GRAPHO-SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POLITICAL SPEECHES OF SOME NIGERIAN MILITARY HEADS OF STATE

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This study investigates how the non-professional politicians:- the military, when they become Heads of State use, the linguistic resources and devices of Grapho-Syntax to convey their political ideas and thoughts. It is therefore, a part of the objectives of this study, to find out which of the components of linguistic resources: Grapho-syntactic features are mostly prominent in the speeches. It is also meant to unravel the thematic roles played by these prominent features in the realisation of the political intentions of the speakers. The data used for the work is based on some selected political speeches of the military Heads of State that ruled the country from 1966 to 1983. The data or speeches were analysed from the perspectives of the Linguistic stylistic approach and linguistic model of Systemic Functional Grammar of Berry (1975). It is discovered from the analysis that the language of the military political rulers is permeated with sparsely use of punctuation marks (open use of punctuation marks) and this is claimed to be in tune with swift and quick manner with which they carry out their administrative duties. Besides, their language in political addresses is mainly of simple declarative sentences. This style too, is in concomitance with their simple and unbureaucratic way of governing.

1.0 Introduction

This study investigates how the non-professional politicians -the military, (people with other primary statutory responsibilities such as soldering) avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the resources of language in playing the game of politics. Towards this end, this study sets out to examine how the military political leaders have been able to use the strength and resources of language to perpetuate their policies and programmes in government. It also verifies the features of the language variety through which they achieve these objectives or goals.

2.0 Data Base

This research is data based. The data is basically of selected speeches of the Nigerian Military Heads of State from 1966 – 1983. Six speeches are selected in all as data for this work from four military Heads of State that ruled during this period. They are selected on the bases of the nation's geographical zones: two are selected from the North and two from the South so that the selection could be geographically spread. Then the speeches selected are those, considered to manifest mostly the features of Grapho-syntactic elements.

3.0 Theoretical Approach

This research adopts the linguistic stylistic approach to its investigation here. It focuses mainly on the frameworks of Grapho – syntactic principle. This is because the investigator believes that this theoretical approach is highly relevant to the subject matter being investigated here, the language of the military in politics. It is also viewed that this approach will enhance quick discovery of the sought findings. Also, in linguistic Stylistics, the terms style and stylistics are normally considered synonyms and are always used as such. The reason is that style as a concept has attracted several meanings to itself over the years. It may for instance, mean or be viewed as the language habits of one person as when we talk of the style of Wole Soyinka or Ola Rotimi. In this sense, style can be mistakenly confused with individual personality. Consequently, it is often associated with personal language habits, which characterise the person's personality. It is further argued in the extended sense that style may refer to language habits of a period of time or a group of people as in Aristotelian style, Elizabethan style, and the linguistic idiosyncrasies common to these periods. Style is also seen as being evaluative and descriptive.

So, style in the sense of usage in this paper, is closely linked with stylistics, as stylistics is the scientific study of style and style concerns itself with the analysis of language habits with the chief purpose of identifying the linguistic network peculiar to different occasions. Stylistics will also in the same continuum explain why certain language features have been used in opposition to other available alternatives, as occasioned by the context under consideration. (The Military Political Situation in Nigeria) For example, stylisticians studying texts and during discourse have viewed the term 'style' differently. See Sebeok (1960:293), Hyones (1962:15), Crystal (1992:21) and so on.

4.0 Framework

The Linguistic Model chosen for this work is Systemic Functional Grammar. This is a kind of Grammar that was developed from Halliday's scale and category grammar and which derives its influence and motivation from the earlier works of Firth and Berry (1975:23). The choice of this Grammatical Model, Systemic Linguistics, predicates on what Berry (1975:22 & 25) calls the "very high priority it gives to the sociological aspects of language" which enables it to account for "particular varieties, particular idiolects, and particular texts..."

Awonuga (1982:3) says that the fundamental concept of Systemic Grammar is that of "systems". The system is a range of choices, a set of possibilities that arises at a specified place in the language. Afolayan

(1975:115) also corroborates this conception by consenting to the submission that Systemic Grammar is based on systems.

Besides, Systemic Grammar represents language as having three primary levels: Substance, Form and Situation. Substance is the raw material of language, which could be phonic if it is speech or graphic if it is writing. Form on the other hand, organises substance into recognizable and meaningful patterns. So, form is divided into Lexis and Grammar with 'Lexis' catering for the kind of pattern which operates between individual linguistic items and grammar. By so doing, Linguistic items like verbs and nouns according to Ajulo (1980:74) are also catered for.

On the other hand, situation refers precisely to "the situation in which a given bit of language is used". This is also the position of Berry (1975:25). It is sub-divided into thesis, immediate situation and wider situation, as claimed by Ellisis (1966:81-82). It is also noteworthy that Systemic Grammar recognises five different units in accounting for the pattern of a language. These are: Sentence, Clause, Group, Word and Morpheme.

The units are taxonomically related from the highest, which is the sentence to the smallest which is the morpheme, it is this principle or order that is called Rank Scale.

4.1 Scope

It is difficult, if not impossible, within the limit of space available in this work, to study all the military speeches available in Nigeria. As a result, the study has been restricted to some selected speeches of the Nigerian Military Heads of State between 1966 and 1993 (Aguiyi - Ironsi – Badamosi Babangida). Relevant portions of the selected speeches are extracted and analysed on the linguistic principle of stylistics using the Linguistic Model of Systemic Functional Linguistics as obtained above. This means, all the Military Heads of State, except General Yakubu Gowon, who fall within this period, are studied in this work. We then generalise on the basis of our findings. Four Heads of State are selected, on the basis of geographical zones where they come from, to ensure an unbiased coverage. In this sense, we picked two from the North and two from the South. Duration of their tenures is also considered: the longest and the shortest tenures. This is to see if the span of their administrations has anything to do at all with how they use language to play politics.

From the North we have:

(a) General Murtala Muhammed –> Short tenure.
(b) General Ibrahim Babangida –> Long tenure

From the South:

(a) Major General Aguiyi Ironsi - > Short tenure

(c) General Olusegun Obasanjo - > Long tenure.

5.0 Grapho-Syntactic Analysis of Data

In this section of the study, I ex-ray the Grapho-Syntactic components of the language of the military in politics. It is a tradition that the speeches of the military in the context of Nigerian politics have always been written down or documented for later reading; they are thus prepared in a manner that is in tune with the militant posture of the military personnel in question. Therefore, in considering the grapho-syntactic features of the selected texts or data for this study, attention has been on the pattern and direction of the graphic elements of the texts such as their orthographies, spacings, hyphenations, italicizations, print sizes, shapes, punctuations and other prominent grapho-syntactic elements.

5.1 Graphological Analysis

Speeches (1-3) will be used as data here for analysis. Then the Graphological analysis here will be based solely on punctuation usage in the speeches since it is more prominent than other graphological items.

The breakdown of the punctuation marks usage is as follows:

Types of Punctuation	Speech I	Speech II	Speech III	Total	% of Speech I	% of Speech II	% of Speech III
Comma	3	2	10	15	20.10	13.3	66.7
Full-stop	5	5	5	15	33.3	33.3	33.3
Semi-colon	0	0	1	01	0.00	0.00	1.0
Colon	0	0	0	00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Question mark	0	0	0	00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Exclamation	0	0	0	00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Parenthesis	0	0	0	00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Others	0	0	0	00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	08	07	16	31			
	25.8%	22.6%	51.6%				

The above statistical table clearly shows at a glance, the graphological pattern of the military political speeches. It reveals that this variety of English language manifests a loose or open punctuation usage. This style of punctuation usage aids a speedy reading of the texts or speeches; and this is indicative of the brisk, speedy, and swift manner the military political personnel go about the execution of their political policies. As these speeches contain several instances of the use of a loose or open pattern of punctuation system, this also implies that punctuation marks are sparingly used in military political speeches; they are only

used when it is absolutely necessary or unavoidable. This is in consonance with the swift and militant posture of the military men.

In addition, it is equally discovered from the three analysed data, that only two forms of punctuation marks: comma and full stop are often used in this form of speech. Other types of punctuation marks are not at all engaged; they are completely avoided, except for one occasion, when semi-colon features. Others have zero frequency of occurrence.

This trend then presupposes that certain type of sentences that call for the use of other forms of punctuation marks besides comma and full stop or period do not normally feature in military political speeches. Such sentences include:

(a) Interrogative sentences that require the use of Question mark (?)
(b) Rhetorical sentences that also require the use of Question mark (?)
(c) Exclamatory sentences that require the use of exclamation mark (!)
(d) Declarative sentences involving items in series that require the use of colon (:).

Then there is also the presupposition that, it is only the declarative sentences of direct form that usually feature in the military political speeches as this is the only sentence form that requires combinatory use of the two punctuation marks. This punctuation style too, is in tune with the military administrative style of frankness, fearlessness and boldness in declaring their intentions, policies vis-à-vis their execution.

5.2 Analysis of Grammatical Features

In this section, we analyse the grammatical structures identified in the data (the selected texts of the military political speeches). This is done so as to highlight the structural or grammatical features permeating this variety of language. Though, admittedly, grammar has two major components – syntax and morphology as claimed by Crystal and Davy (1969:18) however, in the context of this study, they will be collectively referred to or described as Grammatical Features.

So, in the process of our analysis of the texts from the perspective of Grammar, we shall consider prominent features of concepts like neologism, rhetorical strategy of parallelism, repetitions of similar structures at the levels of clause, group, word and morpheme.

5.2.1 Clausal Analysis of Data

In this respect, the following speeches (4 – 6) will be studied and analysed so as to identify and highlight the pervading features of grammar in the texts or speeches.

Analysis:

The first sentences of each of the three speeches (data) are in this form:

S P C

You / (are) all aware / that the Constituent Assembly had completed its task of fashioning out a new Constitution for our country;

S P C

you / are (also) aware / that I have formally expressed the Gratitude of the nation and that of the Supreme Military Council

A

to the members of the Assembly / for the successful completion Of their historic assignment.

S(A)PC + S(A)PC

Description

(a) It is a declarative sentence of SPC structure.

(b) The complement is a clause of rankshifted structure as underlined in the speech.

Then in Data or Speech (5) we have:

S P C

I / wish to reaffirm / the unflinching commitment of the administration to the implementation of the programme Of transition to civil rule.

SPC structure

Description

(a) It is a declarative sentence with all the sentence obligatory parts – SPC.

(b) The complement is realised by nominal phrase structure (as underlined above).

(c) It is a simple declarative sentence.

Data or Speech (6)

S P

Events of the past few years / have indicated /

C

that despite our great human and material resources, the Government has not been able to fulfil the legitimate expectations of our people.

SPC structure

Descriptions

(a) It is a simple declarative sentence with all the obligatory sentence parts – SPC.

(b) The complement part is realised by a rankshifted clause structure.

From the three sentences of the 3 speeches above, it is found that military political speeches manifest these linguistic traits:

(i) A simple declarative sentence typology.

(ii) Completeness of structural parts as all the obligatory sentence parts are often represented in the form of SPC – *Subject, Predicator* and *Complement.*

(iii) The complementation part is always of the form of a rankshifted clause or group (the underlined portions of the sentences).

Types and Nature of Sentences	Frequency of Occurrence			Total	Percentage of Occurrences		
Simple sentence	Speech 4	Speech 5	Speech 5		Speech 4	Speech 5	Speecl 6
Simple sent.	1	3	19	13	7.7%	23.1	69.2
Compound sent.	1	0	3	04	25	00	75
Complex sent	0	1	1	02	00	50	50
Others	0	0	0	00	00	00	00
Declarative	1	4	13	18	5.6	22.2	72.2
Imperative	1	0	0	01	100	00	00
Interrogative	0	0	0	00	00	00	00
Exclamation	0	0	0	00	00	00	00

Percentage of simple sentence = $\frac{13}{18} \times \frac{100}{1} = 72.2$

Percentage of compound sentence = $\frac{4}{18} \times \frac{100}{1} = 30.8$

Percentage of complex sentence = $\frac{2}{18} \times \frac{100}{1} = 11.1$

Percentage of others = $\frac{0}{18} \times \frac{100}{1} = 00.0$

6.0 Findings

This variety of language manifests a preponderant use of simple sentence with a total of 72.2% frequency of occurrences.

Then it also manifests a higher frequency use of declarative form of sentence than other forms, while other sentence forms rarely feature except the

imperative which has just a slot, that is, it features once.

Discussion of the Table above

(a) It is apparent from the table that the data (the three speeches) are predominantly dominated by long declarative simple sentences. Then occasionally, compound sentences feature.

(b) It is also noted that in this form or variant of speech (military political speech) as shown on the table, other forms of sentence such as interrogation, exclamation even imperative save for the fact that it features once are not always used in this variant of speech. All the sentences are always declarative.

Comment

The reasons for the use of these techniques (simple declarative sentence form) might have to do or connected with the simple (non-complex) manner of military government. As it is known that the military have simple administrative procedure, theirs is a sole administrative style. Besides, in their speeches they lean more on declarative sentence form than any other forms. This, too, is not unconnected with the swift and frankness of the military in the dispensation and execution of their policies.

7.0 Conclusion

The analysis of the speeches or data selected for this study from the framework or dimension of Grapho-Syntax clearly shows the link or connection between language use of the military leaders especially in the area of Grapho-syntax and the way they play their politics. Both graphology and syntax display or that are manifested from the speeches confirm this claim.

For instance, at the graphological realm, the open or loose manner of punctuation usage in their speeches raises both the tempo and reading speed of the speeches. This in effect has to do with the speedy and swift manner the military politicians attend to the business of Governance.

In addition, the syntax of their speeches in all ramifications, shows a strong connection between its features and their political intentions. This means that the various features of syntax of the speeches are connected with the style of political administration of the military personnel. For instance, the preponderant use of simple sentence typology is connected with the simple and unbureacratic nature or manner of their administration.

So, in a nutshell; the findings in this paper prove that there is a tight connection between language use and style of Governance in Nigerian Military Administration.

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APPENDIX

Speech I

General Babangida's speech of Saturday August 27, 1989 to commemorate his 4th Anniversary, a speech to the nation expressing his desire to return the country to civil rule in 1992. This speech goes thus:

Politically, the state of the nation is one of steady and deliberate progress towards the return to civil rule in 1992. Let me again on this occasion of the fourth anniversary, reiterate the position of this administration on the return to civil rule. I wish to reaffirm that this administration is committed to return to civilian democratic polity as an illustration of our genuine belief in democracy.

Our implementation of the Transition programme has been deliberate, methodical and sequential. We shall continue to follow our time-table meticulously.

Speech II

On Friday, January 28th, 1966, His Excellency Major General J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi, Head of the National Military Government and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces spoke to the nation in a Radio Broadcast as follows:

I stress once again the need for hard work and honesty from all Nigerians flattering messages, political jobbery and such corrupting activities have no place in the new Nigeria. As regards political activities, we cannot afford to continue with sterile political strife and mutual recriminations. I have therefore ordered that there shall be no display of party flags or symbols and no shouting of political slogans. Fellow citizens, this is a unique opportunity to build a strong united Nigeria. We are determined to succeed and with your support we shall succeed.

Speech III

In a televised broadcast in the evening of July 30, 1975 the new Head of State, General Murtala Muhammed spoke to the nation thus:

Fellow Nigerians,

Events of the past few years have indicated that despite our great human and material resources, the Government has not been able to fulfil the legitimate expectations of our people. Nigeria has been left to drift. This situation, if not arrested, would inevitably have resulted in chaos and even bloodshed. In the endeavour to build a strong, united and virile nation, Nigerians have shed much blood; the thought of further bloodshed, for whatever reasons, must I am sure, be revolting to our people. The Armed Forces, having examined the situation, came to the conclusion that certain changes were inevitable.

Speech IV

General Obasanjo's broadcast of September 21, 1978 in which he stated thus:

You are all aware that the Constituent Assembly had completed its task of fashioning out a new constitution for our country; you are also aware that I have formally expressed the gratitude of the nation and that of the Supreme Military Council to the members of the Assembly for the successful completion of their historic assignment.

Let me reiterate once again that this Administration will not allow any individual or group of individuals to subjugate the higher national interest and overall interest of our citizens to their selfish and narrow interests.

Speech V

General Ibrahim Babangida on August 27, 1990 in selected speeches of IBB (51-52). It is a speech on the commemoration of his 5th Anniversary in office. He states:

I wish to reaffirm the unflinching commitment of this administration to the implementation of the programme of transition to civil rule.

I wish to once again re-assure the nation that this administration will hand-over power to a democratically elected government in 1992. Accordingly, and in conformity with

the logic of the transition to civil rule programme, we shall from now on systematically deregulate and demilitarise the process of politics and governance in the period leading to 1992.

This exercise of demilitarisation is a continuous one until 1992 when the military will totally divest itself of political control.

Speech VI

A text, of the televised broadcast in the evening of July 30, 1975 by the new Head of State – General Murtala Ramat Muhammed, who spoke on the wrong doings of the past and, in a businesslike manner underlined the tasks ahead for the nation.

Fellow Nigerians,

Events of the past few years have indicated that despite our great human and material resources, the Government has not been able to fulfil the legitimate expectations of our people. Nigeria has been left to drift. This situation, if not arrested, would inevitably have resulted in chaos and even bloodshed. In the endeavour to build a strong, united and virile nation, Nigerians have shed much blood; the thought of further bloodshed, for whatever reasons, must I am sure, be revolting to our people. The Armed Forces, having examined the situation, came to the conclusion that certain changes were inevitable.

After the civil war, the affairs of state, hitherto a collective responsibility, became characterised by lack of consultation, indecision, indiscipline and even neglect. ... Indeed, the public at large became disillusioned and disappointed so by these developments. The trend was clearly incompatible with the philosophy and image of a collective regime. Unknown to the general public, the feeling of disillusion was also evident among members of the Armed Forces, whose administration was neglected but who, out of sheer loyalty to the nation, and in the hope that there would be a change, continued to suffer in silence.

Things got to a stage where the head of the administration became virtually inaccessible even to official advisers; and when advice was tendered, it was often ignored. Responsible opinion including advice by eminent Nigerians, traditional rulers, intellectuals, et cetera, was similarly discarded. The leadership, either by design or default had become too insensitive to the true feelings and yearnings of the people. The nation was thus being plunged inexorably into chaos.[1]