



A Stylistic Analysis of Nigerian States' Slogans: A Syntactic Approach

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Abstract

This paper is a stylistic interrogation of the slogans of the 36 (thirty six) states of Nigeria. A direct investigation of stylistic markers was here in deployed based on a linguistic and contextual analysis of its components. A nominal group was found to dominate the syntactic structure of the slogans while most of the nouns were nature-based and abstract entities such as nation, beauty, peace, pearl, land, light, knowledge, state, centre, harmony etc. The slogans were predominantly short, simple and collocative expressions that were also memorable, readable and canonical. They expressed the typical ethos, aspirations and compliments chosen by each of the states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The conclusion of the findings was that, stylistically, the captions meet the expected standard of sloganization as a means of communicating ideas, beliefs, precepts or brand marks through a nickname emblazoned in a pithy headline.

Key Words: Slogans, nominal group, collocative, memorable, compliments, sloganization, headline.

Background

The prevalence of language in human affairs is natural. Language is around us wherever we live and need to communicate verbally. Without language, life in modern society would be grounded. Achievements would be impossible. Businesses deploy or use words in their planning, production and in marketing their products. Parliaments use language in discussing issues, enacting laws, and explaining oversights. The press and electronic media keep us informed through words; so do teachers, lawyers, architects, technologists and others.

Word constitutes language at its least unit of meaningful communication. Some may say, the morpheme because a word such as 'go' comprises a single morpheme, a single word, a single group/phrase, a single clause and a single sentence. However, non-linguists seldom distinguish morpheme from the words they constitute. One of the most important features of a word is that it works best within contexts which are particularly explicit based on the other words that are used with it and the situation of occurrence or context of situation. Context of situation demands that one cannot know the meaning of any language or word without knowing the social context in which it occurs. In this sense, language is seen as part of a social process with relevant features of participants, objects and verbal action which work together in providing meaning. The place of context in linguistic meaning is a subject of researches in context and semantics: Halliday (2004), Widdowson (2004), Forceville (1996), McCarthy and Carter (2006)

There is a striking relationship between context of usage of language and variation of language according to subject matter. According to Quirk and Greenbaum (1980).

With varieties according to subject matter, the presumption is rather that the same speaker has a repertoire of varieties and habitually switches to the appropriate one association rises, perhaps, the switch involves nothing more than turning to the particular set of lexical items habitually used for handling the subject in question: law, cookery, engineering, and football. (p.6).

The above explication is a secondary index in language usage, the primary is that there is a core of grammatical and lexical features of every language form where specific sets are built up based on purpose, attitude, medium and culture. A motto/slogan is a short sentence or phrase that expresses the aims and beliefs of a person, a group, an institution, a state, a nation and is used as a rule of

behaviour, or banner of aspiration or ethos. Usually imprinted as an edifying preserve for posterity, it is a declaration that taps out a message moralization, a dictum of endorsement or an affirmation of a mannerism. Amongst the listless things that human beings do with language is the expression of life and power through axiomatic precepts and mantra that provide a signification index, a brand mark or a canon. Slogonization therefore constitutes a means of communicating ideas via nick naming with complimentary caption emblazoned in pithy headlines that notch up aphorisms. Stylistically, a motto comes in a collocative register, a form of words bespoke in an idiom or metaphor, or indexical inscription or a simple typifying tag. Figuratively, a motto bears a tone of euphemism or hyperbole, the nature of an epitaph or an epigram.

In the business world, the slogan makes a brand distinguishable, recognizable, visual and measurable. These features are achieved by the simplicity, terseness, readability and commonality of the words that constitute the phrases. This is why a slogan is commonly defined as a memorable motto or phrase used in a political, commercial, religious, and other contexts as a repetitive expression of an idea or purpose with the goal of persuading members of the public or a more defined target group (Retrieved from Wikipedia on 15/10/2016). As a component of branding, image-making, public relations or corporate advertising, the slogan or motto complements the name and logo (where applicable) of an organization. As a brand marker conveyed in a linguistic form, the slogan conjures likeability through clear messages, creativity in expression and emphasis on the value being communicated.

As a promotional literature, the slogan should be persuasive enough to catch the attention of the target audience to which the information is communicated. In doing this, there should be effective adjectives that exhude of emotion, attract preference, shape opinion, influence attitude, create awareness and attract support. The likeable, memorable, persuasive and catchy nature of the slogan is supported by repetitive and musical qualities of the constituents. These features are derived from the techniques of rhyme, rhythm, parallelism and

phonics which enhance portrayal to the eyes and pleasure to the ears. The simplicity of the slogan is based on a stylistic “sayability”. The grammatical pattern mostly follows the active voice matrix. The few words (five to ten) are similar-sounding in a sentence structure or a fragment.

A stylistic analysis can be focussed on the description of language resources and units as used in a piece of communication within a particular context. Such resources occur under phonology (sounds/sound effects), lexis (words/diction/usages), grammar (group, clause, and sentence structures), semantics (meaning units) and graphology (orthography/writing symbol). This goal of stylistic description is to methodologically determine the appropriateness, effectiveness or otherwise of the linguistic choices. These facts have been fully discussed by researchers in stylistics at the beginning of this millennium: Allan (2001), Black (2006), Jeffries (2010) Kamalu (2018), Miller and Turci (2007), Simpson and Mayr (2009), Van (2005), and Verdonk (2002). Norgaard and Montoro (2010). Our approach here is the collation of the data (slogans/mottos) and the analysis, followed by a discussion of our findings and a conclusion to the work.

Data Collection and Analysis

TABLE OF ANALYSIS

S/N	STATE	SLOGAN	UNIT	ELEMENTS
1	Abia	God’s own State	Nominal group	mmh
2	Adamawa	Land of Beauty	Nominal group	hq[pc]
3	Akwa ibom	Light of the promise	Nominal group	hq[pc]
4	Anambra	Light of the Nation	Nominal group	hq[pc]c[mh]
5	Bauchi	Pearl of Tourism	Nominal group	hq[pc]
6	Bayelsa	Pride of the Nation	Nominal group	hq[pc]c[mh]
7	Benue	Food Basket of the Nation	Nominal group	mhq[pc]c[mh]
8	Borno	Home of Peace	Nominal group	hq[pc]
9	Cross River	The People’s	Nominal	mmh

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		Paradise	group	
10	Delta	The Big Heart	Nominal group	mmh
11	Ebonyi	The salt of the Nation	Nominal group	mhq[pc]c[mh]
12	Edo	The Heart Beat of the Nation	Nominal group	mhq[pc]c[mh]
13	Ekiti	Fountain of Knowledge	Nominal group	hq[pc]
14	Enugu	Coal city State	Nominal group	mmh
15	Gombe	Jewel of the Savannah	Nominal group	hq[pc]
16	Imo	Eastern heartland	Nominal group	Mh
17	Jigawa	The new World	Nominal group	mmh
18	Kaduna	Centre of Education	Nominal group	hq[pc]
19	Kano	Centre of commence	Nominal group	hq[pc]
20	Kastina	Home of Hospitality	Nominal group	hq[pc]
21	Kebbi	Land of Equity	Nominal group	hq[pc]
22	Kogi	The Confluence State	Nominal group	mmh
23	Kwara	State of Harmony	Nominal group	hq[pc]
24	Lagos	Centre of Excellence	Nominal group	hq[pc]
25	Nasarawa	The Home of solid minerals	Nominal group	mhq[pc]c[mh]
26	Niger	The power state	Nominal group	mmh
27	Ogun	The Gateway State	Nominal group	mmh
28	Ondo	The Sunshine State	Nominal group	mmh
29	Osun	State of Living Spring	Nominal group	hq[pc]c[mh]
30	Oyo	The Pace of Setter State	Nominal group	mmh
31	Plateau	Home of peace and Tourism	Nominal group	hq[pc]c[hh]
32	Rivers	Treasure base of the nation	Nominal group	mhq[pc]c[NG-mh]
33	Sokoto	Seat of the Caliphate	Nominal group	hq[pc]c[mh]
34	Taraba	Nature's Gift to the	Nominal	mhq[pc]c[mh]

		Nation	group	
35	Yobe	Pride of the Sahara	Nominal group	hq[pc]c[mh]
36	Zamfara	Farming is our Pride	Sentence	S-SPC[NG+VG+NG]
37	Federal Capital Territory	Centre of Unity	Nominal group	hq[pc]

Discussion of findings

i) Nature of the nominal group in English

The analysis shows that the slogans comprise the nominal group which generally occupies slots in grammatical constructions. In both the simple sentence and the clause structure, the nominal group realises the subject and the complement in constructions such as:

I am a writer

The man has come

The old man has come

Okon is a student

A simple nominal group has a lexical item that realizes the group. A non-simple nominal group can be as short as two lexical items and as long as eleven lexical items. The non-simple or complex nominal group has three elements, one compulsory (h) and two obligatory (m) and (q). The m element comes before the h while the q element comes after the h. The nominal group performs the function of nouns, providing names for things, persons, concepts, etc. In the above discourse, it is apt to find out that the nominal group dominates the structures of the slogans. Slogans serve as alternative names or labels, as in the context, (Swan 2013).

ii) Semantic phrasing

This phraseology relates to the reality of a linguistic structure corresponding strictly with syntactic specification. For example, “Okon kicked the ball” operates on the basic sense of the individual words “Okon” “kicked”, “the ball” on the syntactic plane of subject-predicator-complement or theme (Okon) and rheme (kicked the ball). In semantic phrasing, words collocate and undergo structure sharing, lexical relationships and dependencies.

In the data, semantic phrasing binds the slogans in a nominalization process where the headword is either preceded by modifier(s) or succeeded by qualifiers. In the process, the authors/proponents of the slogans benefit from other words where single lexemes would not suffice. This correlationship between lexical and syntactic choices finds meaningful expression at the semantic level. This linguistic and stylistic reality is the pivot of the sloganization within the parameters of brevity, clarity and simplicity. Lexical choices of the head words are carefully selected

iii) **The headwords in the nominal groups**

The following constitute the heads (headwords) in the 37 (thirty seven) nominal groups that make up the slogans:

1. State
2. Land
3. Land
4. Light
5. Pearl
6. Pride
7. Basket
8. Home
9. Paradise
10. Heart
11. Salt
12. Beat
13. Fountain
14. State
15. Jewel
16. Heartland
17. World
18. centre
19. Centre
20. Home
21. Land
22. State
23. State
24. Centre
25. Home

- 26. State
- 27. State
- 28. State
- 29. State
- 30. State
- 31. Home
- 32. Base
- 33. Seat
- 34. Gift
- 35. Pride
- 36. Farming/Pride
- 37. Centre

Summary Entries

<u>Item</u>	<u>No of</u>	<u>occurrence</u>
State		9
Centre		4
Land		3
Home		3
Pride		2
Others		1 each

The dominance of the word “state”, is understandable considering that, the respective states are the real objects or subjects of reference “Centre” connotes prominence and focus. It portrays the authors in the light of strategic objectivism. There may be other states who share the features highlighted in the respective slogans, but the word “centre” separates some of them as the champions. “Home” and “Pride” are used for their ending semantic values. Everyone desires to retire to a home. Everyone desires to be proud of something wholesome.

On the whole, the five most used words have “commonality” as their core shared value. They are short, simple to spell, easy to remember and human related. The football is kicked from the centre of the field. A beautiful place can be described as the centre of attraction. The compass hands are held at the centre. Issues that are considered

relevant in a discourse are said to be central. The equator is a line that is drawn on the centre of the earth.

iv) **The modifiers in the nominal groups**

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. God's own (state) | - | possessive adjective |
| 2. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 3. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 4. The (Nation) | - | determiner |
| 5. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 6. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 7. Food (basket) | - | common noun (converted) |
| 8. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 9. The people's | - | determiner, possessive adjective |
| 10. The Big | - | determiner, positive adjective |
| 11. The | - | determiner |
| 12. The | - | determiner |
| 13. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 14. Coal, City | - | tangible noun, common noun |
| 15. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 16. Eastern | - | epithet connoting location |
| 17. The new | - | determiner, epithet (age) |
| 18. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 19. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 20. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 21. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 22. The, confluence | - | determiner, nominal |
| 23. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 24. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 25. The | - | determiner |
| 26. The power | - | determiner, nominal (abstract) |
| 27. The gateway
(common) | - | determiner, nominal |
| 28. The sunshine
(common) | - | determiner, nominal |
| 29. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 30. The pate seller | - | determiner, nominal (common) |
| 31. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |

- | | | |
|--------------|---|----------------------|
| 32. Nature's | - | nominal (common) |
| 33. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 34. Nature's | - | epithet (possessive) |
| 35. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 36. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 37. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |

The modifier slots in the nominal groups are largely filled by the determiner (definite article) "the", followed by various slants of the adjectival (converted nouns inclusive). The definite article denotes specificity. Its usage in this context is appropriate because the nouns that follow them are common words: state, nation, people's, big, city, confluence, power, gateway, sunshine, etc.

The specificity of the determiner also connotes the importance of the noun, the purpose of the thing or person within a particular class and its or his uniqueness within the class.

v) The qualifiers in the nominal groups

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------|
| 1. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 2. Of beauty
= beauty | - | P = of C |
| 3. Of promise
= promise | - | P = of C |
| 4. Of the nation
= the nation | - | P = of C |
| 5. Of tourism
tourism | - | P = of C = |
| 6. Of the nation
= the nation | - | P = of C |
| 7. Of the nation
= the nation | - | P = of C |
| 8. Of peace
= peace | - | P = of C |
| 9. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 10. Nil | - | xxxxxxx |
| 11. Of the nation
= the nation | - | P = of C |

- | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| 12. Of the nation
= the nation | - | P = of C |
| 13. Of knowledge | - | P = of C = the knowledge |
| 14. Nil | - | xxxxxx |
| 15. Of the savannah | - | P = of C = the savannah |
| 16. Nil | - | xxxxxx |
| 17. Nil | - | xxxxxx |
| 18. Of the education | - | P = of C = education |
| 19. Of commence | - | P = of C = commence |
| 20. Of hospitality | - | P = of C = hospitality |
| 21. Of equity | - | P = of C = equity |
| 22. Nil | - | xxxxxx |
| 23. Of harmony | - | P = of C = harmony |
| 24. Of excellence | - | P = of C = excellence |
| 25. Of solid mineral
minerals | - | P = of C = solid
minerals |
| 26. Nil | - | xxxxxx |
| 27. Nil | - | xxxxxx |
| 28. Nil | - | xxxxxx |
| 29. Of living spring | - | P = of C = living spring |
| 30. Nil | - | xxxxxx |
| 31. Of peace and tourism
= peace and tourism | - | P = of C |
| 32. Of the nation
= the nation | - | P = of C |
| 33. Of the caliphate
= the caliphate | - | P = of C |
| 34. Of the nation
= the nation | - | P = of C |
| 35. Of the Sahara
= the Sahara | - | P = of C |
| 36. Nil | - | xxxxxx |
| 37. Of unity
= unity | - | P = of C |

The above manifest discloses the preponderance of the preprend (preposition) “of” while the completive (nominal groups) come with the determiner “the” and common nouns (beauty, promise, nation,

peace, knowledge, education, commence, hospitality, equity, harmony, excellence and unity).

The preposition “of” in this context denotes “belongingness” (being a part of something or relating to it). In this regard, one finds the word “nation”, dominating the nominal group in the completive element, very appropriate. Again the dominance of the definite article “the” further underpins the uniqueness in the “belongingness” or the leading role the headword plays in the ambience of the nominal in the completive.

Thus, in considering item 11 (The salt of the Nation), the first definite article (modifier) specifies the “saltiness” while the preposition points to the relationship between the salt and the nation. The salt belongs to or relates to the nation. The audience can easily understand the figurative meaning of the “salt” and its semantic relationship with ‘the’ nation, particular nation (Nigeria) in this context.

Summary and Conclusion

We set out to investigate the stylistic and syntactic underpinnings of the Nigerian states’ slogans. We provided a wide explication of the slogans vis-à-vis the states that proclaim them. This dimension of our analysis revealed ironic tonality in some of the coinages such as Borno state where the Boko Haram insurgency vitiates the state’s claim to “the home of peace”. On the average, we found out that the claims of the states correspond to the realities on grounds, at least as at the time of the formulation of the slogan.

At the stylistic dimension, we deployed the structural parameters of syntactic templates and semantic phrasing. Syntactically, we found out that most of the slogans disclosed the nominal group structure with various combinations of the modifier-head-qualifier, mhq. We found the nouns in the headwords and the completive elements to belong to the general or common nouns with positive semantic connotation. The profuse use of the definite article “the” reinforces the specificity within the general meaning of the common nouns while the preprend (preposition) dominates the qualifiers in order to significantly portray

“belongingness” and affirm the “uniqueness” conveyed by the specifiers “the”. To tie up, the semantic correlative, three lexical items unify all the slogans. These are “the”, “of”, “nation”. “The” signifies one among others. “Of” denotes “belonging to” and “nation” refers to Nigeria. In conclusion, each of the states attempts to proclaim via the slogans that they have something special, unique, significant and positive to contribute to the making, existence and future of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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