



Language and Cognitive Impediments in Political Campaign Speeches: Issues and Challenges in Political Communication

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Abstract

The contemporary political communication has shifted emphasis from traditional confines of predicting voting outcomes through opinion polls to other areas like the impact of language on political campaigns and other available sources where the electorate receive political information. Moreover, there were areas of political communications in the past to which efforts had been least directed in terms of empirical study, particularly from the perspectives of language and communication disciplines such as semantics, pragmatics, literacy and linguistic barriers in political accessibilities. In that light, this paper wants to look at the use of PR/Advertising in Nigeria's political environment, rhetorical prowess to unconventional political language in campaigns, its contents and barriers to citizens' understanding of political narratives. The study was generated from the researchers' participatory observations and the timeline was between 2007 and 2012 Elections in Akwa Ibom State, South-South of Nigeria.

Keywords: ACN; PDP; Campaigns; Innuendoes; Language; Politics.

1. Introduction

Many scholars, including (Omozuwa and Ezejideaku, 2007) have written on the significance of the aesthetic use of language in campaign speeches. They say that "Nigerians consider 'politics' as an exercise often associated with lies, deceits and propaganda. It is observed that political campaign language is characterized by propaganda through attack on party, exaggeration, vagueness and diatribes". Orwell (1946), says "language of politics is characterized by lack of precision, perhaps because the speaker has a meaning and cannot express it or he inadvertently says something else, or he is almost indifferent as to whether his words mean anything or not". This research came about from our participant observation of the electoral processes between 2007 and 2012 in Akwa Ibom State, one of the South-south states in Southern Nigeria. We were amazed at the language used, both in print and spoken by the different candidates of the different political parties. The printed works came in form of pamphlets, billboards, posters and advertorials and interviews in newspapers and in the social media.

We also noticed that politics as a field of human endeavour in Nigeria admits all, from the motor park touts to the University professors. The language of campaigns therefore is a mixed grill of the gutter to the sublime, and all are used to advance the cause of the political party and the candidates' interest. As we will see in this work, the literacy level of candidates did not count in the campaign rallies since what matters to the politicians was to put the message across, ignoring the basic tenet of communication, which is; "has the recipient understood the message?"

Information for this work was collected through participant observation. We joined the many campaign teams of many politicians of many political parties during the 2007 and 2012 Local Government Elections in Akwa Ibom State, one of the States in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. With that, using tape and video recorders, we were able to record the many campaign speeches of the Chairmanship and councillorship candidates of different political parties in the state throughout the two elections for analysis.

1.1. A Brief History of Akwa Ibom State

The geographical entity known as Akwa Ibom State was part of the Eastern Region when Nigeria gained independence in 1960. In 1967, it formed part of the state called South Eastern State and in 1976 it was renamed Cross River State. Akwa Ibom state was carved out of Cross River State by the General Ibrahim Babangida's administration on September 23rd, 1987. Its population according to 2006 census figure was 3.8million.

Akwa Ibom is blessed with fertile lands, and is mainly agricultural in economy. Akwa Ibomites are therefore mainly farmers and fishermen, with a pocket of government workers. Most of those inhabiting the riverine areas move into the creeks, rivers and open sea in canoes to catch fish, crayfish, crabs, periwinkle and other sea foods. Based on her mineral status, Antia (2005), recorded that "mineral wise, Akwa Ibom has recently become a great producer of crude oil and has occupied a very high wrung in the ladder of crude oil production in Nigeria." Recognizably, Akwa Ibom has 31 local government councils, made up of 18 Ibibio speaking Local Government Councils, 8 for Anaangs and 5 for Oron. It has 115 clans and 2,250 villages

Essien (2010), says that "linguistically, Akwa Ibom State is different from Cross River State in that there is one language which is understood by all sections of the state, namely, Ibibio". However, the fact that there is a common language in Akwa Ibom state does not mean there are no linguistic variations in the state. The state has three major ethnic groups: Ibibios, Orons and the Anaangs. It has several other linguistic groups most of which are related and

have high degree of cognancy and consequently a high degree of mutual intelligibility. Some of these linguistic groups are Ibeno, Eket, Obolo, Itu Mbon Uso, Iwere, Ito, Iko, Nkari, and Efik.

1.2. Political Communication

In political communication, we are broadly interested in the relationship between politics, citizens and the communication modes that connect these groups to each other. We examine how these forces interact with each other and affect one another. Edo (2013), gave a definition of political communication as “the purposeful processes in-which elected and appointed leaders, the media, and public citizens use messages to construct meaning about political practice. When people exercise power in support of public interests, their messages and interactions are strategic means for influencing public policies.” He goes on to add that “political communication is essentially an interdisciplinary field of contemporary research which involves political science, linguistics, sociology and communication. Each has something to contribute to the growth of this emerging and interesting field of research in Nigeria”. We are therefore majorly interested in the language component (speech analysis) of political communication. Political communication in Nigeria, according to Gandu (1995), five major areas of research interest were unveiled, and they are:

- i. Language use in Parliament
- ii. Language use in the deliberative assemblies like Federal, State and Local Government Executive Councils
- iii. Language of administration: the language of the day-to-day running of bureaucracy in government
- iv. State of the nation/budgetary speech and
- v. Language of political campaigns

The first four had some semblance of research in years gone by. The long years of military rule in Nigeria stifled research effort on the language of political campaigns. This is the first time since the nation’s independence Nigeria is enjoying nineteen years of uninterrupted democracy. The preponderance of language of campaigns toward abusive messages at campaign rallies can be excused from the standpoint of military mentality which the politicians imbibed during the long years of military rule. Language of political campaigns throughout the state was very combative like “we will capture Uyo,” “Uyo will fall dis time around”, and “we will take over Ikot Ekpene from PDP”.

1.3. Literacy

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines literacy as the "ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potentials, and to participate fully in their community and wider society." Literacy is conventionally understood as the ability to use graphic symbols to represent spoken language. Literacy so conceived is one important class of mediated human activity. It is a form of literacy based on print (UNESCO, 2012).

In addition, to ordinary language, literacy often refers to the ability to interpret or negotiate understanding within any mode of communication (Cole and Keyser, 1988). Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. These abilities most often require formal training, even when not in a formal school setting. The ability to read, write and read when written to and be able to understand when spoken to in that language constitute literacy. As we shall see in this work, the major assumption by Nigerian politicians is that since they can talk, and talk they can, the electorate is expected to understand them, notwithstanding the language used. Moreover, some may have what to say but lack the ability to present abstract issues in concrete realities, especially current issues about women and youth empowerments, ICT and environmental issues. Also, most of our elites were very wary of wading into politics especially between 1999 and 2007, the first eight years of our democracy because “politics is seen as a dirty game” and because of fears of military interruption. Therefore, majority of those who went into it had no feasible means of survival and no formal training in a school setting beyond school certificate, and lacked exposure in what constitute language of political discourse, especially those seeking for Chairmanship and Councillorship positions.

1.4. The Issue of Language

The problem of interpretation of political speeches forcefully came to the fore when Ali (2008) said that “...it is probable, mark my word... I know we have a press that largely is ignoramus and they tend to say they don’t understand or they cannot decipher my English. They cannot because they never studied the way I studied. I said it is possible, it is a totally different kettle of fish from probable. I emphasized that because, by now, they will go and write a different headline”. Seweje (1996), has observed that “politics is one of the most popular fields in which ambiguity and vagueness are highly manifested. Politicians by their nature do not make clear what their intentions are, and they are never precise in their words, so that they would not be held responsible; if their promises to the electorate are not fulfilled”.

1.5. Literacy Barriers in Political Communication

We know that certain barriers hinder effective message delivery to the electorate, among which is literacy barriers. Literacy barriers in political communications, as we saw in the various campaigns we attended, come in different forms. We were able to note the following:

1.5.1. Education

The issues of education and literacy are issues of vital importance in political communications. Education is simply in its general sense a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training, or research. Lack of formal training of politicians in the art of political communications has made the language of political campaigns vary, ambiguous, and slanderous and in many cases lack semantic exactitude. It should be noted that the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) stipulates a minimum of School Certificate for candidates seeking elective offices. In the Akwa Ibom State political domain, of the 31 Local Government Chairmen in the state, only one had a school certificate. Others had Ordinary Diplomas and degrees in various disciplines. Of the 987 politicians that sought for elective positions as councillors into the 329 councillorship seats in the state, 57 had First School Leaving Certificate (FLSC), 362 had School Certificate and 420 had Diplomas, degrees and higher degrees. With this, the language of political campaigns would have been uniquely decipherable, but the opposite is the case. One major factor of this is that politics admits all from every conceivable profession and background, thus the variety of political campaign speeches noticed at campaign rallies, validated these claims. Our elected officers are ignorant of the basic rules of political communications and lack the commitment to learn same.

1.5.2. Bombastic Words

The language of political campaigns is full of bombastic words. Politicians used such words to persuade the electorate of their capabilities and high educational attainment, the fact that the electorate may not be in tune with their speeches is immaterial. The dictionary meaning of bombastic is “words without meaning, used to impress other people and sound important”. Consider this advertorial published in [The Nation Newspaper \(2012\)](#) by “Coalition of Atai Uyo Forum” captioned “Your Excellency, watch the use of Effiong Bob as smokescreen to go after you”. It was written in favour of Governor Godswill Akpabio’s second term. The introductory statement goes like this:

Let us know, as well as his Excellency would want to know, what was the purpose of a particular meeting this ‘writer’ had in his country home at Nsit Ubium with 6 Bayelsans heavy looking youths, who had to drive from there back to Bayelsa at the end of the so-called crucial meeting which was structured and tailored to ambush the aspiration of his Excellency the Governor. We must decode the suspicious phrases that transpired during the meeting. We are bent to know the meaning of such phrase as “if this man does not accept our anointed senatorial aspirant, let’s spoil the beans for everybody”. What were to be the functions of dis mercenaries one week before the cancelled primaries of PDP?

If the writers can pay for its publication in a national newspaper, they might as well have asked somebody to edit it for them. This is one of the facts that politicians don’t care if they are understood or not, so long as they speak, or write. As [Onuoha \(1991\)](#) observes “... further, when we sought to know if they (electorate) understood what they were being told; only a few men and women responded in the affirmative, but not with a high sense of responsibility and conviction.” The use of bombastic words at campaign rallies was to impress the electorate on the candidate’s mastery of the English Language.

1.5.3. Translation

Translation is an operation performed on languages; a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another. [Cartford \(1978\)](#), defines translation as “the replacement of textual material in one language (source language) by equivalent textual material in another (Target Language)”. This replacement entails the replacement of Source Language (SL) phonology/graphology by the Target Language (TL) phonology/graphology equivalents. [Fishman \(1971\)](#), says “the presentation of a statement in a language other than the language in which it was originally written” is translation. Translation here involves the replacement of source language phonology with that of target language phonology. The source language here might be English, while the target language might be an indigenous language or the Language of the Immediate Community (LIC). [Dosert \(1955\)](#), definition of translation is closer to our idea of translation as canvassed in this work. He says translation is “that branch of applied science of language which is specifically concerned with the problem...or the fact...of the transference of meaning from one set of patterned symbols, into another set of patterned symbols”.

Translation (commonly called interpretation) at campaign rallies was not very popular among politicians in Akwa Ibom State. Apart from two occasions at Oron and Ibeno during the campaigns of a senatorial aspirant of ACN, translation was rarely observed at other campaign venues. And this is not surprising, since most of the time, the candidates spoke using the Language of the Immediate Community (LIC). The use of the LIC helps overcome the problem of bogus translation. For example, at a campaign rally at Ibeno, we were told, “let’s vote for ACN, let’s get it right this time” and was translated thus; “yak isin nwed ino udom, nti nkpo obono k’ubok udom”

1.5.4. Fallacies

According to [The Free Dictionary \(2010\)](#) “fallacy is usually an improper argumentation in reasoning results in a misconception or presumption”. [Shewan \(2003\)](#), says a fallacy is “an error in reasoning that renders an argument logically invalid”. By accident or design, fallacies may exploit emotional triggers in the listener or participant (appeal to emotion), or take advantage of social relationships between people (e.g. argument from authority, head of the party or a stalwart). Fallacious arguments are often structured using rhetorical patterns that obscure any logical argument. The major concern of a politician on a podium is to convince the audience of his party’s or present genuine intentions to the electorate when in power, and is ready to appeal to base emotions with fallacious arguments to plead his cause.

According to Edo (2013), “a favorite fallacy among politicians is the ‘false generalization’, an abstraction of the argument that shifts discussion to platitudes where the facts of the matter are lost. For example, no politician leaves the podium without exclaiming “my party will deliver democratic dividends”. The complex issue of development is generalized and oversimplified under the word ‘dividend’. Another abstraction is “we will fight corruption” which can mean whatever the politician has in mind since there are many forms of corruption. The PDP’s campaign slogan “Akwa Ibom ado ok” is a classic case of the fallacy of false generalization. This is a mere platitude. No nation or state in the world is okay in terms of infrastructural and human capital development.

1.6. Linguistic Barriers in Political Communication

Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria is a multicultural entity with different ethnic groups and different languages. English is the Language of Wider Communication (LWC), but its usage most often is targeted at the urban dwellers where the population is a mixture of all ethnic groups. Therefore, the choice of language must be what the electorate at that particular location or Local Government Area must understand. From the analysis of the data in the state elections, the following were distilled as linguistic barriers to effective political communication in the state.

1.6.1. Ambiguity

Lyons and Semantics (1977) defines it as “the encoding of more than one message by a particular signal.” Kempson (1971) succinctly considers it as “the possession by words and sentences of more than one meaning”. Obilade (1987), puts it this way, “subcultures determine what certain expression means collectively even though they are aware that this restricted meaning is not necessarily shared by the entire society”. This is very true in political communication where the politicians’ choice of words are meant to suit the occasion they find themselves, not minding the semantic implication of their choice of words on the electorate.

According to Thurber (2001) “precision of communication is important, more important than ever in our era of hair-trigger balances, when a false or misunderstood word may create as much disaster as a sudden thoughtless act.” On November 5, 2010, at Ikono Local Government Headquarters, Governor Godswill Akpabio, on a campaign for his second term in office, was asked “now that the Anaangs have zoned the Ikot Ekpene senatorial seat to the Ibibios of Ikono/Ini Federal Constituency, which of the two sisters’ local governments will produce the senator?” His replied thus “the local government that will produce the senator is -----kpm”.

Now what is Kpm? Kpm, according to Edo (1996) is “onomatopoeic. It is the sound made by a gavel normally slammed by the leader of a legislative house (Senate President, Speaker of the House, or Leader of a Local Government Legislative Council, or a Judge) to signal final approval of a bill, motion or judgment.” Now, here was a member of the Executive arm of government, using a legislative instrument to confirm approval of the zoning, but failed to answer the main question. Many people at the campaign ground that day did not understand what ‘kpm’ meant.

Again, at the same venue at the same occasion, the Akwa Ibom State President of the Youth Council, Ibanga Ekong (2011) was called to speak and he spoke thus: “what is happening here today is the spiritual manifestation of the physical justification of our people”. Very few, if any, can conveniently interpret what is meant here.

1.6.2. Vagueness

Politicians make use of certain words that are vague or indefinite, i.e., words that have no realistic ways of validating them. Like rumour, they lack verifiable facts. Ullman (1962), stresses that vagueness in words constitutes lack of precision in language use, and regards the phenomenon as ‘lack of specification’. Akindede and Adegbite (1999), views vague language “as another feature of lexis which is more prominent in spoken language than in written works. Vagueness in language use depends on contextual factors such as whether the discourse is a formal or informal one. But informal spoken context produce the highest degree of vagueness.” This is so in that vagueness can be constantly found in naturally occurring conversation as a device of deliberately becoming imprecise about what one is actually talking about, as is so often happen at campaign rallies. When the Transition Chairman of Ikot Abasi Local Government, Mr Victor Udofia was asked, “in three weeks time, your tenure will expire, what do you make of it?” he replied thus, “Godswill will be done again”. The Chairman is not referring to the will of God Almighty in Heaven, but that the former Governor’s will (the Governor’s name is Godswill) will be done, on whether to re-appoint him or not. And so, when a politician says “let Godswill be done in Akwa Ibom”, he is referring to the will of the governor of the state.

1.6.3. Semantics

According to Ogunsi (1990) “linguists, language philosophers and all those concerned with the study of language agree on the subject matter of semantics---the study of meaning, but the agreement does not seem to go beyond that”. Udofot (1998), sees semantics as “a multi-dimensional discipline. It is approached from different angles. Regardless of the approach however, it is certain that the messages or signals that pass from the source to the destination must be meaningful. If this were not so, there would be no communication”. A breakdown in communication may be due to poor transmission, poor reception or poor signals, but according to Obilade (1987) “in a face-to-face communication situation, communication breakdown is not easily attributable to any of these factors. Some other factors that may result in setting the wrong message include inherent ambiguity in language and trans-cultural constraints in communication.” The most used cliché in all the campaigns was “we will deliver dividends of democracy”. All the parties talk about it. A close look at what is ‘dividend of democracy’ by the different parties and the electorate showed divergent of meaning. Whereas to the politician, ‘dividend of democracy’ is providing

infrastructures, to the electorate, it was buying cars to the political godfathers (Edo, 2013). Moreover, when a politician says “I will buy you brand new cars”, he is referring to second hand cars (used cars imported from Europe). Brand new cars, right out from the factory in Akwa Ibom political parlance, are called “Tear Rubber”.

1.6.4. Pragmatics

Of all the definitions of pragmatics given by scholars, we find the one given by Levinson (1983) and quoted by Ndimele (1997) and Udofot (1998) to be very appropriate for our purpose here. He defines pragmatics as “the ability of language users to pair sentences with the context in which they would be appropriate”. Pragmatics, according to Dijk (1977) “describes language from the point of view of the users, especially as regards the choices they made, the constraints they encounter in using their language for social interaction and the effects their use of language have on other participants in the speech event. Therefore, the meaning of an utterance includes both those aspects that can be describes as referent or denotation of individual words, and those that must be stated as belonging to the sentence, or even a series of sentences. Differences of personal status, family and social relations, degrees of intimacy, relative ages, and other such factors, irrelevant to the consideration of sentences as the expression of logical proposition are all handle under pragmatics”. For example, at Ukanafun local government in a campaign, a chairmanship candidate spoke thus “owo Anaang ade owo Uko. Nkpo iboho ide (an Anaang man is a man of valour; nothing will happen). At the face value, it is a straight forward statement, but the pragmatic meaning is that “if you dare an Anaangman, you will be killed, and nothing will happen”

1.7. African Language Devices

Different cultures perceive and conceptualize the experiences of life in different ways and language functions as the primary carrier of these cultural connections. This is why Adegbija (2000) argues that ‘...each ethnic group expresses and identifies itself by the language it speaks and its cultural paraphernalia is shaped by its language’. In the African context, the language of mass mobilization or discussion cannot be complete without the mention of proverbs, idioms and folktales. The three genres of African literary language were generously used throughout the state by different politicians in campaign rallies.

1.7.1. Proverbs

According to Mensah and Mercy (2003) “the cross-currents of language and culture can be depicted in the use of oral performances such as proverbs, which are forms of ‘deeper’ communication and means of constructing reality in every speech community”. Essien (1990) adds that, “the proverb, one of the most important genres of African folklore, is a device which enables a speaker to present a speech in a more concise and picturesque manner than ordinary expressions.” Ashipu (2004) says “---for a poet or indeed, for the speaker who is some sort of an artist in the use of words, the proverb is a model of compressed or forceful language. In addition to drawing on it for its words of wisdom, he takes interest in its verbal techniques---its selection of words, its use of comparison as a method of statement”. As we have seen here, proverbs are therefore sayings condensing the wisdom of experience, adage, and maxim. They are forms of literary expression of the people as they make observations about the practical experience of life. Proverbs in general are used to advise, warn, teach, admonish, mock or intimidate. Proverbs are like prophecies, they must be interpreted. Lack of interpretation of proverbs is one of the barriers in effective political communication in Nigeria. For example, at campaign rally in Ikono local Government of Akwa Ibom State, the Leader of the party in power said that “ukemeke ndidoro ke enyong eto nto ata ye ofum”. (You cannot stay on top of a tree and challenge air to combat). Apart from that this proverb is open to many interpretations, what was obvious was that the “air” is the party in power while the “man on top of the tree” is the opposition party ready to be blown away by the wind.

1.7.2. Idioms

Idioms are phrasal constructions or verbal expressions closely associated with a given language. Africans, especially Nigerians, enjoy the use of idioms in every day speech. Fromkin and Rodman (1988), believe that “knowing a language includes knowing the morphemes, simple words, compound words, and their meanings. In addition, it means knowing fixed phrases, consisting of more than one word, with meanings that cannot be inferred from the meanings of the individual words. The usual semantic rules for combining meanings do not apply. Such expressions are called idioms”. Idioms are therefore phrases or sentences whose meaning is not clear from the meaning of its individual words and which must be learnt as whole unit. For example, “The problems of the people of Uyo go beyond the issue of neglect by the government. The issue is that the people made the mistake of putting their eggs in one basket. They have been in the same party for eight years.” This was an idiomatic expression from an opposition candidate on why Uyo is neglected, but not all indigenes of Uyo are in the government party.

1.7.3. Folktales

On the African continent, folktales and myths serve as a means of handing down traditions and customs from one generation to the next. The continent is full of rich, fertile legacy of folklore in form of storytelling tradition that has thrived for generations. At campaign rallies, many of the elderly politicians will relive the politics of the past in folktales which may not be in tune with what is at hand and may end up drawing an unpleasant comparison between the different epochs.

1.7.4. Rhetoric

Rhetoric is often associated with deception or manipulation: the language used when someone is trying to hide the truth. Manipulative politicians and used car salesmen come to mind. We usually think first of overtly persuasive genres such as political campaign speeches, newspaper editorials, and advertisements as characteristic of rhetoric, but all sorts of texts have designs on their recipients. Our interest in rhetoric here is in what artful uses of language appear in the speech of a typical politician on campaign? Here, we are looking at ways the politicians turn language, or structure words and sentences in artful ways to capture the attention of the listener or reader and in doing this, communication between the speaker and the electorate is lost. However, because of the nature of language and the complexities of consciousness, speakers do not always say what they think. Their rhetorical acts exceed or fail to reflect perfectly their intentions. Our investigation showed that when a politician spoke eloquently and in most of times, in impeccable English, the electorate consider his speech as ‘grammar’ or ‘rhetoric’. The general chorus will be “him sabi book well well, na grammar we ko chop?” (He is too educated. Will we eat his grammar?) The meaning here is clear. The electorate consider the educated as people who are never close to the grassroots, and so may not be willing to satisfy their yearnings for development.

1.7.5. Register

Register is simply the range of vocabulary; grammar used by speakers in particular social circumstances or professional contexts. A register is also a variety of language distinguished according to use. All human activities require the use of language, and these activities are of diverse nature. Many of them are connected with professions, jobs, games or plain leisure. Wardhaugh (2006), defines register as “sets of language item associated with discreet occupational or social groups”.

Edo (2013), observes that “the register of politics, because of the nature of politics, might not be as exclusive as that of Nuclear Science, Medicine or Engineering, since politics admits people from all other fields. What was noted however, was that most of the register were names of objects and issues in common usage but which had another meaning altogether in the field of politics. Moreover, since most of the politicians are recruited from motor park touts, the language of motor parks comes handy as a political register”. For example, the word “carry-go” was originally a motor park lingo, where the touts, after loading a Bus or Taxi, will tell the driver “carry-go”, (safe journey), but was later transferred to politics to mean “be ready to surmount whatever circumstances will bar you from winning the election”. Another example of register is “if it becomes necessary, please wedge vote”. To ‘wedge vote’ simply means sharing of the unused ballot papers among political parties with the party with the highest vote taking a larger percent of the unused votes. Some of the registers of politics by Edo (2013) are:

1.8. Dividends of Democracy

The word ‘dividend’ used to be found in the commercial world. It is defined by Edo (2013) as “a share of profits paid to people who own parts of a company or to winners in the football pool”. It found its way into the register of politics in the fourth republic. The meaning of dividend of democracy is what the politician has in mind. Generally, it is supposed to mean the provision of infrastructure to the electorate, but like two other concepts, ‘Public relations and lobbying’, has been reduced to a request for political settlement (bribery).

1.9. Pure Water

This is not the same thing like sachet water. Pure water as a register of politics is an all embracing word. Ibibio language has an equivalent word for it. It is called ‘ndia’. When a politician says “do your job, there will be pure water”, he is promising bountiful presence of food, money and general merriments, including the protection of those doing the merriments.

1.10. Clean-up

This is a process by which political parties buy up the agents of other political parties at polling units on Election Day. A night before the election (vigil night), money is appropriated to trusted party officers with a strong mandate to bribe all the agents of other parties to give room for the party to rig the elections.

1.11. Advanced Papers

This means election materials released by the electoral commission to a political party a night or two before the actual election. The voting materials are thump-printed throughout the night to be dumped in the ballot boxes when the actual election begins

1.12. Carry-go

This stands for an overwhelming support for a candidate, usually after heavy inducement, with a threat of violence should anybody wants to stand on the way of the candidate. The shout of ‘carry-go’ is normally heard louder during party primaries where supporters do not brook any opposition, insisting on their candidate to be given automatic nomination.

1.13. Sand-witch

This is the latest addition to the register of politics. It means the car, normally loaded with party supporters or thugs, directly following the official electoral commission vehicle carrying election materials from the state

headquarters of the commission to the local government councils, or from the local government councils to ward centres and then to each polling unit. The essence of the car is to prevent the electoral commission officers from diverting the voting materials to other political parties or to an unauthorized centre.

1.14. No Shaking

In ordinary parlance, this simply means ‘no problem’, but as a register of politics, it means more than that. It means that all that is necessary to be done for the party to win election has been done, meaning that the boys on the ground, money, opposition agents, and even the electoral officials have been taken care of. ‘No shaking’ simply means “there is no impossibility we won’t be overcome, we will win the election”. For instance, when a campaign coordinator calls his local government agent to ask ‘how is your local government’ and he replied, ‘no shaking’. It means everything humanly possible has been done for the party to win the election.

1.15. Online Declarant

This is a name given to politicians of unknown quantity who has just declared his intention to contest for a political position. He is just what might be called a “political upstart”, somebody who has little or no followership, very unlikely to win the election. He is in the race to add pep or colour to the elections and campaigns, and politicians are eager to pick as much resources as possible from him since, according to them, he is there for the entertainment value alone.

1.16. Caucus (inner caucus)

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English (1999), definition of caucus is “a small group within an organization or political party.” To be a caucus member of a political party conveys a lot of responsibilities and power on the individual. There is what is called inner caucus, which is a class of privileged individuals, who may not be known outside the group who runs the party secretly. The inner caucus members usually are those who sponsored a candidate’s election and are expected to benefit directly from appointment through proxy into the cabinet, board or commission

1.17. Stalwart

A stalwart is one of the strong financial members of a political party. He is among those who not only owns the party, but partake in taking critical decisions for the party in terms of funding, candidates to be put forward to stand for elections for the party, including nomination of party faithful to be given political appointment.

1.18. Acclamation

Acclamation means a loud and enthusiastic approval or acceptance of an idea, concept or personality. Acclamation in politics should have come after a consensus has been reached on the position of the party on a particular candidate. But this is not the case. Acclamation is a situation in which the party forces the members to accept a particular candidate on a particular elective position, but met with stiff opposition by party faithful, because the candidate has not been allowed to spend on the party supporters. Not to be left high and dry, the party supporters will say “let the candidate emerge by acclamation”. Acclamation here means “let the man come and give food, drinks and transport money.”

1.19. Workshop Materials

This means young and beautiful girls hired as ushers at campaign rallies to either escort personalities to the podium when invited to speak, or as pin-up girls who decorate the venue of the rally. However, the major roles of the ‘workshop materials’ start when the campaign ends, where they are distributed to party stalwarts to spend the night with. When a politician says “there will be a lot of workshop materials at the campaigns”, he is not talking about campaign bags, badges or flyers, but human beings.

1.20. Sin iko k’ufok

This simply means the candidate should announce his donation to the party elders and stalwarts during consultation. This should not be confused with “ufiok abang”, which is also political donation. The difference between the two is that “sin iko k’ufok” is a huge donation, sometimes running into millions of naira, to a select few party stalwarts who can influence the candidate’s nomination by the party to stand for election, whereas “ufiok abang” is a common donation by a candidate before he starts addressing the gathering. “ufiok abang” is usually given with a bottle of hot drink.

1.21. Yak inim k’isong

This might not be necessarily a register. It is a war cry in the opposition camp for elections to be free and fair. For some time now in Akwa Ibom state, opposition parties have been complaining of rigged elections by the party in power. The solution to this problem is “yak inim election k’isong” (let there be free and fair election) for us to see who will win

1.22. Toys

This simply means guns, as in “give the boys toys to play with”, which means “let the party thugs carry guns because a need may arise for them to use”

1.23. Combine

Combine is a specially brewed hot drink (Spirit). It is a mixture of local gin, Indian hemp and other drugs given to party thugs (supporters) to ginger them for action during elections

1.24. Wedge Vote

To wedge vote means to protect the unused ballot papers from being mass thump printed by the opposition political party and to ensure that should the unused ballot papers be shared, the party with the highest number of lawful votes gets the largest number of the unused ballot papers.

1.25. Give Him Rest

Give him rest simply means put the man inside the booth of a car.

2. Figures of Speech

Edo (2013) says that “figures of speech are the various rhetorical uses of language that depart from the customary construction, order or significance, that is, the use of a word diverging from its usual meaning”. According to Awonusi (2000), “figures of speech are used as rhetorical devices especially when politicians are confronted with abstract concepts which are difficult to explain for the easy understanding of the layman. Figures of speech are used to present the concepts as concrete images that can be understood easily”. Figures of speech differ from language to language and from culture to culture. Of the many figures of speech, two stood out in all the campaigns we attended: metaphor and euphemisms.

Metaphors are used in political communication and in fact in all facets of communication to show comparison between two entities. Ndimele (1997), says a metaphor is “the imaginative use of a word or phrase to describe someone or something as another object to show that they have the same qualities and to make the description more forceful”. Barnwell (1980), says that metaphors involve three major parts;

- a. The topic, that is, the actual thing which is talked about
- b. The illustration, that is, the thing to which the topic is compared
- c. The point(s) of similarity, that is, the components of meaning which the topic and the illustration have in common when compared.

On April 12, 2011, at the Uyo township stadium, a campaign coordinator had this to say;

“Senator John James Akpanudoedehe, the lion of Judah. He conquered as a Chairman of Uyo Local Government, he conquered in the Senate. He conquered at the Federal Capital Territory. He is ready and willing to conquer Akwa Ibom State”. The campaign coordinator did not say he is like ‘a lion of Judah’, but that ‘he is a lion of Judah’, thus forcefully comparing his candidate with a lion, and we all know how powerful a lion is, and what it does with its preys. The effect(s) of this comparison was not lost on the audience.

According to Omozuwa and Ezejideaku (2009) “euphemism entails disguising whatever is intrinsically ugly, repulsive, immoral or, otherwise, unacceptable in more attractive, less offensive or neutral labels.” Though at everyday level, it is considered simple politeness and civilized conduct, in the hands of politicians, euphemism is used as a sinister device to deceive and indoctrinate the public into accepting things which are intrinsically repugnant or contrary to the national interest.

However, the fact that euphemisms make us conceptualize serious or negative events as simple everyday issues has been the greatest attraction of its critics. Hahn (1989) explains that euphemism is central to political language in a number of ways:

- (i) Euphemisms make situations that are intolerable seem tolerable, thus lessening our inclination to act to change them
- (ii) Problems are explained too simply, leading us to accept oversimplified solutions
- (iii) Euphemistic inaccuracies lead to inappropriate solution

He concludes that euphemisms mask reality and when combined with generalizations and oversimplifications, political language can become problematic if not deceitful. At the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) Governorship campaigns in Uyo stadium on April 12, 2011, the State Chairman of the party, Aniekan Akpan said thus; “Akwa Ibom State has received over one point four trillion naira in four years. Akwa Ibom State money is now in the hands of one family”. The underlying meaning of this assertion is that one family is stealing the state’s resources.

2.1. Word Coinages

The use of word formation (coinages) falls under what Edo (2013) calls “theatre in political communication”. It is simply the creative use of language to facilitate effective communication in political campaign speeches. Word coinage is the process of formation and the addition of new words in the lexicon of a language without necessarily going through the process of affixation. New words may also enter the lexicon in other ways, like clipping, abbreviation, reduplication, acronym, compounding, blending etc while some are created outright for a particular purpose, as it is often the case at political campaign rallies. A politician who creates and used them at campaign

rallies will stand out. Examples of word coinages are: -stomach infrastructure; Etangekak; Ndia; Heaven eyetimere; Digital governor; nyem eland sekem (I want to leave office safely).

2.2. Religion/Euphoria and Political Interplay

Euphoria is generally considered to be an exaggerated physical and psychological state, sometimes induced by the use of psychoactive drugs and not typically achieved during the normal course of human experience. Euphoria has also been cited during certain religious or spiritual rituals and meditation.

It is a fact that Akwa Ibom State is a very religious society, and this has reflected in the choice of languages at campaign rallies in the state. At many campaign rallies, it was more of a Christian crusade than a political campaign. The politicians will whip the emotion of the crowd into frenzy. At many campaign rallies, there were also the issues of deliberately distorting, misquoting or mistranslation of many *Bible* portions to convince the electorate of their knowledge of the Holy writ. The *Bible* portion (Roman 13:1) which says “there is no authority but as established by God” was distorted to read “God has already established PDP as the government in Akwa Ibom State, and so shall it be at the elections”. Another *Bible* portion misquoted was 1 Corinthians 4:20, which says “for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power”. It was misquoted thus “for the kingdom of God is not in ACN, but in power---, power to the people---PDP”. Another portion was 1 Corinthians 7:20 which say “let every man abide in the same calling where he was called”. This was translated by the PDP thus “if you were called to be a bus conductor, if your father was called to be a bus conductor, why do you leave that to come and contest for the governorship position of the state?” (In apparent reference to Senator Udoedehe of ACN whose father operated a transport company in Uyo). The Bible portion that says “as for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord” was translated thus: “as for me and my family, we shall vote PDP”. Another portion was “by their fruits, ye shall know them. By sending thugs to burn down government property at the state secretariat, you have now known what they will do when in government”. What was also noticeable at campaigns was that most of the politicians claimed that God sent them to contest elections and to win same. It became confusing when two or more people claim God sent all of them to the same office.

2.3. Bilingualism

The learning of one language is a universal trait of human behavior whereas the mastery of two or more languages is a special skill. [Olaoye \(1988\)](#), defines bilingualism as “the ability to speak two languages which are spoken with equal competence for all purposes in the life of the bilinguals”. A bilingual is therefore someone who can communicate very well in more than one language, say Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Ibibio or English. Such a person might be able to express his thoughts and feelings intelligibly in the languages, and can alternate them freely when situation requires it, and this leads to the issue of code mixing and code switching.

The two common feature of bilingualism is code switching and code mixing. According to [Olaoye \(1988\)](#) “whereas code switching is the bilingual’s ability to choose one or the other of his two languages in a particular speech situation, code mixing is the use of one or more languages for consistent transfer into another, and by such a language mixture, developing a new restricted or not so restricted code of linguistic interaction”. . At campaign rallies, a politician will speak in English, switch over to Ibibio and ends up in Pidgin, all in one speech event, without minding the language background of the electorate.

2.4. Culture

The culture of the people as linguistic barrier in political communication was noted in Ikono Local Government of Akwa Ibom State. The people made it abundantly clear that you cannot address them in any other language except in the Ibibio language. They claim that as the cradle of the Ibibio race, to do otherwise is to invoke the wrath of the gods. Non speakers had to make do with interpreters with its attendants’ bogus translations. Moreover, the concept of ‘contribution’ as an economic system in our culture is well known. We heard at campaign rallies that “in the last election, we contributed votes for your son’s success. It is now time for you to contribute to us. Politics is contribution”. The concept of ‘contribution’ denotes an economic system whereby members of a specific group, body or society contribute money monthly or quarterly to each other or to the group for specific objectives. To equate the complex issue of electoral campaigns in a democracy to a mere economic activity belittles the issue of election and democracy.

3. Conclusion/Recommendation

This study has revealed the extent the politicians will go to showcase their language prowess, rightly or wrongly at campaign rallies. The study has shown that the language of political campaigns was rarely studied in political communication because the environment we found ourselves in the last forty years did not support such effort. We have seen that politics in Nigeria is still in its infancy and it is the only profession now that admits all, thus the language of political campaigns is a mixed grill of the gutter to the sublime.

We took a look at literacy and saw that it is the ability to interpret or negotiate understanding within any mode of communication. Literacy barriers in political communication included education or lack of it, use of bombastic words to achieve self importance or showcase one’s academic achievements, use of fallacies and mistranslations. We also see that in linguistic barriers to political communication, ambiguity and vagueness in words and utterances play a major role as constraints to effective political communication

In the Akwa Ibom State cultural domain, there are places you cannot communicate except in the language of the immediate communication which definitely needs to be looked into. Also significant here is the issue of bilingualism with its twin features of code switching and code mixing. The use of two or more languages in a single speech event

can be confusing and frustrating to the electorate, especially when some of the codes cannot be interpreted at the speech event. The paper concludes that there is need for the modernization of aspects of our culture especially as it affects language usage at political campaigns to enable our politicians to effectively communicate their intentions to the electorate while in office

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