



A Lexico-Semantic Analysis of Selected Speeches of Honourable Patrick Obahiagbon

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Abstract

Language plays many roles in human society. One of these roles is its use to express content or protest unfavourable conditions, laws, policies and systems. This is because language controls human behaviour and is a medium used to communicate ideologies, messages, ideas and to react to existing social order. This study examines the language of Honourable Patrick Obahiagbon, a Nigerian parliamentarian, through an analysis of his selected speeches. Four of his speeches were selected, studied and analysed using Systemic Functional Linguistics as a theoretical guide. The study concludes that Obahiagbon's grandiloquent style is characterised by his use of coinages, compounding, archaisms, borrowed registers, irregular collocations, alliterations, intertextuality, grammatical and lexical deviations in a peculiar manner to express himself on social and political issues bothering on societal corruption, violence, indolence, partiality and inequality in the country. A combination of these features constitutes his style and identifies him as an idiolect. The study reveals that his verbose overuse and concatenation of words act as a distraction from his messages thereby hindering rather than enhancing the effectiveness of his speeches.

Key Words: Idiolect; Stylistics; Political Speeches; Patrick Obahiagbon; ESL

Introduction

Hon. Patrick Obahiagbon is a legal practitioner and a Nigerian politician who was elected to the House of Representative in 2007. He

was appointment Chief of Staff to Governor Adams Oshiomole of Edo State in 2011. Although he was very vocal during deliberations in the House of Representatives, Obahiagbon is known within the Nigerian sphere for his use of complex grammatical expressions when he engages in political and social discourse. His political and social speeches have also been resource material for jest and caricature in stand-up comedy skits. However, it is the opinion of these researchers that there exists a depth of knowledge embedded in the grammatical wit of the selected speeches. Hence there is a need to evaluate the speeches of this typical Nigerian parliamentarian, who appears to exhibit a wealth of knowledge of the English language. A lexico-semantic analysis of some of his selected speeches with a view to identifying the style of the speaker is the focus of this paper. To achieve this, the etymology of some words used, word formation methods and stylistic variation in terms of deviation, register and idiosyncrasies will be addressed.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The speeches of Obahiagbon are always interestingly difficult to understand due to the presence of high sounding and complex words. People are attracted to his speeches because of the rhetorical aesthetics in them. While some laugh as if the speeches were meant to serve as comedy skits, some ignore or totally misunderstanding the message. Despite these, the speeches have both semantic and stylistic value within the context of its use more so because Obahiagbon is a non-native speaker of the English Language addressing other non-native speakers of the language in a manner that is characteristically unfamiliar to them. His use of verbose words therefore draws attention to himself in a way that sets him apart as an idiolect.

This paper therefore identifies the stylistic, lexical, and aesthetic use of language peculiar to him. This will form reference material for further research works on his speeches and for subsequent research on political speeches in a second language situation like Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The peculiar way a writer or speaker uses language that makes them different from other writers or speakers is known in linguistics as style

and style manifests itself in the concept of idiolect because consistent peculiarities in linguistic choices of an individual can be described as the style of that individual. Idiolect is a term for the linguistic peculiarities of an individual. Of note here, is the term 'linguistic peculiarities' which could be a result of stylistic variation. Idiolect embodies the act of purposefully altering one's vocabulary, syntactic structures and discourse structures to achieve a preconceived aim or to match the context and situation in a nearly consistent manner. Obahiagbon style reflect his pedigree as a lawyer and politician and underscores the role of context of situation in speeches. The explication of some words used by him would reveal that the lexical choices in his political speeches are mostly within the register of politics and law even though they are quite different from the regular political usages. Therefore stylistic variation is based not only on the social and geographic origin or position of the speaker, but on the activity he/she is engaged in. This type of variation is known as diatypic variation.

Diatypic variation or register defines the concept that the language we speak or write varies or differs according to the type of situation. It is an instance of language in action. When we talk about stylistic variation, we simply talk about the different ways in which language is used. Perhaps this accounts for why style has been defined as the identification and analysis of the various ways language is used in real life discourse situations. Aristotle in Leech (1969, p.14) is quoted saying that "the most effective means of achieving both clarity, diction and a certain dignity is the use of altered forms of words". Stylistic variation accounts for this. It is important to note here that, the import of stylistics is that it enhances the understanding and enjoyment of any texts. The fact that there are various ways of saying the same thing within a particular language code is proof of the concept of style and stylistics. Style operates at the lexical, syntactic, graphological, phonological and semantic levels of language analysis. Michael Halliday, a principal participator in the development of British stylistics, in his 1971 study of literary style and linguistic function introduced the term "register" in referring to style. He did this in a bid to show the connection that exists between language and context. He

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draws a distinction between register and dialect. According to him, while dialect refers to a variation of a language used habitually by groups of persons within a fixed context, register refers to choices language users make that is dependent on the variables: field (“what the participants are actually engaged in”, for example, they may be discussing, a particular subject), tenor (the participants in the discourse), and the mode (the use of the language in that instance).

The factors which determine stylistic variation are formality such as spelling, morphology, syntax and writing rules, conventions and habits in a particular genre and semantic organization where the language user is at liberty to use choices with a minimum amount of formal conditioning patterns or constraints. The writer’s choice will therefore reflect his personal preferences as well as the social ethos of the time. Adiche’s novel *Half of a yellow Sun*, for example, bears certain stylistic similarities with Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* even though they were published decades apart (Ekpang, 2013, A Comparative Analysis). The conscious decisions a writer or speaker makes while writing or speaking constitutes their style if choice is a determinant of style. For Ekpang (2013,

Stylistic Choices), “the presence of the concept called style is indicative of the possibility of lexical choices in language” (p. 26). Two writers or speakers could decide to chronicle the same event separately. The result would show a difference, not in content but in style reflected by, for example, the use of simple versus difficult diction. It is this idea of style as choice that Chapman (1974) equates style with his concept of register. He is of the opinion that every individual has a repertoire of register and uses them at appropriate situations. To him, style is not just a product of social situations, but is borne out of the choices or decisions of the writer or speaker.

In addition to this, a writer’s style, according to Spencer (1964), may be regarded as an individual’s “creative utilization of the resources of language which his period, his chosen dialect and his purpose within it offer him” (qtd in Enkvist, Spencer and Gregory, p.ix). He adds that for public speeches, the individual’s lexical choices should give pleasure and satisfaction that can elicit appropriate responses from the audience. Obahiagbon’s style gives pleasure and satisfaction to his

audience but for reasons other than the intended ones owing to the complex nature of his diction. It is necessary to state here that the grammar of a language can be described as a network of systems. Each system represents a set of alternatives. This implies that in any language, there are certain choices available for construing experiences. These choices, when harnessed, sometimes constitute style. (Halliday and Matthiessen p.23)

As earlier stated, deviation in language occurs when a writer or speaker chooses to break the rules of his language. This is seen when the language user transcends the norms or exceeds the limits that characterize the language. It is more likely to find elements of this kind of style in literary works because deviation at various levels of linguistics is accommodated as poetic license or writer's license. Deviation could be purposeful or accidental but in whichever way it occurs, it still constitutes the style of an author or a particular text when it is consistent. A writer or speaker can through deviation in codes, communicate unique experiences which he feels cannot be effectively communicated by means of the norms or dominant language in the text. Deviation from linguistic or other socially accepted norms is a basic instrument of aesthetic communication and an understanding of this is essential for the study of style. Deviation as style is most often a product of the creativity of the writer or speaker, who feels he or she is not satisfied with the usual communicative resources of his language. He may break rules of selectional restriction or overgeneralise the rules that govern the syntactic, morphological or graphological structure of language and create meanings in ways not prescribed by the everyday linguistic convention. Although his choices are not permissible in terms of the accepted code and may result in a disruption of the normal process of communication, if properly used, the text would be foregrounded and have the desired semantic and aesthetic effect.

Geoffrey Leech (1969) exemplifies deviation with Dylan Thomas's poem "A grief ago" when he drew attention to the peculiarity of the collocates. The word "ago" collocates with words that refer to units of time, for example, one could say- "two years ago, an hour ago, a week

ago etc.” The collocation of ‘ago’ with ‘grief’ is irregular and therefore foregrounded. Obahiagbon deviates from norms sometimes by the mixing of Greek and Latin codes with English or any other language he deems fit to use. And because of the second language context (L2), his words make little or no communicative impact on his listeners. So that whereas deviation as a form of style is typical, Obahiagbon’s deviation falls short because it hinders effective communication. This is why Hymes (1972) draws attention to linguistic context when he says language belies social, cultural and discourse conventions. This means that contexts and conventions are determinant factors in the expression and perception of meaning in language. Making speeches with words that are inaccessible to the audience may not achieve the intended purpose.

In summary, deviation arouses the interest of the reader with the use of unusual aspects of language and expression. Its peculiarity appeals to the reader or listener but when deviation is used at the expense of comprehension, the style is said to be obscure. The job of the linguistic analyst is to interpret a deviation and find out if what appears irregular or nonsensical at surface levels makes sense at deep level. This paper therefore investigates the deviations found in the speeches of Obahiagbon to unravel meanings imbedded in them.

There are a number of ways foregrounding is achieved through deviation in a text. These ways can be classified as the different types of deviation. Let us look at some which are relevant to this study:

- (i) Grammatical deviation: This occurs when rules of grammar are broken in text. There are two types of this kind of deviation namely, morphological and syntactic. The morphological deviation occurs at the morphemic level which could change the form or spelling of words. Syntactic deviation on the other hand, occurs at sentence level. This may make a sentence to be incorrect, unacceptable or absurd.
- (ii) Lexical deviation: This occurs when rules of lexis or word formation are broken. It is closely related to grammatical deviation but the focus here is on the irregular use of

words. An example of this usage is neologism, which is often erroneously viewed as an anomaly.

- (iii) Phonological deviation: This occurs at the level of pronunciation and articulation of words. An example of phonological deviation is elision. Two types of phonological deviation have been identified as: conventional verse composition and special pronunciation for the purposes of achieving musicality or rhyme.
- (iv) Semantic deviation: This makes the meaning of sentences to seem absurd or meaningless at first glance, until a proper understanding of such a sentence is gotten by breaking down the utterance into constituent parts and each part is analysed to generate meaning.
- (v) Graphological deviation: This is also called orthographic deviation. It involves breaking the rule of punctuations, line arrangement, capitalization, etc. to the extent that spelling is the exact representation of pronunciation (this is unusual in English). An example of this deviation is E. E. Cummings penchant for discarding capital letters.
- (vi) Historical deviation: This involves the use of words from obsolete languages such as Latin and Greek. This type of deviation is used frequently by Hon. Patrick in his speeches.
- (vii) Register deviation: This is the purposeful transfer of words from one field into another domain.

Finally on the delimitation of style is the concept of style as the man. Every individual has his or her linguistic signature and it is impossible for two individuals' signatures to mirror each other in the exact same way. This is why it is possible for example, to differentiate between the writings of Soyinka and Rotimi or the speeches of say Obama from Trump. Each person's speech mannerisms or writing habits bears a certain uniqueness or idiosyncrasy.

In Coles dictionary of literary terms, style is equated with the individual. This perhaps is most clearly verbalized in Court de Buffon's famous epigram "Le style est l'homme meme" meaning "style is the man himself" (discourse sure le style). This is also in line with Arthur Schopenhauer's view of style as "the physiognomy of the mind",

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which means that no matter how careful a writer is, he would still leave traces of himself along the footpath of his writing (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2011).

In summary therefore, every writer has his or her own linguistic peculiarities. This goes to show that style is not just a genre or method of writing learnt consciously by the learners, but is in addition, the special inspiration which pushes him or her to write. His writing captures his experiences and thought pattern. The description of style as the man is a stylistic approach that concentrates on the connection between author/speaker, the deep emotions portrayed in the text and the messages or ideas presented in the range of thought. Sometimes the emotions override the logic and at other times the aesthetics are more overwhelming. Whichever seems consistent in the patterns of the writer/speaker, constitutes his style.

Closely related to style is the man is the concept of idiolect. An idiolect is a person with distinctive speech patterns regarded as unique among speakers of the person's language or dialect. Klammer, Schulz, and Volpe (2007) define this concept more succinctly as follows:

Because each of us belongs to different social groups, we each speak a language variety made up of a combination of features slightly different from those characteristics of any other speaker of the language. The language variety unique to a single speaker of language is called an idiolect. The idiolect includes the vocabulary appropriate to various interest and activities, pronunciations reflective of the region in which you live or have lived and variable styles of speaking that shift subtly depending on whom you are addressing.

Whether we look at style as a diatypic variation, a choice, a deviation or the man himself, the meaning of an idiolect remains constant and in this regard, looks at the various speech mannerisms that are peculiar to a particular person. Before we look at the data for this work, it is expedient that the theoretical framework guiding this exposition be discussed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical guide for this stylistic analysis is Halliday's (1961) systemic functional linguistics. Systemic functional linguistics employs linguistic levels for language analysis. In addition, even though Halliday views language as an arbitrary construct, it is nevertheless function oriented and plays the primary role of transmuting meaning (Taiwo, 2006). This necessitates surface and deep levels of meaning which are explored for the semantic and pragmatic value of a text.

Halliday's linguistic levels of language analysis forms the major categorisation used in the analysis of the speeches in this paper. Also his register theory (field, mode and tenor) guides the researchers in the discussion of appropriateness and inappropriateness of some usages in the speeches. This aspect of the analysis is necessary because systemic functional linguistics is not only concerned with identifying the units and levels of grammar, but takes a critical look at the use for which language is employed in the speech community (Taiwo, p.160).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data used in the analysis of this paper consists of Obahiagbon's speeches entitled "The tyranny of the gavel", "Why I speak big grammar", "The Rivers State crisis" and "The removal of subsidy on petroleum products". The selection of these speeches is purposeful because they provide sufficient data for examining the idiosyncrasies of the speaker. All four speeches were downloaded from the internet and the lines in each speech were numbered using 'L' to denote them and enable proper referencing of excerpts from the speeches in the work. A summaries of the four speeches are presented severally and their data analysed under four sub headings following the four relevant levels of language analysis, namely: Phonology, syntactic, morphology and semantics. These sub headings are further sub divided to account for the different linguistic features that characterise the speech under the major divisions.

DATA PRESENTATION

“Tyranny of the gavel” speech

This is a critical speech. Here, Obahiagbon speaks about the perceived injustice he has observed in the House of Representatives. The title of the speech is a play on words. This is because he believes that the leadership of the House dominate their fellow members who they perceive as enemies because they hold contrary opinions. This dominance is referred to as “tyranny”. He refers to the leadership of the legislative body as “gavel” and the legislature as “mace”. This is metonymy. That is, the substitution of a name with another that is closely related to it. The gavel is a small hammer used by the senate president and leader of the House of Representatives to moderate or maintain order during a sitting while the mace is a staff that symbolises authority in both legislative houses during sessions.

He begins his speech by stating his eight year span of experience (this is ethos. See Ekpang, 2017) and having established this fact, he also makes known the fact that he is conversant with the modus operandi of the legislative wing of government (L4-9). He further establishes the fact that he wishes to talk about the suspension of Senator Ovie Omo-Agege by the senate. “But it is the subject of the gavel that I intend to engage in this piece, particularly against the backdrop of the recent suspension of Senator Ovie Omo-Agege but the senate and others before him” (L14-16).

Obahiagbon condemns the suspension and states that because the leadership of the senate and the House of Representatives enjoy absolute power and support, they suspend at will and determine the fate of their members (L40-41). He claims that from his observation, this instance of needless suspension is not novel as other members named “Abdumumini Jubrin” and Oladimeji Bankole experienced similar fate when they challenged the leader of the House of Representatives. Jubrin was suspended for 180 legislative days, and when he came back he stopped talking in the house. He laments the absence of any kind of opposition in the Senate and House of Representatives because no member who tells the truth and “engages the gavel” gets away from being suspended. It is his opinion that the

leadership of the House dominate the members who they see as enemies when there are occasions of opposing views being presented hence the use of the noun “tyranny”: *“With the support of the majority members, especially the privileged members of the leadership cabals, the privilege members of the leadership cabals, the presiding officers demise, traumatize and ostracize their foes”* (L43-45). He warns that the legislature is a place of law making and members should not be forced to support ideas because they favour those in leadership positions of the legislature (L48-53). He totally condemns the attitude of the leadership of the parliament for suspending members who challenge them (L42-45). He condemns the situation, because he believes that victims of these unjust treatments do not even get proper redress in court (L67-68).

His recommendation is that the leadership of the legislature should allow constituents who voted for the members of the legislature to determine their fate and methods of sanction if the need arises (L54-59). In furtherance of his assertion of tyranny, he makes reference to a previous incidence where he was misrepresented by the media and for which he apologized. His apology was accepted by the then leader who he refers to as “the wielder of the gavel” because he (the leader) understood his argument. He was then pardoned (L70-71). He states that, in contrast, Omo-Agege was suspended even after he (Omo-Agege) apologized. He shows his displeasure at the fact that even after Omo-Agege went to court for redress, he was still punished (L94-98). He therefore spoke against this perceived injustice, suspension and trampling on the rights of members through his speech entitled “Tyranny of the gavel”.

“Why I Speak Big Grammar” Speech

In the earlier discussion of style as the man, we saw that every individual has his or her own style and no two individuals speak the exact same way. Obahiagbon in this speech defends his style and states that he does not purposefully set out to confuse his audience (L4-6).

He argues that he has over the years he has tried to limit his use of complex words to a reasonable extent (L12-13) but defends himself by

stating that what he says is a product of what he reads. He also stressed the fact that it is due to the fact that many people who listen to him don't read, and so, tragically they find it difficult to understand him (L15).

“The Rivers State crisis”

In this speech, Obahiagbon laments the on-going crisis in Rivers State (L3-4). He states also that the Rivers State crisis of 2015 is hazardous and of great concern to the people of Nigeria (L5-9). He argues that Nigeria is practicing neither a democracy or civilian rule but a government which he names “kakitomoboplutocracy” (L13). He concludes this speech by saying that the crisis in the state commenced as a result of Governor Rotimi Amaechi's ambition to become the vice president of Nigeria (L17-18).

“The removal of subsidy on petroleum products”

Here, the government of Nigeria is the subject of his concern. He is enraged by the government's bid to justify the removal of subsidy on petroleum products (L1-3). He calls it shameful and asks some rhetorical questions which he submits as the justification for his anger: *“Must the people now bear the brunt for government's ineptitude, inefficiency and pusillanimity in squaring up with these economic philistines and fat cows?”* (L8-9).

ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED SPEECHES

Phonological analysis

This analysis is based on the written text and so will not account for the phonological or phonetic properties of the speech in actual delivery. However, two distinct phonological properties of the written text are alliteration and anaphora. Although Obahiagbon uses different types of repetition devices in his speeches, only alliteration and anaphora fall under the category of sound features. Alliteration refers to the repetition of consonant sounds in a stream of words (Ekpang, 2016). This is one stylistic tool Obahiagbon uses for emphasis and to foreground his ideas or messages. The following examples of alliteration are found in Obahiagbon's speech on “The Rivers State Crisis”:

“That the political crinkum crankum” (L1)

“The political higi haga” (L2)

“gangatuan gaga (L3)

“It is crystal clear like the teke teke menoyafasin” (L6)

“Some social scientists like myself” (L9)

“It commenced strictly speaking” (L18)

In discussing the prevailing political crisis in Rivers State, Obahiagbon uses the words *crinkum crankum*, an archaic expression which means “an elaborately or excessively intricate thing” to refer to the twist and turns which characterise the political war and near anarchy in the state. By using this term, he describes the problem in the state as complex and multifaceted. Rather than use a common adjective to describe this, in his characteristic manner, he uses a term that is not easily accessible to the general populace for which the message is addressed. The unpopularity of the words mark them out as unique and the repetition of the /k/ and /m/ sounds identify the expression as alliteration. Both are foregrounding tools.

Higi haga does not appear as an English expression in any search cite. It appears it is a personal coinage of the speaker but the intended meaning can be deduced from the linguistic context that is, from its position in the sentence. It is likely used as a synonym of *crinkum crankum*. Below is an excerpt from the speech to buttress this:

“Let me say as quickly as possible, the political crinkum crankum, if you like, the political higi haga that has enveloped the politics of Rivers State for a period of time...” (L1&2)

The expression “if you like” implies synonymy. But it is mentioned as an example of alliteration. Structurally, both *crinkum crankum* and *higi haga* share the same word formation methodology. In the former, all consonant sounds are retained in the first and second part. This is also true for the later expression. Only the vowel sound /i/ is changed to /a/ in both expressions.

Similar to this is the expression *gangatuan gaga*. This is a combination of two distinct words. *Gangatuan* is an archetypal name that is used to express a general idea. The rhetorical name for this word formation process is *antonomasia*. *Gargantua* is the name of a giant in a satirical prose written by Francois Rabelais. Today, it is used as a synonym for

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the adjectives gigantic or extremely large. *Gaga* on the other hand, is an informal expression which means outrageous, crazy or extreme emotion that is beyond the range of moderation. Put together, the words mean “disproportionate/large/extreme madness”. The expression is also an example of alliteration because of the repetition of the /g/ sound.

Teke teke menoyafasin is probably a distortion of the biblical *mene mene tekel and parsin* found in Daniel 5:25. Mene means “God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end”, Tekel means “you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting” and Parsin means “your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians”. Given the similarities in both contexts, it is probable that Obahiagbon is addressing the political leadership in Rivers State in the same way the political leader in ancient Babylon was addressed in the bible verse quoted above. Secondly, in terms of the sound composition of both expressions, there appears to be a swap of /m/ for /t/, /k/ for /n/, /f/ for /p/ etc and vice versa as shown below:

Teke	Teke	Meno	Ya	F/a/sin
Mene	Mene	Tekel	And	P/ar/sin

The expression is alliteration because of the repetition of the consonant sounds /t/ and /m/.

Both “some social scientists like myself” and “It commenced strictly speaking” are similar types of alliteration. Unlike others previously mentioned, the only peculiarity in them is the repetition of the consonant sound /s/ in some, social, scientists, commenced, strictly and speaking.

It is obvious from the above illustrations that Obahiagbon experiments with words through the use of alliteration. However, this does not derail him from the purpose of his speech. He still condemns the political crises in River State and the ills of the country’s political sphere at that time using these peculiar adjectives, and is able to marry his love for flamboyant speeches with the communicative functions of language.

Anaphora

On the removal of oil subsidy by the Nigerian government, he repeats the word “what” in subsequent sentences in his speech. This again is for emphatic purposes. This repetition serves the purpose of intensification as he reiterates his discontent and irritation over the issue being discussed:

“What a shame? What a self-indicting admittal of the failure of governance? What anhocus-pocus? What an anathematous disdain for its citizenry? (L5-7)

“What an opprobrium? What a deprecable descent from the sublime to the ridiculous?” (L13&14)

It can be seen that this is a different type of emphasis. Here, the same word is repeated at the beginning of subsequent sentences. This type of repetition is called anaphora. Anaphora creates rhythm and musicality in speeches. It has aesthetic value and yet it accounts for memorability of words, phrases and clauses made during a speech (Ekpang, 2016).

Syntactic analysis

First person subjective pronoun

In most of his speeches, Obahiagbon makes use of another type of repetition; the singular first person subjective pronoun. Rhetorically, it may be an ethical appeal made by him to draw attention to himself or show sincerity of purpose but this tool also serves the purpose of making emphasis. The following repetitions are found in his speech titled “Tyranny of the gavel”:

“I was the leader of the house for some...” (L2)

“I can asservate without being accused of any streak of immodesty that I am sufficiently vast and knowledgeably vast in the mechanism of the legislature” (L3-5).

“I understand the shapes, forms, organic contents and textures...” (L7-8).

“I am conversant with the utilitarian purposes to which the gavel and the mace are deployed...” (L9-10).

“Suffice to say that I can pontificate ad-infinitum about the gavel and the mace as well as...” (L11-12)

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The following repetitions are also found in Obahiagbon's "Why I Speak Big Grammar" speech:

"Sincerely speaking, I want to tender an unreserved apologia to my colleagues..." (L2-3).

"The truth is that I do not set out to deliberately mystify my audience..." (L4).

"I no longer speak high sounding language." (L9)

"I have reduced radically..." (L9).

"So I am convinced that I have tried, I am trying and I will continue to try to ensure that my idiolect is as limpid and as diaphanous as possible" (L11-13).

"I am an omnivorous reader and I put my nose on the grinding stone" (L14-15).

"I am on my table, in my library..." (L16-17).

We can see that he repeats the personal pronoun "I" several times in both speeches for emphatic purposes. By this repetition, his audience is made aware that these are his convictions and not borrowed opinions. He therefore speaks as an individual and not as a spokesperson. This is opposed to the collective pronoun "we" used by activists and some politicians. The repetition of the personal pronoun helps to persuade his audience to believe his views. Sometimes, this kind of repetition is an emotional appeal.

Parallelism

This refers to the occurrence of two or more identical syntactic constructions. These constructions are usually closely related in meaning, as they share similar sentiments. Parallelism is a kind of repetition so it has been classified as both an aesthetic and rhetoric device. It is called parallel structures in some texts. Lexical parallelism occurs at word level. Here, two or more words separated by commas or coordinating conjunctions are paired up generating some kind of semantic relationship with one another. Syntactic parallelism occurs at phrasal, clausal and sentential levels. An example in "Why I Speak Big Grammar Speech" is:

"Portmanteau of indecipherability or in portmanteau of conundrum" (L5&6)

An instance in the speech on "The Rivers State Crisis" speech:

"It is audible to the deaf and visible to the blind" (L 5)

Examples from "Tyranny of the gavel" speech are:

"I am sufficiently versed and knowledgeably vast" (L4)

"The gavel and the mace" (L10 & 12)

An example from "Fuel subsidy" speech:

"Must the people now bear the brunt for governments ineptitude, inefficiency and pusillanimity" (L8&9)

His use of parallelism is both aesthetic and functional. Parallelism creates lyrical and rhetorical effects, thus making his points memorable. It also foregrounds his discontent over some pressing political issues which is the essence of the speech.

Dislocation of fixed forms

Perhaps the most noticeable feature of the syntax of Hon. Patrick speeches is the dislocation of fixed forms of words and expressions or the unusual importation of words, phrases, clauses or sentences from other linguistic contexts or register into his speeches. Sometimes, this usage are malapropos when he uses these words instead of their more context appropriate forms. Examples are: *"When I was faced with a situation where my position on a national issue in the media was misinterpreted by some of my colleagues and the matter was raised on the floor, I tendered an apologia and it was accepted..."* (Tyranny of the gavel). He used the legal term "apologia" rather than the English word "apology". The word "apologia" is a legal term which means "a written defence of a position or belief" while apology means "an expression of regret or remorse". Although both words can function in the sentence, subsequent sentences accord the audience the intended meaning of the speaker and it is in view of this that the researchers find that the word "apology" would have been misleading, so the speaker resorted to a legal term which bears his intended meaning.

In his "Removal of oil subsidy" speech, he modifies the noun "disgust" with the adjective "acatalectic"- *"I have read with acatalectic disgust, governments asinine and puerile ratiocinations..."* (L1&2). Although "acatalectic" is an archaic word used in literature to denote a verse with complete syllables; and in philosophy to mean "uncertainty",

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none of these meanings fit into the construct or sentence. In fact, the unusual collocation makes the sentence meaningless.

In the same speech, the speaker says “anathematous” which is not an English word in the following sentence- “*What an anathematous disdain for its citizenry?*” (L6-7). The word which sounds like “anathematous” and which would be appropriate in this context is “anathematic” or “anathematize”, meaning “loathsome”. This is an instance of malapropism which is a very common feature in the spoken English of second language speakers of English. Other similar examples found in his speeches are: “justicate” instead of “justification” (Oil Subsidy speech, L2) and “prependalism” instead of “prebendalism” (Why I speak big grammar, L31). Both “justicate” and “prependalism” were not found in the English dictionary.

SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Semantics is the study of meaning at all levels of linguistic analysis. An analysis of sense relations at the sentence level reveals that Obahiagbon speeches contain tautological and redundant expressions. He uses synonyms side by side to flaunt his grammatical and lexical dexterity. This kind of needless semantic repetition of words is frowned at by scholars of English and considered redundant and inappropriate. To illustrate this, let us look at some utterances in his “Why I speak big grammar” speech.

“The truth is that I do not set out to deliberately mystify my audience in portmanteau of indecipherability or in portmanteau of conundrum” (L5 &6).

“I will continue to try to ensure that my language or idiolect is as limpid and as diaphanous as possible” (L13).

“But, really, the intention is ²³not to deliberately befuddle or obfuscate my presentations on the floor” (L22-23)

The words “indecipherability” and “conundrum” as used in the above context are synonyms. They both mean difficult questions or riddles. Also the words “limpid” and diaphanous as used by the speaker are near synonyms. While “limpid” means clear, transparent or bright, “diaphanous” means “transparent or translucent”.

Similarly, the words “befuddled” and “obfuscate” points to the same meaning, and therefore is a case of tautology if they are used together. The word “befuddle” means “confused” and “obfuscate” means “mystify” or “unclear”. These meanings are similar and both words are synonyms. It was unnecessary to use both but as would be seen in subsequent examples, the use of multiple synonyms side by side appears to be the individual characteristic of the speaker.

In his “Oil subsidy removal” speech, he says “*I have read with acatalectic disgust, governments asinine and puerile ratiocinations attempting to justiceate” (L1&2) and “Must the people now bear the brunt for governments ineptitude, inefficiency and pusillanimity?” (L8-9).*

While “asinine” means “foolish”, “puerile” means “childish or immature”. Both words are near synonyms too. The use of both words together does not occasion additional meaning to the sentence.

“Ineptitude” and “inefficiency” are synonyms while “pusillanimity” which means “lack of courage to carry out a required task” can be termed a near synonym. All three words being used side by side tautologises the expression and renders it redundant.

In his “Tyranny of the gavel” speech, we find copious examples. Three of them are shown below.

“It would have rendered them tentative and dilatory in the way and manner they wield the gavel to determine the fates of members that move against the run of play” (L25-27).

“Members cannot be cocooned, pigeon-holed or manacled into a strait-jacket support for ideas...” (L51-52).

“Is the wilful violation of court pronouncements by the Senate and House of Representatives as it affects the sacrosanct right of members not as malodorous and putrescent as what Omo-Agege is accused of?” (L101-103)

Intertextuality

Obahiagbon’s style is occasioned by his ideological and religious inclinations as well as his educational exposure. Because of this ideological and educational background, he imports words and concepts from other semantic fields. Understanding these words and

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concepts would require an understanding of their roots and sources. This kind of importation is called intertextuality. Identified below are some words that exemplify this:

Teke teke menoyafasin (Rivers State crisis speech) is probably a distortion of the biblical mene mene tekel and parsin found in Daniel 5:25. The meaning of this expression has been elaborately discussed earlier under alliteration.

In the same speech, we find other instances of intertextuality.

"It leaves me with two conclusions that 2015 is inherently laden with a political and democratic 'Thalidomide.'" (L7-9): "Thalidomide" is a medical term for a sedative drug. This word is borrowed from the medical register and used in this linguistic context.

"I can see the ship of the Nigerian state hovering around the political Bermuda Triangle" (L14-15). The Bermuda Triangle is a name for a region in the North Atlantic Ocean where several vessels have been said to have disappeared mysteriously. It is an understanding of this geography that would give insight into the speaker's message in this text.

In the "Tyranny of the gavel" speech, the followings examples are found.

"I can pontificate ad-infinitum about the gavel and mace" (L12): "Ad-infinitum" is a legal term of Latin origins. It means "forever".

"Pray, are members of the National Assembly not suppose to be exempli gratia in respecting our laws and court orders?" (L99-100): "exempli gratia" is also a legal term for exemplary behaviour.

"I am manically bewildered that the National Assembly, despite a cornucopia of court cases and an Appeal Court case for that matter, forbidding the suspension of members, has continued to engage in the shameful danse macabre" (L95-98): "Danse macabre" is the title of a non-fiction film criticism book written by Stephen king in 1981. The book chronicles horror in films. Writers of African literature like Wole Soyinka and Helen Habila have used this title a metaphor for horror in their novels *Season of Anomy* and *Angel*. Aboh (2012) regards this expression as French and opines that African writers use foreign or European languages like this for class distinction and identity of characters in their stories set within the African context (p.67).

In his “Why I speak big grammar” speech, the following examples were derived.

“The cosmic afforded me the lacuna to give a vivacious and vibrant representation to my constituency” (L42-43): “lacuna” is a legal term used to denote “legal gap” but the speaker uses it in this political discourse to mean “opportunity”.

*“I would decide to be more recusant rather than being recumbent. I decided to be more quixotic rather than being laisser-faire” (L36-38): “quixotic” means “unrealistic”. It is borrowed from the field of literature as it is the name of the major character in Miquel de Cervantes’ novel entitled *Don Quixote*. The character in the novel holds an unrealistic view of life hence the meaning of the word in today’s usage.*

In the “Removal of oil subsidy” speech, the following expression is used.

“The Governors Forum has posthaste conferred an apocalyptic imprimatur on this genie.” (10-11): “imprimatur” is also a legal term that denotes a kind of licence or legal permission to carry out an action.

Other examples are “parliamentary seppuku” (L90), “jejune politics” (L108) and “legislative brigandage” (L108). While “seppuku” is a Japanese word for honourable suicide performed by members of the samurai cult, both “jejune” and “brigandage” are French words denoting “emptiness” (lacking in substance) and “robbery” respectively.

All the words above are borrowed words from other registers and languages and are used by Obahagbon in his speeches.

Morphological analysis:

Lexical and morphological deviations occur at word level. This is typified in neologism, telescoping and blending, lexical innovations, compounding, nonce-formation, malapropism, vulgarism etc. Some examples found within the speeches are:

Telescoping and Blending

Telescoping and blending is a morphological process of birthing new words in a language. Here, parts of two or more words are combined to produce a lone new word. In the English language, words like brunch and smog are blended words because they are a product of

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the merging of parts of the words *breakfast + lunch* and *smoke + fog* respectively (Udofot, p.90). Telescoped and blended words are however only used in informal contexts.

In his “Why I Speak Big Grammar” speech, Obahiagbon uses the words “overgasted” and “flabberwhelmed”. These are novel words. Their structural composition show an interesting formation- whereas flabbergasted means “shocked, surprised or confounded”, “overwhelmed” means “engulfed or overpowered”. He interchanges the morphemes of both words through telescoping and blending. Thus

Over + whelmed = overwhelmed

Flaber + gasted = flabbergasted

Over + gasted = overgasted

Flabber + whelmed = flabberwhelmed

The morpheme “over” means “surplus or in excess of”, and “gast” means “to frighten” so that he could say “overgasted” to mean extremely frightened, shocked or surprised. “Whelm” means “to engulf or submerge” and flabber means extreme ineptitude. It can be observed that the word flabbergasted is not a transparent compound word because the meanings of the constituent words do not determine its meaning. So he uses the two morphemes to form new words as in “flaberwhelmed” which will mean” to be senselessly engulfed by emotions. His play on words make this possible. He uses this kind of morphological reconstructions to show his passion and discontent over issues he addresses.

Another example of this kind of coinages are his use of the word “kakistomoboplutocracy” (Rivers State crisis, L13). There is a system of government known as “kakistocracy” which is the government by the worst. There is also a system of government known as “mobocracy” which is the government by mobs or crowds and also “plutocracy”, which is the rule or power of wealth or the wealthy. He combines the three forms of government to form “kakistomoboplutocracy”. He uses this word to show the multifaceted state of bad governance in practice in Nigeria.

Another instance of morphological deviation is the use of “teke teke meyofasin” (Rivers State crisis, L6) which is a biblical allusion to “mene mene tekel uphasin which he uses to mean that something is crystal clear or as clear as a hand writing on the wall.

Findings

Obahiagbon’s speeches are not political protests, they do not present an agenda, and neither do they influence political processes. He points to the errors of the government in a crusader fashion, but does not proffer solutions or actions. Due to his complex diction, his speeches create humour, because they entertain rather than educate the hearers in most instances. But his use of words and expressions like: “from gavel to gavel”, “excesses of a Machiavellian and Mephistophelean Cabal”, “parliamentary seppuku”, “jejune politics”, and “kakistomoboplutocracy” place his speeches within the scope of political satire. As a political satire, Hon. Patrick’s manner of speech is characterised by bombastic languages and syntactic jugglery. This feature permeates all the four selected speeches.

In Oluasaanu’s (2012) text entitled “Linguistic obfuscation in the name of legislation: A stylistic analysis of 234 next online magazine”, he implies that Obahiagbon may have suffered some political misfortune as a result of his critical stance:

All should rally around and reposition the great and gaudy Hon. Patrick Obiahgbon a.k.a Igodmigodo who has been schemed out of the centre point of political activity via some calculated political dexterity, so that his political occupation should not comatose. Though he might have been a victim of double dipping he should take solace in the fact that he is not alone he should find a way of realigning himself with the powers that be and take respite in the public support he incontrovertibly enjoys.

Oluasaanu implies here that Obahiagbon’s use of grandiose terms may have garnered for him popularity among the populace and his constituency only but has not accomplished for him any permanent political relevance or invincibility since he was “schemed out” from participating in active politics at the national arena. It is either that

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the speeches had no political import or they were viewed as being too radicalised for the polity or government's agenda. Whatever the case may be, his grandiloquence has secured for him, a place in the annals of Nigerian Parliamentarians as one who was vocal, irrepressible and verbose.

Summary

This work, "A lexical analysis of Selected Speeches of Honorable Patrick Obahiagbon, has focused on identifying the style of Obiahagbon as depicted in his selected speeches. The analysis was carried out under the sub-headings- semantic, morphological, phonological and syntactic features in the selected speeches. The work also points out the appropriateness and inappropriateness of some of these choices which gives a picture of the speaker's communicative competence. Language is a dynamic concept where idiosyncrasies require the language user to step into the semantic and stylistic creativity- a state where a language user becomes a creator of some sort. However, this licence should be married with the purpose of the text, giving particular attention to the importance of communicating meaning in discourse. Communication of meaning thrives on the choice of diction when a message is being encoded by an individual. This message could serve esoteric or exoteric purposes. If it is esoteric, then a speaker may not be too bothered about comprehensibility because it is likely that the speaker would use appropriate language to suit the context, subject and audience. In exoteric or political speeches like the ones analysed in this paper, which targets a mix and great generality of the people as its audience, clarity and not obscurity should be the aim of the language user. This is because the effectiveness or not of any text is adjudged by the transfer of messages from the sender to the receiver. This makes the choice of diction to be of fundamental value and should therefore guide the lexical choices made in such speeches.

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