

A LEXICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF COUP SPEECHES OF GENERALS IBRAHIM BABANGIDA AND SANI ABACHA

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Abstract

This paper analyses Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha's coup speeches from a lexico-semantic ambit. The study reveals that the language of coup speeches is deliberately different from that of everyday usage. It exposes us to the forms and characteristics of political language as contained in coup speeches which include; newspeak, doublespeak, diplomacy, vagueness, persuasiveness and euphemism. The major sources of data are the Babangida and Abacha's coup speeches of August 27, 1985 and November 17, 1993, respectively. The study adopts Hallidayan's theory which helps in the analysis of the texts. The findings reveal that language is an important tool in coup speeches and that the choices of words used by the speakers are highly dependent on their idiosyncrasies. The study also reveals that both speakers use the same lexico-semantic features such as, lexical choices which include the diction and choice of words used by the speakers; referring expression which include pronominal references; lexical reiteration which include repetition of dictions and phrases and also the use of lexical relation which include synonyms, antonyms, etc. to arrive at meaning. It therefore concludes that both speeches have some similarities since they were both delivered at similar circumstance and situation. Lastly, the study concludes that military coup speeches have some elements of political orientations as reflected in their choice of words which is geared toward persuading, appealing and convincing the audience through the use of language.

Keywords: Language, coup speeches, political and military language and lexico-semantic.

Introduction

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, it was necessary for there to be a system of leadership responsible for the successful running of the country. Consequently, it became a matter of concern as to who should control the affairs of government, whether the civilians or the military. Although self governance started off with the civilian administration of the first republic, eventually, Nigeria and Nigerians went through several coups d'état intermittently, from 1966 to 1999. Each coup was followed by a speech intended to address the Nigerian audience. These speeches had in common, feature which was the use of language to persuade and convince Nigerians for a change. Language therefore becomes the tool used by the coupists to convey their thoughts through their speeches. It is said that language does not exist in a vacuum. It plays many roles in human society. One of these roles is its use to express content in a given situation. This is so because language controls human behaviour and it is a medium used to communicate ideas and feelings. Language is context-based and each context determines lexical choices to effectively communicate the intent of the speaker in a given situation. This position is supported by Gunn & Ekoru (2021) when they observe that every social organization has a language unique to itself to enable it communicate effectively.

The language use in coup speeches is often the language of power that connotes authority. However, since the coupists are the soldiers themselves, the speeches are often characterized by some aspects of military language and political language. Hence, the speeches conform to the cultural relativity theory which holds that language forms reflect their environment. Therefore, a coup speech does not only connote a political and military language but also manifests the relationship between language and power because; the military uses a particular language style to enforce a change. This study therefore analyzes the language of Nigeria coup speeches which is quite different from the everyday language. To actualize this, the paper will anchor its linguistic analysis largely on the lexico-semantic aspect of the speeches. Interestingly, it is pertinent to note that a coup speech is quite different from other political speeches such as inaugural speech, welcome speech, postponement speech and what have you. Most persons view a coup to be a revolution but, a coup is quite distinct from a revolution because a coup involves the use of power by the

higher authorities while a revolution involves the masses participation. Hence, coup speeches carry with them the language of politics appropriately spiced with militarian language; and because the military expects little or no form of challenge from the people, they use the language form to their advantage. Thus, this study will fill a gapping lacuna of a thorough analysis of the language used in military coup speeches and the meaning of such language in a given situation.

The concept of political language

Political language can be defined as a verbal production in the form of what politicians say. That is, political language is the language used by politicians. It is described as language manipulation which is highly used to acquire or regain power. According to Tanko, Ismail, Jabar & Mustapha (2021), the term political discourse is simply used to refer to the speech that politicians produce. Little wonder Akinwotu (2018, p.3) observes that, “language is constructed to champion and promote individual interest and...political speeches reflect many ideological differences in terms of party politics, policy formation and individual view.”

A politician uses language basically to manipulate through vagueness. In line with this, Ali (2011) is of the opinion that language is used to provoke the audience’s mind and feelings and subsequently gain their persuasion. Also, Johnson (2000) believes that political discourse is intended to involve all citizens in decision making; gain the persuasion of others through valid information and logic and determine what cause of action would be most influential in solving a political problem. Finally, Abaya (2008, p. 38) opines that “political language can be traced to the theory of linguistic determinism which states that not only that our perception of the world influences our language but also that the language we use profoundly affects how we think.” This is to say that language is considered as a tool of manipulation by politicians in order to achieve their individual set goals.

Having considered broadly the concept of political language, we can see that the definitions have some common features which make it distinct from other types of languages. Political language is different from scientific language, philosophical language, religious language, etc. In summary, political language is fluid, deceptive, complex, persuasive, enticing and dynamic.

Forms of political language

As already established that the doing of politics is the doing of language, political language therefore has some forms which shape it. According to Abaya (2008, p. 48), “political language to a large extent can be likened to propaganda.” This is because it has the propensity to convey misleading information. It happens or appears to be true but in real sense it is not true. Propaganda can be defined as information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view. Propaganda can also be said to be ideas or statements that are often false or exaggerated and that are spread in order to help a cause, a political leader, a government, etc. Propaganda is a communication that is primarily used to influence an audience and further an agenda, which may not be objective and may be selectively presenting facts to encourage a particular synthesis or perception, or using loaded language to produce an emotional rather than a rational response to the information that is being presented. Politicians use the manipulative means of language to convince the audience to believe in a change. Abaya (2008) is of the view that propaganda manifests in the form of newspeak, political correctness, doublespeak, language of deception, language of persuasion and language of diplomacy. These will be discussed briefly below.

Newspeak

Newspeak is a propagandistic language that is characterized by euphemism, circumlocution and the inversion of customary meanings designed to diminish the range of thought. The term was first coined by George Orwell in his novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949). Thomas and Wareing (1999, p. 194) as cited in Abaya (2008) refers newspeak to a special vocabulary invented by totalitarian regime to manipulate people’s mind. However, they observed that the term has passed into common usage to mean new words or use of words specifically in political jargon. Affirming this, Gee (2001) cited in Abaya (2008) asserts that newspeak usage has become rampant in the political circle. Newspeak manipulates the use of language to have a deeper meaning from what is being said. It tends to control people’s thought and ideology.

Political correctness

In simple term, this concept best describes pretence. The concept can be defined as a term used to describe language, policies and, or measures that are intended to avoid offense or disadvantage to members of particular

groups in the society. Political right enforces its own form of political correctness to suppress criticism of its favoured constituencies and ideologies. Political correctness is viewed to be a case of pretentious euphemism that characterizes anything politicians do and say to further cause discrimination. Political correctness adopts in its presentation to sideline their opponent and convince their audience to believing what they say.

Doublespeak

Doublespeak is defined as a language used to deceive usually through concealment or misrepresentation of truth. It is a language that can be understood in more than one way and that is used to trick or deceive people. Referring to what people say as doublespeak is simply criticizing them for presenting things in a way that is intended to hide the truth or give people the wrong idea. It can be defined as language deliberately constructed to obscure, disguise, distort or even reverse the meaning of words which is associated with political language. The term is derived from Orwell's concepts of 'doublespeak' and 'newspeak.' Parallels have also been drawn between doublespeak and Orwell's classic essay in which he discussed the distortion of language for political purposes. He observes that political language serves to distort reality. In a nutshell, doublespeak amounts to deception; it is a language used to make what is bad seems good.

Language of deception

This being the fourth form of propaganda best describes political language. Political language is deceptive in nature. Politicians use language manipulatively to convince their audience to believe in their new change of governance. Little wonder Orwell described political language as largely the defense of the indefensible and one consisting of euphemism, question begging and sheer-cloudy vagueness. Politicians make promises which are more general and more related to common good through the use of language.

Language of persuasion (rhetoric)

To persuade is to successfully convince someone to agree to, accept, or do something, usually through reasoning and verbal influence. Political language is persuasive in nature. The ability for politicians to use language persuasively and convincingly is what characterizes a political discourse. In

political discourse, issues are often presented and solutions attached to them. Persuasion is an umbrella term that has a strong influence on all aspects of human life.

Tanko et al (2021, p. 1730) define persuasion as a “process that aims to change individual’s or group’s attitude or behaviour towards specific issues, ideologies, or objects by employing written or spoken discourse.” Rhetoric is synonymous to persuasion. It could be spoken or written to inform, educate, persuade or move an audience. Politicians use persuasive diction in delivering their speeches which makes it (political language) equivalent to propaganda.

Political and military language

Since much has already been said about political language, credence will be given to military language here, while attempt will be made to show their interconnectedness. In other words, we will consider the concept of military language and how the military language and political language help in the delivery of coup speeches. When we talk about military language, we are simply referring to the language used by the military in enforcing authority. The military already being vested with power uses a language of power, that is, ‘a commanding language.’ Their status influences the use of language in their actions. The study of military language becomes peculiar to coup speeches because the coupists themselves are the military and as such use a militaristic language politically to control the audience. The military is a commanding society or institution where power is sublet from the top to the bottom. In the words of Ayeomoni (2005) as cited in Akinwotu (2018, p. 2),

Military officers make use of punctuation marks in their speeches. The use of comma and full stop are stylistic devices identifiable with the administrative style of the military which relate to briskness and military fiat. It also shows their frankness, fearlessness and boldness.

This describes language as used by the military, often backed by fearlessness and boldness. Enyi (2016) is of the opinion that the use of language in the military is authoritative. He adds that the military uses masculinity, speed, precision, etc. in their pronouncements. On this note, Abaya (2008, p.119) posits that, “though the military ideals might not be

honest in intentions and motive, they serve the symbolic functions of systematically reassuring the masses and including political quiescence (achieved) in parts by the use of consciously expressed symbolic rhetoric that has universal appeal.” These views of the military language are tilted towards one goal- the effective use of words to enable the speaker to exercise control through the use of language to command, order, request, and threaten the audience.

Military coup speeches

It has been established that a coup speech is an address prepared by coup plotters to announce a change in government. Scholars have expressed varied opinions in respect of the matter. Umar (2019, p.2) asserts that coup speeches are “the initial statements made at the hour of takeover of power and they capture the anxieties and views of the coup makers at their freshest.” To him, military coup speeches are aspects of political discourse. Their essence lies in their performative declarative powers; that is both being used in ending a government and in starting another one. The speech is often factual and cohesive and captures the subject matter. Military coup speeches is otherwise known as “maiden coup speeches,” claims Enyi (2016, p. 37). According to him, the maiden coup speeches provide the incoming president the first opportunity to display the power of language. Language then becomes the greatest tool used by the military in realizing their goal of a power takeover through the control overflow of information.

Military coup speeches can also be seen as a sub-type of political speeches (Enyi, 2016). This is because its aim is targeted toward a political ambition. A coup speech or address has the feature of all the public communication meant for the public consumption. Therefore, coup speeches reveal the ideological inclination of the military that see themselves as heroes and saviours; people who have come to save the nation from savages through their interventions.

In the words of Abaya (2008), the Nigerian military coup speeches can be said to be a military socio-political pedigree. To him, Nigerian coup speeches have some elements of political language embedded in them despite their peculiarities and background. A coup speech has in it both military and political language in terms of the ideological underpinning and the situational context in which they are produced. Lastly, Akambi, (1999, p. 1) defines a coup speech as “an address prepared by coup plotters and rendered by their representative... to announce a change in government.”

In all, a military coup speech is a speech prepared and read by the military (coupist) to make known his intention to the masses. Most times, such intentions are for the coupist's interest rather than for the interest of the masses. The speech is often declarative and informative. It reflects the reality of the military.

Data analysis and discussion

The analysis of the data derived from the two speeches is done lexico-semantically. The task takes note of those lexical and semantic categories that are significant in the realisation of meaning in the texts. Every investigation here attempts to find the artistic principle underlying the speakers' choice of language and how such choices enhance the understanding of their message. Some of the lexico-semantic features prominently used in the text for realising meaning and persuasion include: diction or lexical choices, lexical relations, referring expression, among others.

General Ibrahim Babangida's speech (1985)

In his broadcast, Babangida speaks about the regime of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari as being the saving government and one which is to salvage the people thus he states in his first paragraph *with the nation at the mercy of political misdirection and on the brink of economic collapse, a new sense of hope was created in the minds of every Nigerian* (line 2). However, he expresses his disappointment at the fact that the expectations of the people were not met; rather their hopes were gradually diminishing (3). He further established that the main objective of the military takeover has been betrayed (7) and therefore there is need for a change (10).

Babangida in his speech condemns the rigidity and uncompromising nature of General Buhari to issues of national significance (13). To him, the Nigerian Security Organization (NSO) failed as well and therefore needed to be amended in his regime. After stating the problem and reason behind the change, Babangida goes on in his speech to address the attention of the people to major issues confronting the state (22). He reaffirms that he and his cabinets have come to restore the lost hope, thus he states, *We have come with the strongest determination to create an atmosphere in which positive efforts shall be given the necessary support for lasting solutions* (24). He frowns at the level of corruption and indiscipline recorded in the administration of Buhari and its effect on

individuals (27-29). He also abolishes some decrees which he considers unfair to humanity (34-35).

Also, Babangida stated his objectives in his speech and how they will be actualized. Concerning foreign policy, he promised to be more involved (67). He swore to change the course of history, thus he says, *my colleagues and I are determined to change the course of history* (75). He further solicited for the assistance of everyone in order to make Nigeria a better country (89). Finally, he commended the Armed Forces and the Nigeria Police for their maturity during the change and also thanks all for their cooperation and understanding (90-91). He ends his speech with a blessing to all Nigerians, *God bless Nigeria* (92).

General Sani Abacha's speech (1993)

In Abacha's speech, he announces the return to a ruthless military rule. He begins his speech by stating the resignation of the interim government and his subsequent appointment as Head of State (1). He also made known the fact that he is working towards finding solutions to his dear country's problems (1). He establishes the fact that Shonekan took over in a most critical condition when the country was full of uncertainties and therefore acknowledges him for his courage (4/5).

Abacha in his speech comments on the fear of the citizens toward the return of the military (8). However, he points to the fact that the most important thing to consider is the survival of the country (9-10). He takes upon himself to dissolve all the ruling councils of the interim government (16-27), bringing into power the military (29-30). He further establishes the need for an effective reinforcement of security system (31). Abacha condemns the ongoing strike due to increase in the price of fuel and further appeal that everyone should return to work (33).

In addition, he emphasizes the need for there to be a permanent and lasting solution to the pending problem thus he says *we require well thought-out and permanent solutions to these problems if we are to emerge stronger for them* (39). Abacha in his speech condemned indiscipline; *we will not condone nor tolerate any act of indiscipline* (44-45). Again, he reaffirms his strong desire to restore and establish peace and stability to the country as well as solicit for a chance to solve the problems in his regime (47-48). He concludes his speech with a prayer of long life to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (49).

Analysis of Babangida's speech

Diction / lexical choices

The lexical choices that are commonly used in military regimes and which are found in the speech include: hope (2/3), political misdirection (2), intervention (4), premise (10), regime (5), issues (20), resolution (23) government (80), etc. By selecting the word *hope*, the speaker bears in mind that the citizens had certain expectations they looked forward to, thus; *a new sense of hope was created in the minds of every Nigerians (2.)* But these expectations were not met, thus he says; *however, we have witnessed a systematic denigration of that hope. (3)*

The use of *intervention* and *premise* in the speech quickly informs the audience of the reason why there should be a change in government. The phrase, *political misdirection* shows the state Nigeria was in, owing to the fact that the people were being misled by previous leaders. The use of the lexical item, *regime* subscribes to the recognition of the Supreme Council as the government of the day thus the speaker noted; *Nigerians have since then been under that regime that continued with those trends (5).* *Issues* in the speech take us to the persisting problems lingering in Nigeria which calls for a change. This is seen in his statement; *let me now address your attention to the major issues that confront us... (20).* By the lexical item, *resolution*, the speaker shows a strong determination to accomplish his set goals – *for matter of the moment which requires immediate resolution; we intend to pursue a determined programme of action. (23)* By extension, any opposition to the realisation of this intention will be highly resisted, thus he states; *the guilty should be punished only as a lesson for the future (29).* Again, the *ousted military government (57)*, as used by Babangida is evident that a coup has taken place. In line with this, the speaker reassures that with him in the picture, things will be put in place. Hence he says; *this government... will ensure that the leadership exhibits proper examples. (80)* By this, it means that the people's hope will be restored. The lexical items above are used by the speaker to persuade, convince and inform the people (Nigerians) about the military takeover.

Negators

In Babangida's speech, he deploys a lot of negative expressions which are made possible with the negative markers 'not' and 'never'. These negators are strong assertive words which are brought into the speech by the speaker to show his dissatisfaction and disappointment in the toppled regime. Also, they are used to strongly refute any form of subjection and

oppression which were brought in by Buhari's government. Some examples are;

The initial objectives were betrayed and fundamental changes do not appear on the horizon. (7)

We must never allow ourselves to lose our sense of natural justice. (31)

The innocent cannot suffer the crimes of the guilty. (32)

Apart from the negators used in the speech as captured above, the speaker makes use of strong verbs, to express his height of disappointment towards the dissolving regime. Verbs such as fulfilled (12), failed (16), subjected (42), and forced (45) are used in the speech as follows:

...it became increasingly clear that such expectations could not be fulfilled (12).

As Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, he failed to exhibit the appropriate disposition demanded by his position (16).

Contrary to expectations, we have so far been subjected to a steady deterioration.... (42)

...Nigerians were forced to buy goods and commodities at higher prices...(45)

These verbs are evident in the fact that the government have failed in carrying out the promises and responsibilities which were made by them. Again, it brings to the audience's attention, the importance of the termination of the existing government and also, the verbs ensure that the sorrowful mood of the speaker is upheld.

Lexical relation

The aspects of lexical relations used by the speaker in the speech include the use of antonyms, synonyms, adjectives, collocation, personification, synecdoche, etc. These help in bringing out the rhetoric (persuasion) in the speech. When a speaker uses words that are opposite in meaning to each other, it is known as antonyms. This is often done for purpose of emphasis in a speech. This is found in the following sentences:

He arrogated to himself absolute knowledge of problems and solutions... (17)

The innocent cannot suffer the crimes of the guilty. (32)

...both the negative and positive implications of reaching a mutual agreement with the Fund (49).

A speaker could decide to use words which habitually co-occur in a sentence; such is known as collocation, as seen in the following sentences;

A grossly unequal gap between the rich and the poor.
(54c)

...this country has had since independence a history mixed with turbulence and fortune. (71)

Sometimes, the speaker uses words whose meanings are the same or which are similar; often done to create emphases. This is known as synonyms. They are found in the following sentences:

...Nigerians were forced to buy goods and commodities at higher prices...(45)

To protect the danger this poses to the poor and the needy in our society. (53)

Another aspect of lexical relation found in Babangida's speech is his use of personification. When an inanimate entity is given an animate feature or characteristic, it is called personification. This can be found in the following sentences:

Unemployment has stretched to critical dimensions. (43)

We shall break the deadlock that frustrated the negotiations.... (49)

The Economic Community of West African States must be reborn... (65)

Referring expression

A significant cohesive feature in the speech is pronominal reference, deictic form and other referring expressions such as; you, I, we, us, our, etc. These are used to realise specific stylistic effects or meaning in the speech. For instance, the pronoun 'you' and its variant 'your', refer to the citizens of Nigeria whom he believes share the collective will to keep Nigeria free from corruption and instability. This is seen in the following instances:

Let me at this point attempt to make you understand the premise... (10)

I thank you all for your co-operation and understanding.
(91)

The use of the personal pronoun 'I' and its variant 'me', and the possessive pronoun 'my' portrays General Babangida as a man of authority, who has the saviour mentality to salvage the country;

Let me at this point attempt to make you understand the premise... (10)

My colleagues and I are determined to change the course of history (75).

The pronoun 'we' and its variants 'our' and 'us' is another pronominal reference used in the speech for the stylistic effect of inclusion. The pronoun of inclusion, 'we' by virtue of its deployment, makes the speaker part of the revolution. This could be found in the following excerpts:

Our dedication to the cause of ensuring that our nation remains a united entity... (9).

We do not pretend to have all the answers to the questions which our present problems have put before our nation (24).

We must never allow ourselves to lose our sense of natural justice. (31)

Our role as Africa's spokesman has diminished because we have been unable to maintain the respect of African countries. (59)

Apart from the pronominal 'we' being used as inclusion of self in the speech, the speaker also uses it in its deictic form to refer to himself and his executive body and not Nigerians as a whole. Such is found in the following examples:

We have come with the strongest determination to create an atmosphere in which positive efforts shall be given the necessary support... (25)

We shall not allow anything to obstruct us. (77)

Lastly, the use of the pronoun 'he' and its variant 'him' and 'his' refer to the previous government which he has succeeded. Example:

Efforts to make him understand that a diverse polity like Nigeria... (14).

...he failed to exhibit the appropriate disposition demanded by his position. (16)

In the speech, Babangida uses the phrase ‘fellow Nigerians’ in lines 1 and 71. This reveals the speaker’s interpersonal relationship between him and his audience. The phrase poses an inclusion on the part of the speaker as the word “fellow” means a colleague. To him, he is one of the citizens of Nigeria and not an alien.

Lexical reiteration

This involves the repetition of some lexical items often done to create emphasis. The constant repetition of the phrase, ‘this government,’ in the speech, gives a reaffirmation that the new regime will definitely bring a change to the lingering problems of Nigeria. This is found in the following lines;

It is the view of this government that austerity without structural adjustment is not the solution to our economic predicament. (51)

This government is determined to unite this country.
(76)

Rhetoric and coercive features

Due to the political nature of coup speeches as already revealed, the speaker adopts a rhetorical strategy in the speech to create persuasion and coercion. The persuasive strategy is the use of language to coax a person or group of persons to accept a point of view. In Babangida’s speech, he realises this function in his choice of words and structure as captured in lines 22-27. Using a rhetoric feature, he assures Nigeria of better governance. The coercive strategy is another level of rhetoric. It is anchored on threat. This also is a function of power. Example include:

The guilty should be punished only as a lesson for the future. (33)

Analysis of Abacha’s speech

Diction / lexical choices

As in the previous section, this has to do with the speaker’s choice of words deployed in actualising meaning as captured in his speech. These include the following:

Lexical items

The speech contains some lexical items which are of significance. These items (words and phrases) help in deducing the meaning and reason for the speech. The speaker uses the expression, ‘fellow Nigerians’ (1 and 36) to

reveal his interpersonal relationship with his audience and also to capture the attention of his audience. The expression also poses an inclusion of the speaker being a citizen as well. The word ‘resignation’ (1) informs the audience of the previous administration’s handover hence, paving the way for the speaker’s appointment as the new Head of State. The use of ‘beloved country’ (1) depicts a tone of affection on the part of the speaker to his country, Nigeria. The speaker uses the word ‘tribute’ to express his gratitude to his predecessor, Shonekan, for his selfless service to the country, thus he stated; *I will therefore like to... pay tribute to him for his selfless service to the nation* (6). The combination of these lexical items is what brings about meaning in the speech.

Use of adverbs

The speaker uses the adverbs ‘firmly’, ‘objectively’ and ‘decisively’ to describe the manner in which the problem is to be handled. Thus he stated;

The problems must be addressed firmly, objectively, decisively ... (15).

The use of the adverb ‘decisively’ shows a decision on his part to punish any defaulter. Example;

Any attempt to test our will, will be decisively dealt with (45).

He also uses the adverb ‘however’ to comment on the bravery of the previous leader towards the uncertainties of the nation.

However, driven by a belief in himself, his countrymen, and love for his country, he accepted to face the challenges of our time (5).

In (9), he uses the word ‘however’ in its deictic form to categorically state that notwithstanding the fear of the people toward the return of the military regime, the welfare of the nation should be placed far above the fears:

However, under the present circumstances the survival of our beloved country is far above any other consideration (10).

Use of verbs

Verbs carry the action in the speech. The constant use of the verbs ‘dissolved’ (16-18, 21/24); ‘banned’ (25); ‘proscribed’ (26); and ‘abrogated’ (27) brings to the notice of the nation, the termination and abolishment of existing offices and decrees which he considers

unacceptable. Also, the speaker uses the negator which is made possible by the word ‘not’ to refute any form of subjection of the country or his leadership. This is seen in:

We cannot afford further dislocation and destruction of our economy (34).

We will not condone nor tolerate any act of indiscipline (44).

The lexical choices above are used in the speech to show the speaker’s brevity in the use of words to communicate meaning.

Lexical reiteration

Repetition is often used to create emphasis in a speech. It serves as a persuasive device which is used to reaffirm an existing point. Here, Abacha deploys this device to reaffirm the purpose of his existence thus;

This regime will be firm, humane, and decisive (43)

This government is a child of necessity... (47).

Also, the constant use of the verb ‘dissolved’ (16-18, 21 and 24), shows that the decision made by him is not negotiable.

Referring expression

As common in political speeches, the use of pronominal reference, referring expressions such as; I, you, us, we, our, etc. are deployed in the speech for significance. The use of the pronoun ‘I’ and its variant ‘me’ and ‘my’ refers to the speaker himself, who has come to bring change to the persistent problems; Example:

...sequel to the resignation of the former Head of the Interim National Government... and my subsequent appointment as Head of State..., I have had extensive consultations within the armed forces hierarchy ... (1)

I will, therefore, like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to him... (6)

The pronoun, ‘he’ and its variants ‘his’ and ‘him’ refer to Ernest Shonekan, whom Abacha succeeded.

I will, therefore, like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to him for his selfless service to the nation. (6)

He showed great courage at taking on the daunting task... (7)

The pronoun ‘you’ refers to the citizens of Nigeria whom he will govern.

Fellow Nigerians, the events of the past months..., are well known to you. (37)

For the International Community, we ask that you suspend judgment while we grapple with the onerous task of nation building... (46).

The speaker uses the pronominal ‘we’ as inclusion of self in the revolution. The pronoun ‘we’ and its variants ‘our’ and ‘us’ is a stylistic effect of inclusion of the speaker being also a Nigerian. They include:

Nigeria is the only country we have. We must, therefore, solve our problems ourselves. We must lay a very solid foundation for the growth of democracy. We should avoid any ad hoc or temporary solutions. (11-14)

Apart from the pronominal ‘we’ and its variant ‘our’ and ‘us’ being used as an inclusion of self by the speaker, he also uses it in its deictic form to mean his governing body. Examples:

Our security system will be enhanced to ensure that lives of citizens, property of individuals are protected and preserved. (31)

...we ask that you suspend judgment while we grapple with the onerous task of nation building, reconciliation and repairs. (46)

Give us the chance to solve our problems in our own ways. (48)

Lexico semantic characteristics shared by Babangida and Abacha in their respective coup speeches

At this point we consider the contrast that exists between the speeches of both speakers as well as the similarities found in them. One of the ways of identifying the idiosyncrasies of a speaker is by comparing it with other notable speeches within similar speech situations. A look at the speeches of both men will reveal a relative preponderance of simple sentences in Babangida’s speech and more of fragmented and multiple sentences in Abacha’s. While Babangida sets out to criticise his predecessor, Buhari, and his governance, Abacha rather appreciates his predecessor, Shonekan for his bravery.

Through persuasive and convincing words, Babangida sets out to appeal to the nation to see reasons why the previous regime should end; Abacha on the other hand uses declarative and assertive statements to abolish what he considers needless during his governance. Babangida’s speech tends to be long and exhaustive, while Abacha’s is rather brief and straight to the point. On the use of lexical devices, however, Babangida’s speech appears to be more creative though both speeches draw from the same pool of lexical choices. The arrangement and contents of their coup speeches appear to be similar as both speeches adopt the same phrase; ‘fellow Nigerians’ as their opening and a prayer of goodwill to Nigeria as their ending.

Table 1: Similarities in the contents of the speeches in terms of diction, structure and meaning.

	Babangida		Abacha
1a	With the nation at the mercy of political misdirection and on the brink of economic collapse, a new sense of hope was created in the minds of every Nigerian. (2)	1b	Chief Ernest Shonekan took over as Head of State... at a most trying time in the history of the country. Politically, economically, and socially, there were lots of uncertainties. (2-3)
2a	Our dedication to the cause of ensuring that our nation remains a united entity worthy of respect and capable of functioning as a viable and credible part of the international community dictated the need to arrest the situation. (9)	2b	Many have talked about the concern of the international community. However, under the present circumstances the survival of our beloved country is far above any other consideration. (9-10)
3a	For matters of the moment which require immediate resolutions, we intend to pursue a determined programme of action. Major issues falling into this category have been identified... (26-27)	3b	We must lay a very solid foundation for the growth of democracy. We should avoid any ad hoc or temporary solutions. Consequently, the following decisions come into immediate effect.... (13-14, 16)

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|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4a | The guilty should be punished only as a lesson for the future. (33) | 4b | Any attempt to test our will, will be decisively dealt with. (45) |
| 5a | ...This generation of Nigerians and indeed future generations have no other country but Nigeria. (85) | 5b | Nigeria is the only country we have. (11) |
| 6a | There is a lot of work to be done by every single Nigerian. (88) | 6b | We must, therefore, solve our problems ourselves. (12) |
| 7a | My colleagues and I are determined to change the course of history. This government is determined to unite this country. (75-76) | 7b | This government is a child of necessity with a strong determination to restore peace and stability to our country... (47) |
| 8a | God bless Nigeria. (92) | 8b | Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (49) |

In 1a and 1b, the speakers introduce the current state of the country and in 2a and 2b they give reasons upon which the previous governance should be dissolved. The speakers identify the next plan of action needed for a successful running of the nation in 3a and 3b. In 4a and 4b, the speakers place a law which governs defaulters of any form. They reaffirm the fact that, the citizens' hope is built on their country, Nigeria, and nowhere else, in 5a and 5b. They urge the citizens to get to work for the betterment of the country in 6a and 6b. Sentences 7a and 7b capture the determination of both speakers to build a good and comfortable country for the citizens and finally, a goodwill prayer for Nigeria is captured in 8a and 8b.

From the above discourse, it can be concluded that both speakers place their speeches within the same semantic framework. The speeches were delivered in similar circumstances and this therefore explains the similarities of lexical choices used by the speakers. These similarities reveal that lexical choices made by speakers within a particular speech situation, though idiosyncratic, are to a large extent predetermined by the context in which they are used.

Conclusion

Generally, language plays many roles in human society. It is the mechanism used by individuals to convey meaningful thoughts in a given situation. This paper has been built on the assumption that military coup speeches have some elements of political language embedded in them for specific purposes irrespective of the speakers' military background.

Consequently, the conclusion that emerges in relation to the textual analysis shows that, indeed language performs a unique role in the realisation of these speeches. The speakers through their lexical choices use language to persuade and convince the audience to accept the change which they proffer. The study has successfully proven that there exist some similarities between both speeches being that both speeches were products of similar purposes and related circumstances. The study has, therefore, succeeded in enhancing the understanding of political language in general and language of military coup in particular from the perspective of lexicosemantics.

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