

Stylistic Analysis of Chief Dr. Samuel Ioraer Ortom's Inaugural Speech, "Our Collective Vision for a New Benue"

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Abstract

The idiolect has remained the basic yardstick for the measurement of speech variation within a mutually intelligible speech community. This idiolect - linguistics habit of a speaker, treads the 'La Parole' Path of language proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure which culminates into the present day stylistics. The inaugural speech of Governor Samuel Ortom is the data for this work. This research hinges on descriptive grammar as methodology. This is an approach to the study of grammar which seeks to account for the way the speakers actually use their language without reference to an approved standard or the grammatical structure of another language. Ndimele (2008:48). This work presents the meaning of language, stylistics, style, speech, political discourse and the various styles employed by the speaker to drive his point home. These styles range from the physiological structure of the speech, morphological analysis, syntactic analysis, and semantic analysis to figurative expressions and some unique presentations. The styles are discussed from the perspective of style as a choice and style as a deviation. Through this work, the researchers discovered that the governor's speech is not only a beautiful rhetoric but a stylistically unique speech in terms of language use.

Keywords: stylistics, style, speech, political discourse

1.0 Introduction

Over the years, language has been the most invaluable instrument utilized by man as a medium of communication and peaceful co-

existence. It is one of the major qualities that make man unique. Language is a medium of communication through which we express our emotions, ideas, feelings and thoughts to our fellow people. Murthy (2007:1). These varying expressions known as linguistic habit varies from person to person. As a matter of fact, no two people speak exactly alike (idiolect). Their speeches vary considerably in grammar, lexis, syntax, semantics, phonology and figurative expressions. It is this variation that evolves into style over time. In the same way, Olaoye (2007) in Ofoegbu (2017:4) defines language as ‘a purely human and non-instinctive way of communicating ideas, emotion and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols.’ These symbols vary in context and speakers. This brings about synchronic and diachronic variation of language that presents language as dynamic, creative and conventional. To Wardhough (2007:1), language is simply ‘What the members of a particular society speak’.

Language as a means of passing information and ideas is used with slight difference within the speakers in a given speech community. This slight variation could be of choice or of deviation from the norm.

The above introduces us to stylistics which deals with the distinction between ones innate linguistic ability of a given language, mostly mother tongue from that of another. This leads us to the history of stylistics which is traced to Ferdinand de Saussure. To him, language originates from two French words: ‘Langue’ and ‘Parole’. ‘Langue is the code or system of rules common to the users of a language; parole, on the other hand, is the particular selections from the system that individual make on any one occasion, the choice people make in conversation’. Onwukwe (2012:8).

2.0 What is Stylistics?

The branch of linguistics called stylistics came up in the early 20th century in Europe. It suffers a lot of definitions from different scholars. To Yankson (2008:1), stylistics is the study of the breach of language code. This means that stylistics is the study of linguistic abnormalities. This definition is not completely true due

to the fact that style could be of choice not only of deviation or breach.

To Fowler (1975) in Onwukwe (2012:17) 'Stylistics is a discipline that emphasizes particularity, individuality and concreteness'. It is a branch of linguistics which studies the features of the distinctive uses or varieties of language in different situations. It tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language (Onwukwe 2012:27).

2.1 What is Style?

As earlier stated, style has its root in the two French words from which language emerged - 'langue' and 'parole'. To Saussure, 'parole' involves the selections from the system that speakers make in any given speech context. Thus style could be regarded as 'parole', the way a speaker or writer selects and employs his words, phrases and sentence to achieve a desired effect in any given context.

According to Crystal (1997:67) in Onwukwe (2012:8), 'To Samuel Wesley, style is the dress of thought; to Jonathan Swift, it is the proper words in proper place, to WB Yeats, it is high breeding in words and argument'. To him, Crystal, style is evaluative (implying a degree of excellence) and descriptive (a set of distinction that characterizes object, periods or places). Thus we have the Shakespearean style Achebe style etc.

From the foregoing, style is the linguistic habit of a speaker or a writer. It could be called discourse technique. It is the unique and distinctive way a speaker/writer expresses his thoughts. This linguistic habit defines his work or speech in any given context. Thus, we have style as individual's characteristics, style as a set of collective characteristics, style as deviation from the norm and style as a choice.

2.2 What is Speech?

'Speech is the art and process of speaking or giving lecture to a group of people in a structured and deliberate manner. It is intended to influence, to persuade or entertain its audience'.

Ofoegbu C. & Usar, I. (2011:25). It is a formal talk that a speaker presents to an audience which could be spoken or written.

2.3 Political Discourse

Political speech is a speech that pertains to the government and the governed. The speech involves words carefully employed to maintain a harmonious friction within the government in terms of communication and solidarity. Every field of life has its own language which is usually called Jargon. This accounts for why political register is employed in every political speech as found in the speech under discuss. In terms of political discourse or language, persuasion, convincing, deception and illusion are highly employed especially in Nigeria where ears are itchy to hear lulling promises over and over again despite uncountable breach. The inaugural speech ‘Our Collective Vision for a New Benue’ has all these elements embedded in it which contributed greatly to the uniqueness of the speech.

2.4 The Styles in the Inaugural Speech

Stylistics is the study of styles in a given context. ‘Linguistic stylistics focuses on the figures, tropes and other rhetoric devices that provide variety and a unique voice to writing’. Richard (2017:1).

From the elementary level of style, the speaker employs the use of capitalization under graphisation and numbering of the speech; unique and effective use of punctuation marks, political register, primary words, affixation (inflectional and derivational), compounding, simplicity of diction with mild bombardment. Under syntax, the speaker extensively employs the use of compound and complex sentences in a bid to supply details. Simple sentence and compound-complex sentence are employed too but not as the first two. The styles mentioned above come under style as a choice.

In addition, there is a predominant use of repetition and linguistic foregrounding which makes the speech rhythmic, draws emphasis and attention. There is the extensive use of the third person plural pronoun ‘we’ to show humility, mutuality,

involvement and sense of belonging. The speaker employs figurative expressions; recurrent use of metaphor to drive his point home, proverbs, slogan, imagery, hyperbole, symbolism, allusion, realism and illusion to win the hearts of his audience. The styles listed here come under style as a deviation.

More so, the speaker stylistically called the indigenous people of Benue State citizens to attach more value to them and always put his deputy first in introduction to show humility and the desire to be simply called Samuel Ortom devoid of all titles. He also employs the use of emphatic expression to firmly assert. Most importantly, unlike other Nigerian political speeches, he avoided the use of vernacular due to the heterogeneous nature of Benue State having more than seven languages in use.

3.0 Methodology

The researchers adopted a descriptive method of data analysis. This is a product of descriptive grammar which concerns with the study of grammar which seeks to account for the way the speakers actually use their language without reference to an approved standard or the grammatical structure of another language. Ndimele (2008:48). The researchers describe the various styles as found in the inaugural speech of Governor Samuel Ortom using this method.

4.0 Data Analysis and Presentation

The inaugural speech under discourse is a speech presented by the executive Governor of Benue State on the 31st of May, 2015. It is a political speech designed to appreciate, entice and encourage, give hope, arouse expectation and to win the confidence and mandate of the people.

From the list of styles given above, it is obvious that several styles are employed by the speaker to pass his message across in a unique way. These styles now will be discussed in full as they appear in the governor's speech. Below lays the experimentation:

(1) Graphology:

a. Numbering:

This falls under style as a choice. The speaker chooses to use arithmetic numbers in place of words. He divides the speech into numbers ranging from 1 to 13 so that even the confused part of his audience could take the 13 points home. More so, in number 1 line 3 and number 2 line 1, the speaker uses 39 in place of thirty-nine.

The speech is divided into 13 numbers of 19 paragraphs having the shortest made of five words and the longest made of 19 lines of about 350 words. The speech is made up of 154 lines and about 2650 words.

b. **Capitalization:** the speaker of choice employs the use of capital letters to show emphasis and draw attention to attach importance. This could be seen in both the broad and narrow title of the speech:

INAUGURAL SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLENCY CHIEF DR.
SAMUEL IORAER ORTOM, GOVERNOR OF BENUE STATE,
and OUR COLLECTIVE VISION FOR A NEW BENUE

In a similar way, in Number 4, para. 2 (lines 3) (STEAM) – based and CHANGE are employed to show emphasis.

(2) Morphological Analysis:

a. **Primary words:** Primary words (monosyllabic words stem or free morphemes) are found everywhere in the speech e.g.

Number 1. (line 1) ‘our’ ‘state’, ‘thank’

Number 2 (line 2) ‘is’, ‘far’, ‘vision’, ‘yet’, etc.

b. **Affixation:** This consists of a stem – primary or free morpheme and one or more bound morpheme(s).

i. Numb. 3 (line 3) commitment – suffix (class changing derivation) changes verb to noun

ii. Numb. 6 (line 1): expected – suffix (inflectional ending)

iii. Numb. 1 (line 1): almighty – prefix .

The speaker uses suffix far more than prefix due to the negative tendency of most prefixes.

c. Compounding: This involves the combination of two primary words or free morphs/stems to form a new word.

- i. Numb. 1 (line 1) ‘milestone’
- ii. Numb. 4 para. 2 (line 3) (STEAM) – based
- iii. Numb. 3 (line 7) ‘self-seekers’

d. Diction: Due to the fact that the speaker is addressing both literate and illiterate audience, his diction is average to enhance understanding. Some few words that may pose difficulties include:

- i. Numb. 1 (line 10): Fountain – A rich source of supply of something.
- ii. Numb. 4 (line 4): Industrialization: to be industrially developed
- iii. Numb. 6 (line 7): Numeracy: A good basic knowledge of mathematics
- iv. Numb. 8 (line 3): Landscape: A painting view of the country side.

Definitions adopted from Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 9th Edition.

e. Political register: As earlier stated, every profession has its peculiar jargon – lexicon that is conversant with people of that profession. The speaker employs some political words to give the required political flavor. Some examples include:

- i. Numb. 1 (line 8): ‘Predecessor’
- ii. Numb. 1 (line 10): ‘governance’
- iii. Numb. 3 (line 6): ‘Colony’
- iv. Numb. 8 (line 6) ‘politicians’
- v. Numb. 12 (line 15): ‘party....power...ruling’\

(3) Syntactic Analysis

Syntax is the systematic study of the internal structure of the sentence. It is the correct arrangement of words in the sentence. It

is the study of sentence structure. Ndimele (2008:1)

The speaker employs the use of simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence and compound complex. He makes predominant use of the compound sentence and mostly complex sentence for detail explanation. To mention but a few, below are some examples:

a) Simple sentence: Numb. 1 (line 1)

“Today is a milestone in the history of our state”

b) Compound sentence:Numb. 2 (lines 1)

Our vision will not be realized by chance; we will remain focused and not be distracted.

c) Complex sentences: Numb. 2 (line 1)

Though we appreciate the achievement of the past 39 years, we acknowledge the fact that our state is far from reaching its potential.

d) Compound complex: Numb. 8 (line 17)

To teachers at all levels in the state, you are the key to unlocking the major challenges in education. We will not only support but rebuild the school system and enable you to take our schools to the next level.

(4) Semantic Analysis

Semantics is a ‘field of enquiry seeking the meaning of meaning as expressed in a language’ Umera-Okeke (2015:1). This is the area where style as deviation comes to play. The speaker employs figurative expressions which mostly goes with connotative meanings thus deviates from the regular denotative meaning. Figures of speech refer to the use of words in a peculiar manner to achieve special effect and meaning. Ugwu (2001:13). Below are some good examples:

Repetition:

In a quest to lay emphasis and draw attention in a special way, the

speaker reproduces some words, phrases and clauses to pass his message. Examples include:

- 1) Numb. 3 (line 4-5): 'We will'
- 2) Numb. 7 (line 5-6) 'we shall'
- 3) Numb. 10 (line 1-3): 'I am the governor of those who voted for me, I am the governor of those who did not vote. I am governor of all'

The style of constant repetition employed introduces musicality (rhythm) into the speech making it to sound like a poem.

Linguistic Foregrounding:

Close to repetition is linguistic foregrounding. It is a kind of indirect replication to show emphasis and enhance musicality. Some examples include:

- i. Numb 1 (line 1-2): Our great party, the All Progressives Congress, APC', just our great party' is enough but he included the rest to lay emphasis.
- ii. Numb. 9 (line 1-3)

'I pledge to govern with the fear of God. this shall translate to core values including transparency, accountability, fairness, justice, humility, selflessness, discipline, integrity, forgiveness and reconciliation'.

Just 'fear of God' or 'core values' would have been enough!

Figurative expression:

'Figures of speech are extensively or effectively used to express the ideas and feelings of the speaker in an impressive manner' Murthy (2007:552).

The speaker employs figures of speech to effectively sink home the point and give the speech its originality in its African setting.

- i. Numb. 12 (line 15-16)

'For an opposition party to wrestle power from a ruling party is not a picnic in a garden. It has been a long marathon in the desert'.

This figurative expression contains both contrast (between picnic

and marathon with regards to the wrestling) and metaphor (as it compares the ‘wrestling’ to ‘marathon in the desert’).

(a) Metaphor: ‘it is an implied simile in which the two things compared are treated as one’. Murthy (2007:552) the speaker extensively uses metaphor to clearly pass his message. Below are some excerpts:

- i. Numb. 4 (line 1) ‘As midwives to the vision of a new Benue,’ the speaker compared himself and his deputy to midwives.
- ii. Numb 8 (line 17): ‘you are the keys to unlocking the major challenges...’. He compared the teachers to key.
- iii. Numb. 3 (line 6-7): ‘No longer will a tiny colony of self-seekers deny us the urgency of this vision toda’. The ‘tiny colony’ refers to the few privileged and their selfish life-style – self seekers.

(b) Allusion: The speaker alluded to the Bible to tread the righteous path of speech. This is found in Numb. 8 (line 15): ‘The Bible states that the worker deserves his wages’

(c) Imagery: This involves the stylistic use of words to paint mental picture .e.g Numb. 8 (line 11): ‘my heart bleeds’. Heart doesn’t bleed but it paints an image of the degree of the pain.

(d) Realism: In literature, it is the act of describing things the way they are. The speaker presents the horror unleashed by the ravaging Fulani herdsmen in Benue state and the 7 months unpaid salary. This is found in Numb. 7.

(e) Hyperbole: This is also called exaggeration or over statement. The speaker over blows the aftermath of his administration when he describes that ‘Benue people will go on their knees thanking God and celebrating’ after his administration.

(f) Illusion: Illusion is a false idea or belief, especially about somebody or situation. Hornby (2015:783). The speaker supplies illusive assertions in his speech that even the audience

are aware that he was untying a goat he cannot catch .e.g. Numb. 6 (line 12-13)...'free, qualitative and compulsory education up to secondary school'

(g) Slogan: slogan is a word or phrase that is easy to remember, used for example by a political party or in advertising to attract people's attention or to suggest an idea quickly Hornby (2015:1468).

The speaker employs his party slogan, the motto of Benue State and his personal slogan to arouse his supporters e.g.

- i. Numb. 6 (line 1-2): 'Food Basket of the Nation'
- ii. Numb. 13 (line 3) 'CHANGE'
- iii. Numb. 13 (line 7) 'In God We Trust'

As a complement, the speaker stylistically refers to the indigenous people of Benue as citizens instead of indigenes. This he does to hike the status of the audience despite the fact that everything is happening within the state thus requires indigenes. This could be seen in Numb. 8 (line 9). More so, the speaker to show humility and buy over his audience puts his deputy first in order to acknowledgement. This makes him the first governor to do that in Nigeria. This is found in Numb. 11 (line 3-4): I...conferred on Engineer Benson Abounu and my humble self, the authority of Deputy and Governor respectively. The most striking feature of his speech is his strict usage of English language unlike African inaugural speeches that always carry one or more indigenous languages (vernacular) or pidgin top show native. The speaker skillfully avoided any of such because he is aware of the heterogeneous nature of Benue State. There exist three major languages and four minor languages excluding Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Edo etc Numb. 9 (line 22). In addition to Tiv, Idoma and Igede, there exist the Ebira, Ijaw, Jukun and Agatu. To show neutrality, the speaker stylistically employs the only neutral language which is English in order to be the governor of all as contained in his speech.

In conclusion, it is made obvious that the governor's speech is

indeed not only a vote of thanks giving, appreciation or a beautiful rhetoric but a stylistically unique speech in terms of language use due to stylistic use of figurative language, linguistic foregrounding, repetition, rhythm, etc, to drive his point home.

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