Stylistic Analysis of Selected Political Campaign Posters and Slogans in Yola Metropolis of Adamawa State of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Posters are very important forms of visual communication that commercial and political advertiser use to persuade target audience. During election campaign periods all over the world, posters are used to familiarize candidates to the electorates and entice them to vote for candidates. This study, analyzed selected campaign posters in Yola Metropolis of Adamawa State of Nigeria. Crystal and Davy's (1985) Linguistic stylistic model of analysis was used as method of analysis. The result showed at graphological level that campaign posters are of different shapes and sizes and are beautifully designed to attract the attention of the electorate or passers-by. The vocabulary is descriptive and emotive, thereby enticing to change and accept a political candidate.The syntactic features are concise, precise and usually in declarative or imperative moods. The linguistic features generally are descriptive, emotive and persuasive.

Key Words: *Posters, style,stylistics, lexis, syntax and semantics.*

INTRODUCTION

Communication as a means transmission of ideas, thoughts or feelings is in two major categories-the verbal and non verbal communication. The most common one used for interaction in human societies is the non verbal. Poster is one of the leading non-verbal means of communication in the society today especially the commercial and political posters. While commercial posters are commonly designed to appeal to customers to patronize a particular product, the political campaign posters are designed primarily to familiarize a candidate to the electorate. Technically put, posters are very important forms of visual communication. It presents picture(s) with meaning lying behind it.

 In Nigeria, competing posters of various sizes and shapes on walls or billboards at strategic locations in cities, towns and villages announce that election campaign is going on. It is a tradition in politics during election campaigns for politicians to combine images with words in order to persuade the electorates to accept their political ideologies, thereby winning their votes. In addition to the beautifully designed photographs of the candidates, there are inscriptions such as the candidate's name and the position campaigning for. Above all, campaign slogans are inscribed to sell the candidate's political mission or ideology. Political campaign posters are made aggressive since they are always pasted on the wall or billboards in completion with others.

Campaign involves series of actions taken to achieve particular result in politics, health   or business. Politicians all over the world embark on different actions that they think will help to influence the opinions of the electorates. One of the most popular tools that they use is campaign posters which are specially designed to familiarize candidates and their ideologies to the electorates. Accompanying posters are slogans designed to give extra effects to the photographs of the candidates to achieve political objectives. The slogans are usually a word, phrase or sentence which politicians constantly recite in the course of presenting campaign speeches. The ultimate goal of the politicians' use of posters and slogans is to make the electorate change by accepting their ideologies.

Political campaign posters and slogans are like double edged sword that politicians use to work on the emotions of the electorates. They make sure that the candidate's photograph is attractive and the words are appealing and emotive. During election periods in Nigeria, campaign posters of different sizes and shapes are seen in strategic locations in cities, towns and villages. Sometimes, they make sign posts, roundabouts and even public buildings an eye sore. However, they are there to communicate to the electorates about political candidates and their political missions/ideologies.

It is worth to note that underlying every political campaign poster is language. How do the politicians manipulate language and the electorate's process of to achieve their political goals? How do the politicians select language to influence the world way we think of the world and the events happening around us? These are the basic questions this paper attempts to answer by embarking on stylistic analysis of the graphetic and graphological, the lexical, syntactic and semantic features of selected 2011 campaign posters in Yola Metropolis of Adamawa state.

1. Aim and objectives of the study

This study aims at linguistic stylistic analysis of political campaign posters and slogans selected from 2011 political campaign posters in Yola Metropolis of Adamawa of Nigeria. The objectives are to:
1. Discuss the graphitic and graphological features of the political campaign posters and slogans in the study corpus.
2. Identify and discuss the lexical features
3. Determine and discuss the syntactic features of the political campaign and slogans in the corpus.
4. Explain the semantic implications of the use of posters and slogans in political campaigns.
5. Discuss to what extent political campaign posters and slogans serve as a tool for winning votes.

2. Corpus of the Study

The corpus of this study consists of nine political campaign posters slogans selected from 2011 election campaign posters in Yola Metropolis of Adamawa State. The selection was based on accessibility and availability of the campaign posters and slogans. This means that the posters were selected based on the ease by which the posters were obtained. The selection was not based any political ideology or affiliation as the study is purely linguistic and academic.

4. Method of Investigation

There are many approaches to stylistic analysis. This study however adopts Crystal and Davy's linguistic model of analysis. The model is centred on investigating linguistic features of a text at every level of linguistic description. These levels include phonetics and phonology, graphetic and graphological, lexis, syntax and semantics. This approach entails identifying from the general mass any linguistic feature that can be isolated and discussed.

5. Defining Style

The word style has been defined by different scholars from different perspectives. However, from general sense, style refers to the way something is made or done. In this sense, the way clothes or furniture is designed can be seen as style. Matthews (1997) states that in general, whatever is studied under stylistics constitute style. It is language appropriate to a specific genre of writing or characteristics of an individual. From etymological point of view, like many other English words, style metamorphosed from a Latin word "stylus" meaning a pointed object used for writing in those times. Ogidefa(2008) defines stylus as 'reed'. The word 'reed' according to Ogidefa is a stick used for writing. Similarly, Wikipedia refers to stylus as a pointed instrument for engraving, drawing or writing. It was a tool used in ancient times for writing on a wax tablet, which was pointed at one end and blunt on the other for erasing mistakes.

In computer science, stylus refers to pen-shaped device used on a displayed screen to input commands or hand written text. Style itself was referred to as a manner of writing or expression. In linguistics, style is used to describe the choice made by a language available to its users. This refers to the resource of a language that the user selects form based on his purpose of communication, context or genre. Leech and Short (1989) are of the view that writers on style differ a great deal in their understanding of the subject matter, and that one source of agreement has been the question "To what or to whom do we attributed style?"'. Style from linguistic point of view is used to describe the way or choice that language makes available to its speakers. This means that there exist natural linguistic conventions that users of language select which can be identified in all forms of texts-spoken or written, technical or non-technical, professional or popularized etc.

According to short and Leech(1989),a text whether considered as a whole or extracted from a work,is the nearest we can get to homogeneous and specific use of language. Therefore, it is naturally the starting point for the study of style. Style means the language which is used "in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose" (Leech 1989). It is applied to the writer's individual characteristic manner of expression. It is applicable to the written and spoken, and literary and non-literary codes.

It can be deduced from the above views that though scholars defined style from different perspectives, the concept as a linguistic term refers to selection or choice of language by a speaker from his/her linguistic repertoire. The selection or choice is normally controlled by context of situation, profession or genre. Style then refers to the way language is selected appropriately to a given context, profession or genre.

6. Defining Stylistics

Like style, the word stylistics has various definitions. Kamil (2007),in his definition of stylistics highlighted the difficulties of defining it. He is of the view that **Stylistics** can be by and large described as the study of style of language usage in different contexts, either linguistic, or situational. Yet, it seems that due to the complex history and variety of investigated issues of this study, it is difficult to state precisely what stylistics is, and to mark clear boundaries between it and other branches of **linguistics** which deal with text **analysis**. This implies that stylistics as branch of linguistics is closely related to other branches of linguistics. In a similar way, Matthews (1997) defines it as the study of style in language: traditionally, of variations in usage among literary and other texts; now more generally, of any systematic variation, in either writing or speech, which relates to the type of discourse or its context.

Some scholars see it as a branch of linguistics that studies style. Ogidefa (2008) for instance is of the view that it could be viewed as a branch of linguistics that engages in the scientific study of style in both spoken and written texts. It recognizes the relationship between form and context by making use of language. Similarly ,Crystal and Davy(1985) defines it as a sub-discipline of linguistics that is concerned with the systematic analysis of style in language and how this can vary according to such factors as, for example, genre, context, historical period and author. For instance, there is the individual style that distinguishes one writer from another, the styles associated with particular genres (e.g. 'newspaper language' or the gothic novel), or the characteristics of what might constitute 'literary' style. In this sense, analysing style means looking systematically at the formal features of a text and determining their functional significance for the interpretation of the text in question. Stylistics is a tool that can be employed for analysis of style in literary or non-literary texts. Short (1996) in Missikova (2003) has this to say in this regard:

> *Stylistics sometimes looks like either linguistics or literary criticism,*
>
> *depending on where you are standing when looking at it. Some of my literary*
>
> *critical colleagues sometimes accuse of being an unfeeling linguist,saying that*
>
> *my analysis of poems,say,are too analytical, being too full of linguistic jargon*
>
> *and leaving insufficient room for personal preference on the part of the reader.*
>
> *My linguistic colleagues, on the other hand, sometimes say that I'm no linguist*
>
> *at all,but a critic in disguise ,who cannot make his descriptions of language precise *
>
> *enough to count as real linguistics .They think that I leave too much to intuition*
>
> *and that I am no analytical enough. I think we've got the mix just right, of course*!

Stylistics is the description and analysis of the variability of linguistic forms in actual language use. The concepts of 'style' and 'stylistic variation' in language rest on the general assumption that within the language system, the same content can be encoded in more than one linguistic form. Operating at all linguistic levels (e.g. lexicology, syntax, text linguistics, and intonation), stylisticians analyze both the style of specific texts and stylistic variation across texts. These texts can be literary or non literary in nature. Generally speaking, style may be regarded as a choice of linguistic means; as deviation from a norm; as recurrence of

linguistic forms; and as comparison. Crystal and Davy(1985) has this to say on the aim of stylistics:

> Stylistics aims to analyze the language habits with the main purpose of identifying from the general mass of linguistic features common to given text. The features are usually restricted to certain kinds of social context so as to explain why certain features are used as opposed to other alternatives, and features into categories based upon a view other function in the social context. By features here we mean any bit of speech or writing which person can single out from the general flow of language and discuss-a particular word, sequence of words, or way uttering a word. A feature when it is restricted to a limited number of social contexts, we shall call stylistically significant or stylistically distinct features. (Crystal and Davy 1985).

Two concepts are prevalent in the sampled definitions of stylistics by the above cited scholars. Style is seen in each of the definitions as an object of study in stylistics. This means that stylistics is a tool that can used to determine the selection of language by speakers or writers from their linguistic repertoire to create effect/achieve particular purpose. stylistics as a branch of linguistics therefore analyzes how speakers/writers created text as well as how effect is made or achieved. This also implies that text in which ever medium it might be is automatically an object of analysis. The second thing prevalent in the cited definitions is context. In sociolinguistics, this is made up of the field, tenor and mode of discourse.

7. On election campaign Posters and Slogans

The term "election campaign" or "partisan political activity" refers to an act designed to promote the election or defeat of a particular candidate or candidates to a public office, and shall include any of the following: Forming organizations, associations, clubs, committees or other groups of persons for the purpose of soliciting votes and/or undertaking any campaign for or against a candidate;Holding political caucuses, conferences, meetings, rallies, parades or other similar assemblies for the purpose of soliciting votes and/or undertaking any campaign or propaganda for or against a candidate;

Making speeches, announcements or commentaries, or holding interviews for or against the election of any candidate for public office;

Publishing or distributing campaign literature or materials designed to support or oppose the election of any candidate; or

Directly or indirectly soliciting votes, pledges or support for or against any candidate.

(Commission on elections Republic of the Philippines 2013)

A **poster** in general sense, is any piece of printed paper designed to be attached to a wall or vertical surface. Typically posters include both **textual** and **graphic** elements, although a poster may be either wholly graphical or wholly text. Posters are designed to be both eye-catching and informative. Posters may be used for many purposes. They are a frequent tool of advertisers (particularly of events, musicians and films), **propagandists, protestors** and other groups trying to communicate a message. Posters are also used for reproductions of

artwork, particularly famous works, and are generally low-cost compared to original artwork (wikipedia)

Sontag(1999) cites Hutchinson's definition, at the beginning of his book *The Poster, An Illustrated History from 1860* (London, 1968) thus:

> A poster is essentially a large announcement, usually with a pictorial element, usually printed on paper and usually displayed on a wall or billboard to the general public. Its purpose is to draw attention to whatever an advertiser is trying to promote and to impress some message on the passer-by. The visual or pictorial element provides the initial attraction--and it must be striking enough to catch the eye of the passer-by and to overcome the counter-attractions of the other posters, and it usually needs a supplementary verbal message which follows up and amplifies the pictorial theme. The large size of most posters enables this verbal message to be read clearly at a distance.

Posters according to Gallo,a French have been displayed in public places all over the world for over 200 years. Visually striking ,they have been designed to attract the attention of passers by making the aware of political view point, enticing them to attend specific events or encouraging them to support a particular candidates. Gallo furthers explains that modern posters dates back to 1870,when the printing industry perfected colour lithography and made mass production possible. By 1890, the technique had spread to Europe. Since then to this day posters are found in different sizes and used for either advertisement of a product or political candidate. This study concentrates on political posters .These are posters commonly seen during the period of elections. They are meant to persuade, motivate,entice the voters and grab their attention.(Wikipedia)

8. Data Analysis

Nine campaign posters and slogans selected within Yola Metropolis were subjected to analysis using Crystal and Davy's (1985) Linguistic stylistic approach. The analysis was carried out in order to identify and discuss the linguistic features of the inscriptions on political campaign posters.The graphitic/graphological,lexical, syntactic and semantic components were the major focus.

Graphetic and Graphological Features

Graphetically, Campaign posters are in different sizes and shapes. They are beautifully designed to attract the attention of the electorates or any passers-by. The photographs are always designed with attractive colours. Sometimes, even the inscriptions on them which are mostly campaign slogans are also coloured and written artistically. All the campaign posters and slogans analyzed showed that the photographs are well coloured and attractive. The font sizes are Large enough to catch the attention of the electorates or any passers-by. The names of the candidates and their slogans are all presented in bold print. The aim of such stylistic presentation is to enhance easy reading and attention catching. Functionally, the posters and

the inscribed slogans attempt to covey to the electorate, the political mission of the candidate and at the same time familiarize the candidate to the electorates.

From the graphetic/graphological point of view, it can be deduced that political campaign posters and slogans are very important tools that politicians use for campaign communication. They are working tools employed by the politicians to advertise/familiarize themselves to the electorates. Political campaign posters and slogans enable the electorates to retain name and campaign platform of the candidates of their choice. In Nigeria for instances, they are distributed to electorates in forms of hand bills when elections are at the corner. A campaign slogan is basically a concise statement that describes or summarizes a candidate's ideology or philosophy. In order to make them memorable, they are usually short, concise and precise. It is easier to remember short slogans than longer ones. Attempt is always made to ensure that campaign slogan accommodates the campaign mission of the candidates. Most of the time colourful designs are made to motivate and familiarize political candidates to the electorates. Political signs/symbols are also a very important means of helping electorates that are not well educated to remember their party and candidates .As such, the signs are always placed at strategic locations on campaign posters. In Nigeria for instance, most of the photographs of the candidates of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has umbrella as their sign, All Nigeria Peoples Party(ANPP) candidates have Maize as their sign, while Action Congress of Nigeria(ACN) candidates have broom as their sign. These embody the major ideology or philosophy of the parties. These signs/symbols have political connotations emphasized during campaign times.

9. Lexical Features

Lexis in linguistics refers to the entire vocabulary of a given language. In stylistic analysis,how the words are selected from the language user's linguistic repertoire to meet communication ends is the major concern. The lexis of political language generally are subject specific and abstract nouns are quite common since decisions are often theoretical even though they may be directly linked to a proposed plan of action(Thorne 1997).The analysis of the texts in the corpus has revealed that the key words are mostly descriptive and emotive. Most of them are presented in metaphors which embody the political mission of the candidate. They are carefully selected in order to entice the electorate to abandon their opinion and hold on to the candidate's. Like language of advertisement and propaganda, the words selected by the candidates aim at making the electorates change by moving to their side. In to be retained and remembered easily, the slogans on the posters are mostly in single word or phrase.

The word 'change' in text one for example is a single but powerful metaphor. It carries the central aim of doing political campaign, since the aim of every political campaign is to influence the opinions of the electorates, make them accept the ideas of the candidate, see him as the only one that can do better for them. When these happen, the candidate wins the votes of the electorate. Change therefore is what every politician tries to make the electorates to do. The slogan of text two is in phrasal form (Passion for service").The word passion in this context of usage is also a strong metaphor which presents the candidate as someone ever ready to serve the people. Electorates vote for candidates with high hope that they will render services to them. By using this word, the electorate may be enticed to vote the candidate. But then any learned electorate nowadays is aware of the fact that language of politics is full of pervasions and swindles. The slogan of text three is also in phrasal form (continuity for purposeful leadership).This phrase obviously presents a candidate that is struggling to return, in order words to be re-elected. The slogan is likely to remind the

electorates of anything positive that the candidate has done for them which may convince them to elect him again. The slogans are presented at strategic positions on the campaign posters of the political candidates. The vocabulary of the campaign slogans therefore are everyday words but are descriptive, motivate, emotive and mostly metaphorical

10. Syntactic Features

The word syntax describes the grammatical relations that exist between words and other units within the sentence. Syntax and morphology seem to have close goals. While syntax looks at how words are combined to form larger grammatical units such as phrases and clauses, morphology concentrates on the study of the internal structures of words, that is, how morphemes are combined to form a word or single grammatical unit.

The study of the texts in the corpus revealed that campaign slogans accompanying campaign posters are embodiments of the candidates' political mission or ideologies. Most of the slogans are in phrasal forms. Typical examples are "for *equal opportunity and social justice in appendix vii and for equality, justice and prosperity (Text i)*. These are emotive words joined by coordinating conjunctions since they are reflections of what the people desire to have to have as evident of democracy. The emotive words appeal to the emotion of the electorate. This is one of the ways in which the language of politics is similar to the language of advertisement and propaganda. Just in the way advertisers select language carefully to convince the people to go in for their products, the politicians carefully select and structure their campaign slogans to convince the electorate buy their ideologies and campaign missions.

Of The nine selected posters, only two presented political slogans in full sentences. *These are "Adamawa state may now excel" (Text viii) and "Barka namu ya dawo" (Text ix).* This Hausa sentence means "congrats our own has come back''. The sentence presents a candidate that feels that feels the people like him or thirst for him. The declarative sentence "Adamawa state may now excel presents a candidate that feels he has the potential to move the state forward. He however, remained reserved by making it condition;-if he is elected. His slogan embodies words of courage and salvation of the state from its predicaments. The candidate believed that the government in power has not done well but he is elected the state will be transformed.

The analysis carried out on the syntactic features has uncovered that the syntax of political campaign slogans are generally simple. There is no instance of complex clauses noted. This means that the slogans are intentionally made short, concise or precise so that the electorates can memorize or retain them. The concise nature of the syntax also enables the electorates to easily analyze the sensitive ideologies and campaign missions of the candidates with ease.

11. Semantic features

Political campaign posters and slogans carry meaning beyond the conceptual and denotation level. Almost all the inscriptions in words, phrases and sentences carry connotations. Connotation in political context refers to feelings, attitudes, moods, implied by a term or phrase employed by political candidates to help them achieve their goals. There lies behind the literal meaning, implied value judgement or feeling which the political candidates hope to be considered positive by the electorates. The lexical and syntactic features are mostly connotations. This means that they are subjective and emotional as objective and substantive. Also they are frequently interpreted positive by the political candidates and their supporters and on the other hand interpreted negative by political opponents and their supporters. The words change and passion in appendix 1&2 two are typical examples of connotations. They

cannot be interpreted objectively in the sphere of politics. However, they are purposely selected by the political candidates to motivate and entice the electorates to vote for them. Similarly, the phrases ''for equality, justice and prosperity and foe equal opportunity and social justice'' in appendix 1&7 are highly emotive but can hardly be interpreted objectively. Political campaign posters and slogans at semantic level are best seen as connotative-subjective, personal and idiosyncratic. They are interpreted based on political ideologies and affiliations. What political candidates and their supporters see as positive can hardly be seen as positive by the political opponents and their supporters.

From the above discussions, conclusion can be drawn that political campaign posters carry inscriptions that are mostly ambiguous since they open to more than one interpretation. They are personal, idiosyncratic and subjective as they variations in their consideration by the audience.

12. Conclusion

The study has revealed that political campaign posters are essential visual communication means that the political candidates use in canvassing for votes. Graphetically, the posters are large and attractive, though there are some that are in hand bill forms which are not large. They are designed purposely to entice the electorate to vote for the candidates. The posters play almost the same roles with the commercial posters in terms attempting to persuade and influence the people's opinion. Just as the photographs are made attractive, the inscriptions are also made attractive by being printed in different shades of colours. At the lexical level, the key words are mostly descriptive and emotive. They are selected carefully to work on the emotions of the target audience in order to decamp to the side of the candidate. The syntax is simple since no single complex compound or sentences were noted. The simplicity of the syntax makes it possible for the majority of the literate audience to read and interpret the slogans. It can be deduced from the analysis carried out on the various linguistic components that campaign posters and slogans very important means of communicating to the electorates. They are embodiments of political candidates' ideologies and missions.

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