PRAGMA –STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF MAJOR GENERAL J. T. AGUIYI – IRONSI'S MAIDEN SPEECH

AYEOMONI, M. O.
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,
OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY,
ILE-IFE, OSUN STATE.

This paper specifically reviews the language of Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi's maiden speech from the perspective of Speech Acts theory as formulated by John Austin in 1962 and developed by Searle 1999. However, it is brought to the open in this research how the language of the speech under review, in relation to its context of use, influences to a large degree the interpretation generated from the speech. It also explores how the language of the speech has been pragmatically organised and planned towards luring and mobilishing people to accept the government in power. Towards this end, the speech is framed in such a way that it caters for all shades of opinions, interests, groups and thoughts. This then informs the use of various kinds of illocutionary tactics employed in the speech, which are meant to cajole and elicit the support of the citizens for the new Government.

1. Introduction

Militarized Political Language

Militarized political language is a variety of language exclusively used by military personnel in politics for disseminating political ideas and thoughts. For instance, Mazrui (1995: 145) explains that military political language is inspirational and organisational, and it is always used for additional military resources. This variety of language (military political language) results from communication strategy of the military during war, political turbulence, militopolitical transitional period and so on. These factors explain why Winston Churchill in Mazrui (1995: 144) posits during one of his war broadcasts on February 9, 1941that: 'In wartime there is a lot to be said for the motto: Deeds not words.'" He claims further that every political authority will have to justify itself by an appeal to language in its symbolic or realistic sense.

Besides, during the period of war and revolution, the language of the military is always more extravagant than in peace period; hence, the Nigerian Military Heads of State, in their broadcasts to the nation during coups, are often very dictatorial and forceful. For instance, Aguiyi Ironsi in Ojiako (1986: 6) declares in his broadcast that:

The National Military Government hereby declares:

(a) The suspension of the provisions of the Constitution of the Federation relating to the office of President...

(b) The suspension of the provisions of the Regions...

This is a typical militarized political language; it is highly forceful and dictatorial in tone. Then Major Kaduna Nzeogwu in Ojiako (1986) declares during the "revolution" of January 1966 that:

> *You are hereby warned that looting, arson, homosexual, rape, embezzlement, bribery or corruption, obstruction of the revolution, sabotage, subversion...*

Likewise, the excerpt above manifests attribute of militarised political language as it is found to be forceful, harsh, dictatorial and compelling. Most of the lexical elements in the excerpt semantically attest to this claim.

2. The Military Rule in Nigeria: Historical dimensions

The politics of the Federation of Nigeria is full of interesting episodes dating back to Lord Frederick Lugard's day. For several years after the 1959 elections, the problems facing the country were many and disturbing. The politicians became very powerful; foreign investors and capital lenders exercised their influence on the country through them.

Between 1966 and 1993, Nigeria was subjected to different shades of military rule with brief periods of the civilian interregnum between 1979 and 1983. The usual excuse for taking over government was to sanitise the polity. The military usurped political power, which it held on to tenaciously.

Since then, the Nigerian political scene has been unstable and unpredictable as a result of incessant incursion of the military into the scene through coups and countercoups. Their reasons for intervention range from economic mismanagement, tribalism or ethnicity to maladministration, insincerity and corruption.

3. Research intention:

The intention here is to analyse and interpret the maiden text or speech of Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi, the First Military Head of State in Nigeria, using the framework of Speech Acts as postulated by Austin (1962); Searle (1969, 1980) Kempson (1963, 1991); and Lawal (1997). This study, therefore, is meant to show how the theory or Speech Acts reveals or shows how the language of the maiden speech of General Aguiyi Ironsi is organized or patterned logically to communicate the political intentions of the speaker.

4. The Theoretical Framework

Speech Acts theory was first developed by John Austin in 1962. According to Abrams (1982), it was originally a reaction to the logical positivists who analyse sentences according to their veritable or falsifiable truth conditions. Thus the illocutionary or performance acts are classified into direct and indirect forms.

The speech act theory, and indeed the whole of pragmatic theory, is essentially concerned with how interlocutors (speakers and listeners) understand one another in spite of the possibility of their saying what they do not mean, and meaning what they do not say. It is this possibility of indirectness and implicitness of meaning which recommends pragmatics as a useful analytical tool in studying texts of all kinds. The third type of speech act, the perlocution-results from a language user's utterance, a produce of the listeners' interpretation, and in the view of Levinson (1980), it is the intended or unintended consequence of, or reaction to what is said. This act is not part of the conventional meaning of the utterance, but it is derived from the context of situation of the utterance.

Searle in his own perception of the theory, thinks in terms of illocutionary verbs, and we may conclude that this taxonomy is more successful and systematic than Austin's, hence this work is based on Searle's principle. This is because he allows that illocutionary force may be expressed by a number of illocutionary forces indicating devices including intonation, punctuation as well as performance verbs. So, Searle sticks to a categorical theory of speech acts, in spite of the obvious difficulties of deciding when a given utterance fits into one category rather then another. His classification of illocutionary is as follows:

a. **Assertive Verbs:** affirm, allege, asserts, predict, announce, insult and so on.
b. **Direct Verbs:** ask; command, forbid, recommend, request and so on.
c. **Commissive Verbs:** promise, serious, volunteer, vow and so on.
d. **Declarative:** (conventional) no illocutionary force. They derive their force from the part they play in ritual.

5. Analysis (See the Data in the Appendix) of the First Military Speech in Nigeria.

Speaker/Ruler: Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi.

This speech is structured into four major segments:

(a) Introduction of the speaker and his mission.
(b) Justification of the mission: reasons for seizing power.
(c) Issuance of compelling or coercing orders and decrees.
(d) Appeal for calm, support and acceptance.

In this speech, the speaker (Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi) makes this speech within the then prevailing socio-Nigerian political environments. Then the entire speech could be categorized into the following illocutionary acts (using Searle's terms);

(a) Assertive
(b) Directive

(c) Commissive
(d) Expression.
(e) Declarative.

All these illocutionary acts are inherently structured into this speech event, that is, The Maiden Political Speech, with each of the illocutionary acts, logically, in the context of the speech events, manifesting various semantic perlocutionary effects as shown below to realize the four segments structure of the speech highlighted above:

Paragraph 1 of the speech is a Declarative illocutionary act. It is stated thus:

The government of the Federation of Nigeria having
ceased to function, the Nigerian Armed Forces have been invited to form an Interim Military Government for the purposes of manifesting law and order.

This Illocutionary Act of Declaration, if viewed critically within the semantic pragmatic context of this speech event (military politics), reveals or shows a perlocutionary act of involuntarily or unwillingly taking over of the Government. This then presupposes that the people were fed up already with the Government of the day vis-à-vis civilian government. Therefore, the military was though of as a better alternative Government to the people.

Then the second sentence of the speech, which is basically a complex one, is an Assertive Illocutionary act of affirmation and self-proclamation. It runs thus:

This invitation has been accepted and I: General
J.T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi, the General Officer Commanding the Nigerian Army have been formally invested with authority as Head of the Federation Military Government and Supreme Commander of the Nigerian Armed Forces.

In the sentence, Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi came out boldly to affirm and confirm that he had been vested with the authority to rule the country as the First Military Head of State. This assertive illocution presupposes that his source of power or authority, though ironical, because it is 'unmilitary", is from the people, even though these people were unknown, but merely acting behind the scene.

Therefore, the perlocutionary intent here is to create the impression that he is a man of the people and the people have approved his Government (militodemocracy). This is no doubt a military language strategy of imposing themselves on the people, as it is well known that in a military set-up, power or

"authority" is always derived from and acquired by force (through the barrel of a gun), and not by open invitation as claimed here.

The greater part of the speech is essentially of an illocutionary force of Directives. This portion of the speech commences from chapter two labelled Judiciary, the Civil Service and the Police..." All these areas of the speech deals specially on proclamation of decrees, laws and orders (Directive) on the established system. As a result, this act of decreeing, issuing of orders or Directives and prohibitions is typical of the Military; this act simply suggests force, militancy or imposition of undemocratic Government (Government by force) on the people. For instance, the first clause of the first sentence in this paragraph states:

The Federal Military Government hereby decrees:

(a) The suspension of the provision of the constitution of the Federation relating to the establishment of the offices of Regional Governors.

(b) The suspension of the provisions of the Regions to the establishment of the office of Regional Governors, regional Premiers and Executive Councils, and Regional Legislatures.

These Directive illocutionary acts have a compelling force of stopping the hitherto established order and system: Then paragraph three, concerns the Appointment of Regional Military Governors; it is stated here that:

The Federal Military Government further decrees:

(a) That there shall be appointed a Military Governor in each Region of the Federation.

Paragraph IV, addresses the Judiciary, Civil Service and the Police, here, the illocutionary act of Directive is put thus:

(a) The Chief Justice and all other holders of judiciary appointments within the Federal shall continue in their appointments, and that judiciary generally shall continue to function under the existing statutes.

(b) All holders of appointments in the Civil Service of the Federal and of the Regions shall continue to hold their appointments....

(c) All Local Government Police forces and Native Authority Police Forces shall be placed under overall command of the Inspector-General.

Then in this paragraph, four clauses labelled (a), (b), (c) the illocutionary directive give directive or order for continuation with the old system, while the (c) illocutionary act gives a new order or directive concerning the subject matter so referred.

On critical view of the stated decrees within the socio-political backgrounds of the speech, it is apparent that they are compelling laws, orders and directives issued with the intent of subjugating the people; forcefully compelling them to submit to the imposed Government whims and caprices, as these illocutionary act of Directives, here is a language device for an easy establishment of dictatorial Government.

Then in paragraphs (v) and (vi) of the speech, which is basically centred on the "Internal Affairs Policy", and "External Affairs Policy" respectively, the illocutionary act changes form, from Directives to Commissive. So, what we have in these two paragraphs, are Illocutionary Acts of Commissiveness. In these paragraphs, promises and vows are made concerning what this new Government wants to achieve within a very short time in order to make life comfortable to people. For instance, in paragraph (v), we have the following Commissive illocutionary acts.

The Federal Military Government announces, in connection with the internal affairs of the Federal that:

(a) It is determined to suppress the current disorder in the Western Region and the Tiv area of the Northern Region (Promise).
(b) It will declare martial law in any area of the Federal in which disturbances continue. {Vow}.
(c) It is his intention to maintain law order... {Vow}. such a time a new constitution for the Federation prepared in accordance with the wishes of the people is brought into being. {Promise}.

The same Commissive illocutionary theory is applied in paragraph six based on External Affairs Policy. The two illocutionary acts here are Commissive acts of "promise" and "vow" respectively.

It is stated that the Federal Military Government:

(a) Is desirous of maintaining the existing diplomatic relations with other states. {promise}.
(b) That it is its intention to honour all treaty obligations and all financial agreements and obligations entered to by previous Government. {vow}.

All these illocutions are Commissive illocutionary acts made by the speaker to encourage mobilize and lure the people or the subject to submit to the new Government. This is because the Commissive acts have the perlocutionary effects of hope and relief for the people; it also brings succour to the people. Therefore, this is no doubt, a political speech delivery strategy by this military man (Aguiyi-Ironsi) to acquire political power through undemocratic process. Then in the concluding paragraph of the speech, subtitled "Citizens to cooperate" the illocution again changes form. It now becomes Expressive as against the Commissive we have in the preceding

paragraphs. In this paragraph, there is a call on the citizens to cooperate with the Government. This call is put into this expressive illocutionary act.

> **The Federal Military Government calls upon all**
> *Citizens of the Federation to extend their full*
> *Cooperation to the Government in the urgent task of*
> *restoring law and order in the present crisis...*

This seems another language use strategy by Ironsi to win the people's heart and support, especially when he knows he has taken over the Government by force. So, he resorts to appealing expressively to the people, as it is mutually generally believed that it will have a cooling perlocutionary effect on them and lure them into accepting the new Government.

6. Conclusion

From the analysis above, it is discovered that in this first Military Maiden Speech of Major General J.T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi, there is a logical pattern in the Language. It manifests various forms of illocutionary acts of diverse semantic contextual interpretations. This shows that the speech is framed in a way to cater for different shades of opinions, interests and thoughts. This informs the presence of different acts in the speech such as Assertive, Directive, Commissive, and Expressive and of course, Declarative acts. All these illocutions are logically built into the speech to enable the speaker penetrate his listeners easily because each of these illocutions, performs one communicative function or the other. It is thus the case that this maiden speech is framed in a manner that the language so employed is directed towards mobilizing and luring the people to accept and support the speaker and his new Government.

References

Adegbija, E. (1981), "Speech Act Classification: A study in the lexical Analysis of English Speech Activity Verbs". In General Linguistics, London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, Vol, 23, No. 3, pp. 196 –223.

_____ (1995), "Discourse tact's In Military in Military Coup Speeches in Nigeria" In An Inter disciplinary Journal for the study of Discourse, 15 (2), pp 253 –270.

_____ (2001), The Military and the Nigerian State, 1966 – 1993: A Study of the strategies of political control, Ibadan.

Adekanye, J.B. (1988), "Nigerian Armed Forces and the conduct of Elections": Quarterly Journal of Administration, xxIII (1 &2) October 1988 – January 1980, pp. 27 –28.

_____ (1992), "The Military as a problem in Comparative Political Analysis", Nigerian Journal of International Affairs, xviii (1), pp, 1 – 28.

Ali Mazrui (1995), The Political Sociology of the English Language, The Netherlands: Monton and Q.
Austin, J.L. (1962), How do Things with words, Harvard: Harvard University Press.
Austin, R. (1975), The Governing of Man, 4th Edition, Madison: Wisconsin.
Levinson, S.C. (1995), Pragmatics Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Ojiako, J. (1986), 13 Years of Military Rule, Lagos: A Daily Time Publication, pp. 141 – 145.
Oyediran, O. and Gboyeya, A. (1978), "The Nigerian Political Scene In 1975", In O. (ed) Survey of Nigerian Affairs, Ibadan, Oxford University Press.
Oyeleye, L. (1985), The Language of Achebe's Early Novels, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, 1966 – 1979, Lagos: Friends Foundation Publishers Limited, 1988.
Oyeleye Oyediran (19880, Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule, 1966 – 1979, Lagos: Friends Foundations Publishers Limited.
Searle, J.R. (1969), Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language: Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press.
_____ (1969), Speech Acts, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
_____ et al, (ed) (1980), Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics, England, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
_____ (1991), "Speech Acts: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Sinclair, J. (1968), A technique of Stylistic description", Language and Style, No. I. Pp 215 – 242.
_____ and Coulthard, F.M. (1975), Towards an Analysis of Discourse. London: O.U.P.

APPENDIX 1

Welcome to DAWODU.COM.
Dedicated to Nigeria's socio-political issues.

STATEMENT BY MAJOR-GENERAL IRONSI LAGOS ON 16TH JANUARY 1966.

The government of the Federation of Nigeria having ceased to function.
The Nigerian Armed Forces have been invited to form an Interim Military Government for the purposes of maintaining law order and of maintaining essential services.

This invitation has been accepted, and I, General J.T.U. Aguiyi – Ironsi, the General Officer Commanding the Nigerian Army, Have been formally invested with authority as Head of the Federation Military Government, and Supreme Commander of the Nigerian Armed Forces.

SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN PARTS OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Federal Military Government hereby decrees"

a. the suspension of the provisions of the Constitution of the Federation relating to the office of the President, the establishment of parliament, and of the office of Prime Minister.

b. the suspension of the provision of the Constitution of the Regions relating to the establishment of the offices of Regional Governors, Regional and Executive Council, and Regional Legislatures.

APPOINTMENT OF REGIONAL MILITARY GOVERNORS

The Federation Military Government further decrees:

a. that there shall be appointed a Military Governor, in each Region of the Federation, who shall be directly responsible to the Federal Military Government for the good government of the Region;

b. the appointment as Adviser to the Military Governor of the Regions, of the last person to hold the office of Governor of the Region under the suspended provisions of the Constitution.

THE JUDICIARY, THE CIVIL SERVICE AND THE POLICE

The Federal Ministry Government further decrees:

a. that the Chief Justice and all other holders of judicial appointments within the Federation shall continue in their appointments, and that the judiciary generally shall continue to function under their existing statutes;

b. that all holders of appointments in the Civil Service of the Federation and of the Regions shall continue to hold their appointments and to carry out their duties in the normal way, and that similarly the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Special Constabulary shall continue to exercise their functions in the normal way;

c. that all Local Government Police Forces and Native Authority Police Forces shall be placed under the overall command of the Inspector – General.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS POLICY

The Federation Military Government announces, in connection with the internal affairs of the federation:

a. that it is determined to suppress the current disorder in the Western Region and in the Tiv area of the Northern Region;

b. that it will declare Martial law in any area of the Federation in which disturbances continue;

c. that it is its intension to maintain law and order in the Federation until such time as a new Constitution for the Federation, prepared in accordance with the wishes of the peopled, is brought into being.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS POLICY

The Federation Military Government announces, in connection with the External affairs of the country:

a. that it is desirous of maintaining the existing diplomatic relations with other states and;

b. that it is its intention to honour all treaty obligations and all financial agreements and obligations entered into by the previous Government.

CITIZENS TO CO-OPERATE

The Federation Military Government calls upon all citizens of the Federation to extend their full co-operation to the Government in the urgent task of restoring law and order in the present crisis, and to continue in their normal occupations.

Federal Ministry of Information Release and Government Notice No. 14/1966.

Compiled by Nowa Omoigui, MD.

RETURN TO HOME PAGE

C1999 –2002 Segun Toyin Dawodu. All rights reserved. All unauthorized copying or adaptation of any content of this site will be liable to legal recourse.
Contact: webmaster@dawodu.com or segun@dawodu.com
Segun Toyin Dawodu, P.O.BOX 710838, HERNDON, VA 20171-0838, USA.
This page was last updated on 06/02/02.