



A LINGUISTIC STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL COMMENTARIES ON ONDO 2020 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION ON ONLINE NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated linguistic stylistic analysis of political commentaries on Ondo 2020 gubernatorial election. The researcher selected 4 political commentaries from two online newspapers (Sun and Independent). The focus of this study was to analyze the collected data based on the objectives of the study that cover syntactic, phonological, foregrounded elements and deviant features found in the selected political commentaries. The analysis was anchored on Leech and Short's Checklist of Linguistic and Stylistic Categories as its theoretical framework while the method was qualitative research analysis. Descriptive survey method was however employed to analyze the collected data. Hence, the findings showed that sentences in the analyzed comments are predominantly non-simple sentences with mixtures of declarative, imperative and interrogative sentences. Phonological devices such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance fully have rhythmic patterns. Also, foregrounded elements such as phonetic spelling, and dominant deployment of deviational and non-deviational foregrounding to captivate readers' attentions are evidential. Lastly, deviant features such as morphological, grammatical and lexical deviations manifest in the analyzed comments. Thus, the manifestation of linguistic features inherent in the analyzed data is an attestation that the choice of words in the use of language is peculiar to an individual writer.*

KEYWORDS: Linguistic stylistics, Syntax, Phonology, Foregrounding, Political commentaries.



INTRODUCTION

Language plays an essential role in communication; hence, it is a crucial component of communication. It serves a variety of significant functions among humans as a form of communication in their regular interactions and communications (Akabogu & Ajiwoju, 2015). It is considered a fundamental kind of human communication (Farinde & Ojo, 2000; Xiao, 2017; Udoeyo, Effiong & Awonuga, 2018). Oyedokun-Alli and Ajepe (2019) emphasize the distinctiveness of language in human communication and refer to it as the individual and primary way of human interaction. So, it is needless to say that language is unique to humans and it is used largely for communication. Thus, the importance of language in human affairs is not disputable.

Signs, symbols, and noises are all used in language as a means of communication. Nwodo (2008) defines language as a system of sounds utilized by the inhabitants of a specific nation, region, or tribe. As a result, language is used systematically for communication. People intentionally spread information in a particular way to influence it artistically. Therefore, style and language are thus two phenomena that are somewhat intertwined. If style is not employed in conjunction with language, it cannot function on its own. Style means potential when language is employed for communication. This implies that language is primarily a distinguishing feature of style. Thought is given through language, but style enhances the elegance of the notion.

The study of style or stylistics is essential to the science of language analysis. It is founded on the use of style in language or textual analysis. According to Yemet (2019), stylistics has a solid theoretical and methodological grounding for analyzing language. Qian (2006) is of the opinion that stylistics examines how language is used in particular contexts and makes an effort to take into consideration the traits that distinguish the language use of particular people and social groups. To avoid imprecision and a lack of accuracy in literary studies, stylistics, a subfield of linguistics, serves as the foundation for language usage that is suitable. So, it tries to underscore how suitable a language is to a particular audience. It is on this note that stylistics is concerned with the study and interpretation of any form of writing from a linguistic perspective (Suhadi & Baluqiah, 2017). Going by the opinions of these scholars on stylistics cum linguistic stylistics, the general goal of stylistic or linguistic stylistic analysis is proper identification of linguistic choices peculiar to an individual writer in any literary work. Therefore, this study is concerned with the analysis of linguistic peculiarities of each political commentator's choices of language in terms of style in the areas of syntax, phonology, foregrounding and deviations.



Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study is aimed at providing a linguistic stylistic analysis of selected political commentaries on Ondo 2020 gubernatorial election. Specifically, the following objectives would be achieved:

1. Analyse and identify the structures and functions of the sentences in the selected commentaries;
2. Determine which phonological devices have rhythmic patterns in the selected commentaries;
3. Examine the foregrounded elements found in the selected commentaries; and
4. Investigate morphological, lexical and grammatical deviations in the selected commentaries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stylistics can be viewed from the perspective of linguistic stylistics. Hence, linguistic stylistics uses linguistic bases to describe the formal pattern of a document (Ogunsiji & Farinde, 2010). This demonstrates its scientific nature by outlining the approach employed in a particular document. So, stylistics is dependent on linguistics since linguistics is the scientific study of language. This idea therefore relates to a stylistic research that bases much of its analysis on the "scientific rules" of language (Isidore, 2010). When stylisticians engage in stylistic analysis, the primary goal is to determine the message a text is passing through reliance on linguistic evidence of the text. Stylisticians should bear in mind the basic levels of stylistic analysis. Tariq (2018) supports this submission by identifying phonology, graphology, lexico-syntax, and morphology as levels of stylistic analysis. So, to better reflect the content of literary texts, stylisticians must analyse literary texts using these itemised levels as a pedestal. In light of this, Ogunsiji and Farinde (2010) contend that stylistic analysis focuses on the evaluation of the idiosyncrasies in a writer's or speaker's choice of how to use all of the available linguistic resources to convey his ideas. In order to identify "why" and "how" in the text being studied, the analyst must use a certain sort of analysis. However, this sets stylistic analysis apart from literary criticism, a type of study that only aims to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of any literary work.

Linguistic ideas like norm and deviation as well as prominence and foregrounding are essential in linguistic stylistic analysis. So, in linguistics, the terms, prominence and foregrounding, are synonymous. When certain aspects of the language used in a text stand out in particular ways, the former is realised, whereas the latter is realised when the former is prompted. Thus, foregrounding is a motivated use of language (Leech & Short, 2007). In any literary work, when the use of language is unusual and it is peculiar to a particular writer, foregrounding is achieved. Ogunsiji and Farinde (2010) claim that foregrounding occurs when language is used in a way that draws attention and it is interpreted as unusual or non-automatic. Consequent upon this, this study at this level of analysis is premised on unusualness in individual political commentator's use of language such as code-mixing, code-switching, deviational and non-deviational foregrounding, phonetic spelling, among others.



The linguistic components of a language, such as graphology, phonology, grammar, and lexis are the focuses of norms which are established patterns within a text. The opposite of the norm is deviation. Deviation is a total departure from norms. Therefore, it is an outcome of any divergent usage from the recognised writing norms of a given language. It is on this basis that this study is interested in any obvious departures from the writing norms leading to morphological, lexical and grammatical deviations of political commentators on online newspapers. In addition to this, when language is employed figuratively to convey non-literal meaning, it has significant psychological impacts on readers or analysts. Consequently, it is appropriate to say that figurative usage of a language for non-literal meaning by a writer or author undermines its grammar.

Grammar is the nucleus of language usage. It is therefore a core aspect of every language because it is important to any form of language study and analysis. It is the power house of a language (Feez & Joyce, 2000). However, grammar is concerned with more than the rules that define how words, phrases, and sentences are formed. It is also concerned with the rules that decide how those words, phrases, and sentences are to be interpreted (Radford, 2002). On this ground, it is noteworthy that grammar is crucial to any type of language study (Adetuyi & Olatayo, 2015). Grammar, being a field of linguistics that investigates or explains the shape and structure of words (morphology) and their interrelationships in sentences (syntax), is a crucial aspect in language studies. The sentence structure of a language is dealt with by syntax, one of the aspects of grammar. Words can be combined to create phrases, clauses, and sentences based on a set of rules guiding the structure of a language (Miller, 2002; Denham & Lobeck, 2010). Syntax therefore is a branch of linguistics that deals with the structures of a language. It is how words are combined to become larger units such as phrases, clauses, and sentences. So, it is rule-governed. Farinde and Ojo (2005) assert that, at this level of stylistic analysis, the analyst is concerned with the syntactic arrangements of words to form phrases, clauses and sentence patterns. This study therefore, at this level, concentrates on simple and non-simple sentences as well as their syntactic features in the selected commentaries.

Phonology deals with the description of sound system of a language. Phonology, according to Lodge (2009), is the study of how speech sounds are produced and structured in language. It is concerned with the realization of any observable sound patterns in a literary work. Huda, Ali and Mahmood (2014) assert that rhyme, alliteration, consonance, and assonance are all phonological devices. These are among the linguistic elements that serve as a pedestal for statisticians in their stylistic analysis of a literary text or work. Thus, this study aims at analyzing phonological devices such as assonance, alliteration and consonance in the selected commentaries.

It is on the above scholars' views that the researcher is interested in using online newspapers as a means of conducting research into the analysis of political commentaries. This, however, will definitely make a difference from any of the studies previously conducted using linguistic stylistics as an analytical tool. Subsequently, Akinwotu (2018) examined "Language and Style in Political Inaugurals: A Study of Inaugural Speeches of Governor Olusegun Mimiko." Using Halliday's systemic functional grammar, the focus of the study is to identify specific stylistic features that characterize the speeches of Governor Olusegun Mimiko of Ondo State. One of the findings revealed that the speaker skillfully used lexical components including adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns to portray himself as a dedicated, truthful, and accountable leader.



Also, Ramzan, Khan, Khan and Jamil (2021) investigated the “Stylistic Analysis of the Short Story ‘Call it a Sunshine’ by Hamid Khan.” The focus of this study was to examine some linguistic features in the short story. Thus, stylistic tools such as lexical, grammatical, and phonological schemes were focused in the course of analyzing the story using Leech and Short’s Checklist of Linguistic and Stylistic Categories. One of the findings showed that the whole story contains declarative sentences with some sentences of negation and deviant structured sentences. The study also found out that the writer of the story made abundant use of sound devices such as assonance alliteration and consonance which in turn led to a lot of sound repetitions.

This study is similar to the studies of Akinwotu (2018), and Ramzan, Khan, Khan and Jamil (2021) in its bid to unravel linguistic stylistic features inherent in political commentaries on Ondo 2020 gubernatorial election on online newspapers. However, its peculiarity lies in its linguistic stylistic framework covering the syntax, phonology, foregrounding and deviations it aims at unraveling. Thus the present study intends to fill some of the gaps yet to be filled in the previous studies already carried out on linguistic stylistic analysis.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on linguistic theory known as Leech and Short’s Checklist of Linguistic and Stylistic Categories. It is a linguistic theory with a wider scope in language analysis, especially linguistic stylistic analysis. This model of linguistic stylistic analysis was developed in the early 1980s by Leech and Short in their book titled *Style in Fiction* but it was later modified in 2007. They primarily proposed the model as a theoretical approach for addressing issues related to linguistic stylistic analysis by offering workable solutions. Khan, Ahmad, Ahmad and Ijaz (2015, p. 2) claim that "The checklist provides a 'systematic basis' for the collection of relevant linguistic data from the text for the purpose of stylistic evaluation and offers four levels for analysing the linguistic choices made by the writer, in terms of style." They further posit that this checklist encompasses the lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, context, and cohesiveness when analysing literary texts using linguistic stylistic analysis.

Going by the above opinion by Khan et al., four major categories of this checklist can be diagrammatically illustrated as follows:

Lexical Categories	General, nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs
Grammatical Categories	Sentence types, sentence complexity, clause types, clause structure, noun phrases, verb phrases, other phrase types, word classes, and general
Figures of Speech	Grammatical and lexical schemes, phonological schemes, and tropes
Cohesion and Context	Cohesion and Context

The present study is therefore focused on grammatical categories and figures of speech. The grammatical categories are analysed in form of: (1) sentence types such as declarative, imperative, interrogative and exclamatory sentences, that is, the usage of statements, commands, questions, exclamations; and (2) sentence complexity such as dependent and independent clauses as well as simple and non-simple sentences. In a similar way, figures of speech are analysed in form of: (1) phonological schemes - phonological devices such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, etc.; and (2) tropes – obvious departure from the rules of



grammar like neologism, syntactic (grammatical), morphological, lexical and graphological (foregrounding) deviations. Thus, to show the relevance of the linguistic choices made by political commentators in terms of style, this theory is relevant to this study because the analyses and discussions of the selected commentaries are done in line with the focuses of this theory as outlined in the above-mentioned two categories.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher collected data for analysis in order to conduct a study into linguistic stylistic analysis of political commentaries on Ondo 2020 gubernatorial election. The data collected for this study cover some areas of linguistic stylistic analysis such as syntactic, phonological and graphological (foregrounding) levels as well as deviant features. The data for the analysis were collected from two online newspapers, namely: *Independent* and *The Sun*. The collected data were sourced from their respective websites: <https://independent.ng> and <https://sunnewsonline.com>. This was done by making screenshots of the headlines and the comments therein after the researcher had read the news and the comments below them. Thereafter, a multi stage sampling technique was adopted by the researcher to select 4 comments (from 2 headlines) for the analysis. Hence, using descriptive survey method for data analysis, the methodology in which this study was conducted was qualitative research analysis. The choice of this method was borne out of the fact that the study was interested in describing and analysing the linguistic stylistic features inherent in the selected political commentaries on Ondo 2020 gubernatorial election on online newspapers.

ANALYSES AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis for this study is based on linguistic stylistic features inherent in the selected political commentaries on Ondo 2020 gubernatorial election on online newspapers using Leech and Short's Checklist of Linguistic and Stylistic Categories as its theoretical guide. It focuses on syntactic, phonological, graphological (foregrounding) and deviant features. All these features are identified in the selected data to realise the aim of this study which is to stylistically analyse some linguistic features inherent in the selected political commentaries. Consequent upon this, four comments are selected for analysis.

Headline 1: My achievements 'll speak for me on October 10 - Akeredolu - *The Sun*

Datum A:

go to Ado ekiti and see the one kilometer bridge build by Fayose is not up to two billion naira ur government build that small bridge at ore at 4'5 billion naira god of Almighty will not allowed u to win



Syntactic Features:

- ð
ð
β
- i. //go to Ado ekiti //and //see the one kilometer bridge //build by Fayose //is not up to
- ð
ð

two billion naira //ur government build that small bridge at ore at 4’5 billion

ð

naira// god of Almighty will not allowed u to win//

This comment is made up of a very long non-simple sentence. It is a multiple-complex sentence that contains five independent clauses and one dependent clause structure.

Phonological Devices:

- i. **Alliteration:** /b/ alliterates in bridge ... build; /t/ in to two; and /w/ in will ... win
- ii. **Assonance:** /i/ assonates in kilometer bridge build; /əʊ/ in go ... Ado; /ɔ/ in god ... not; and /ɔ:/ in small ... Almighty
- iii. **Consonance:** /d/ repeats itself in god ... allowed; /n/ in not ... win; and /l/ in Almighty will ... allowed.

Foregrounded Elements:

The word that starts the comment “go” is an example of a deviational foregrounding because it starts with a small letter “g” instead of a capital letter “G.” Likewise, “ekiti”, “ore”, and “god” are other examples of deviational foregrounding because the writer started them in lower cases. In a nutshell, they are proper nouns denoting the names of a state, a town and a creator; hence, they should be in upper cases rather than lower cases. Other elements of foregrounding are the use of “ur” instead of “your” and “u” instead of “you.” They are instances of phonetic spelling.

Other Deviant Features:

- i. **Grammatical Deviation:** The whole structural arrangement of the comment is grammatically deviant. Also, the use of “build by” and “build” are good examples of grammatical deviation. The former is supposed to be in past participle form “built by” while the latter is supposed to be in past tense form “built.”
- ii. **Morphological Deviation:** The writer deviated morphologically as a result of wrong inflection of “ed” in “allowed.” The base word “allow”, being a lexical verb preceded by a modal auxiliary verb “will”, is not supposed to have any inflection in terms of tense, number, or person.

Datum B:

which type of achievement ‘ll peak for u after you and your family have already looted Ondo state oga and sit down



Syntactic Features:

δ

β

- i. //which type of achievement ‘ll peak for u //after you and your family have already looted Ondo state//

δ

δ

- ii. //oga go //and //sit down//

Although the insertion of full stop is missing in this comment, there are two coordinated ideas in it. In a nutshell, there are two non-simple sentences in which the first one is a complex sentence having the structure of independent and dependent clauses. The second one is a compound sentence having the structure of two independent clauses. Consequently, the first sentence is an interrogative sentence while the second one is an imperative sentence.

Phonological Devices:

- i. **Alliteration:** /j/ alliterates in you and your
- ii. **Consonance:** /ʃ/ repeats itself in which ... achievement; /g/ in oga go; /d/ in and ... down; and /l/ in family ... already
- iii. **Assonance:** /i:/ assonates in achievement ... peak; /i/ family ... already; and /u:/ in you ... looted

Foregrounded Elements:

There are instances of foregrounded letters of the alphabet in words such as “which” and “state”. The small letters “w” in “which” and “s” in “state” are written in lower cases instead of upper cases as well as an instance of phonetic spelling “u” instead of “you” are all foregrounded elements. Lastly, there is an instance of code-mixing in the second sentence, “oga go...” The commentator foregrounded “oga”, being a Yoruba language lexical item, by code-mixing it with the English language lexical item “go”.

Other Deviant Feature:

- i. **Lexical Deviation:** The use of “‘ll peak” instead of “‘ll speak” is an example of lexical deviation.

Headline 2: Ondo 2020: Former Federal Lawmaker defects to ZLP - Independent

Datum A:

nothing is missing in APC. The guy is broke and needs cash to bounce. Feather weight politician

**Syntactic Features:**

S P A

i. ///nothing /is missing /in APC.///

ð ð ß

ii. ///The guy is broke //and //needs cash //to bounce.///

There are two declarative sentences in this comment in which the first one is a simple sentence while the second one is a non-simple sentence. In a nutshell, the simple one has non-basic simple sentence structure of SPA. On the other hand, the non-simple one is a compound-complex sentence with the structure of two independent clauses and one dependent clause.

Phonological Devices:

i. **Alliteration:** /b/ alliterates in broke ... bounce.

ii. **Consonance:** /n/ repeats itself in nothing is nissing

iii. **Assonance:** /i/ assonates in nothing is missing

Foregrounded Elements:

The acronym of All Progressives Congress “APC” is foregrounded to acquire prominence. Expectedly, it is supposed to be written in capital letters rather than small letters but it is a non-deviational foregrounding. Also, in the first sentence, the writer foregrounded the first letter by writing it in a lower case “n” instead of an upper case “N.”

Datum B:

but only the south senatorial zone cannot wins ondo yes Akeredolu insult a well recognize king in the south senatorial zone

Syntactic Features:

ð

ð

i. ///but only the south senatorial zone cannot wins ondo //yes Akeredolu insult a well recognize king in the south senatorial zone///

This comment comprises only one non-simple sentence. It is a compound sentence with the structure of two independent clauses.

Phonological Devices:

i. Alliteration: /s/ alliterates in south senatorial; /w/ in wins ... well; and /k/ in can ... king

ii. Assonance: /i/ assonates in king in; /e/ in well recognize; and /əʊ/ in only ... zone



- iii. Consonance: /z/ is repeated in recognize ... zone; /n/ in not wins; and /t/ in but ... senatorial

Foregrounded Elements:

The writer foregrounded the first letter of the sentence by writing it in a lower case “b” instead of an upper case “B.” Also, “ondo”, “south”, “senatorial”, and “zone” are instances of deviational foregrounding because they are proper nouns expected to start with capital letters as in “Ondo”, “South”, “Senatorial”, and “Zone.”

Other Deviant Features:

- i. Grammatical deviation: Instead of a “well-recognized king”, the writer wrote a “well recognize king.”
- ii. Morphological deviation: The writer deviated morphologically as a result of wrong inflection of “s” in “wins.” The base word “win”, being a lexical verb preceded by a modal auxiliary verb “cannot”, is not supposed to have any inflection in terms of tense, number, or person.

Consequent upon the above analyses, it is revealed at the level of sentence complexity that six sentences are structurally analysed containing one simple sentence and five non-simple sentences. The simple one contains non-basic structure while the non-simple ones contain twelve independent clauses and two dependent clauses. Also, it is revealed at the level of sentence type that the analysed commentaries are more of declarative sentences than imperative and interrogative sentences. It is therefore obvious that the writers of the analysed commentaries structurally employed more non-simple sentences than simple sentence and more independent clauses than dependent clauses. So, the finding of this study, at this level, agrees with that of Murana (2017) that revealed that, with the non-simple sentences having more occurrences, all structural sentence types were used by Barak Obama in his speech at Hiroshima Peace Park. Also, functionally, the writers employed more declarative sentences than imperative and interrogative sentences in their writing styles. Thus, its finding agrees with the finding of the study of Akinwotu (2018) which revealed that declarative sentences were the most used of all the sentences but it disagrees with that of Sharndama and Agu (2015) which revealed that the syntactic components were mostly characterized by simple surface structures such as imperative sentences.

At the phonological level, it is revealed that phonological devices such as assonance, alliteration and consonance fully manifested in all the selected commentaries to show rhythmic patterns. Hence, the analysis shows that the repetition of vowel sounds and consonant sounds, to link related words in sentences so as to reinforce meaning and create special rhythmic pattern, manifested in all the four selected commentaries. It is imperative to stress here that the finding of this study at phonological level agrees with the finding of the study of Ramzan, Khan, Khan and Jamil (2021). It was revealed that the writer of the analyzed short story made use of abundant sound devices in a compact way by selecting words and organizing them in such a way that different sound devices are incorporated within the stretch of a single sentence.

At the levels of foregrounding and deviations, it is revealed that foregrounded elements such as deviational and non-deviational foregrounding, code-mixing, phonetic spellings, etc. are evidential in all the analyzed commentaries. These linguistic stylistic devices were embedded



in the writers' choices of language and styles for emphasis and to probably attract readers' attention. Also, its finding shows that online political commentators deviated lexically, grammatically and morphologically in their commentaries with morphological and grammatical deviations having more occurrences. On this note, this study's finding agrees with the finding of the study of Ramzan, Khan, Khan and Jamil (2021) in the aspect of grammatical deviation. It was revealed that the writer of the analyzed short story deviated in his sentence and clause constructions by using ill-structured sentences and clauses to attract reader's attention. In the same vein, the finding of this study agrees with the finding of the study of Udeze, Udeze and Orji (2017) in the aspect of lexical deviation. In these two studies, lexical deviation has the least occurrence.

CONCLUSION

Every language user is allowed to make choice in their use of language for a better linguistic performance. This is applicable in the area of online political commentaries. So, this study has carried out an investigation into a linguistic stylistic analysis of political commentaries on Ondo 2020 gubernatorial election on online newspapers. It is primarily carried out to analyse linguistic stylistic features inherent in the selected political commentaries. On this note, the results of the analysed comments are: structurally, sentences in the analysed comments are predominantly non-simple sentences while they are functionally a mixture of declarative, imperative and interrogative sentences with declarative sentences having the highest occurrences; phonologically, phonological devices such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance fully manifest in all the analysed comments. It is evoking that sentences in the selected commentaries have rhythmic patterns thereby giving both the consonant and vowel sounds rhythm almost in every sentence in the selected commentaries; graphologically, phonetic spelling is evidential in some of the comments and the dominant deployment of deviational and non-deviational foregrounding by some of the commentators to captivate readers' attentions; and lastly, deviant features such as morphological, grammatical and lexical deviations manifest in the analysed comments. Thus, the manifestation of the aforementioned linguistic features in the analysed comments has proved that the choice of word in the use of language is peculiar to each writer by using available linguistic resources to convey his/her ideas.

RECOMMENDATION

Further studies need to be carried out using other level of linguistic analysis and other theories to examine linguistic features inherent in political commentaries of another state. Therefore, discourse analysis as a linguistic analytical tool is recommended by the researcher to conduct further studies into this area of research by looking into features of discourse analysis such as field of discourse, mode of discourse, and tenor of discourse of each comment.



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