



## A Linguistic Analysis of Representing Actions/ Events/States in Nigeria Political Speeches

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**Abstract:** The thrust of this study is the identification and the analysis of representing Actions/Events/States (verbal group) in budget speeches by the state governors in Nigeria. It describes the thematic preoccupation of the speeches and also elucidates the implications of the political ideologies that are deep-seated in the speeches. The study also relates the themes and the stylistic instruments deployed in the selected speeches to the socioeconomic situations in Nigeria so as to characterise budget speech discourse in the country. This study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were obtained from selected state governors' budget speeches in Nigeria. Budget speeches delivered in 2015 were selected because it was the year that marks the beginning of a new era in the country. The data for this research consisted of six budget speeches delivered by state governors in Nigeria. A budget speech was selected from each of the six geopolitical zones in the country. The secondary data were obtained from books, journal articles and the internet. The data were analysed using Jeffries' critical stylistic approach. The results showed that the producers of budget speech used wide range of linguistic features such as representing actions, events and states to communicate their stance. The analysis of the linguistic features and the description of the themes and content of the speeches revealed the manifestation of representing actions/events and states. The themes and the stylistic tools were also related to the socio-economic situation of the country. The study concluded that governors utilised various semantic devices to represent political ideologies using representing actions/events and states in the financial statements of their states. Also, critical stylistics helped to give useful insight into the political dynamics of budget speech presentation.

**Keywords:** Budget Speech: Verbal Group: Political Ideology: Financial Statements

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### 1.0 Introduction of the Study

Language is a weapon and a potent instrument for gaining public support, particularly during this moment of the information revolution. In both form and content, political discourse is ideological and persuasive. The lifeblood of politics is language (Ahmed & Arif, 2014; Beard, 2000; Bosman, 1987; Chateris-Black, 2005). Political power struggles and the legitimisation of political initiatives, as well as obtaining the permission and support of voters' authority, are mostly accomplished through language and verbal representations. Circumlocution, irony, symbolism, innuendo, euphemism, and metaphor have all been related to political language in various rhetorical and figurative methods (Bosman, 1987: Charteris-Black, 2005). According to Geis (1987), political language conveys both the linguistic meaning of what is said and the corpus, or a portion of the corpus, of the political views that support any given utterance. Language is an important aspect of political campaigns and an interesting medium of post-election communication and point of reference. Political discourse conveys and supports the prevailing political authority' ideological foundations and ways of knowing. Van Dijk (1998) describes ideology as "the foundation of groups'

social representations." He identifies the following types of politician, which are: conservatives and progressive politicians, socialists and neo-liberals, nationalists and racists. It is most likely that their ideologies and political beliefs and background will show up and combine in the discourse of politicians. Some words, phrases, and expressions used by politicians have hidden meaning. This is due to what Taiwo (2010) refers to as indirect use of language by politicians to talk about politically risky topics.

According to Taiwo (2010), politicians' use of indirect language is typically linked to a number of variables, including the need to safeguard their careers, the desire to obtain a political and interactional advantage over their opponents, politeness, and so on (Obeng, 1997; Jeffries, 2010; Nwabueze, 2002). The use of metaphors in politics can be linked to persuasion and propaganda. Politicians and government agencies utilize language to communicate what is known and understood among members of their political party and ideological ideas. This means that official papers are formed by the knowledge and understanding of things in the context in which they are primarily used. What is included or excluded, as well as the form of political speeches, is primarily influenced by these means of knowing and thinking, as well as what is ideologically regarded to encompass them. The thrust of this study is the linguistic analysis of budget speeches in Nigeria aiming at unveiling political ideologies that are deep-seated in the speeches.

### **1.1 Statement of the Research Problem**

There have been fascinating studies on political communication generally and specifically on budget speeches discourse. Most of these studies for instance, Omolehinwa & Roe (1989), Oshionebo (1999), Nwabueze (2002), Obadan (2003) and Tella (2004) to mention a few focus on the political, economic and historical points of view. Among the few that are on Language and style of the discourse such as Armed et al. (2014), none looks at the analysis of actions/events/states (verbal group) from Critical Stylistic perspective. This study aims at filling the gap

### **1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to describe the form and content of budget speeches in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- (i) Identify and analyse actions/events/states (verbal group) in budget speeches by state governors in Nigeria using critical stylistic tools;
- (ii) Describe the thematic preoccupation of the speeches;
- (iii) Discuss the connotations of the underlying political ideologies, intrinsic in the speeches; and
- (iv) Link the themes and the stylistic tools with the Nigeria socio-economic situation.

### **1.3 Limitations of the Study**

There is no getting around the fact that all research has limits. Some of the research work's drawbacks include the fact that it is limited to budget speeches given by selected Nigerian governors, limiting us from utilising other pertinent budget speeches given by non-governmental groups. Also, our analysis did not touch other budget speeches such as Presidential budget speeches and Local government budget speeches due to time constraint. The study applies the framework of critical stylistics which is the branch of linguistic stylistics that unite the analytical method of Stylistics and Critical Discourse Analysis.

## **2.0 Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 Concept of Critical Stylistics**

Peter (2002) defines stylistics as the study of style. It is the study of unique linguistic expression and the description of its function and effect. Different style academics, or stylisticians, dispute on how such analysis and description should be undertaken, and how the relationship between them should be established, but for the time being, this generic definition will suffice. The focus of this study is the Critical Stylistic analysis of budget speeches by selected state governors in Nigeria (Obadan, 2003; Obeng, 1997). Critical stylistics has been chosen because it is a fusion of Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Linguistics and Stylistics. It's useful for detecting ideology in literature.

According to Jeffries (2010), CDA provides general theories for describing the impact of texts in social and political contexts. Critical Stylistics combines the strengths of both to discover the deep-seated ideology of ordinary texts. Stylistics gives tools for analyzing how texts work, whereas Critical Stylistics combines the capabilities of both to uncover the deep-seated ideology of everyday texts.

Critical stylistics is a branch of stylistics which helps us to explain how texts are used to persuade the readers and to change their ideology towards a particular situation. She (Jefferis) goes further to claim that the framework of critical stylistics discovers the underlying ideologies and gains a deeper understanding and appreciation of texts. Jefferis introduces a set of tools that will provide a reader with a clear set of analytical tools to use while conducting critical analysis of texts with the goal of finding or discovering the texts' underlying ideologies (2010; Tella, 2012; Van Dijk, 1998). These are: naming and describing elements, elements for representing actions, events and states, elements for equating and contrasting, exemplifying and enumerating, prioritizing elements, elements for assuming and implying, negating elements, hypothesizing elements, elements for presenting other's speech and thoughts and elements for presenting time space and society (Peter, 2002; Stolper, 1966; Taiwo, 2010; Tella, 2004).

## 2.2 Review of Existing Works on Budget Analysis

Ahmed *et al.* (2014) engage in a critical discourse analysis of Pakistan and Indian budget speeches. The researchers compile two specialized corpora, Pakistani Budget Speeches (PBS) and Indian Budget Speeches (IBS), from 2009 to 2012. The research explores the hidden meanings through the study of Parts of Speech (POS) which were conveyed in budget speeches. Nouns (singular and plural), pronouns, adjectives (generic), and verbs (present/past/modal) were the only POS allowed. The study comes to the conclusion that when a budget is declared, it has numerous implications. According to the findings, the government declares the budget with certain similarities and variations from other countries, but the hidden meanings behind the declaration are a fixed (Ogunyemi, 2011; Ogunyemi, 2012; Omolehinwa & Roe, 1989; Oshionebo, 1999). Budget Discourse Phenomenon. Although their study is equally on budget speeches, this present study is a departure from theirs because it looks at budget speeches of selected state governors in Nigeria from critical stylistic perspective. That is, while their study looks at budget speeches from critical discourse perspective, this present study looks at budget speeches from critical stylistic perspective. Dorpar (2013), analyze Jashne-e-Farkhonde, using critical stylistic approach. For the analysis of Persian literature, the study advises the adoption of new stylistic branches as well as relevant methods. As a first step in this direction, she uses critical stylistics to examine the stylistic aspects of Jashn-e Farkhonde, a short story by Jalalal-e Al-e Ahmad, addressing the following fundamental questions: "What is the ideology behind the text?" and "What stylistic features reveal this ideology?" "What is the function of the ideology that underpins the text?" and "What is the function of the ideology that underpins the text?" It is expected that the knowledge gained through focalization and micro-layer analysis will lead to the finding of ideology and power relations in the text. The study finds that the author's excessive use of swear words and imperative phrases reveal the text's latent ideology, namely, the author's unhappiness as a critical intellectual who represents community groups from both the socioeconomic and political currents addressed in the story.

Budgeting, according to Tella (2012), is an annual practice in many countries around the world. However, in recent years, the president, governors, and local government chairmen have made the budget presentation more of a show than a serious business, as it was until the mid-1980s. The first day of January was traditionally regarded as a hallowed day for national budget presentations and subsequent state budget presentations under military governments (Dorpar, 2013; Enodien, 1984; Fapojuwo, 1995; Geis, 1987). The seriousness with which budget presentations should be treated, as well as the implementation, has waned over time. Budgeting at the grassroots level, i.e. at the local government level, is rare in most parts of Nigeria. Budget drafting, legislative, implementation, and auditing are the four phases of the budgetary process, according to Tella (2012). According to him, both the executive and the legislature have a responsibility to play in each phase, which is clearly stated in the constitution. It also identifies different budget types and procedures. Ogunyemi (2011) argues that budget types are viewed in terms of the structural relationship between the budget's revenue and expenditure profiles, whereas budgeting procedures are viewed in terms of the relationship between one year's budget and subsequent ones. When it comes to budget type, we assess whether the budget is surplus, deficit, or balanced.

Authors, especially those of the social science persuasion have delved into the issues of budgeting in Nigeria with great intellectual fervour, suggesting most often, a list of ameliorative measures to what they perceive as the problems of resource application in Nigeria. But such scholarly interests have been tilted more to the problems of budgeting generally rather than the issues and character of the budget as a public document and language related problem. That explains why the works of authors such as Stolper (1966), Enodien (1984), Omolehinwa & Roe (1989) and Fapojuwo (1995), all focus on the problems of budgeting in the forms of socio-economic constraints in resource allocation, inadequate data for planning, organizational and coordination problems as well as the disconnection between budgeting and planning in Nigeria. Ogunyemi (2011) observes that in Nigeria, unlike other countries, the budgetary process is characterized by utter conflicting interests and squabbles between the executive and legislative arms of government. These conflicts are always exacerbated by excessive politicking by the two arms of government, as well as the constitutional lacuna created by the president's broad discretionary powers granted under section 81 (1) of the 1999 constitution to lay budgets "at an early date."

Furthermore, whenever the National Assembly actually insists on thoroughness, the budgets delay so much that significant period of time must pass before they are actually passed. Unlike, comparable situation of the United State, where budgets must be presented on or after the first Monday in January but not later than the first Monday in February of each year. The Nigerian system lack this time framework. The result is that, the executive would always hide behind the provision "at any time" to present the budget too late for any thorough oversight work to be done on it. Therefore, any government who does not lack political will over its responsibility to its country will prioritize budget and other budgetary issues so as to make it available for implementation as at when due, while commenting on the characteristics of the Nigerian budgetary system. Ogunyemi (2012) points out that the Nigerian Federal budget is characterized by the executive arm of government's dominance in its development and drafting as opposed to input from the legislative. This, according to him, is a major departure in the character of Nigeria Federal budgets from those of the United State (US) in which the legislature is more dominant in its formulation and legitimacy.

Ogunyemi (2012) identifies and analyses the basic features that have characterized the budgeting processes of the Federal Republic of Nigeria since 1954. He discusses the identified characteristics around the theme of public financial accountability and the need for transparency in governance. The study establishes that the characteristics of Nigeria's budgetary processes contained peculiar fiscal and legal dimensions worthy of emphasis. The study found that respective budgeting and the circumvention of the laws on accountability were the most visible features of the Nigerian budgets process in about the last six decades despite the institutional and legal frameworks within which federal budgets were expected to be operated. Despite all these analysis his work also failed to delve into stylistic analysis of the discourse. However, the fact that all the existing works on budget discourses (which we have reviewed so far) lack linguistic and stylistic analysis which would have revealed the ideological motivation content of the discourse shows that there is a vacuum which this study intends to fill. Hence, this present study.

### **3.0 Identification and Analysis of Linguistic Features in Budget Speeches: Representing Actions, Events/States (verbal group)**

This category of the discourse content captures the verbal group. What is being done is represented by action, events are what is happening, and states are simply what is. We have the following instances from the selected texts;

- (a) Like in any other change process, we envisage some initial challenges – MAI.
- (b) We have also restored relative peace to the state through our ongoing efforts towards resolving the NURTW crisis - MAI.
- (c) We created 20,000 jobs under the YES – O scheme – MAI.
- (d) The youth unemployment will be addressed by our administration - MAS.
- (e) Our people have lost property worth 3.5 billion naira to the flood disaster in the last one year - MAS.
- (f) Our local contribution to this malaise became known to all and has necessitated the need to be environmentally responsible - MC.

Examples a-f present instances of representing Action\ events\ state. In a sentence, the primary clause to which a subordinate clause provides support is the unit of analysis. Six sentences that are representational were analysed for the purpose of this study. In “a-c” illustrates Mental Action Intentional (MAI), “d” illustrates Mental Action Supervention (MAS) and “f” illustrates Mental Cognition (MC). Like in any other change process, we envisage some initial challenges’. The above sentence contains two clauses; one subordinate clause i.e “Like in any other change process” and one main clause i.e ‘we envisage some initial challenges’. As stated earlier, our emphasis shall be on the main clause; Actor process circumstance goal, we envisage some initial challenges, we – actor, envisage – process, some initial – circumstance, challenges – goal.

Example 1 ‘like in any other change process we envisage some initial challenges’ (MAI). illustrates material action intentional. The collective pronoun ‘We’ is the Actor (subject/ performer of the action). The lexical verb ‘envisage’ is the process (Action/verb). ‘Some initial is the circumstance which serves as modifiers for the goal (challenges).’ ‘Challenges’ which is the ‘goal’ is the recipient of the action ‘envisage’ that is performed by the actor ‘we’.

Counting words has proven to be a popular strategy for following a trend and uncovering a hidden message. The responsibility factor can be located through pronoun analysis. According to Beard (2000), the examination of the first person singular pronoun "I" and first person plural pronoun "we" is noteworthy because it reveals how the speaker wishes to be perceived by the addressees. The usage of the first person singular pronoun "I" emphasizes the speaker's narcissism as well as his own contribution to the topic at hand. It portrays the speaker as a haughty egomaniac. When excellent news is presented, the speaker employs this pronoun to claim full credit. Using the plural pronoun "we" has the advantage of spreading accountability during more uncertain or unpleasant situations. Nonetheless, adopting the plural pronoun "we" reduces the barrier between the speaker and the audience. As a result, it aids in the development of rapport. Furthermore, this pronoun conveys a sense of inclusion, implying that the speaker and the audience are one and the same person. This feeling gives a sense of unconscious pride to the listeners, they begin to admire and take side of the speaker. The text producer therefore intentionally used the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ in the example so that the effect of the action ‘envisage’ which is an expression of fear will not be on him alone. Also, in examples 2 ‘We have also restored relative peace to the state through our ongoing efforts towards resolving the NURTW crises (MAI).’ and example 3, ‘We created 20,000 jobs under the YES – O scheme (MAI).’, pronoun ‘we’ is equally used so that the glory of restoring peace in the state and the creation of 20,000 jobs will not go to him alone.

Example four (4) ‘The youth unemployment will be addressed by our administration’. (MAI). The rule of passivization is in place here, this is because the text producer focuses the ‘goal’ (i.e the youth employment) rather than the actor (i.e our administration). The use of passive expression by the text producer has its semantic implications. The subject object inversion in the sentence implies the writer’s intention to draw the attention of the addressees to the problem of unemployment among the youth which his administration has determined to address. The choice of the personalised passive is significant by contributing to the truth value of the proposition.

In example five (5), ‘Our people have lost property worth 3.5 billion naira to the flood disaster in the last one year’ (MAS). The lexical verb ‘lost’ is material action supervention (MAS). It is an action performed by conscious being unconsciously.

#### S P C A

Our people/ lost/ property worth 3.5 billion naira to the flood disaster. The lexical verb ‘lost’ in the sentence is a transitive verb and a verb of process. It has a complement (i.e property) and an adjunct (i.e flood disaster) headed by a preposition (to).

‘Our local contribution to this ailment became known to all, necessitating the need to be environmentally responsible,’ says example six (6). The primary auxiliary verb ‘was’ precedes the lexical verb of cognition (MC) ‘known.’ This implies that the addressees cannot prove ignorance of their contribution to the malaise that befall the state. The text producer does not want to bear the blame alone and at the same time does not want to cast aspersions on the people, so he makes use of inclusive pronoun ‘our’ which shows his sense of belonging.

In conclusion, Representing Action, Events and States have stated earlier capture the verbal group. Depending on ideological standpoint, a dwindling economy may be described as ‘world markets are falling’ (Events) by the politician who wishes to get votes. Also, member of the opposition may present it as, ‘The honourable member has ruined the economy’ (Action) and a commentator can present the same idea as ‘The world economy is in crisis’ (State). The text producer prefers Material Action Intentional (MAI), according to the pilot study. This means that the majority of the 'Actions' in budget speeches are done on purpose by conscious humans. The summary of the analysis is presented in the following quantitative analysis which further elucidates our findings (Table 2).

**Table 2: Representing Action/Events/States**

Transitivity Devices	Frequencies	Percentages %
Material Action Intentional (MAI)	6	46.1
Material Action Supervention (MAS)	4	30.7
Material Action Event (MAE)	3	23.0
Verbalisation Process (VP)	-	-
Mental Cognition (MC)	-	--
Mental Reaction (MR)	-	-
Mental Perception (MP)	-	-
Relational Intensive (RI)	-	-
Relational Possessive (RP)	-	-
Relational Circumstantial (RC)	-	-
<b>Total</b>	13	100

Table 2 shows that Material Action Intention occurs 6 times (46.1%), Material Action Supervention occurs 4 times (30.7%) and Mental Cognition occurs 3 times (23.0%). This shows that Material Action Intention is more predominant and Mental Cognition has the least occurrence.

#### 4.0 Findings of study and discussion

The results of the findings show that the producers of budget speeches deployed representing actions, events and states. The producers of budget speech made copious use of transitivity model. Specifically and predominantly used is the Material Action Intention (MAI). This includes the linguistic items that have to do with voluntary actions. The selection of material action portrays the governors as the actors while the people of their states are seen as the affected. Apart from this, the choice of material action process options reveals the extent to which transitivity model was employed in the budget speech to manipulate the public towards their political standpoints.

The use of relational process revealed the producers' copious use of copular verbs which lay emphasis on past and present budget speeches in their various states. Analysis of the speeches shows that the discourse sometimes give prominence to some information in a sentence. We discovered that certain social facts were fronted in the statement in order to achieve the desired goals. The text producers came about this through the use of prioritising. Budget speech discourse was also rendered from pragmatic perspectives. It was discovered that some expressions have conversational semantic implications which revealed hidden expressions that were not actually stated in the speeches. The use of negation in the discourse was employed to create negative attitude towards the opposition party and other social vices in the country. This shows that the discourse of budget speeches entail some elements of propaganda.

### 5.0 Conclusion of the Study

This study has revealed that budget speech is a veritable data for illustrating the basic ideas of critical stylistics. Such discourse idea as naming and describing, representing action/events/states, prioritising, implying and assuming, negating which are the hallmarks of critical stylistic study clearly manifest in the budget speeches of the state governors in Nigeria. Also, the study highlighted the adequacy of critical stylistics in engaging socio-critical and persuasive discourses such as budget speeches under study. The study also demonstrates that budget speeches are excellent venues for locating the interaction of textual and non textual modes of communication, as the latter is frequently used by producers in packaging meaning and expressing positions. This research has aided in the comprehension of budget speeches' rhetoric. It has also enriched the knowledge of the language content and political ideologies underlying budget speeches in the Nigerian context. This study fore-grounded the peculiarities of Budget speeches as a form of political discourse. Studying the language and style of such strategic discourse has revealed the ideological issue and the politics underlying budget speeches in Nigeria. It has created a better way of understanding budget speeches as a form of political communication appropriated by the politicians to campaign or market their parties and personal ideologies and also to brand their political parties and leadership styles. It showed the appropriateness of critical stylistics in analyzing political communication with an ideological import, using budget speeches as an instance. It also explained the moral, political and economic issues that are embedded in the discourse genre under study for better understanding of the discourse and shed light on the linguistics characteristics of budget speeches. Finally, it is a valuable addition to the existing literature on political discourse in general and budget speeches in particular.

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