A STYLISTICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF NSIMA EKERE’S MANIFESTO FOR 2019 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN AKWA IBOM STATE

EVENTUS EDEM, Ph.D
Department of English
Akwa Ibom State University
Obio Akpa Campus.

Abstract
This paper focuses on Nsima Ekere’s manifesto speech for 2019 gubernatorial election. The paper applies Crystal and Davy’s linguistic stylistic model of analysis as a method of analysis. The result at graphological level reveals that some words are fore-grounded to capture the electorates’ attention with a view to attracting more support for the Speaker. The lexical choices are descriptive and emotive and it brings about the sense of inclusiveness thereby influencing people to change and accept Ekere as the best option in the race. The syntactic and phonological features are concise, straightforward and simple while the semantic features are connotative mostly creating a sense of solidarity with the electorates. The stylistic and linguistic features of the study are generally descriptive, emotive and persuasive in function. This heightens the effect and the hidden intention of the Speaker in order to win more support and goodwill from the public for himself and the party he represents. But the fact that these did not translate to massive votes or victory for the APC Gubernatorial candidate in the 2019 election is a pointer to the fact that the masses were not convinced that that message resembles the messenger, which makes a change of strategy by political actors desirable.

Key words: The Electorates, Manipulation, Social Mobilization, Linguistic and Competence.

Introduction
Language and politics have become inseparable to an extent that language is seen as an indispensable tool in politics. An inquiry of the language of politics helps one to gain insight into how language is used by those who wish to gain power, those who wish to exercise power and those who wish to keep power. This appears to be in consonance with the claim that language is a vital process setting the personality and the program of the candidates to the public with the primary aim of gaining their support.
and mobilizing them to participate in the process of securing and controlling power. According to (Aboh & Uduk, 2017, p.35) political activity does not exist without the use of language”. Within the multiparty democratic system in the world today, the voting masses or the electorates are awashed with political rhetoric, campaigns and presentation of manifestos. People have to be persuaded to adopt a particular system of beliefs and actions capable of facilitating social order and to lure the masses and gain great support to their respective parties. In establishing the relationship between language and politics, Wilson (1990) cited in Aboh & Uduk (2017), draws attention to the manipulative power of language. The implication is that a linguistic act becomes political only if the goal tallies with the linguistic choice (Aboh & Uduk, 2017, p.236). Political actors or politicians, therefore, face the common urge to justify their proposals as right or wrong. The use of words often reflects one’s attitude, beliefs and values towards persons and events. In Beard’s words:

Language is a means of communication, a means of presenting and shaping series of beliefs. Language is not something, somehow separate from the ideas it contains, but the way language is used says a great deal about how the ideas have been shaped (Aboh & Uduk, 2017, p.237).

Since the goal of political manifesto is to persuasively sway the opinion of the electorates, style and linguistic choice have become a prominent tool in the communication process. As it is widely conceived that language and politics are interconnected, language is for instance, considered the vehicular expression of politics. Scholars have written so much on this concept. Ali (1975) cited in Ayeomoni (2005), opines that language “is the most important point of entry into habits of thought of a people. It embodies within itself cumulative association derived from the total experience of its people”. Similarly, Harris views that Orwell sees political language as being designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable. He further asserts that “with words we govern men”. Language is the means by which political ideas, visions and missions are transmitted to the community. Harris again states that the strength of language in politicking is enormous. (cf Ayeomoni, 2005). Baba and Elegba 2016, Edem 2005, 2019 and 2020 describe language as a powerful tool for everyday communication and situates it as indispensable in human existence and relationship.

However, Ayeomoni (2005) quotes Ranny 1975 as saying that every political authority will lead to justify itself by an appeal to language in its symbolic or realistic sense. It is evident from various opinions stated above that language is the key factor in
political behavior concerning mobilizing people to support and accept, and vote them into political office. It is this relationship of language and politics that justifies the need for this paper to identify and highlight certain stylistic and semantic features used in Nsima Ekere’s manifesto for 2019 gubernatorial election in Akwa Ibom State.

Commenting on steps taken while preparing a speech, Ekpe (1997, p.41-44) observes that the goal of any speech needs to be clear to the speaker who will then search for what to say in order to accomplish it. The next task according to Ekpe cited in Edem (2005, p.10) is to consciously identify what kind of response is expected from the audience and then treats the subject in a way that produces the desired response. The source further admonishes that,

The topic and subject sentence should guide the speaker in gathering information since ideas cannot be gathered at random, neither is every detail appropriate, but materials should be used which expand, clarify, support, re-enforce and illustrate the central idea in ways that produce the desired response from listeners. Such details could be factual, narrative, statistical, defining, comparing, contrasting, analogical, testimony or anecdote (cf Edem 2005, p.10).

While carrying out its duty of reaching the unreached, the addresser (Nsima Ekere) through his 2019 manifesto attempted to elicit certain responses from the addressee (audience).

Against this backdrop Udoakah (1998, p.43) cites Karl Deutsch as asserting that, people respond to events not only in terms of what happens but also in terms of what they think is happening. They respond according to their perceptions of each situation and hence they respond in part to the memories and images that they already have been carrying in their minds.

Lucies 1998 cited in Edem (2005, p.11) sums up his impression thus:

The impact of speech is strongly affected by how the speech is delivered. You cannot make a good speech without having something to say. But having something to say is not enough. You must also know how to say it. Good delivery does not call attention to itself. It conveys the speaker’s ideas clearly, interestingly and without distracting the audience. You should concentrate on speaking intelligibly, avoiding distracting mannerisms and establishing contact with your listeners…once you get these elements under control, you can work refining your delivery so that it adds to the impact of your ideas.
Language as a Means of Communication

For the learner, it implies that it is not enough to understand and construct grammatically correct sentences but it is more important to know how to use appropriate correct sentences in equally appropriate communicative situations or contexts. According to Ahukanna (1996 cited in Edem 2005, p.12), it requires the learner not only to be able to give information in the target language or ask questions but also to relocate effectively with his interlocutor.

In other words, language is seen as an instrument of communication demands that the learner’s mastery of what has been referred to as the relevant functions of a language. That is, language in its referential, expensive, fatigue, cognitive and even poetic dimensions. This as Edem (2005) observes, would enable the learner (especially in an English as a second language setting ESL) to develop skills in manipulating the linguistic system spontaneously and flexibly in order to express his intended message. According to the source, other skills the speaker should develop include: the identification of a linguistic system as part of a communicative system, the use of language to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations and the awareness of the social function of language.

In a sense, therefore, language as a means of communication requires the development of two basic competencies. The communicative competence and the cultural competence both of which rely on linguistic competence which is an innate mechanism and implies a native-like conscious performance in the mother tongue. It would therefore, involve the accurate and fluent use of language, phonology/orthography, grammar, lexicon and semantics and its four intra-lingual skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Communicative competence has a lot to do with the speaker’s ability to generate appropriate and effective messages that are situationally relevant and appropriate for a variety of communication acts (cf Edem 2005 pp.12-13).

Ahukanna (1996) quotes Campbell and Wales as defining communicative competence as “the ability to produce or understand utterances which are not so much grammatical but more important and appropriate to the context, in which they are made” (cf Edem 2005, p.14).

The pre-occupation of this paper was therefore to assess the role language plays in a communication act such as 2019 Manifesto of Mr. Nsima Ekere the APC
Governorship Candidate in Akwa Ibom State with reference to its persuasive intent and signification value in relation to rhetorical standard.

Language use in political discourse including speeches, manifestos and other political texts has been identified to be associated with different rhetorical and figurative strategies like circumlocution, irony, symbolism, inuendos, euphemisms and metaphors (Yusuf, 2003; Linfoot-Kerry, 2005; Carver and Pikalo, 2008). Also the language used in this is that of indirect language by politicians to gain political and interactional advantage over their opponents (Obeng, 1997). Thus, use of language in political texts is uniquely different from other discourses. Some works earlier cited have examined the use of language in political texts.

Alo (2008), examined lexical choices and values in political manifestos in Nigeria deploying Rhetoric and Critical Discourse Analysis theory. He explained that values are categorized under four headings: ideological, material, cultural and spiritual/moral. From the lexical analysis of the manifestos, it is very clear that lexical items signify certain values used to persuade the electorates, showing that the basic goal of the writers of the manifestos is merely to woo, lure and persuade the electorate to cast their votes for the Party’s candidate. He further stressed that values have an important place in political party manifestos aimed at winning political support. One remarkable observation in the study is the absence or total neglect of traditional values of Nigerian culture and society in the manifestos examined.

Also, Sharndama and Mohammed (2013) in their study, examines the stylistic analysis of selected political campaign posters and slogans in Yola Metropolis of Adamawa State of Nigeria. Basically, their study revealed that political campaign posters are essential visual communication means that the political candidates use in canvassing for votes. They noted that from the analysis carried out on the various linguistic components, campaign posters and slogans are very important means of communicating to the electorates. They are “embodiments of political candidates’ ideologies and mission” (Sharndama & Mohammed, 2013, p.68).

In addition, Taiwo (2010) examined the use of metaphors in selected Nigerian political discourses deploying Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) theory of conceptual metaphors. He explained that metaphors play a central role in public discourse, most especially, political discourse, which according to him is mostly persuasive and rhetorical in nature. He further stressed that they help to shape the structure of political categorization and argumentation which is instantiated through conceptual mappings.
Basically, Taiwo (2010)’s work examines Nigerian political discourses from the view of metaphors and how the politicians realize their political goals and aspirations through the deployment of these metaphors. While this present study relate to these works mentioned above in terms of political discourse analysis, stylistic analysis of political campaign on lexical choices and values while Sharndama & Mohammed (2013) study, which is also based on Nigerian political discourse only discussed stylistic devices in political campaign posters and slogans. Taiwo discussed metaphors in selected Nigerian political discourses. However, this reveals the gap this study aims to fill by undertaking and exploring a stylistico-semantic analysis of Nsima Ekere’s Manifesto for 2019 Gubernatorial Election in Akwa Ibom State.

Method of Investigation/Framework

There are many approaches to stylistico-semantic analysis. This study however adopts Crystal and Davy’s linguistic model of analysis. The model is centered on investigating linguistic features of a text at every level of linguistic description. These levels include phonetics and phonology, graphitic and graphological, lexis, syntax and semantics. The approach entails identifying from the general mass any linguistic feature that can be isolated and discussed. This method is firmly rooted in the branch of stylistics known as linguistic stylistics. Linguistic stylistics explores the linguistic features of a text. Since style is seen as the selection of certain linguistic forms of features over other possible ones, linguistic stylistics, therefore, points out those linguistic choices which a writer or speaker has made as well as the effects of the choices. This implies that linguistic stylistics is primarily concerned with the use of language and its effects in a text.

Linguistic stylistics, directs its attention primarily to how a piece of discourse expresses the language system. By language system, this means linguistic features that can be examined based on the levels of language. Linguistic stylistics was introduced to act as a complementary approach to literary criticism where the linguistic study of text was conspicuously absent. It studies the devices in languages (such as rhetorical figures and syntactic patterns) that are considered to produce expressive style. Linguistic stylistics concentrates on the “linguistic frameworks operative in the text” (Ayeomoni 2013, p.117, cf NOUN course material). It reveals a writer’s style and purpose of writing. Some of the features of linguistics stylistic include: lexical repetition, lexico-semantic level, syntactic level and phonological level. It is primarily concerned with the
description of language used in a text. In this approach, style is measured quantitatively, that is, the greater the length of the sentence, the mature the style. The modern writer, while expressing opinion on a particular subject, is more concerned with the type of style to be achieved. They are more concerned with the language of features than the theme at hand. The language of features may be described as quantitative: that is, the number of words, phrases, sentences and the sentence length etc.

**Defining Style and Stylistics**

Stylistics, a yoking of style and linguistics, is a discipline which has been approached from many perspectives. Its meaning varies, based on the theory that is adopted. The word style has been defined by different scholars from different perspectives. However, from general sense, style refers to the way something is made or done. In the sense, the way clothes or furniture is designed can be seen as style. Usen, 2019 p.9 quotes Frank (1955) as defining style as “the effective use of language, especially in prose, whether to make statements or to rouse emotions. It involves first of all the power to put fact with clarity and brevity”.

Style has also been defined as the description and analysis of the variability forms of linguistic items in actual language use. In linguistics, style is used to describe the choice made by a language available to its users. This refers to the resource of a language that the user selects from based on the purpose of communication, context of genre. Style from linguistic point of view is used to describe the way or choice that language makes available to its speakers. This means that there exist natural linguistic conventions that users of language select which can be identified in all form of text—spoken or written, technical or non-technical, professional or popularized (Sharndama & Mohammed, 2013, p.62).

According to Leech and Short (1989) cited in Missikova, 2003 p.13, a text whether considered as a whole or extracted from a work, is the nearest we can get to homogenous and specific use of language. Therefore, it is naturally the starting point for the study of style. Style means the language which is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose. In addition, Wales, (1990) cited in Missikova, (2003, p.17) gives the following information or definition about style: “At its simplest, style refers to the manner of expression in writing and speaking, just as there is a manner of doing things, like playing squash or painting. We might talk of someone writing in an ornate
According to Usen (2019), the word stylistics has various definitions. It is defined as a study of the different styles that are present in either a given utterance or a written text or document. The consistent appearance of certain structures, items and elements in a speech, an utterance or in a given text is one of the major concerns of stylistics. Stylistics requires the use of traditional levels of linguistic description such as sounds, form, structure and meaning. According to this source, the goal of most stylistic studies is not simply to describe the formal features of text for their own sake, but to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the text; or to relate literary effects to linguistic causes where these are felt to be relevant (Missikova 2003, p.18).

Crystal and Davy states that:

The aim of stylistics is to analyze language habits with the main purpose of identifying, from the general mass of linguistic features common to English as used on every conceivable occasion, those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social contexts; to explain, where possible, why such features have been used, as opposed to other alternatives; and to classify these features into categories based upon a view of their function in the social context. By ‘features’ here, we mean any bit of speech or writing which a person can single out from the general flow of language and discuss – a particular word, part of a word, sequence of words, or way of uttering a word (Crystal and Davy 1969, p.10-11).

Linguistic stylistics studies are concerned with the varieties of languages and the exploration of some of the formal linguistic features which characterize them. The essence of the usefulness of stylistics is that it enables the immediate understanding of utterances and texts, therefore maximizing ones’ enjoyment of the texts. Again, stylistics is concerned with the study of the language of literature or the study of the language habits of particular authors and their writing patterns. From this, stylistics can be said to be the techniques of explication which allows us to define objectivity what an author has done (linguistic and non-linguistic), in his or her use of language (cf NOUN 2013, p.3). The concept of style and linguistic variations in language are based on the general notion that within the language system, the content can be encoded in more than one linguistic form. Thus, it is possible for it to operate at all linguistic levels such as phonological, lexical and syntactic. Therefore, style may be regarded as a choice of linguistic means, as deviation from the norms of language use, as recurrent features of
linguistic forms and as comparison. Stylistics on the other hand deals with a wide range of language varieties and styles that are possible in creating different texts, whether spoken or written, monologue or dialogue, formal or informal, scientific or religious among others.

On the Manifesto

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Manifesto is a written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives or views of its issuer (www.merriam-webster.com). It could be issued by a group or person. Therefore, a political manifesto can be defined as the plans, programs and broad policy directions that a political party captures on paper and declares as what it wants to implement when it is voted into power during a general election. In most political jurisdictions, a political party aspirant is expected to present its manifesto to the people because the electorates would look at the programs and policies to be executed if voted into power. It is on the basis of this manifesto that electorates would vote for either candidate ‘A’ or candidate ‘B’ and it is very pertinent that the writer of manifesto select some linguistic features that would capture, motivate and convince the electorates to vote such a candidate. The importance of manifestos are enormous especially in a political setting. Manifesto sets ideological direction, it indicates whether the candidate is a socialist, capitalist or any other ideological direction that may be chosen. Manifesto educates the electorates. In order to advance the reasons for the choice of candidate policy, the candidate might have to give a background to the particular problems that the State is facing in the area. By providing this background before spelling out its plans on how to resolve the problems, the candidate through its manifesto, enlightens the people on the peculiar problems of the States or establishment and how to deal with it. Similarly, a manifesto serves as a measurement tool. It is used as a tool to measure the success or otherwise of the candidate when he/she comes into power. This is so because the candidate sets out its plans in the manifesto so that the electorates know what to expect from the candidate when he gains power. The electorates can therefore determine whether the candidate has been able to fulfill its promises and to what extent. However, of the greatest importance of manifesto is Attraction. A manifesto helps to attract people to the party. Since politics is a game of numbers, the more people a candidate has, the more likely it is that such number would vote for it. The electorates are likely to be attracted to programs and policies of the candidate.
Data Analysis/Results

This study is based on the written text of Nsima Ekere’s Manifesto for 2019 Gubernatorial Election in Akwa Ibom State. The text is subjected to analysis using Crystal and Davy’s linguistic stylistic approach. The analysis is carried out in order to identify and discuss the linguistic features in the manifesto. The graphitic/graphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic components remain the major focus while the phonological features are also considered.

Graphitic and Graphological Features

Here, such features such as the use of punctuation marks are significant. These include capitalization of some letters, the choice of type size (or font size), colour of presentation (where applicable) and all those other physical features of the written expression. However, a major feature here is foregrounding. In this instance, certain words are fore-grounded or brought to the fore to give them prominence through the use of italics, capital letters, underlying and so on. In the manifesto, there are a total of four hundred and two punctuation marks. These include: comma-186, hyphen-18, colon-19, semicolon-19, period-153 and exclamation point-7. All these marks are carefully used to capture the electorates’ attention to matters and pertinent issues raised in the manifesto such as: zero tolerance for corruption and impunity, restore financial autonomy to local government, state’s social protection policy as follows: #5,000 to the extremely poor, poor multiple-birth mothers to receive (one-off) #100,000. The graphological features in the use of italicization and capitalization include: “THE NEW VISION FOR OUR COLLECTIVE PROSPERITY - #5 PILLARS OF CHANGE”, “State Social Protection Policy”, “Your thumbprint is the key to the New Akwa Ibom of our dream”. For the capitalization, it includes: “THE NEW VISION, PILLAR ONE: ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT; PILLAR TWO: INFRASTRUCTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT; PILLAR THREE: EDUCATION, HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION, GENDER, WOMEN AND CHILDREN; PILLAR FOUR: SECURITY and PILLAR FIVE: GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS”. The use of italics in the above excerpt is to draw the electorates’ or the reader’s attention to key aspect of plans when he comes into power. For the capitalization, this is used stylistically to lay emphasis on the cardinal points of development in his administration. The capitalization is eye-catching and enticing. It’s a focal point and it is to lure the electorates that Nsima Ekere has good plans for the
people. Another key strategy at this level is the use of capital initials in some words such as ‘Rural Development’, ‘Better Health + Care Initiative’, ‘The Ibom Science and Technology Park’.

The strategy further draws attention of the electorates/readers to this abandoned projects and his readiness to revive and overhaul them. Above all, these features convey to the electorates/readers, the mission and vision of Nsima Ekere in transforming the State and it aptly represents the change mantra his party APC had been advocating, and a new lease of life.

Lexical Features

Lexis in linguistics refers to the entire vocabulary of a given language. In stylistic analysis, how the words are selected from the language user’s linguistic repertoire to meet communication ends is the major concern (Sharndama & Mohammed 2013, p.66). The lexis of political language generally are subject specific and are quite common since decisions are often theoretical even though they may be directly linked to a purposed plan of action (Thorne, cited in Sharndama & Mohammed, 2013). The analysis of this study reveals that the key words are mostly descriptive and emotive. They are carefully selected in order to entice the electorates/readers not to abandon them and hold on to Nsima Ekere’s opinion. In the text under reference, Nsima Ekere makes use of modal auxiliaries such as ‘will’, ‘shall’, ‘should’, and it reads:

a. ‘…I will be sincere with and accountable to the Akwa Ibom people…’

b. ‘My administration will have zero tolerance for corruption…’

c. ‘We will manage your resources prudently, transparently and efficiently’

d. ‘My administration will be fully dedicated to the welfare of our people, and will be accountable to only God and the good people of Akwa Ibom State’

e. ‘I will operate in interactive and all-inclusive administration’

f. ‘I will be your voice and your eyes. I will work and fight for you’

The use of ‘will’in (a-f) above demonstrate political will and obligation of the candidate Nsima Ekere and his party. The desire and commitment to serve the people. ‘I will’ shows a persuasive tone capable of convincing even the most critical individual or unbeliever about his genuine intentions. It reveals his willingness to fulfill the party’s commitment of fighting corruption (in b). The ‘will’ in (d-f) show Nsima Ekere’s willingness to carry everyone along in his administration and make the electorates his priority. According to (Moses 2008, p.236), what generally distinguishes the political
party manifestos is a statement of promises and avowed commitment of the writers/producers to the cause of building the economy and creating wealth for the nation. Here, Nsima Ekere the APC Governorship Candidate demonstrates the deep knowledge of the social needs of the people by the use of shall and should by stating:
g. ‘We shall institute and enforce explicit local content requirements in all government projects and programmes’
h. ‘Overall, our policies and programs should create 400,000 direct and indirect jobs every year’.

In (g-h) above, the future expressing structure shall/should signifies that the sentences is designed to promise some benefits if allowed to rule the state by electing him. The use of shall/should accounts for the certainty of the promises in the manifesto. In addition, another lexical feature employed in the manifesto is pronominal choices. Generally, pronouns are used for making references to an existing entity or participants in discourse. They are used in place of nouns or noun equivalents in a sentence. However, pronouns in political discourse do not only serve the purpose of making reference but also used for construction of identity and presentation of principles and ideologies. The analysis indicates that the personal pronouns ‘we, I, and my’ are the most frequently used by Nsima Ekere, these include the following:
i. ‘We want to think big and dream big again’
j. ‘We are totally committed…’
k. ‘We will start to harness its tourism potential to attract domestic, foreign visitors and investors’
l. ‘I am stepping into the ring to fight for you…’
m. ‘I will give my whole-hearted devotion to the call and responsibilities…’
n. ‘I am the man you can trust to bring 21st century strategies to address the 21st century challenges that confront our people and State’
o. ‘My call to serve is founded on the need to offer Akwa Ibom State a new vision for our collective prosperity’
p. ‘My top most priority will be to address the twin challenges of mass unemployment and poverty’
q. ‘My administration will embark on massive public works to reflect the economy…’
(Extracts from Ekere’s Manifesto 2019)
From the above excerpts, the logic of inclusion not exclusion; the means of showing collective responsibility and solidarity rather than distance. It is noticed from the manifesto that, the pronoun we which usually echoes to ‘our’ is used to show in-group membership and collectivism: ‘our policies and programs will aim to create jobs…we will focus…’ The use of these pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’ interchangeably is to create in the electorates, the feeling of belonging and unity of purpose. These words help Nsima Ekere to identify and connect directly with the electorates and make the speaker more attractive to the people. The pronouns ‘I’ and ‘my’, generally make reference to the speaker alone, but this analysis revealed that these pronouns are used to exclude other people. This shows commitment, shouldering of personal responsibility and of course the assertion of power.

**Syntactic Features**

The word syntax describes the grammatical relationship that exists between words and other units within the sentence. Syntax and morphology seems to have close goals. While syntax looks at how words are combined to form larger grammatical units such as phrases and clauses, morphology concentrates on the study of the internal structures of words, that is, how morphemes are combined to form a word of single grammatical units.

The study reveals that manifesto is an embodiment of the Nsima Ekere’s political vision and mission for Akwa Ibom State. The linguistic features that are manifested in the manifesto at this level of syntax are summarized thus:

Sentence/clause typology.

Simple declarative, sentences and clauses.

The features are:

“I want to serve as your Governor because the good and hard-working people of Akwa Ibom deserves better than what they are getting from the current administration”

In the above excerpt, the sentence has all the obligatory sentence elements of (SPC) – subject, predicator and complement. For instance:

S          P               C
I/want to serve/as your Governor…

Besides, the declarative nature of the sentence, it is mainly of simple typological form. Other forms of declarative sentences in the text include:

S          P               C
“…our children/deserve/the right foundation…to become global champion”.

For clauses, this include:

“I want to serve as your governor because the good and hardworking...” (subordinate clause)

“I promise to make a positive difference in the lives of our people and with your support I will not fail…” (compound sentence with main clause joined by the conjunct) and

“I am the man you can trust to bring 21st century strategies to address the 21st century challenges that confront our people and State (adjectival clause).

These features determines Nsima Ekere’s attitude in getting what he wants, which is support. He makes the messages very clear, simple and unambiguous using mainly the coordinating conjunct ‘and’ to pass his messages across. The clauses analyzed aresyntactically balanced and complete with all the obligatory sentence elements. The straightforward and concise nature of the syntax enables the electorates to easily analyze the sensitive ideologies and missions of Ekere with ease.

**Phonological Features**

In this area, stylistics describes patterns of sounds or writing that distinguish, or assist in distinguishing, varieties of English-repetition of segmental sounds in a specific distraction, patterns of rhythm, intonation and other non-segmental variance. In the analysis, it reveals that there are repetitions of segmental sounds in a specific distribution. Some of these include:

i. “...investment must be employment…’/m/

ii. “...funding to function…’/f/

iii. “...stunted growth and stranded development…’/s/

iv. “...define and direct…”'/d/

v. “...disrespectful, despised and denied…”'/d/

vi. “...build bridges of…”'/b/

(Extracts from Ekere’s Manifesto 2019)

From the excerpts above, it reveals that consonant sounds are the most repeated sounds in a specific distribution and these sounds are carefully chosen to counter the
opposition. In ‘stunted growth and stranded development’, the sounds carry negative connotations in an attempt to derogate or deface the ruling party PDP which allegedly could not bring the desired development to the state and the people. In ‘funding to function’, ‘define and direct’, and ‘build bridges’, these sounds /f/, /d/, /b/ denotes Ekere’s readiness to move the State forward.

Semantic Features

Semantics deals with meaning of words and coinage used in the said manifesto. At this level, it looks at the lexical choices made by a writer or speaker. Here, words can be chosen for the denotative, connotative and other dimensions of meaning. The analysis reveals that words, phrases and sentences in the manifesto carry connotative and denotative meanings. Connotation in political context refers to feelings, attitude, mood implied by a term or phrase employed by politicians to help them achieve their set goals. These are outside the literal meaning, implied value judgement or feeling which the political party’s candidate hopes to be considered or attended to positively by the electorates (Sharndama & Mohammed, 2013, p.60). Some of the semantic features used in the manifesto include:

“Our Five-point ONE Akwa Ibom Agenda is both a covenant and a pledge, made before you this day, and before God Almighty, to redress the said reality of our developmental challenge and set us all on the path of our collective prosperity”

(Extracts from Ekere’s Manifesto 2019)

This expression is used connotatively to convey a deeper meaning to the audience. The ‘covenant’ and ‘pledge’ connotes a binding agreement between the speaker and his audience/people. This shows the level of commitment Ekere has towards fighting the cause of the masses. According to him, his covenant and pledge is one that cannot be broken or fail unlike other politicians who promised and failed. Nsima further states:

“I am stepping into the ring to fight for you, build bridges of hope and opportunities, to unite Akwa Ibom behind a common vision of greatness. I am stepping in to bring real peace and healing to our brothers and sisters in Ika, Etim Ekpo and Ukanafun”. (Extracts from Ekere’s Manifesto 2019).

Here, Ekere sees himself as a hero or a spokesman of the suffering majority of the State. He also made reference to the area Etim Ekpo and Ukanafun which at that point was crises ridden and he states in unequivocal terms about his resolve to bring
back peace and sanity to the war-ravaged area. The message is that of hope and assurance, he is ready to go extra mile and do whatever it takes for the people to be free and enjoy the dividends of democracy. In fact, he demonstrates his readiness to bring succor to every Akwa Ibomites. The phrase ‘real peace’ connotes stability and absence of violence in the affected areas. He is ready to bring everlasting solution to the challenges of insecurity in the area.

Here, Ekere uses emotional/rhetorical appeal and captivating words to further attract public sympathy. He further asserts in the text:

“I want to serve as your Governor because the good and hardworking people of Akwa Ibom deserve better than they are getting from the current administration”.

(Extracts from Ekere’s Manifesto 2019).

This expression, denotatively means that Ekere is ready to bring the best to the people in terms of education, infrastructural development, manpower development among others. Here he asserts further that the current administration is underperforming and stressed the need for change that he represents. He goes on to state unequivocally thus, “in all of this, my great party and I will be sincere with and accountable to the Akwa Ibom people”. This expression is veiled and connotatively, he wants his audience or supporters to believe that there is no accountability and transparency in the present administration lead by the current Governor, Mr. Udom Emmanuel and he is “determined to bring accountability and transparency to the governing system and every Akwa Ibomites will benefits from his administration”. “There will be no sentiment and ethnic bias in the polity”. He used this to restore public confidence and trust of the electorates in the new government he hopes to bring to fruition in Akwa Ibom State in 2019.

Conclusions

The paper attempts to analyze the stylistic and semantic analysis of Nsima Ekere’s 2019 Manifesto for Gubernatorial Election in Akwa Ibom State. The study shows that language of politics is a good example of promise, though not necessarily being kept by those canvassing for support from the electorates. The study indicates that Nsima Ekere’s manifesto is yet another aspect where language is used in a unique way to give extra effect and force to his message. This is aimed at achieving his main objective of manipulating the people or winning more votes from the unsuspecting
audience. This style of language is embodied at the graphological, lexical, syntactic, phonological and semantic levels and its features.

The study reveals that at the graphological level, the features are designed to capture and draw electorate’s attention to the key areas of development which are given prominence when he assumes power in 2019 by God’s grace. At the lexical level, the words are carefully chosen to reflect the electorate’s pathetic or helpless state and Ekere’s desire to serve as an agent of change, seeing himself as a messiah or one of them.

The study also revealed that at the syntactic level, Ekere makes his message clear, simple and unambiguous. At the phonological level, some repetitions of most consonant sounds in a line of distribution makes the manifesto melodious and pleasant to listen to and it laid emphasis on the much talked about abandoned and decayed infrastructures in the State. At the semantic level, the study reveals that Ekere, a former Managing Director of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) used words connotatively to show solidarity with the electorates and earn their sympathy and trust. Above all, the study showed that, throughout the manifesto, the language and style employed by him is simple and this gives room for the majority of the literate audience/electorates to read and interpret with ease.

The study however concludes that all these linguistic features were carefully selected to woo, lure, manipulate and attract the electorates to support and vote for Nsima Ekere at the polls. But again, language played a key role in expanding Mr. Ekere’s support base but sadly was not enough to dislodge his opponent and incumbent Governor of the State Mr. Udom Emmanuel of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) who was however, re-elected at the polls in 2019 and subsequently sworn-in as Governor for a second term.

The final outcome of the polls in 2019 is a pointer to the fact that most elites and key stakeholders in the State could not trust Nsima Ekere with their votes ostensibly because they did not believe that “the message resembles the messenger”, which makes a new strategy by upcoming political actors desirable.
References


