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DISCOURSE STRATEGIES IN PRESIDENT HAKAINDE HICHILEMA'S INAUGURAL SPEECH

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Abstract

Linguistic scholars have variously revealed the indispensability of language for politicians in their everyday efforts to influence the minds of their listeners in order to have favourable attitudes and dispositions towards them. To this end, this paper sets out to investigate the discourse strategies deployed by the president of Zambia in his 2021 inaugural speech for the purpose of giving hope to the citizens and convincing them to cooperate with his administration. The paper adopts Systemic Functional Grammar as its theoretical framework. Through careful study and analysis, the author discovers that the speech encoder makes use of different strategies to make his message acceptable and to have the intended effects on the audience. A few of these are repetitive use of the vocative "Fellow Zambians"; deployment of apparent honesty moves; use of direct address to make the audience feel recognised and appreciated and use of presupposition and implicature among others.

Keywords: President Hakainde Hichilema, Inaugural Speech, Apparent Honesty Move, Direct Address, Fellow Zambians.

Introduction

Inaugural speech has become a notable genre of political speeches, which linguistic scholars investigate in order to unravel the different shades of meanings which the encoders attempt to pass across to their audience. By political speech or political discourse, we refer to "text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions such as Presidents, Prime Ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both on the national and international level" (Dijk, 1997:12). One of the notable qualities of a political speech is that it must perform political functions (Van Dijk 1997).

Agbara (2018:1) opines that inaugural speech has become a traditional function performed by new leaders upon their assumption of office: whenever an elected leader assumes power, the first public function is usually the presentation of a public address termed "Inaugural Speech." The speech encoder uses this medium to inform his audience of his philosophy of governance, directions of focus and the current situation of things in some key sectors of the economy. He also uses the speech to pledge or commit himself to do some things as well as making the speech to serve as an expression of gratitude to the people of the country for one reason or the other.

In reference to the persuasive nature of political discourse, Beyram (2020:29) avers that the aim of a political discourse "is to persuade the audience of the validity of the speaker's political claims." In the words of Adebiyi (2006), political inaugural speeches are not only used to motivate, mobilise, educate and inform its target audience, but they are also used to criticize previous administrations (Ademilokun, 2016). Political discourse generally has been widely investigated in literature. Agbara's (2018) work centres on the pragmatic use of first-person plural pronouns in President Muhammadu Buhari's inaugural speech. The scholar finds out that

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four different groups are referred to using the first-person plural pronoun. Olaniyan (2015) carries out a stylistic study of selected Independence Day broadcasts of General Ibrahim Babangida. The work centres on the graphological, morphological, lexico-semantic as well as syntactic features deployed by the encoder of the speech in order for him to realize the aims of rendering the speeches.

Ojo, Omotunde and Akintoye (2022) investigate the discourse strategies which President Olusegun Obasanjo deployed in his open letter to President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. Some of the strategies adopted in the letter include: repetition of "national interest", repeating the vocative "Mr. President," mentioning and portraying God in different perspectives, direct appeal to the present etc. Wang (2020) engages in a critical discourse analysis of Barack Obama's speeches. He carries out a transitivity analysis, modality analysis and textual analysis of the speeches.

Abdulahi-Idiagbon (2002) investigates how language is used in selected Nigerian presidential campaign speeches. Using Systemic Functional Linguistics as his theoretical framework, the scholar finds out that politicians use political speech to serve their personal interests. Osisanwo's (2017) work centres on the pragmatic acts performed in President Buhari's inaugural speech by making use of insight from aspects of Jacob Mey's pragmatic act theory as his theoretical framework. The scholar discovers that the acts deployed in the speech are designed to achieve some goals which are basically appreciation, giving directives and others. Amaechi's (2016) work on a comparative analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's coup address of January 1, 1984, and his inaugural speech of May 29, 2015 uses Speech Act theory for the purpose of revealing the illocutionary forces of the speech acts employed in both speeches to manipulate Nigerians into working towards his desired goals.

The work of Abuya (2012) is a pragma-stylistic study of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's inaugural speech. Through speech act theory, the author reveals that the speech encoder relies more on sentences that perform commissive acts than other speech acts in his inaugural speech. Suhair (2015) investigates the significance of language in the communication and interpretation of intentions in selected political speeches of John Kerry in Presidential campaign in 2004 and George Bush's inaugural address in 2001 using insight from pragmatics. The study reveals that Kerry relies more on sentences that perform commissive acts while Bush uses sentences that perform assertive acts more than other speech acts.

Apart from the above, there is no doubt that several other works exist on political speeches in general and inaugural speeches in particular, but none seems to exist on the inaugural speech of President Hakainde Hichilema or any Zambian President at all. Although, Mwinga (2015) examined the discoursal features of the parliamentary debate sessions of March 2013, in which the immunity of the Fourth Republican President was lifted. The study was guided by critical discourse analysis theory. It was discovered that the debate was characterized by unequal power relations with the members of the ruling party enjoying more freedom than those of the opposition. Therefore, the aim of this article is to investigate the various discursive strategies used by the speech encoder in giving recognition, hope and awareness to the people of Zambia.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this work is Systemic Functional Grammar (henceforth SFG) which was popularized by M.A.K. Halliday. On this theory, Hu Zhuanglin (1988: 307) writes that:

> *Systemic grammar aims to explain the internal relations in language as a system of network or meaning potential. And this network consists of subsystems from which language users make choices. Functional grammar aims to reveal that language is a means of social interaction based on the position that language system and the forms that make it up are inescapably determined by the uses or functions which they serve.*

In the opinion of Ojo (2018:1), SFG places emphasis on meaning, function and language use. The overall implication of the above is that grammar focuses more on the meaning of words, phrases and sentences in

contexts rather than on pure formal analysis of these discourse units. This grammar identifies three major functions that language performs which are ideational, interpersonal and textual. It is the interpersonal function that is relevant to this work in that according to Halliday (1978:112), this component is the medium "through which the speaker intrudes himself into the context of situation, both expressing his attitude and judgements and seeking to influence the attitudes and behaviour of others." One other notable thing about SFG is the emphasis placed on the notion of "choice" in the interpretation of texts (spoken or written). This simply means that the linguistic choices a speaker or writer makes in a particular context are very important for the interpretation of meaning. On this assertion, Fontaine (2013:11) reveals that "there is general agreement that meaning is choice and choice is meaning." The implication of this to the current work is that all the discourse strategies deployed by the encoder of the speech under analysis are conscious choices and they are meant to pass across certain meanings, hence the appropriateness of SFG to this work.

Data for the Study and Method of Analysis

The data for the study is the inaugural speech delivered by the President of Zambia, His Excellency, Mr. Hakainde Hichilema which was delivered on the 24th of August, 2021 at Lusaka. The speech was downloaded on the internet. The analysis is carried out by first identifying the discourse strategies deployed by the speech encoder which is then followed by relevant excerpts from the speech for the purpose of illustration and clarity.

Data Analysis

This section discusses the strategies deployed by President Hakainde Hichilema towards giving hope to the people of Zambia while at the same time preparing them for the task ahead.

Observance of Large Protocol

The president acknowledges the presence of a large number of different categories of people at the inauguration. In fact, it is the largest protocol or acknowledgement of people that the scholar has ever come across in political speeches. All in all, the speech encoder recognizes twenty-three individuals and groups. The first five are:

- *Your Excellency, the 54th President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr. Edger Chagwa Lungu and the Former First Lady, Mrs. Esther Lungu;*
- *Your Excellences, Visiting Heads of State and Government;*
- *Your Excellences, Special Representatives of Heads of State and Government;*
- *Your Excellences, the Fourth President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr. Rupial Banda…;*
- *Your Honour, the Vice-President of the Republic of Zambia, Mrs. Mutale W.K. Nalumango, MP.*

The last five are:

- *Your Royal Highness;*
- *Members of the Clergy;*
- *Members of the Press;*
- *Fellow Zambians;*
- *Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.*

This elaborate acknowledgement of individuals or groups at the occasion is to make his audience feel very important and therefore comfortable and determined to work with him. It is a way of telling them that he recognises them which invariably is a way of soliciting their loyalty and cooperation for the new administration.

Repetition of the Vocative "Fellow Zambians

The president uses the vocative "Fellow Zambians" or its variants such as "My Fellow Zambians" and "Fellow Citizens" seventeen (17) times in the speech. The purpose of this copious use of vocatives is to introduce

intimacy and equality into the speech presentation. It is a discourse strategy that aims to bridge the gap between him and his listeners. Another reason for using this discourse strategy is to make the audience pay attention to his speech.

Recognition of Zambians who have Passed away

This is a rare discourse strategy that is deployed by president Hichilema. This strategy is meant to show solidarity with Zambians on account of those that died within a specific period. One significant thing is that he not only recognizes the dignitaries that had passed on, but also other citizens. This is to indicate that the life of all Zambians matter to him irrespective of their status or socio-economic background. Consider the excerpt below:

> *Fellow Zambians,*
> *Before we proceed, I request that we take a moment of silence in honour of eminent citizens who passed on this year. We lost our founding father and first President of the Republic of Zambia, Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda and the first female Chief Justice, Madame Irene Chirwa Mambilima. We also recognise all those that have passed on during the period (pause). May their souls rest in eternal peace.*

From the above, it is clear that President Hichilema first recognises the first president of the Republic followed by the first female Chief Justice and then all others that passed on within the same period. This indicates that the life of all Zambians is precious to him.

The Use of Presupposition and Implicature

Presupposition and implicature are pragmatic concepts that are utilised in the speech. Presupposition "is an assumption about the world or a background belief relating to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted. It also refers to what a speaker assumes his or listeners already know, that is, some assumed knowledge between the speaker and listener" (Omotunde and Ugah, 2021: p. 380-381). An implicature on the other hand is a type of meaning that is inferred from an utterance based on the context of its usage. That is, an implicature is a type of meaning that is not expressly stated (Ogunrinde and Adedoja, 2021).

In the speech, there are many instances of presupposition which pass across various meanings in order to achieve certain effects or pass on certain pragmatic meanings. Consider the excerpts below:

I. *My fellow Zambians, twenty-three years ago, a visionary by the name of Anderson Kambela Mazoka, together with his colleagues founded the United Party for National Development (UPND). It was founded on the promise of a better Zambia. A Zambia which is united and prosperous. A Zambia that guarantees basic needs for all its citizens. A Zambia in which the fundamental human rights and property of its citizens are protected. Today, we* ***begin*** *our journey towards realising this dream* (emphasis mine).

   The verb "begin" that is in bold form above is a presupposition trigger meaning that previous administrations had not done anything in realising the Zambian dream as indicated above. It is a serious indictment on the administrations before him. This presupposition trigger is meant to give hope to the Zambians.

II. *To the jobless youths, a new dawn is here where you will be skilled and find opportunity to work or do business in an economy* ***that we will revive*** (emphasis mine).

   The expression "that we will revive" above has the implicature that the economy has collapsed before this time which is also another indictment on previous administrations. It is a way of saying that previous administrations are clueless on how to tackle the challenges facing the economy. This is also meant to give hope to the people.

III. *We will* ***restore*** *the rule of law, general order in our public places and communities and* ***return our country back to normalcy*** *(emphasis mine).*

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While the word "restore" as used above is a pre-supposition trigger meant to show that there was no rule of law and general order in public places as at the time of rendering the speech, the expression "return our country back to normalcy" has an inbuilt implicature that the country is in a state of chaos and anarchy as at the time of delivering the speech. This is another indictment on the past administrations. The deployment of these two pragmatic concepts are meant to tell his listeners that he is a determined leader who is ready to do what it takes to help the country and the citizens.

IV. *I write the church and the traditional leaders **to continue** providing spiritual and moral guidance… I invite our development partners **to continue** your cooperation as Zambia's recovery requires concerted effort* (emphasis mine).

The use of "continue" above is a presupposition trigger that is used positively to indicate that the church and the traditional leaders and "our development partners" have been assisting the country in their own different ways.

V. *We treat diversity as a strength, never **again** should any difference be used for political mileage or to favour one over another.* (emphasis mine).

The use of **again** in the above is a presupposition trigger that is meant to pass on the unpleasant message that some perceived differences in the country have been used to favour some people or some groups before. The presupposition trigger is meant to give assurance to the people that his government will not promote divisive tendencies and that equality will be the hallmark of his administration.

VI. *Time has come for all Zambians to be free.*

The implicature in the above is that Zambians are not free under former administrations

Copious Use of Pronoun "we" to Indicate Pledge and Commitment

Politicians use pronouns to pass across different meanings and messages. In support of this, Jones and Peccei (2004: p. 52) write that "… the pronouns that politicians use to refer to themselves or their audience can be a significant part of the message. They can be used to foreground or to obscure responsibilities and agency." In the text, the first person singular pronoun "I" and first person plural "we" and its objective forms "our" and "us" are used to achieve different meanings. However, the one we are concerned with here is the use of "we" to represent the president and his political party for the purpose of assuring the people of good governance and adequate representation. Consider the excerpts below:

I. *We will grow our economy so we can lift more people out of poverty than ever before;*
II. *We will promote unity in diversity and ensure respect for the fundamental human rights and freedoms for all;*
III. *We will restore the rule of law, general order in our public place and communities;*
IV. *Our focus over the next five years will be on restoring macro-economic stability and promoting growth of the economy;*
V. *We will pay special attention to lowering the fiscal deficit, reducing public debt and restoring social and market confidence;*
VI. *We will focus on inclusion and not exclusion, unity and not division, gathering and not scattering.*

In the above excerpts, the "we" refers to the president and members of his political party. The "we" is used to achieve solidarity and collectivity for the purpose of assuring the citizens of Zambia that the party has good plans for them. The use of "we will" is to show absolute commitment and pledge to the propositions above. The pledge above covers growing the economy, promoting unity and oneness in the country, restoring the rule of law and restoring macro-economic stability which are in fact, the major things that any responsible government and political party are expected to do. In essence, the use of "we" to represent the president and the party is for the purpose of bringing hope to the citizens of Zambia.

The Use of Apparent Honesty Move

This is a discourse strategy used by politicians to indirectly inform the citizens that all may not be as rosy as they think, and that understanding and other things are expected from the citizens. It is a way of saying that government does not possess any magic wand with which to solve the myriads of problems that individuals and the nation may be facing. van Dijk (1995:159) cited in Bamigboye and Omotunde (2015:193) writes that "the Honesty move is a well known form of disclaiming possibly negative statements. One way to do this is to use phrases such as "frankly…", or "we should not hide the truth…" and so on. The following are examples from our data.

I. *The road ahead will not be without challenges but with a clear vision and plan, which we have, and relentless determination, we shall overcome and deliver on the aspirations of our people.*
The underlined expression above indicates the use of Apparent Honesty Move.

II. *Fellow Zambians, to achieve the Zambia we want, we must work together as a people. To achieve the Zambia we want, we need to be committed to hard work.*

In the excerpt above, the encoder is telling the citizens that he has to be frank and tell them the truth that the only way to achieve the Zambia of their dream is for the people to work together and be committed to hard work.

Elaborate Use of Direct Speech Act of Inviting

One major discourse strategy that the president uses copiously in the speech is direct speech act of inviting. The purpose is to tell the citizens openly that he cannot by himself alone take the country to an enviable height economically and politically but that he desires their expertise, commitment, cooperation and support. The excerpt below clarifies the point.

I invite every Zambian to join hands with us as we move forward on this noble journey.
I invite the private sector on this journey.
The Zambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry
The Zambia Chamber of Mines
The Zambia Association of Manufacturers
The Zambia National Farmers Union
The Zambia Federation of Employers
The Labour Movement
I invite you all
I invite all political parties to work with us…
We must put aside our election related and other differences…
I invite the church and the traditional leaders
I invite the civil society to continue complementing our development efforts
I invite our development partners to continue your cooperation…

The above is an indication of the willingness and determination of the president to genuinely bring progress and development to the country by openly inviting all the above categories of unions, political parties, institutions and so on. The president believes that the progress of the nation overrides any other consideration and personal ego or interest.

Making Zambians to Feel Good, Recognised and Appreciated through Direct Address

The president, through direct address, made very effective by the use of "you" and "your", makes his listeners to feel honoured, appreciated and recognised for the significant role they play in ensuring his victory at the poll. Consider the excerpt below.

> *I stand before **you** today humbled and filled with gratitude for **your** trust in a simple village boy who **you** have made the seventh president of the Republic of Zambia. This victory is not mine but for all the citizens of our great country, especially the youth who turned out to vote in great numbers with great energy and passion, and made this day possible… **You**, the people of Zambia, resoundingly spoke with **your** role and I thank **you** from the depth of my heart.*

In the excerpt above, **you** and **your** occur six (6) times. This direct address using the above pronouns will evoke the feeling of being individually praised by the president. This will surely make the listeners feel very happy and determined to cooperate with him.

Evaluation

Rozina and Karapetjana (2009:114) reveal that "it is axiomatic that language plays an essential part in politics because its main function in different political situations is to enable politicians to form structurally stable relationships. In essence, all the discourse strategies adopted by President Hichilema is for the purpose of making the people feel that he loves them, he thinks about their welfare, he has the determination to tackle the socio-economic problems facing them and that he will fulfil all the pledges he makes to them in the speech. In essence, every linguistic choice made by politicians is for the purpose of achieving one political goal or the other. This then follows that the purpose to which language is put by politicians is a significant part of what determines how their listeners assess them which, of course, may be right or wrong.

Conclusion

This study was designed to X-ray the discursive strategies in President Hakainde Hichilema's Inaugural Speech. Politicians are noted for manipulation. Therefore, their speeches are usually prepared to bring out the best in their audience, for the purpose of gaining wide acceptance.

This paper has employed systematic functional grammar as a theoretical framework, to identify strategies employed in speeches as demonstrated in many inaugural addresses of presidents in different parts of the world. The strategies notable in this article include the observance of large protocols to make the audience feel important, "fellow Zambians" was used 17 times to show intimacy. There was also a reference to the dead Zambians to show how much love the president has for the people. Presuppositions and Implicature were used robustly. The pronoun "we' was employed to make people believe that it will be a collective mission whereby everyone will be engaged. "Apparent Honest Move" was also employed to make people understand that the government is not a magician, therefore not all problems will be resolved in the administration. In all, it was made clear that language is an essential ingredient of politics.

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