

LANGUAGE USE IN ORAL COMMUNICATION FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Language is used for the expression of thoughts or ideas; this is very crucial in political development. Oral communication involves the use of speech to express ideas, feelings, thoughts, information etc. with the aid of articulate speech sounds that are coherently organized and properly presented. The oratory prowess of a speaker depends much on his/her use of language. Governance and development are inseparable. Democracy is practised through political parties and oral communication is mainly used by politicians in political campaigns and rallies. One of the qualities of a good speaker is the ability to manipulate language to inform, persuade, correct or put forward an idea. Therefore, oral communication involves linguistic skills. This paper seeks to highlight the importance of language as an instrument of political development in Nigeria.

Introduction

Language is a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings. Language is the most common system of communication. It allows people to talk to one another and to write their thoughts and ideas. Wherever there is human society, there is language. Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols (Sapir, 1963).

Language is considered to be an organic phenomenon whose dynamic growth everyday defies the most astute scholarly dissection (Ogunsiji, 2001). It is a form of social behaviour whose use is determined by situation and context.

Communication is sharing information or providing entertainment by speaking, writing or other methods. We use communication in many ways at home, school, in business and industry and in world affairs. When language is spoken what is going on is a complex series of events. These events are on many planes of experience: physical (the sound waves), chemical (the body chemistry); physiological (the movements of nerve impulses and of muscles), psychological (the reaction to stimuli); general cultural (the situation of the speaker in respect to the cultural system of his society), linguistic (the language being spoken); and semantics (its meaning) (Encyclopedia Britanica, Vol. 7: 147).

The Uses of Language

Language (both written and spoken) is used for different purposes; it exists to express our thoughts and feelings and it can be employed in every kind of human enterprise. Inghram as cited by Quirk (1982, p.36) categorized the uses of language as follows: "

- To dissipate superfluous nervous energy
 - To direct motion in others, both men and animals
 - To communicate ideas
 - As a means of expression
- " For the purposes of record
" To set matter in motion (as in chains and incantations),
" As an instrument of thinking,
• To give delight.

Language is an exclusive human possession which is socially acquired and which serves as a means of communication making use of conventional symbols (Ogunsiji, 2001:152). Wallwork (1969:12) states

the purposes for which language is used thus:

- For phatic communication,
- For ceremonial *purposes*,
- As an instrument of action,
- To keep records,
- " To convey orders and information,
- To influence people,
- To enable self-expression, and
- " To embody and enable thought.

From the above, it is evident that Ingraham and Wallwork's categorization of the uses of language are similar. Both categorization point to the fact that language is a major and powerful means of communication. Language is seen as an instrument of economic and political power around the world today (Ogunsiji 200:153).

Smith (1994) considers language as powerful instrument by which we can engage in any of the endeavours that occupy our lives. He stresses further that language reflects and transcends every kind of human intention and aspiration as there is no part of our lives in which it cannot be productive. Smith (1994) enumerates various uses of language as shown in the following table. -

Language Use	Non-Language Alternative
1. Instrumental: "I want" (Language as a means of getting things, satisfying material needs).	Pantomime, facial expressions, screaming, pointing, grabbing.
2. Regulatory: "Do as I tell you" (controlling the behaviour, feelings, or attitudes of others).	Pushing and pulling people around, modeling behaviour of others to copy, gestures, traffic lights.
3. Interactional: "Me and you" (Getting along with others, establishing relative status, also "me against you", establishing separateness).	Waving, smiling, linking arms, holding hands, shaking first, sport, gifts, uniforms, shared activities.
4. Personal: "Here I come" (Expressing individuality, awareness of self, pride, pleasure, anger, grief).	Art, music, dress, cosmetics, ornamentation.
5. Heuristic: "Tell me why" (Seeking and testing knowledge).	Exploration, investigation, experimentation
6. Imaginative: "Let's pretend" (Creating new worlds, making up stories, poems).	Play, art, mime.
7. Representational: "I've got something to tell you" (Communicating information, descriptions, expressing propositions).	Pointing, rituals, diagrams, dials, maps, mathematics.
8. Directive: "Enjoy this" (Puns, jokes, riddles).	Games, puzzles, magic.
9. Authoritative/Contractual: "How it must be" (Statutes, laws, regulations, agreements, contracts).	Roles, rituals, regalia, uniforms, architecture, money.
10. Perpetuating: "How it was" (Records, histories, diaries, notes, scores).	Cave drawings, photographs, sculpture, monuments, memorials.

Smith (1994) p.14.

... which has been defined in various ways.

Communication: Communication is a broad term which has been defined in various ways.

Communication is part of everyday life. It is an information sharing activity. Communication can be defined as the process which involves the transmission of properly conceived and encoded facts, ideas, view, thoughts, opinions, messages, feelings or information among individuals, organizations or systems via appropriate means like face-to-face conversations, letters, reports, memoranda, drawings

designs, posters etc. which can be easily decoded, understood, responded to or acted upon with the aid of appropriate feedback (Oluga, S. O; Adewusi, C. O and BabaloJa, H. A. L. 1998).

Communication serves as an instrument of social interaction, it is a means by which people in politics, business, industry etc. interact and exchange information and ideas. Five important elements are involved in communication process viz sender, message, channel, receiver and feedback. Read, as cited by Ajewole-Orirnogunje (2001:122), he states the essence of communication thus:

- To express oneself clearly and effectively in both writing and oral communication.
- To understand the ideas of others.
- To acquire certain skills and habits required for critical thinking, including the proper use of the English language.

Oral Communication

Oral communication can be defined as the organization and presentation of coherently arranged facts, ideas, feelings or messages in speech or spoken form (Oluga, S. O; Adewusi, C. O. and Babalola, II. A, L. 1998). Oral communication involves face-to-face conversation in situations such as interviews, meetings, oral briefings, public addresses, oral presentations, conferences., telephone conversation, dialogues, debates, seminars etc. (Babalola, H. A. L.; Adewusi, C. O. and Oyediran, A. O. (2003). It is also majorly employed in political campaigns. Oral communication serves as the most common form of communication as it involves a direct means of communication among persons. It therefore involves all the five elements of communication process which have been mentioned earlier. Oral communication has an advantage in that both the speaker and the audience are involved actively in the communication process, there is also the advantage of physical proximity in the process of the exchange of information.

Non-verbal communication is very important in complementing oral communication. It can be used to reinforce, support or contradict the oral message, it helps to sustain and regulate the communication process by altering the flow of conversation between persons and groups of people (Ajewole-Orimogunje 2001). It has been observed (Read 1975) that much of our communication is accomplished through the use of non-verbal symbols. We communicate when we smile, frown, raise a head, point a finger, clench a fist or rub our faces. In the words of Read (1975:19): Non-verbal codes most often carry emotional messages - fear, hate, love happiness, sadness, concern, envy, elation, despair. Often but not always, we use verbal and non-verbal codes in combination. We raise our hand and say "stop". We beckon and say "come". We smile and say "thank you". We draw a picture and say "here's how it works",.. Radio combine music with words to sell soap, cigarettes, new cars and a host of other products.

The Role of Oral Communication in Political Mobilization

Oral communication is the most important means of human communication. It is man's original means of communication which has been existing before the invention of writing as a means of communication.

For the sustenance and development of our nascent democracy in Nigeria there is the need for effective use of language for communication. According to The new Encyclopedia Britanica (Vol.9), a political party is a group of persons organized to acquire and exercise political power through election or revolution. Parties seek political power by electoral means.

Oral communication is a powerful instrument in ensuring political mobilization of the people to participate fully in political development programmes. Language serves as a means of communication and self expression. Democracy involves joint action at various levels: local, state and federal and communication plays a vital role in this aspect.

Partly members persuade voters to support their parties' candidates in an election. Locker (1989) states the purpose of oral communication thus: to inform, to persuade and to build goodwill. Persuasive discourse is aimed at influencing the listeners through sound arguments, evidences, facts,

opinions and reasoning to share the speaker's beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, views etc. Akindde (1989:186) posits:

By its very nature, politics or political discourse involves the persuasion of a group or groups of people, largely through the manipulation of language that forms the communication environment of a society. Alt recorded history bears witness to attempts by politicians to use all available communication strategies to move people to action; to vote for a candidate, to support a party and to fight for a cause.

Political speeches are made to stimulate the listeners to action. The speaker aims at stirring up his listeners and to bring about certain changes in their behaviour. Persuasive speeches are motivated by the speaker's conviction and beliefs; and the speaker through logical reasoning and presentation persuades his listener to accept his point of view.

Conclusion

Governance and development are inseparable and democracy is practicalised through political parties. Politicians make use of oral communication to inform the electorates about their parties. The speeches are aimed at influencing people to act, believe and share the speaker's views. Communication is a powerful source for political change and development, it brings about understanding and unity between the leaders and the people. Political candidates speak during the period before election at public meetings and campaigns arranged by their parties. In doing so, a party hopes to win or stay in office. The party in power tries to justify its programmes. The opposition parties on the other hand point out what they consider as weaknesses in the ruling party's programme and offer voters an alternative one. This is best done through oral communication.

It is clear that language use and politics are intertwined and positively connected (Ayeomoni 2001).

Our use of language can tell our listeners or readers a great deal about ourselves in particular, about our social background, occupation, personality and level of education. The importance of oral communication in political development can be further buttressed by quoting Hayakawa (1952:84):

When often we are hearing or reading impressive ... speeches, political addresses, essays or fine writing, we stop being critical altogether and . . . simply allow ourselves to feel excited, sad, joyous or angry as the (author / writer) wants us to feel. . . . Like snakes under the influence of a snake -charmer's flute, we are swayed by the musical phrases of the verbal hypnotists.

There is no doubt that democracy is an instrument of change and development; and oral communication through the use of linguistic skills plays an important role in the choice of a democratic government.

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