

Language, Power, and Intentions: Exploring Pragmatic Functions in President Muhammadu Buhari's Inaugural Address

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Abstract

This study investigates the pragmatic functions employed in President Muhammadu Buhari's inaugural address, aiming to fill a research gap in the analysis of Nigerian political discourse. While existing studies have examined linguistic features in political speeches, there is a scarcity of research specifically focusing on the pragmatic functions in President Buhari's inaugural address. The purpose of this study is to explore how language is used to convey power dynamics, and communicative intentions within the inaugural address. Employing a qualitative research design, the study conducts a detailed analysis of pragmatic functions, drawing on insights from previous research on political discourse analysis and pragmatics. The findings reveal a range of pragmatic functions employed by President Buhari, including the expression of intentions, promises, acknowledgments, appeals, and reminders. These pragmatic functions serve to establish authority, articulate governance priorities, and mobilize support among the Nigerian populace. This study contributes to our understanding of the role of language in political communication, highlighting the significance of pragmatic analysis in uncovering the features of presidential discourse and its implications for governance and society.

Keywords: pragmatic acts, inaugural address, political discourse, President Muhammadu Buhari, language

I. Introduction

Political speeches, including inaugural addresses, serve as crucial platforms for leaders to communicate their vision, agenda, and intentions to the public. Within these speeches, language plays a central role in conveying power dynamics, shaping perceptions, and mobilizing support. Previous studies have explored the linguistic strategies employed by political leaders in various contexts to achieve communicative goals. For instance, Josiah and Johnson (2012), conducted pragmatic analyses of the inaugural addresses of Presidents Goodluck Jonathan and Barack Obama, revealing how language is used to project authority and inspire confidence in leadership. Similarly, studies such as Nedashkivska (2006) and Odebunmi and Oni (2012) have examined presidential speeches to understand processes of language democratization and lexical choices in political discourse, respectively. Furthermore, Okpanachi (2009) and Olaniyi (2010) have conducted discourse and pragmatic analyses of presidential addresses in Nigeria, providing insights into language use and rhetorical strategies in African political contexts. Additionally, Osisanwo (2010) explored the relationship between language, politics, and

development through a lexico-semantic analysis of political posters, highlighting the role of language in shaping political narratives and mobilizing support for developmental agendas.

Against this backdrop, the current study aims to contribute to the existing literature by conducting a pragmatic analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's inaugural address. President Buhari assumed office in Nigeria amidst high expectations and a pressing need for governance reforms. His inaugural address serves as a key document for understanding his vision, priorities, and intentions for the nation. By employing a pragmatic framework, this study seeks to explore the linguistic strategies used by President Buhari to convey power dynamics, communicate intentions, and mobilize support within his inaugural address. Building upon previous research in political discourse analysis and pragmatics, this study aims to reveal the crucial ways in which language is deployed in Nigerian political contexts to shape public perception and discourse. Additionally, by focusing specifically on pragmatic functions, such as revealing intentions, admitting and appreciating, identifying, describing, appealing, reminding, and calling, this study seeks to provide a detailed analysis of the pragmatic strategies employed by President Buhari to achieve his communicative goals. Through a systematic examination of linguistic features and pragmatic devices within the inaugural address, this study aims to offer insights into the dynamics of language, power, and intentions in Nigerian political discourse, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of language in shaping political narratives and governance in Africa.

II. Literature Review

A. Language and Politics

Language and politics are deeply intertwined, with language serving as a critical tool for political communication, persuasion, and power negotiation. As Chilton (2004) emphasizes, analyzing political discourse provides insights into the underlying power structures, ideologies, and strategies employed by political actors to advance their agendas. Language in the political realm is not merely a means of conveying information but also a medium for constructing and shaping reality (Joseph, 2006; Adenike, 2021; Jegede, 2018). Political discourse is characterized by its strategic use of language to influence public opinion, mobilise support, and legitimize authority. In the context of electoral campaigns, discourse plays a central role in framing issues, defining identities, and positioning candidates, as observed in Opeibi's (2009) study on the discourse of the 1993 presidential election campaigns in Nigeria.

Moreover, language in politics extends beyond verbal communication to include visual and symbolic elements, as explored by Osisanwo (2010) in the analysis of political posters. Political posters, through their lexico-semantic features and visual imagery, communicate messages, evoke emotions, and mobilize support for political causes. The language used in political posters reflects not only the linguistic choices of political actors but also the socio-political context in which they operate. Additionally, Adetunji (2006) discusses the role of deixis in political discourse, highlighting how linguistic markers of spatial and temporal deixis are used to include or exclude individuals and groups from political narratives.

In the arena of politics, language serves multiple functions, including persuasion, legitimation, identity construction, and social mobilization (Adenike, 2021). Politicians strategically use language to shape public perception, influence decision-making, and establish

authority. Through rhetorical devices such as persuasion, framing, and narrative construction, political actors seek to garner support for their policies and ideologies. Moreover, language plays a crucial role in constructing and negotiating social identities, as political discourse often revolves around issues of belonging, exclusion, and representation.

Furthermore, language in politics is inherently ideological, reflecting and perpetuating dominant power structures and social hierarchies (Jegade, 2019b). Political discourse is shaped by ideological frameworks that influence how issues are framed, what values are prioritized, and whose voices are heard. Language serves as a vehicle for the dissemination of political ideologies and the consolidation of power relations within society. Additionally, linguistic markers of power and authority, such as honorifics, pronouns, and rhetorical devices, are used to assert and maintain political dominance.

In a nutshell, language and politics are closely linked, with language serving as a key instrument for political communication, persuasion, and power negotiation. Political discourse is characterized by its strategic use of language to shape public opinion, mobilize support, and legitimize authority. Through verbal and non-verbal means, politicians construct narratives, frame issues, and position themselves within the socio-political landscape. Moreover, language in politics is inherently ideological, reflecting and perpetuating dominant power structures and social hierarchies. Understanding the dynamics of language and politics provides valuable insights into the dynamic nature of political communication and governance in contemporary society.

B. The Significance of Language in Inaugural Speeches

The significance of language in inaugural speeches lies in its power to convey messages, shape perceptions, and mobilize support for political leaders and their agendas. Through the analysis of linguistic features in inaugural speeches, researchers have gained insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by presidents to articulate their vision and goals for governance. Studies such as those by Josiah and Johnson (2012) and Ayuba (2012) have conducted pragmatic and pragmatic-stylistic analyses of inaugural addresses, revealing how linguistic choices and rhetorical devices are used to establish authority, inspire confidence, and mobilize public support. Additionally, corpus-based approaches, as demonstrated by Adagbonyin, Aluya, and Edem (2016), provide systematic insights into the linguistic features and patterns across Nigerian and American presidential speeches, highlighting the role of language in political communication and discourse.

Moreover, the significance of language in inaugural speeches extends beyond mere communication to encompass the construction of political identities and ideologies. Pragma-rhetorical analyses, as explored by Babatunde and Odegbedan (2009), uncover the strategic use of language to convey political messages and ideologies, shaping public perceptions and discourse. Linguistic features such as metaphors, as discussed by Charteris (2005), play a persuasive role in conveying complex ideas and evoking emotional responses from the audience. By examining the language of politics, scholars like Beard (2000) and Chilton (2004), have highlighted the ways in which linguistic choices reflect and perpetuate power dynamics, social hierarchies, and ideological frameworks within political discourse.

Furthermore, inaugural speeches serve as symbolic rituals that mark the beginning of a new political era and set the tone for governance (Jegade, 2020a, 2020b). The language used in

these speeches not only reflects the values and priorities of the incoming administration but also seeks to inspire hope and unity among the populace. Linguistic features such as pronouns, modality, and rhetorical devices are strategically employed to establish rapport with the audience and foster a sense of shared purpose and national identity. Through the analysis of inaugural speeches, researchers can uncover the underlying themes, motifs, and discursive strategies employed by political leaders to examine the dynamics of governance and address the challenges facing their nations.

In short, the significance of language in inaugural speeches lies in its ability to shape public perceptions, convey political messages, and mobilize support for governance agendas. By analyzing the linguistic features and rhetorical strategies employed in these speeches, researchers gain insights into the ways in which language is used to establish authority, articulate visions, and shape political narratives. Through pragmatic, pragma-rhetorical, and corpus-based approaches, scholars contribute to our understanding of the role of language in politics and its implications for governance, democracy, and society.

C. Pragmatics and Political Discourse

The relationship between pragmatics and political discourse is diverse, with pragmatics providing valuable insights into the communicative strategies employed by political actors to achieve their goals (Jegede, 2024). Pragmatics, as a subfield of linguistics concerned with the study of language use in context, offers analytical tools for examining how language functions in political communication (Jegede & Osoba, 2019a). Scholars such as Mey (2001) and Osisanwo (2003) have provided foundational frameworks for understanding pragmatics and discourse analysis, laying the groundwork for applying pragmatic principles to the analysis of political discourse.

In the context of political speeches, pragmatic analysis enables researchers to uncover the underlying intentions, strategies, and effects of linguistic choices made by political leaders. Studies such as those by Ayeomoni and Akinkuolere (2012) and Olaniyi (2010) have conducted pragmatic analyses of presidential speeches, revealing how linguistic features such as deixis, implicature, and speech acts are used to convey messages, shape perceptions, and mobilise support. By applying pragmatic frameworks, researchers can identify the pragmatic functions of language in political discourse, including the expression of power, persuasion, negotiation, and social identity.

Furthermore, the pragma-rhetorical approach, as explored by Babatunde and Odegbedan (2009), emphasises the strategic use of language in political communication to achieve rhetorical aims. Pragma-rhetorical analyses focus on the persuasive strategies employed by political actors, such as framing, persuasion, and manipulation, within specific socio-political contexts. Through pragma-rhetorical analyses, researchers can uncover the discursive strategies used by political leaders to advance their agendas and shape public opinion. This approach highlights the relationship between pragmatics and rhetoric in political discourse, as linguistic choices are employed to achieve persuasive effects and influence audience attitudes and behaviours.

Moreover, pragmatic analyses of political discourse contribute to our understanding of the dynamics of power, ideology, and social interaction within political contexts (Jegede, 20218). By examining the pragmatic functions of language in political speeches, researchers can

identify patterns of discourse that reflect underlying power structures, social hierarchies, and ideological frameworks. Pragmatic analysis enables researchers to uncover the implicit meanings, intentions, and effects of political discourse, shedding light on the ways in which language is used to construct and negotiate political realities.

Thus, the relationship between pragmatics and political discourse is essential for understanding how language functions in political communication. Through pragmatic analyses, researchers can uncover the communicative strategies employed by political actors, explore the persuasive effects of linguistic choices, and reveal the underlying power dynamics and social interactions within political contexts. Pragmatics provides analytical tools for examining the pragmatic functions of language in political discourse, contributing to our understanding of the dynamic nature of political communication and its implications for governance, democracy, and society.

D. The Pragmatic Act Theory

The pragmatic act theory is a theory of pragmatics which was developed by Jacob Mey. It is an amendment to J. L. Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory (SAT). According to Mey (2001), Austin's *Doing Things with Words* is merely a theory of reference. Despite Austin's claim that the SAT caters for context, Mey contends that context is more than just reference. Context is action; it is about understanding what things are for; it is also what gives our utterances their true pragmatic meaning and allows them to be counted as true pragmatic acts (Mey, 2001, p. 41). Mey (2001, p. 43) argues further that "the context determines what one can say and what one cannot say". Consequent upon the limitation of SAT, Mey proposes the Pragmatic Act Theory as not just a theory of reference but a theory of action which situates speech acts in the appropriate socio-cultural contexts. Mey posits that in order for speech acts to be effective they have to be situated: "they both rely on, and actively create the situation in which they are realized ... there are no speech acts, but only situated speech acts, or instantiated pragmatic acts" (Mey, 2001, p. 218). Consequently, the emphasis is not on conditions and rules for an individual speech act, but on characterising a general situational prototype (pragmeme) that can be executed in the situation. Thus, a particular pragmeme can be substantiated and realized through individual pragmatic acts. In other words, a pragmatic act is an instance of adapting oneself to a context, as well as adapting the context to oneself.

There are two parts to Mey's (2001), theory of a pragmeme: Activity and textual. According to Mey, the activity part, which includes acts that can be performed by interactants in communication, has a list of optional components of the model – it is possible to have one of the components and not the other(s). The textual part has a list of components which make the context (or co-text). Whereas the activity part covers speech acts, indirect speech acts, conversational acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts and physical acts; the textual part involves context elements such as inference, reference, relevance, voice, shared situation knowledge, metaphor, and meta-pragmatic joker. In relation to the present study, the activity part, which includes acts that can be performed by interactants in communication is of immediate relevance.

III. Methodology

For the study, a qualitative research design was employed. The data source consisted of President Buhari's inaugural address delivered upon assuming office. The speech transcript was obtained from official government archives and verified for accuracy. Data collection involved a comprehensive examination of the speech text to identify instances of pragmatic functions, including revealing intentions, admitting and appreciating, identifying, describing, appealing, reminding, and calling. Each pragmatic function was analyzed within its context to discern the rhetorical strategies employed by President Buhari. The analysis procedures involved thematic analysis to identify themes and recurrent linguistic features associated with pragmatic functions. This approach allowed for a systematic exploration of language use, power dynamics, and communicative intentions within the inaugural address, providing insights into President Buhari's rhetorical approach and governance priorities.

IV. Results

In exploring the dynamic nature of governance and societal challenges, pragmatic communication plays a crucial role in shaping understanding, fostering cooperation, and inspiring action. Through various pragmatic functions such as revealing intentions, admitting and appreciating, identifying, describing, appealing, reminding, and calling, speakers strategically convey messages to achieve specific goals. Whether it's acknowledging past shortcomings, emphasizing the significance of an occasion, defining a concept, or urging collective action, pragmatic communication serves as a powerful tool for effective leadership and governance. The following analyses show how pragmatic functions operate within the speech of President Muhammadu Buhari, shedding light on their crucial roles in shaping discourse, power, and intentions.

Goal of Revealing Intention

The goal of revealing intention is explored by President Muhammadu Buhari using four pragmatic functions – proposing, promising, stating and assuring.

Proposing

Excerpt 1

With depleted foreign reserves, falling oil prices, leakages and debts the Nigerian economy is in deep trouble and will require careful management to bring it round and to tackle the immediate challenges confronting us, namely; Boko Haram, the Niger Delta situation, the power shortages and unemployment especially among young people.

In this excerpt, President Muhammadu Buhari reveals his intention to address the economic challenges facing Nigeria by proposing specific measures to tackle them. By acknowledging the depleted foreign reserves, falling oil prices, leakages, and debts, he sets the stage for his proposed actions. His mention of careful management and the need to bring the economy round indicates his intention to implement strategic measures to stabilize the economy. Furthermore, by listing the immediate challenges, such as Boko Haram, the Niger Delta situation, power shortages, and unemployment, he demonstrates his intention to prioritize and

confront these issues head-on. This pragmatic act of revealing intention by proposing reflects Buhari's commitment to transparency and his strategic approach to governance, laying the groundwork for his administration's economic and security policies.

Excerpt 2

For the longer term we have to improve the standards of our education.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of proposing is evident as the speaker articulates a long-term goal: improving the standards of education. By proposing this goal, the speaker reveals their intention to prioritize education as a key area for development and improvement. This reveals a forward-looking approach, indicating an awareness of the importance of education in addressing broader societal issues and laying the foundation for future progress. By explicitly stating this intention, the speaker not only signals their commitment to educational reform but also sets a clear direction for future policy and action in this area. This pragmatic act of proposing reflects a strategic approach to governance, highlighting the speaker's proactive stance on addressing long-term challenges and fostering societal advancement through education.

Excerpt 3

We have to look at the whole field of medicare.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of proposing is evident as the speaker expresses the need to examine the entire scope of medicare. By proposing to "look at the whole field of medicare," the speaker reveals their intention to comprehensively assess and potentially reform the healthcare system. This statement implies a recognition of existing challenges within the healthcare sector and an intention to address them systematically. Additionally, by using the inclusive term "we," the speaker suggests a collective responsibility and commitment to finding solutions to healthcare issues. This pragmatic act of proposing indicates a proactive approach to healthcare governance, signaling a willingness to engage with complex issues and explore potential strategies for improvement. By revealing this intention, the speaker sets a clear direction for future policy discussions and actions aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and accessibility of healthcare services.

Excerpt 4

We have to upgrade our dilapidated physical infrastructure.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of proposing is evident as the speaker advocates for the upgrade of dilapidated physical infrastructure. By proposing this action, the speaker reveals their intention to prioritize infrastructure development as a means to address existing deficiencies. The use of the inclusive pronoun "we" suggests a collective responsibility and commitment to this goal, implying a shared understanding of the importance of infrastructure improvement. This statement indicates an awareness of the impact of infrastructure on various aspects of society, including transportation, communication, and economic development. By revealing this intention, the speaker sets a clear agenda for addressing infrastructure challenges

and signals a proactive approach to governance, aiming to enhance the overall quality of public infrastructure for the benefit of society as a whole.

Promising

Excerpt 5

Having just a few minutes ago sworn on the Holy Book, I intend to keep my oath and serve as President to all Nigerians.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of promising is evident as the speaker pledges to fulfil their oath of office and serve as President to all Nigerians. By promising to uphold their oath, the speaker reveals their intention to prioritize the welfare and interests of the entire Nigerian populace, regardless of differences or affiliations. This statement not only emphasizes the speaker's commitment to their duties but also seeks to instil confidence and trust among the citizens. By invoking the solemnity of swearing on the Holy Book, the speaker underscores the seriousness of their promise and the moral obligation to fulfil it. This pragmatic act of promising reflects a sense of accountability and integrity, as the speaker commits to acting in accordance with their stated intention, thereby setting a standard for transparency and responsible governance.

Excerpt 6

We shall rebuild and reform the public service to become more effective and more serviceable. We shall charge them to apply themselves with integrity to stabilise the system.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of promising is evident as the speaker commits to rebuilding and reforming the public service for greater effectiveness and serviceability. By promising to undertake these actions, the speaker reveals their intention to prioritize reform efforts aimed at improving the functionality and quality of public services. The inclusion of the term "we shall" signifies a definitive commitment and implies a sense of responsibility on behalf of the speaker and their administration. Furthermore, by emphasizing the importance of integrity in stabilizing the system, the speaker not only reveals their intention to instill ethical standards but also sets expectations for accountability and professionalism within the public service. This pragmatic act of promising reflects a proactive approach to governance, as the speaker articulates their commitment to enacting tangible changes that will benefit both the public service and the broader society.

Stating

Excerpt 7

At home we face enormous challenges. Insecurity, pervasive corruption, the hitherto unending and seemingly impossible fuel and power shortages are the immediate concerns.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of stating is evident as the speaker highlights the significant challenges facing their country. By stating that "at home we face enormous challenges," the speaker reveals their intention to acknowledge and confront these pressing issues head-on. The use of phrases such as "insecurity," "pervasive corruption," and "fuel and

power shortages" emphasizes the gravity of the challenges at hand. By explicitly identifying these issues as immediate concerns, the speaker signals their intention to prioritize addressing them in their governance agenda. This pragmatic act of stating intentions reflects a commitment to transparency and accountability, as the speaker lays the groundwork for addressing critical issues and mobilizing efforts to find solutions for the betterment of society.

Excerpt 8

With depleted foreign reserves, falling oil prices, leakages and debts the Nigerian economy is in deep trouble and will require careful management to bring it round and to tackle the immediate challenges confronting us.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of stating is evident as the speaker candidly addresses the economic challenges facing Nigeria. By stating that "the Nigerian economy is in deep trouble," the speaker reveals their intention to acknowledge the severity of the situation and the urgency of addressing it. The mention of "depleted foreign reserves, falling oil prices, leakages, and debts" provides specific details about the challenges, underscoring the magnitude of the economic crisis. Additionally, by emphasizing the need for "careful management" to overcome these challenges, the speaker reveals their intention to adopt a strategic and cautious approach to economic recovery. This pragmatic act of stating intentions reflects a commitment to transparency and realism, as the speaker sets clear expectations about the economic difficulties ahead and signals their determination to pass through them with careful planning and effective management strategies.

Assuring

Excerpt 9

I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of assuring is evident as the speaker makes a bold declaration about their allegiance and identity. By stating "I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody," the speaker assures the public of their commitment to serve the interests of all citizens, irrespective of any particular faction or group. This assertion reveals the speaker's intention to prioritize the collective welfare of the nation over individual or partisan interests. Additionally, by juxtaposing the inclusive "everybody" with the exclusive "nobody," the speaker emphasizes their independence from personal or special interests, reinforcing their dedication to impartiality and fairness in governance. This pragmatic act of assuring reflects a deliberate effort to build trust and confidence among the populace by conveying a sense of accountability and integrity in leadership.

Goal of Admitting and Appreciating

The goal of admitting and appreciating is explored by President Muhammadu Buhari in the speech, using four pragmatic functions – acknowledging, thanking, saluting and remarking, as discussed below.

Acknowledging

Excerpt 10

In recent times, Nigerian leaders appear to have misread our mission. Our founding fathers, ... and their colleagues worked to establish certain standards of governance.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of acknowledging is evident as the speaker reflects on past leadership and acknowledges a departure from the standards set by Nigeria's founding fathers. By admitting that "Nigerian leaders appear to have misread our mission," the speaker acknowledges shortcomings in recent governance. This admission reflects a level of humility and self-awareness, as the speaker acknowledges past mistakes or deviations from the intended path. Additionally, by appreciating the efforts of Nigeria's founding fathers in establishing standards of governance, the speaker pays homage to their vision and contributions. This appreciation not only honors the legacy of past leaders but also serves to inspire a return to the principles and values they espoused. Thus, this pragmatic act of admitting and appreciating through acknowledging demonstrates a commitment to introspection, accountability, and a desire to learn from past experiences in order to chart a better course for the future.

Thanking

Excerpt 11

I am immensely grateful to God Who Has preserved us to witness this day and this occasion ... Our journey has not been easy but thanks to the determination of our people and strong support from friends abroad we have today a truly democratically elected government in place.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of thanking is evident as the speaker expresses gratitude to God for preserving them to witness the present day and occasion. By admitting that "our journey has not been easy," the speaker acknowledges the challenges faced along the way, demonstrating humility and recognition of the difficulties encountered. Additionally, by thanking both "the determination of our people" and "strong support from friends abroad," the speaker appreciates the collective effort and external assistance that have contributed to the establishment of a democratically elected government. This act of thanking not only acknowledges the contributions of others but also fosters a sense of unity and collaboration, emphasizing the importance of both domestic resilience and international cooperation in achieving shared goals. Hence, this pragmatic act of admitting and appreciating through thanking reflects a spirit of gratitude, humility, and recognition of collective effort in overcoming obstacles and achieving progress.

Excerpt 12

I would like to thank President Goodluck Jonathan for his display of statesmanship in setting a precedent for us that has now made our people proud to be Nigerians wherever they are. With the support and cooperation he has given to the transition process, he has made it possible for us to show the world that despite the perceived tension in the land we can be a united people capable of doing what is right for our nation.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of thanking is evident as the speaker expresses gratitude to President Goodluck Jonathan for his display of statesmanship. By admitting that Jonathan's actions have set a positive precedent and made Nigerians proud, the speaker acknowledges the significance of his leadership in fostering national unity and pride. Additionally, by thanking Jonathan for his support and cooperation during the transition process, the speaker appreciates his role in facilitating a smooth transfer of power and demonstrating to the world Nigeria's capacity for unity and collective action. This act of thanking not only recognizes Jonathan's contributions but also reinforces the importance of collaboration and goodwill in advancing the nation's interests. This pragmatic act of admitting and appreciating through thanking reflects a spirit of gratitude, respect, and recognition of leadership qualities that contribute to the nation's progress and unity.

Saluting

Excerpt 13

I salute their resolve in waiting long hours in rain and hot sunshine to register and cast their votes and stay all night if necessary to protect and ensure their votes count and were counted.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of saluting serves to honor and commend the determination and commitment demonstrated by the citizens who participated in the electoral process. By saluting their resolve, the speaker acknowledges and pays tribute to the citizens' perseverance despite challenging conditions, such as waiting long hours in adverse weather conditions and remaining vigilant to safeguard the integrity of their votes. This act of saluting not only recognizes the efforts of the voters but also serves to inspire and uplift their morale by validating their actions and sacrifices. Furthermore, by publicly acknowledging and appreciating the citizens' dedication, the speaker reinforces the importance of civic engagement and underscores the value of active participation in democratic processes. In short, the pragmatic function of saluting in this excerpt reflects a gesture of respect, admiration, and solidarity towards the citizens who have demonstrated full commitment to their democratic rights and responsibilities.

Remarking

Excerpt 14

Today marks a triumph for Nigeria and an occasion to celebrate her freedom and cherish her democracy. Nigerians have shown their commitment to democracy ... we have today a truly democratically elected government in place.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of remarking serves to emphasize the significance of the present moment as a triumph for Nigeria and a cause for celebration of its freedom and democracy. By remarking that "today marks a triumph for Nigeria," the speaker highlights the historical importance and symbolic value of the day. This remark draws attention to the collective achievement of the Nigerian people in upholding and advancing democracy, underscoring the progress made towards establishing a truly democratically elected

government. Furthermore, by remarking on the commitment demonstrated by Nigerians to democracy, the speaker acknowledges and validates the efforts of the populace in safeguarding democratic principles and participating in the electoral process. In a nutshell, the pragmatic function of remarking in this excerpt serves to show the significance of the occasion and reinforce the importance of democracy as a cornerstone of Nigerian society.

Goal of Giving Details on Issues

The goal of giving details on issues and problems in Nigeria is explored by President Muhammadu Buhari using three pragmatic functions – identifying, defining and describing, as discussed below.

Identifying

Excerpt 15

It is only when the three arms act constitutionally that government will be enabled to serve the country optimally and avoid the confusion all too often bedevilling governance today.

In this excerpt, the pragmatic function of identifying serves to pinpoint a crucial factor essential for effective governance: the constitutional action of the three branches of government. By identifying the necessity for all three arms of government to act constitutionally, the speaker highlights a key principle for ensuring optimal government performance and minimising confusion in governance. This identification underscores the importance of adherence to constitutional processes and the proper functioning of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. By acknowledging the significance of constitutional action by all arms of government, the speaker emphasizes the role each branch plays in maintaining stability, upholding the rule of law, and promoting effective governance. Thus, the pragmatic function of identifying in this excerpt serves to clarify a fundamental requirement for achieving efficient and accountable governance, thereby contributing to the enhancement of democratic principles and institutional integrity.

Defining

Excerpt 16

Boko Haram is a typical example of small fires causing large fires.

In the excerpt, the pragmatic function of defining is utilized to clarify the nature of Boko Haram as an example of a phenomenon where small-scale issues escalate into significant problems. By defining Boko Haram as "a typical example of small fires causing large fires," the speaker elucidates the concept of small-scale conflicts or issues leading to broader and more severe consequences. This definition helps the audience understand the nature of Boko Haram's impact and its role in exacerbating larger societal challenges, such as insecurity and instability. By framing Boko Haram in this context, the speaker aims to emphasize the interconnectedness of seemingly isolated incidents and the potential for localized conflicts to escalate into widespread crises, highlighting the need for proactive intervention and preventive measures.

Thus, the pragmatic function of defining in this excerpt serves to clarify the relationship between Boko Haram and broader societal challenges, facilitating a better understanding of the group's impact and the dynamic nature of addressing its threat.

Describing

Excerpt 17

Boko Haram is a mindless, godless group who are as far away from Islam as one can think of.

In the excerpt, the pragmatic function of describing is employed to characterize Boko Haram as a "mindless, godless group" that deviates from Islamic principles. By describing Boko Haram in this manner, the speaker aims to convey a strong condemnation of the group's actions and ideology. The use of adjectives such as "mindless" and "godless" paints a negative image of the group, emphasizing their lack of rationality and moral values. Additionally, by asserting that Boko Haram is "as far away from Islam as one can think of," the speaker seeks to distance the group from the religion of Islam, indicating that their actions are not representative of Islamic teachings. This description serves to define Boko Haram in stark terms and to underscore the contrast between their extremist ideology and the principles of Islam, thereby shaping perceptions of the group and their motivations.

Goal of Giving Directives and Calling to Action

The goal of giving Directives and Calling to Action is explored by President Muhammadu Buhari using three pragmatic functions – Appealing, Reminding and calling, as discussed below.

Appealing

Excerpt 18

I appeal to employers and workers alike to unite in raising productivity so that everybody will have the opportunity to share in increased prosperity. ... My appeal to the media today – and this includes the social media – is to exercise its considerable powers with responsibility and patriotism.

In the excerpt, the pragmatic function of appealing is evident as the speaker urges both employers and workers to collaborate in enhancing productivity for the benefit of all, thereby appealing to their sense of collective responsibility and mutual interest. By making this appeal, the speaker seeks to encourage cooperation and solidarity between different stakeholders in the economy, emphasizing the importance of shared efforts in fostering economic growth and prosperity. Additionally, the speaker appeals to the media, including social media, to wield their influence responsibly and patriotically. This appeal aims to remind media professionals of their role in shaping public discourse and fostering national unity, urging them to exercise their power conscientiously and in alignment with the interests of the nation. The pragmatic function of appealing in this excerpt serves to mobilize support for collective action and responsible behaviour, highlighting the speaker's commitment to promoting cooperation and integrity in both economic and media spheres.

Reminding

Excerpt 19

Our situation somehow reminds one of a passage in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; Omitted, all the voyage of their life; is bound in shallows and miseries. We have an opportunity. Let us take it.

In the excerpt, the pragmatic function of reminding is employed to draw parallels between the current situation and a passage from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, specifically the quote about "a tide in the affairs of men." By invoking this literary reference, the speaker reminds the audience of the importance of seizing opportunities when they arise, as depicted in the quote. This reminder serves to emphasize the critical juncture at hand and the potential consequences of inaction. By urging the audience to take advantage of the present opportunity, the speaker seeks to motivate action and decision-making that can lead to favorable outcomes. Therefore, the pragmatic function of reminding in this excerpt serves to evoke a sense of urgency and encourage proactive behaviour, drawing inspiration from timeless wisdom to underscore the significance of seizing the moment.

Calling

Excerpt 20

I call on the leadership and people in these areas to cooperate with the State and Federal Government in the rehabilitation programmes which will be streamlined and made more effective.

In the excerpt, the pragmatic function of calling is utilized to urge the leadership and people in specific areas to collaborate with the State and Federal Government in rehabilitation programs. By issuing this call, the speaker seeks to mobilize support and participation from stakeholders in those areas, emphasizing the importance of cooperation in achieving the objectives of the rehabilitation programs. This call serves as a direct appeal to action, highlighting the responsibility of local leadership and communities to actively engage in efforts aimed at improving their own welfare and infrastructure. Additionally, by stating that the rehabilitation programs will be streamlined and made more effective, the speaker suggests a commitment to optimizing resources and processes, further incentivizing cooperation from the targeted groups. Thus, the pragmatic function of calling in this excerpt serves to rally support, foster collaboration, and promote a sense of shared responsibility in addressing the rehabilitation needs of the specified areas.

Discussion of Findings

Across the analyzed excerpts, pragmatic functions such as revealing intentions, admitting and appreciating, identifying, describing, appealing, reminding, and calling are observed. These functions serve as essential tools for the speaker to convey messages, shape perceptions, and mobilize support effectively.

When compared with the studies by Adetunji (2006, 2009) and Ayeomoni (2005a, 2005b), which focus on linguistic and grapho-syntactic analyses of political speeches, our

findings align with their emphasis on the importance of linguistic choices and syntactic structures in conveying political messages. However, our analysis looks deeper into the pragmatic functions employed within these speeches, providing insights into how political leaders strategically utilize language to achieve specific communicative goals. For example, in the excerpt where the speaker appeals to employers and workers to unite in raising productivity, the pragmatic function of appealing serves to mobilize support and foster cooperation, echoing the findings of Adetunji and Ayeomoni regarding the persuasive power of political discourse.

Furthermore, our findings aligns with the studies by Josiah and Johnson (2012) and Olaniyi (2010), which conduct pragmatic analyses of inaugural addresses. Similar to their findings, our analysis highlights the pragmatic functions of reminding and calling within inaugural speeches. For instance, in the excerpt where the speaker reminds the audience of a passage from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar to underscore the importance of seizing opportunities, the pragmatic function of reminding serves to evoke a sense of urgency and encourage proactive behaviour, consistent with the findings of Josiah and Johnson.

Additionally, our analysis aligns with the studies by Ayoola (2005) and Okpanachi (2009), which examine Nigeria's political discourse through linguistic and discourse analysis. Like their findings, our analysis emphasizes the role of language in shaping political narratives and perceptions. However, our focus on pragmatic functions provides a good understanding of how language is used to achieve specific rhetorical purposes, such as appealing for cooperation or mobilizing support for government initiatives.

In comparison to Nedashkivska's study (2006), which explores presidential speech and language democratization in Ukraine, our findings offer insights specific to the Nigerian political context. While Nedashkivska's study examines language democratization processes in a post-Soviet state, our analysis sheds light on the pragmatic strategies employed by Nigerian political leaders to explore complex societal challenges and mobilize public support.

In a nutshell, our findings contribute to the existing literature by highlighting the importance of pragmatic analysis in understanding political discourse in Nigeria. By examining the pragmatic functions employed within political speeches and inaugural addresses, we gain valuable insights into how language is used strategically to convey messages, shape perceptions, and mobilize support in the Nigerian political landscape.

Conclusion

The pragmatic analysis of political speeches and inaugural addresses in Nigeria offers valuable insights into the strategies employed by political leaders to communicate effectively with the public, shape perceptions, and mobilize support for their agendas. Through the examination of pragmatic functions such as revealing intentions, admitting and appreciating, identifying, describing, appealing, reminding, and calling in this study, we have gained a deeper understanding of how language is utilized as a powerful tool in the political domain. Our analysis highlights the importance of linguistic choices, especially pragmatic functions in conveying sensitive messages and achieving specific rhetorical purposes within political discourse.

This study contributes to the existing knowledge by enriching our understanding of the complex relationship between language, politics, and society in Nigeria. By focusing on

pragmatic functions, we move beyond traditional linguistic and discourse analyses to explore how language is used strategically to influence public opinion, mobilize support, and shape political narratives. Furthermore, our findings shed light on the rhetorical strategies employed by Nigerian political leaders to explore challenging socio-political situations and address pressing issues facing the nation. This study reveals the significance of pragmatic analysis in showing the features of political communication and provides valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners interested in understanding and engaging with Nigerian politics and society.

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