background to the issues that frame the present study so as to put our arguments in the right historical perspective. Our textual data were excerpts drawn from two inaugural speeches of our past leaders. Inaugural speeches were selected because at the point of their writing, the speakers were making proposals about their governance and how it would be beneficial to their subjects.

The Shagari and the Obasanjo civilian regimes which inaugural speeches formed the textual data of the present study were sandwiched between repressive and stifling dictatorial military juntas. Their regimes, at different times, represented the light at the end of the tunnel for Nigerians. In the former case, Nigerians needed a respite from thirteen years of military rule characterized by corruption and suppressive decrees. For the latter, the “second coming” in 1999 brought a lot of hope to Nigerians as the light that would bring them out of darkness such that when the speech was captioned “The New Dawn”, Nigerians hoped that the messiah had come at last to redeem them from the excruciating experiences of austerity measures,

structural adjustment programmes, ‘belt tightening measures’, unending transition programmes, suspected clandestine killings and the self succession bids which made the future of the country “very bleak” indeed (Osuntokun & Aworawo, 2003:250). The preceding political era represented the darkest in the Nigerian political history such that the two speeches represented hope, succour, and a source of freedom from dictatorship, corruption and human right abuses. In fact, according to Osuntokun, Aworawo and Masajuwa (2003:228), Obasanjo’s speech was regarded by the international community as “the second most important day in Africa’s recent history, after Nelson Mandela’s installation as president of South Africa”.

However previous experiences with governance and leadership in this country have left the citizens disillusioned, resigned and suspicious of our political elite. Describing the language of politicians, Agbede (2008:171) bemoaned the penchant with which the Nigerian political office holder employs language – “verbal carpentry” – to “bamboozle, mesmerize, hoodwink and coo” the governed, manipulating, misleading and deceiving them in order to enthrone their corrupt and selfish practices. According to him, the three arms of government in Nigeria are culpable in this culture of misrule such that they have earned themselves the tags, “executhieves”, “legislouting” and “judisharing”, these coinages pointing to the very debased level to which the Nigerian political leaders have fallen in the estimation of their subjects. This kind of assessment would be an extreme case of personal judgement on our political elite as we have also experienced some cases (though few and far between) of leaders in Nigeria who have shown exemplary leadership.

Against this backdrop, we subject the two speeches to critical scrutiny to find out how the language used in the speeches reflected the true situation in Nigeria during the two regimes, how the content of the speeches represented the yearnings of the people, how the lexicogrammatical choices reflect the power relations and ideological positions implicit in the speeches, the genuineness of the promises and the willingness of the speakers to take responsibility of what they were saying.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an offshoot of research efforts in discourse analysis. It is a relatively new research paradigm which gained prominence in the 1970s as Critical Linguistics (CL). The term ‘Critical Linguistics’ was first used by a group of scholars working in the University of East Anglia, Norwich – Roger Fowler, Robert Hodge, Tony Trew and Gunther Kress –as the last chapter of their work *Language and Control* published in 1979 (Fairclough 2002). CDA scholars believe that this research paradigm is neither a theoretical framework nor a method of enquiry, nor even an analytical tool. Van Dijk (2004:99) calls it “a perspective in doing scholarship” while Wodak and Meyer (2004:2) refer to it as a “research paradigm”, a kind of orientation or model or pattern of research in need of constant revising. Jaworski and Coupland (2002:115) refer to CDA as a sort of “forensic activity with a libertarian political slant”. These scholars take political stance explicitly and apply critique to the analysis of oppressive, manipulative, and repressive propaganda in language use. Their aims were to locate and reveal opaque power structures in texts and bring them to the surface for scrutiny. By so doing, consciousness raising and awareness is created in text producers and consumers to the potentials of texts to hide dominant ideological positions. This would ultimately lead to the creation of ‘critical awareness’ (Fairclough, 1999:222).

CDA is also interested in the polarization between ingroups and outgroups, the “us” and “them”. This view is further illustrated by van Dijk (2004:103) in his claim that,

CDA research is often interested in the study of ideologically-biased discourses and the ways these polarize the representation of ‘us’ (in groups) and ‘them’ (out-groups). Both at the level of global and local meaning analysis, we thus often witness an overall strategy of positive self and negative other presentation in which our good things and their bad things are emphasized and our bad things and their good things are de-emphasized.

We applied this framework to the present study because as our everyday lives become pervasively textually-mediated, it becomes pertinent to question

certain textual representations and the ideologies implicit in their representation of individuals and groups within social settings.

Systemic Functional Linguistics

The systemic functional theory has been recognized by many scholars working in the area of CDA as a powerful explanatory and evaluative framework for analyzing language use in context.

The concept of ‘meaning as choice’ is essentially the basic component of systemic theory. Halliday (1973:29) identified three ‘meaning potentials’ - ideational, interpersonal and textual- and referred to them as ‘macro-functions’ or ‘metafunctions’. A speaker chooses from a rich inventory of potential options in the linguistic system to produce intended meanings which have significance to how s/he wishes to be positioned in discourse. The actual choices so produced is a text – the “actualized meaning potential” which are meant to serve the speaker/writer’s communicative purposes. Meaning (ideational, interpersonal and textual) is said to be an interface between contextual dimensions of field, tenor and mode; and lexicogrammatical dimensions of transitivity, mood and theme; and this simultaneously form what Halliday (39) calls “Social Semiotic”. The contextual dimension gives the text what Eggins (29, 54) would call “generic” and “registerial” coherence. Texts are said to relate to its context through its register and its genre, and to the lexicogrammar through its choice of participant roles, role relationships and how the text relates to itself to form texture so as to be meaningful to the reader.

Bhatia (1993:13-16) refers to a genre as a “recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by members of the speech community in which it occurs”. Fairclough (1995:138) refers to genre as “language use associated with a particular social activity”, and in our case political discourse. A text is said to have generic coherence when we can identify a unified purpose motivating the language usually expressed through a predictable generic or schematic structure. Thus, a political discourse should exhibit linguistic features (register) and a cognitive move structure (generic structure) to mark it out from other discourses which belong to other genres. Whereas the generic structure of a text is text-internal –that is, the unique structural patterning which characterizes a particular text type, schematic structure is reader-generated, that is, the pattern imposed on the text by individual

readers. For our purposes, schematic structure/generic structure of the political speeches will be analyzed to determine how the structuring of the moves provide the means of identifying the presentation of 'self' and 'others', and how the choice of these moves were used to paint an idyllic picture of the status quo.

Experiential Meaning

Experiential meaning is an aspect of the ideational meaning of a text. The ideational function is described as the "informative function"; language in its representational aspect, a means of reflecting on things (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004:168ff). It is concerned with the potential of a language to express content or subject matter of discourse in terms of the speaker's experiences of the world and that of the speech community. It represents the speaker's meaning potential as an observer (Halliday, 1978:112). It has two components; the experiential and the logical metafunctions. The experiential metafunction relates to the interpretation of the whole of our experience, reducing the infinitely varied phenomena of the world around us, and also of the world inside us, the processes of our own consciousness, to a manageable number of classes of phenomena: types of processes, events and actions, classes of objects, people and institutions and the like. On the other hand, the logical metafunction expresses elementary logical relations, like 'and', 'or', 'if', as well as those created by language itself such as 'namely', 'says' and 'means'. The experiential metafunction is at the crux of this paper. Our concern in this paper is to analyze the experiential meaning of the speeches using insights provided by CDA, and how the speakers' lexicogrammatical choices reflect their experiences of reality. Experiential meaning is realized in the grammar of the clause by the lexicogrammatical system of Transitivity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1978). The logical, interpersonal and textual metafunctions, though realized simultaneously in the grammar of the clause, are not discussed here because they are outside our scope.

Transitivity is described by Halliday (1973:39) as "simply the grammar of the clause in its ideational aspect" as a representation of experience. The structure –forming elements of the Transitivity system is the 'participant-process-circumstance configuration' which represent the real life experiences – who is doing what, to whom, when, where, why and how. The main argument of the Transitivity system is that the experiences we go through in life consist of 'goings-on' –doing, happening, sensing, being, saying, which

are shared by people. These goings-on in the world of experience are called ‘processes’ and they are six in number (see Table 1). The people and entities that share these experiences are called ‘participants’. These participants carry out these processes under ‘circumstances’ which may be constrained by time, place, manner, cause, purpose, reason and so on (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:181). The participant roles are realized by the nominal group, the process types by the verbal group and the circumstantial elements by adverbial group and prepositional phrases.

Experientially, the clause is said to represent a “quantum of change” as a “figure” unfolding through time –a configuration of a “process”, “participants” involved in it and any attendant ‘circumstance’. Table 1 summarizes the process types and their corresponding participant roles as explicated by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 260). Because of this potential of the Transitivity system to construe action and to impose order on the flow of events, it is a useful guide to the development of the generic/schematic structure of texts which we have applied in our analysis below in Table 2, how the subject matter of the text is developed logically to achieve generic coherence and how the text connects appropriately to the context of situation.

Table 1: Process Types, their Meanings and Characteristic Participants

Process Type	Category Meaning	Directly-Involved	Obliquely-involved
Material	Doing/Happening	Actor, Goal	Beneficiary, Scope, etc
Mental	Sensing	Senser, Phenomenon	-
Relational	Being	Carrier, Attribute Identifier (T)/Identified(V)	Attributor, Beneficiary, Assigner
Verbal	Saying	Sayer, Target	Receiver, Verbiage
Behavioural	Behaving	Behavior	Behaviour
Existential	Existing	Existent	-

Adapted from Halliday and Matthiessen’s *Introduction to Functional Grammar* p. 260

Data Analysis

Analysis of Experiential Meaning through the Generic Structure of the Speeches

The following table (Table 2) gives a sketch of the generic or schematic structure of the speeches – the macro-propositions which also give insights to the content of the speeches and the role-relationships specified. The cognitive-move structures follow Bhatia’s model as explained above. The two speeches tended to have identical eight-move structure, with emphasis on their achievements and passing but sniping comments on those that came before them.

Table 2: Summary of the Generic/Schematic Structure of the Speeches

Moves	Speech 1	Speech 2
M ₁	Announcing election to presidency as destiny preordained by God/Establishing common ground	Announcing the birth of second Republic. His election as President. Establishing common ground
M ₂	Accepting office “in all humility”	Assumption of office “as a result of a free, democratic and peaceful election”
M ₃	Appreciating God and the electorate	Appreciating God and the electorate
M ₄	Castigating past administration	Castigating past administration
M ₅	Goodness of this administration/promises of good times ahead	Goodness of this administration/promises of good times ahead
M ₆	Challenges of present administration	Challenges of present administration
M ₇	Call for collective responsibility	Call for collective responsibility
M ₈	Coda	Tributes/Coda

Analysis of Experiential Meaning through the Lexicogrammatical Features of Transitivity

The following table summarizes the prevalence of the participant-process configuration in the transitivity system of the speeches. The speeches are coded Speech 1 and 2 as explained above. Speech 1 and Speech 2 contained approximately 230 and 180 clauses respectively out of which 178 and 161 respectively were selected based on their relevance to the objectives of the study. We use the word “approximately” here because only finite verbs were

counted as full clauses, though some linguists may argue that infinitives, gerunds and participles may imbue an expression with the status of a clause. We disregarded non-finite verbs in our categorization of clauses selected from the speeches.

Table 3: Summary of Participant – Process Configuration in the Transitivity System of the Speeches

Process Types	Participant Roles	Occurrence in the Speeches	
		Speech 1	Speech 2
Material	Actor-Goal/Scope-Beneficiary	92	57
Mental	Senser-Phenomenon	32	43
Relational	Carrier-Attribute		
	Identifier-Identified	44	39
Verbal	Sayer-Receiver-Verbiage	6	7
Behavioural	Behaver-Behaviour	-	1
Existential	Existent (event/entity)	4	14
Total		178	161

Table 3 above shows high prevalence of material clauses (92 and 57), mental clauses (32 and 43) and relational clauses (44 and 39), in speeches 1 and 2 and a corresponding low prevalence of verbal, behavioural and existential clauses. Owing to the low prevalence of verbal and behavioural clauses, we cease henceforth to make reference to them as they are not significant for our purposes. Though existential processes are relatively few, their presence in the speeches are relevant as they provide illuminating insights to how the idyllic picture being contrived by these existents agree with reality. We shall therefore focus on material, mental, relational and existential clauses in our subsequent analyses.

Occurrence of Material Processes in the Speeches

For ease of illustration and to highlight our focus, we categorize the various material processes in the sample texts as follows:

1. Operative process – Actor-Goal

- (a) Speaker as Actor (Singular “I”)
 - (b) Speaker + others as Actor (Plural “We”)
2. Receptive process. (Goal with Actor Omitted)
 3. Scope processes (Actor-Scope) – delexicalized/lexically empty/dummy processes
 4. Lexically indeterminate/Evasive processes (material process shading into mental ones)

The sample texts that follow illustrate these various material processes and how they position the participants (the speakers) as either directly or obliquely involved in the unfolding events/actions. The processes are in bold in the sample texts.

(1) Operative Processes

(a) Speaker as Actor (“I”)

Text 1

Speech 1

- I **shall ... reintroduce** civil service rules and (I) **enforce** compliance
- I **have worked** out measures

Speech 2

- I **will continue to advance** and **defend** the cause of our great country before the world community of nations.

There seemed to be very few operative processes which refer to the actions of the speaker as directly-involved participant in the unfolding actions as observed in the two texts.

(b) Speaker + other as Actor (Plural “We”)

Text 2

Speech 1

- **Let us rise** as one to face the task ahead and (we) **turn** this daunting scene into opportunities in a New Dawn.

- **Let us make** this the beginning of a genuine Renaissance
- We **must change** our ways of governance and of doing business

Speech 2

- We **will** vigorously **attack** the problem of housing
- We **will** immediately **create** new layout to be serviced by adequate drainage system

The use of “we”/ “our” as Actor is replete in the speeches especially in Speech 2. This inclusive “we” used interchangeably with the first person singular makes the speaker to hide in the crowd of “other” participants. The speaker is thus not directly responsible for the specified actions as the “we” does not refer explicitly to the speaker rather to other unknown Actors which include the speaker.

(2) Receptive Process (Goal with Actor omitted)

Text 3

Speech 1

- Corruption, the greatest single bane of society today **will be tackled** head on...
- The rampant corruption in the public service **will be stamped out**...
- A determined effort **will be made** to cut down significantly the incidence of violent crime.
- The public officer **must be encouraged to believe** ...that integrity pays.
- His self respect **must be restored**.
- His work **must be** fairly **rewarded**.

Speech 2

- Continuous research **will be under taken** ...
- ...factories **will be established**

- Issues **will be reviewed**

Receptive processes allow the language user to omit the Actor – the ‘doer’ of the action, the responsible agent, so that there would be no commitment or responsibility attached. This type of structure is realized by what is known as “agentless passives” in traditional grammar, but in functional grammar, they are called “receptive process types”. This process type enables the speaker shirk responsibility to the actions or events specified by the process.

3. Scope Processes (delexicalized/lexically-empty or dummy processes)

Text 4

Speech 1

- ...we **shall take** steps to halt the decline in the human development indices...
- I **will give** the forthright purposeful, committed honest and transparent leadership that the situation demands.

Speech 2

- Our party **made** strong commitment to the people of this country to rapidly develop and improve agriculture.
- I **will take** necessary action to effect remedies in the interest of the nation.
- We **shall map** out strategies to encourage Nigerian to engage in fruitful agricultural activities. The Federal Government **will give** equal treatment to each state...

Scope processes do not specify concrete goals and so cannot be probed with “do to” or “do with”. As such, they are delexicalized or dummy material processes (Halliday & Mattiessen, 2004:193). Scope is an obliquely-involved participant which is not directly involved in the process by bringing it about, nor is it affected by or benefitting from the process unlike the Goal, a directly-involved participant on which the actions and events construed by the process are extended.

However the following illustrations show samples of clauses with the speaker as Actor where the processes are lexically-indeterminate – material processes shading into mental ones.

4. Lexically-Indeterminate Operational Processes with Speaker as Actor (material processes shading into mental processes)

Text 5

Speech 1

- I **am determined to build** a broad consensus among all parties to enhance national harmony and stability
- I **will endeavour to heal** divisions...
- I **intend to reconcile** all those who feel alienated ...
- I **am determined to stretch** my hand of fellowship to all Nigerians regardless of their political affiliations.

Speech 2

- We **are dedicated to building** a viable economy by fostering broad mass participation...
- We **are determined to transform** Nigerian Agriculture...
- This administration **stands committed to ameliorate** the conditions of Nigerian workers...
- We also **plan to make** education more qualitative ... etc.

These indeterminate process-types referring to the actions of the speakers were observed to be more prevalent in the speeches. They construe actions which are indeterminate, weak and therefore unrealizable. We shall see more samples of this indeterminacy in the high prevalence of mental processes discussed below.

The Table 4 below shows samples of mental process used in the speeches. A careful perusal of the speeches revealed a high prevalence of cognitive mental processes, (I believe, I think, I am convinced); and desiderative process (I am determined, I want, I wish, we need). Emotive mental processes (I like) and perceptive mental processes (I see, we witnessed) were

less prevalent. Below are samples of clauses bearing these different mental processes.

Table 4: Samples of Mental Processes in the Speeches

Mental Process Subtypes	Speech 1	Speech 2
Cognition	<p>I know what great thing you expect of me at this New Dawn</p> <p>I believe that this administration must deal with the following issues...</p>	<p>I am convinced that these goals are attainable</p> <p>We strongly believe that home ownership will lead to family pride.</p>
Desideration	<p>I will need good men and women of proven integrity...</p> <p>I intend to reconcile all those who feel alienated...</p>	<p>Our government will encourage the local production of building materials</p> <p>Nigeria will require millions of additional housing units ...</p> <p>Our overall policy seeks to provide education that will equip recipients...</p>
Emotion	<p>... my heart bleeds to see the degradation in the proficiency of the military</p> <p>It (corruption) must not be condoned</p> <p>We experienced in the last decade and a half.. persistent deterioration in the quality of our governance ...</p>	<p>I like to emphasize that our overall policy seeks to provide...</p> <p>The problem of creating a national government...overwhelmed the First Republic</p>
Perception	<p>It is the destiny of all of us to see this day</p>	<p>We have witnessed today the birth of the Second Republic</p> <p>This cannot be found overnight</p>

Mental processes construe experiences (phenomenon) that exist in the inner consciousness and imaginations of the Senser and have no outward manifestations. Phenomenon is one of the two inherent participants in the mental process (Senser-Phenomenon) representing “fact” “act” or “idea” which are contents of inner thoughts, wants, feelings and perceptions of the

speaker (Senser). Since these are psychological states, they contribute nothing to the quanta of change in the socio-physical context of situation. In mental processes, change is simply construed as a semiotic construct represented in the grammar as a mental state and not anything physical. The high prevalence of these processes in the speeches with reference to the actions of the speakers is viewed as a deliberate attempt by the speakers to shirk responsibility to concrete actions.

(5) Relational Processes

Whereas material and mental clauses model our outer and inner experiences respectively, relational clauses model these outer and inner experiences as processes of “being” and “having” rather than as “doing” or “sensing”. In relational clauses, change is construed as unfolding inertly, without any input of energy, as a static location and possession in space unlike material processes which construe a dynamic motion through space bringing about change in the participants that are affected. Samples of the two types of relational processes in the speeches are given below:

- (6) **Attributive Relational Processes:** This specifies the participant Carrier and Attribute

Text 6

Speech 1

- Corruption (Carrier) **is** (Process – relational) insipient (Attribute) in all human societies (Circumstance of Place) – **(intensifying attributive)**
- Everything created by God (Carrier) **has** (Process-Relational) its destiny (Attribute) – **(possessive attributive)**

Speech 2

- ...Nigeria (Carrier) **will be** (Process-Relational) self-sufficient (Attribute) in food production (Circumstance of Place) - **(intensifying attributive)**
- ... urban dwellers (Carrier) **will have** (Process-Relational) more credit to build their own houses (Attribute) – **(possessive attributive)**

(7) Identifying Relational Processes

Text 7

Speech 1

- The difference (Identifier) **will be** (Process-Relational) that in the past (Circumstance of Time) sacrifices were made and patience exercised with little or no results (Identified).
- One of the immediate acts of this administration (Identifier) **will be** (Process-Relational) to implement quickly and decisively measures that would restore confidence in governance (Identified)

Speech 2

- Our key domestic programmes(Identifier) **are** (Process-Relational)in the sectors of Agriculture, Housing, Education, Health Industry and the New Federal Capital (Identified)
- A primary objective (Identifier) **is** (Process-Relational)to create the right atmosphere for a rapid increase in home ownership. (Identified)

A series of probes for attributive and identifying relational clauses have been advanced to enable us differentiate the two (Halliday and Matthiessen 228, Eggins, 241-243). The strongest of these probes is that identifying clauses are reversible as in for instance:

- One of the immediate acts of this administration (Identifier) **will be** (Process-Relational) to implement quickly and decisively measures that would restore confidence in governance
- To implement quickly and decisively measures that would restore confidence in governance will be one of the immediate acts of this administration.

Effecting a similar reversal to an attributive relational clause would render it anomalous. For instance:

- Nigeria **will be** self-sufficient in food production

*Self-sufficient in food production will be Nigeria

These relational processes serve to give information on the prevailing situation, on what is on ground. They do not specify proposed actions.

(8) Existential Processes

In Text 8 we present samples of existential clauses in the speeches which are relevant to our purposes in this study.

Text 8

Speech 1:

- There **will be** no sacred cows

Speech 2:

- There **has been** a steep rise in the rate of inflation in Nigeria...
- There **is** need to provide adequate food for every family
- There **is** need to stop the current drain of foreign exchange on the importation of foodstuff
- There **is** need to transform our underdeveloped country into a modern industrialized society.

Like relational processes, existential clauses give information on existing situation and do not construe any quanta of change in the context of situation.

Discussion

In this paper, we tried to find out how choices in the transitivity system of the speeches projected the experiential meaning of the speakers, the actions and happenings stated in the speeches and their relevance to the context of the study. It was found that the speakers somehow, whether by coincidence or by design, avoided operative material processes and these positioned them as obliquely-responsible participants. There is however, persistent use of receptive processes which tended to divest the Actor of any commitment to the propositions or proposals raised in the speeches. Scope processes were also prevalent. They are usually delexicalized or dummy processes where the participant is either a nominalized process or is obliquely-involved in the process – that is, it is not directly affected by the actions of the Actor. Scope processes simply specify the domain over which the actions of the agent take

place and hence cannot be probed by “do to” or “do with” as is the case with Goal in operative clauses with Actor-Goal configuration. Some of these Scope participants are triads and parallel structures which are mere embellishments, hence impressionistic and mere rhetoric as in:

- I will **give** the forthright, purposeful, committed, honest and transparent leadership that the situation demands.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (194), one cannot probe the above Scope participant (underlined above) with ‘do to’ or ‘do with’ as in:

*What I will do to forthright, purposeful, committed, honest and transparent leadership... was **give** it.

This will surely be anomalous. These parallel structures are therefore simply overlexicalizations used to gain ethos and manufacture consent (hegemony) but they are devoid of concretized meanings. No wonder these goals continued to prove elusive because they were not encoded as concrete goals.

Most of the material processes are indeterminate processes which shade into mental ones thereby making the propositions weak and evasive in character, hence mere statements of intention as in:

- **I am determined to build ...**
- **I intend to reconcile ...**

Other weak material processes include “enhance” “harness” “maximize”. They do not denote concrete actions, and where they do, they are not quantifiable, neither do they represent “a quantum of change” to give them meaning in the world of existence. They, like mental processes, exist only in the imaginations of the speaker as mere wishful thinking.

Similarly, the high prevalence of mental and relational processes seemed to divest the speakers of explicit commitment to concrete actions. Mental processes construe mental states of thinking (cognition), feeling (emotion) seeing (perception) and wanting (desideration). They represent the speaker’s beliefs, opinions, wishes, likes and dislikes and other experiences (phenomenon) that exist in the consciousness of the speakers (Sensor) and contribute nothing to the quanta of change in the socio-physical context. This is also viewed as a deliberate attempt by the speakers to evade commitment to concrete actions.

The use of relational and existential clauses were only for the speakers to give information of certain existents, identify and assign attribute to actions, events, ideas, feelings, opinions and behaviours. The actions of the speakers are not directly brought to bear on these processes. Existential clauses construe existents in the real world but in the case of the speeches, the existents construed were simply make-believe. Most of them have not been recognized to truly exist in Nigeria as in for example, “There will be no sacred cows”.

From our analysis, we inferred language use that is ostensibly persuasive but inherently evasive. The language used seemed to be aimed at the manufacture of consent (hegemony) while dangling the issues representing the yearnings of the people as bait. These speeches do not adequately represent what exists in reality. Most of what the speeches purport are still illusive, existing only as unrealized dreams in the imaginations of the leaders and the citizenry. We nurse the hope that these dreams may one day metamorphose into reality.

Conclusion

The study has confirmed that the lexicogrammatical choices of transitivity in the inaugural speeches under review helped us in the interpretation of the experiential meanings of the two speeches. We saw in the analysis language use that is indeterminate, vague, and non-committal, language use which divests the speakers of direct responsibility to certain actions through the persistent use of mostly indeterminate process types. Less use were made of strong operative material processes which commit the speakers to concrete actions. These deliberate choices enabled the speakers to hide their evasions and deceit in over-lexicalized expressions with little or no concretized meanings. We argue that for our future Nigerian leaders to win back the credibility which past leaders have sacrificed on the altar of deceit, diplomacy, manipulation, propaganda, and other hidden agenda, they should use language that commit them to concrete actions and then live up to their words. Shrouding their ill-intentions in a maze of lexically-empty words has no doubt lost its appeal on the citizenry.

Funding Acknowledgement

The manuscript for this publication was prepared with the support of an African Humanities Program (AHP) Fellowship, established by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) and supported financially by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

References

- Agbedo, C. U. (2008). Verbal carpentry as language of political corruption in Nigeria: Implications for good governance in 21st century Africa. In E.J. Otagburuagu (Ed) *Governance in Africa in the 21st Century*. (pp.169-194). Nsukka: Global Publishers.
- Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing genre: Language use in professional settings*. London: Longman.
- Dawodu.com. Shagari's inaugural address to Nigerians" October, 1, 1979. Retrieved May 11, 2009, from <http://www.dawodu.com/shag/htm>.
- Eggins, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*. (2nd ed). New York: Continuum.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Essex:Longman: Group Ltd.
- Fairclough, N. (2002). Critical linguistics/critical discourse analysis. In K Malmkjaer (Ed.). *The Linguistic Encyclopedia*. (2nd ed) (pp.102-106). London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (1999). Global capitalism and critical awareness of language. *Language Awareness*. 8(2). Retrieved July 30, 2008 from <http://www.multilingual-matters.net/1a/008/0071/1a008007/1pdf>.
- Halliday, M. A.K. (1973). *Explorations in the functions of language*. London: Edward Arnold
- Halliday, M. A.K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic. The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M. A.K. & Matthiessen, C.M.M. (2004) *An introduction to functional grammar*. (3rd ed). London: Hodder Arnold.
- Jaworski, A. & Coupland, N. (2002). Discourse analysis and conversation analysis". In K. Malmkjaer (Ed.). *The Linguistic encyclopedia*. (2nd ed). (pp.114-119). London: Routledge.
- Nigeria World Publication. (1999). Inaugural speech by His Excellency, President Olusegun Obasanjo...on May 29, 1999. Retrieved May 11 2009 from <http://nigeriaworld.com/feature/speech inaugural>.

- Osuntokun, A & Aworowo, D. (2003). A new dawn? Nigerian politics since 1999. In A. Osuntokun, D Aworawo & A Masajuwa (Eds.). *Issues in Nigerian Government and Politics*. (pp.250-260) Ibadan: Rex Charles Publications.
- Robinson, M. (Ed.) (2007). *Chambers 21st Century Dictionary*. (Revised ed). New Delhi: Allied Chambers Ltd.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2005). Multidisciplinary CDA: A plea for diversity. In R. Wodak & M Meyer (Eds.). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. (pp.95-120). London: Sage.
- Watson, J & Hill, A. (2006). *Dictionary of media and communication studies*. (7th ed). London: Hodder Arnold.
- Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Critical Discourse Analysis. Retrieved May 11 2011 from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical Discourse Analysis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_Discourse_Analysis).
- Wodak, R. (2005). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M Meyer (Eds.). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. (pp.63-94). London: Sage.
- Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (2005). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. London: Sage.