



Role of Language and Lexical Cohesive Devices on Manifestos: A Ghanaian Political Perspective

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Abstract

The need to establish a stronger rapport with supporters in political contexts is never a walk in the park. This requires dedication, persuasiveness which through language and lexical devices could create an effective platform to win their trust. Since politics is essentially about struggling to regulate power, it's only through language that such might be accomplished, thereby making language a really strong political weapon. Opeibi (2009) postulates that regardless of how good a candidate's manifesto is; regardless of how superior political thoughts and ideologies of a party could also be, these can only be expressed and further translated into social actions for social change and social continuity through the facilities provided by language. This essay, however, examined the functions of language and lexical cohesive devices in the development of political manifestos. Mixed methods such as observation; an evidence-based approach and archival studies were used in the data collection.

Keywords: Ghana, language, lexical cohesive devices, manifestos, politics, register



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1.0 Introduction

The role and relevance of language use in political discourse can't be over emphasised, since the role of language in political discourse is very explicit. Ayeomoni & Akinkuolere (2012, p. 461) postulate that 'language is important within the implementation of successful democratic rule out any country'. This draws a really strong tie between politics and language in any system of state. Taiwo (2007) opines that language may be a heavily loaded vehicle which our words are never neutral, transparent or innocent. Words always carry the facility and ideologies that reflect the interests of these who speak or write them. This suggests that the selection of certain words over others may reflect conscious and unconscious ideologies held by those that produce them. In simple terms, the utilization of language reveals who we are and what we expect about and need to expire to others. Taiwo (2007) again, postulates and argues that 'language is that the conveyor belt of power, it moves people to vote, debate or revolt, and it's therefore a central explanation of political stability or polarization. Taiwo (2007) considers language metaphorically as a conveyor belt. The conveyor belt plays a key role in transporting objects from one place to a different. Comparing language to a conveyor belt means language is the transporter of ideas to a specific people. As language is compared to a conveyor belt, so do the ideas transmitted through language also can be compared to the objects transported by the conveyer belt? Language is purposefully employed by politicians to hold their ideas across even as the conveyor belt carries objects to a specific destination. The destination for the transport of those ideas is to the people even as the objects conveyed by the conveyor belt are deposited at a specific point. The ideas carried by political language induce people to vote, debate or revolt. This makes language play a central role in creating political stability or conflict. Taiwo (2007, p. 192) further describes politics as 'the struggle for and control of resources, values, norms and behavior of a social group'. it's very obvious that one needs language as a strong tool to achieve political power. It's true that the politicians' targeted struggle and control of whatever resources, values and norms are going to be a fiasco without the utilization of language. Edelman (1985) confirms the potency of language in political speeches by saying that political speeches assume traits like subtle mystification and distortion in their quest to influence the audience to simply accept the stance of the speech maker through his use of language. In the struggle for political power between those that seek to say and maintain power and people who seek to resist it as an example, the power of a political speech to mystify and warp becomes very crucial. Language in political speeches therefore is the life vest employed by politicians to breeze through the damaging turbulent storms activated by

their opponents. The pivotal role a life vest plays within the midst of a storm during a sea are often compared to the role of language in political speeches. Language is important to politicians. Most, if not all, activities performed by the politicians are done through the avenue that language creates.

2.0 Methods

This is a short communication on language and politics. It shows how language has influenced the writing of manifestos to drive political goodwill. The study was driven in the qualitative approach, with desk research (Travis, 2016) and document analysis (Bowen, 2009) as the main research methods. Secondary data was obtained from published articles and news reports, from various online databases such as Africa Journals Online, DOAJ, Google Advanced Search and ResearchGate as well as various online news portals. Several articles were reviewed for the study. The high number of references is because the study relied on only secondary data. The secondary data were carefully analyzed thematically based on the broad research themes. The discussions were scholarly corroborated with the existing theories in the literature.

3.0 Discussion

3.1 The concept of register

The concept of register is central to Halliday's model of language. It is central not only within the sense of being important to the idea, but central also within the sense of 'at the centre of' the idea. The concept of register according to Halliday (1994) is variation according to use, and arises from a concern with the importance of language in action. Halliday notes it had been Reid (1956) who first used the term 'register' to capture the notion of 'text variety' (Halliday 2007). Although the idea of looking at the importance of situation on language was in use much earlier for instance by proto-pragmatists such as Wegener (1990) who considered both the 'user' and 'use' in his concept of situation. Although, it seems obvious that folks speak differently in several situations, systematic analysis of variation consistent with what could be considered contextual features like setting, addressee, subject and formality is relatively recent. Both Firth (1950) and Hymes (1969) developed accounts of the weather of context relevant to the act of speaking. The concept was developed by Ure (1969); Ure and Ellis (1972); Halliday et al. (2007) and Hill's (1958) "institutional linguistic" framework' where the concepts of 'field', 'mode' and 'style of discourse' were introduced. Later, Halliday adopted the term 'tenor' from Spencer and Gregory (1964). Matthiessen et al (2008), recent 'typology of registers' draws

directly on Ure's work. The notion of register has helped shape many approaches to language, including the Birmingham school (Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and corpus linguistics. Biber (1995), In differentiating this approach from the general move of stating that language varies according to situation type, Halliday (1978) suggests that what 'register does is to attempt to uncover the general principles which govern this variation, so that we can begin to understand what situational factors determine what linguistic features to employ'. Register is defined again by Halliday (2002, p. 89) as a semantic configuration. As such, this strata designation reveals something about what Halliday means by register, and the way Halliday conceptualizes the semantic stratum, register may be a semantic phenomenon within the sense that register is that the clustering of semantic features consistent with situation type.

According to Halliday (1994), there are three functions which underpin the use of register these are field, tenor and mode. Field refers to the topic matter and it's going to be almost like certain uses of the term domain in computational linguistics: what's happening, to whom, where and when, why it is happening, and so on. Tenor also refers to the social relation existing between the interactants in a speech situation. It includes relations of formality, power, and affect for instance, (manager/clerk, father/son). And indeed, tenor influences interpersonal choices in the linguistic system, and thereby it affects role the structures and the strategies chosen to activate the linguistic exchange. Mode on the other hand, describes the way and the role language is used in speech interaction, including the medium (spoken, written, written to be spoken, etc.) as well as the rhetorical mode (expository, instructive, persuasive, etc.). These three elements change for the speaker/writer to orient himself within the context of situation. The translator must attempt to maintain the situational and cultural context by finding the corresponding three components within the target language. Considering the field, the speaker or writer will have to take decisions about what terminology to use, to what extent the writer's context is familiar to the target language reader, the type of grammatical structures to adopt (active or passive). Tenor is a variable which allows the speaker or the writer to frame the right choice of register be it formal or informal, modern or archaic, technical or non-technical. Mode is the way the text should be organised where the information focus lies, what is given and what new information is provided.

3.2 The Concept of Political Discourse

According to Quinto (2014, p.1) political speeches by various political actors and in different contexts have been widely investigated in various linguistic fields. The literature

on political speeches is rich on studies that draw on traditions from sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, and semantics and pragmatics. Hence, tools of analysis from these linguistic traditions have been extensively utilised, not to mention the rich resource they have accounted for in understanding the dynamics of language in political speeches. Edelman (1988) also notes that the functions of political discourse is to present proposals, manifestoes concerning actions and policies that ought, should, or must be pursued as well as what future realities must be prevented and what future realities are desirable. Agreeing with Edelman, Dunmire (2005,p.484) posits a key ideological component of political discourse, that is, “its construction and representation of future realities and the rhetorical function those representations serve in implicating more immediate material and discursive practices and actions”. Language plays an important role in manifesting political wills and accompanying political actions. However, as Schaffner (1996, p. 201) states, “in political discourse linguistics have always been interested in the linguistic structures used to get politically relevant messages across to the addressees in order to fulfill a specific function, but narrow linguistic analysis of political discourse cannot ignore the broader societal and political framework in which such discourse is embedded”.

Therefore, Schaffner (1996), Sauer (1996), and Fairclough (1996) claim that the analysis of political speeches in political discourse should relate linguistic structures to larger contexts of communicative settings and political functions, and they recommend using critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the integrated approach. CDA, as Fairclough (1996, p. 287) claims, is “a perspective which is concerned with showing up often opaque connections between language and other aspects of society and culture”. In addition, van Dijk (1993) suggests examining the style, rhetoric or meaning of texts for strategies that aim at the concealment of social power relations and the exercise of power. In order to obtain certain ideologies that the group with power wants to construct, the circumstances of text construction such as who, when, where, and how, and a deep analysis of the texts themselves cannot be ignored, as CDA suggests (Van Dijk, 1993).

3.3 The Concept of Political Manifesto

During election, campaign is very important for the candidates to introduce their objectives through manifestoes to the voters. Manifestos are the messages used by candidates and parties to implement if they win the election. According to Robertson (2004) a manifesto is a public declaration of principles, policies or intentions especially that of a political party or government to coerce and persuade group of people to vote

for them The manifesto contains the promises use to attract voters (Muhamad Fuzi, 2007). Othman and Omar (2014, p.32) also assert that those manifestoes usually highlight issues like religion, education good governance, economics, social services and many others. Moreover, parties or candidates will try to promote their capabilities compare to their opponents through the content of the manifesto.

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