
Foregrounding as a Stylistic Strategy in President Muhammadu Buhari's 2019 Democracy Day address

Chinelo J. Ezekulie, PhD and KeziahJonah Pam, PhD

Abstract

The crafting of political speeches, especially presidential speeches, is a sensitive and painstaking communicative package intended for delivery by someone occupying the apex position in the nation's echelons of government. The illocutionary goal of political speeches is usually to persuasively sell the political ideology of the speaker and to convince the audience that the speaker holds the political magic wand that is favourable to them. This study investigates how linguistic foregrounding is employed as a stylistic technique in President Muhammadu Buhari's 2019 Democracy Day cum second term Inaugural Address to drive his discourse goals. A qualitative design was adopted in which purposively selected sentences from the speech were subjected to textual analysis. The findings show an incredible array of foregrounding devices in form of linguistic deviation and parallelism that operate at different linguistic levels. Such deviational and parallel organization of the text forcibly lends the message compelling attention and aesthetic appeal. The instantiations of foregrounding in the text invite the decoder to deploy the entire inferential arsenal at his disposal to get a handle on the communicative meaning of the text. The potency which foregrounding confers on the speech has potential for amassing and sustaining support. The paper therefore concludes that the linguistic choices made in the presidential speech are not perfunctory but are contrived to induce a conscious perception of the phenomena of interest, triggering the brain to subject the encoded message to more conscious processing and lending it more

Introduction

Political speeches afford political candidates' ample opportunities to address crucial ideological issues and socio-political phenomena of interest. Having emerged from a keenly-contested political tussle victoriously, political officer holders, in this context president, are conscious of the high expectations of the electorate who voted for them against all odds; they are aware that everything they do is of national significance and can make or mar their reputation and the legitimacy they enjoy. Accordingly, in words and deeds, they labour to sustain the credibility, relevance, and feasibility of their political manifestos, and to demonstrate their problem-solving prowess.

Given that a political speech is oriented towards affecting the hearers' disposition towards the subject matter and swaying their perception, the speaker needs to deploy some linguistic resources to make the most lasting impression on the audience and hold them spellbound. The speech is often energetic, incisive, emotive, impressive and inspiring. To achieve these discourse effects, a good speaker usually employs language creatively using stylistic devices (SDs). From the plethora of linguistic resources open to the speaker, he often makes deliberate choices that best advance his discourse goals.

This paper therefore argues that there is an overarching relationship between linguistic form and its communicative function; both phenomena in this context represent the linguistic choices made in a political speech and the communicative goal of the speaker respectively. The paper investigates how linguistic resources are stylistically deployed in a presidential speech to foreground the message following Leech and Short's perception of foregrounding as instances where readers are encouraged to pay attention to salient and prominent linguistic features in a text, which are to be interpreted as significant and relevant to the author's purpose (p. 41). The significance of the study derives from Sarab Alazawi's view that "the theory of foregrounding is perhaps the most imperative theory within stylistic analysis and, by extension, foregrounding analysis is arguably the most important part of stylistic analysis" (p. 31). Butt and Lukin have stated that "stylistic analysis is defined by its concern for the semantic consequences of linguistic patterns" (p. 211). Apart from accounting for the semantic consequences of the linguistic choices in text, it is also the

duty of a stylistician to elucidate how the choices form an organization in the text under investigation.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) developed by Michael Halliday is interested in the interface between form and function in textual analysis. SFL explores the 'meaning-making' potential of language. "Language is a resource for making meaning, and meaning resides in systemic patterns of choices" (Halliday and Matthiessen p. 23). Thus, the grammar of a language is not an agglomeration of abstract structures but consists in system networks. Consequently, the construction of meaning requires the making of choices while the way the choices are realized forms the structure thereby making the structure of a text the manifest or outward form of systemic choices.

The paper seeks to identify the stylistic intricacies of the linguistic structures that contribute to the meaning and aesthetic appeal of the speech investigated bearing in mind that the systemic choices made in a text are controlled by the field, tenor and mode of discourse. The presidential speech – the social action in which language is being used – is the field of discourse. The tenor of discourse – the nature of social relationship that exists among the interactants in relation to their status and their social distance with each other – is that of a newly sworn-in president and the electorate. The mode of discourse – the medium of contact for the participants in the discourse – is the spoken mode. Underscoring that the three concepts affect both the production and the reception of the texts, Hasan asserts that the nature of the message communicated changes as the values of the contextual parameters change, acknowledging that this is what it means to claim that language in use suits itself to the speaker's socio-semantic needs (p. 172). This entails that in interpreting textual data it is not only important to understand the encoded semantics but also the paradigmatic and syntagmatic organization of the linguistic resources and the contextual parameters that activated those wordings.

Researchers have shown significant interest in studying political speeches of presidents across the globe. At the local sphere, Abuya carried out a pragma-stylistic study of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's Inaugural Speech to ascertain the types of speech acts used in the speech and the various illocutionary forces used by the speaker to

appeal to the emotions of the electorate. Bolarinwadi did a stylistic analysis of the language of politics employed in the acceptance speech of President Goodluck Jonathan to specifically identify how the president uses language in transmitting political ideas to the electorate and the functions of language in the realm of politics. The analysis showed that language is stylistically used to reflect achievement, promises and propaganda. Virginia Okafor and Gloria Issifem made a stylistic study of President Muhammadu Buhari's Inaugural speech of 2015 to ascertain the choice of mood and modality in the speech. Innocent Koutchade conducted a discourse analysis of Buhari's 2015 official acceptance speech using a systemic functional perspective to ascertain the experiential and interpersonal meanings realized through transitivity patterns and modality respectively. Jombadi Abiodun and Zakariyah Moshood conducted a study entitled "Style and national integration: An analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's post 2015 presidential election speech". The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods in analyzing the text. The study revealed the different sentence types, the mood system, lexico-semantic features, and rhetorical features employed in the speech and how these stylistic features are used to convey the message of national integration pursued.

Although the studies are related to the present research having studied the speeches of former Nigerian Presidents, their orientations vary considerably. The reviewed studies are mostly conducted under the purview of pragmatics, discourse analysis, syntax and stylistics. However, the few studies that are stylistics-oriented are more general in approach while the current study is narrowed down to the use of a specific stylistic technique, linguistic foregrounding, in the presidential speech with a view to exposing how this deliberate stylistic device emphasizes the message and heightens its perception. Furthermore, both the presidential speech of interest and the social action that produced it are different from the reviewed ones. The 2019 Democracy Day Speech doubles as President Buhari's second term Inaugural Address, the reason being that the Inauguration was celebrated low key to give way to the maiden celebration of Democracy Day on June 12 in honour of the late MKO Abiola. These considerations justify the study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What foregrounding devices are employed in the Democracy Day Speech of President Muhammadu Buhari?
2. At what stylistic levels is foregrounding used in the speech?
3. What stylistic effects are created by the use of foregrounding to advance the discourse goals of the speaker?

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Stylisticians borrowed the term 'foregrounding' from art criticism, which distinguishes between the foreground and the background of a painting. The theory of *foregrounding* was first postulated by Jan Mukarovsky, one of the leading exponents of the Prague linguistic circle, in 1970. Mukarovsky presents foregrounding as the opposite of *automatization* equating it to *deautomatization* of an act. He believes that the more an act is automatized the less consciously executed it is but the more it is foregrounded the more completely conscious it becomes (Alazawi, p. 31-32). Automitization, therefore, refers to the use of the normal linguistic code – the common patterns of linguistic organization which do not elicit any unusual attention from the text recipient.

Geoffrey Leech defines foregrounding as “the motivated deviation from linguistic or other socially accepted norm” (p. 121). Being motivated, foregrounding is a deliberate stylistic use of language, which thwarts or violates the automatism characteristic of the normal language code. Foregrounding therefore encompasses any deliberate linguistic manipulation orchestrated to command the decoder's attention. Linguistic choices are controlled by the context of situation; thus, any occurrence that distorts the conventional patterns of everyday use characteristic of the specific context places the message in the forefront of the decoder's mind, thereby foregrounding it. Kofi Yankson's words validate this claim: “The normal language code is the background. Any deviation from the norm – the code – is the foreground, because it brings the message to the forecourt of the reader's attention” (p. 3). This view draws attention to the inescapable attention which a foregrounded element commands.

Foregrounding is related to *defamiliarisation*, a common translation of *ostranenie*, the Russian Formalist term for an aesthetic estrangement

from the perception of the familiar and routine. Being first used by Viktor Šklovsky in 1917, the motivation for defamiliarization is the quest for an increase in both the effort and the duration of a perceiver's experience of a text. This goal is explicitly in opposition to habitualization or automatization, the aesthetic deadening that results from an over-familiarity with language (Emmott and Alexander p. 290). Other stylisticians corroborate the relationship between foregrounding and estrangement. Foregrounding is the process of "making strange" within a text motivated for literary-aesthetic and artistic purposes (Simpson p. 50, Wales p. 41, Gregorioup. 88). The literary theory of defamiliarization, hence, suggests that certain texts draw interest and attention owing to the way familiar events are presented in an unfamiliar way thereby raising their attention levels. Miall and Kuiken underscore this attention-grabbing rationale for defamiliarisation when they write that it "evokes feelings and prolongs reading time" (p. 1).

Foregrounding can be realized in two ways: linguistic deviation and linguistic repetition or parallelism (Leech p121, Simpson p50, Gregorioup89), both of which may operate at an array of stylistic levels: lexis, grammar, phonology, graphology, and semantics, among others. Deviation refers to an encounter with something different from what is expected, or indeed different from regulations of some kind. The concept of linguistic deviation lies at the core of stylistic analysis. Macpherson Azuike, one of the proponents of the theory, sees style as "deviation from the norm" (p. 111). This view portrays style as a departure from some conventionalized standards of usage, creating a seeming 'ghost' boundary between what is perceived as the norm and what constitutes a departure. Style viewed in this manner portrays language as highly circumscribed and consisting in a conglomeration of patterned and predictable utterances usually defined by specific contexts as the norm. This presupposes that deviation is characterized by usages that draw attention to themselves by way of salience and unusual occurrence in a context.

On the other hand, linguistic parallelism means the use of pattern repetition in a text to achieve a particular stylistic effect (Yankson p14; Gregorioup. 89). According to Leech, parallelism "sets up a relationship of equivalence between linguistic items and strongly urges a connection between them" (p. 69). Linguistic parallelism serves the following

purposes: It produces a semantic compound; it can impose a new meaning on a lexical item; it can neutralize the semantic opposition between two lexical items; it's a well-known, universal rhetorical device which serves the purpose of hammering home a message by placing it at the forecourt of the listener's mind and it represents the creative artist's search for an appropriate linguistic means of expressing the inexpressible; it is an attempt to capture a fugitive feeling (Yankson, p. 40-42).

Foregrounding is thus achieved through an assortment of stylistic devices within the linguistic levels such as repetition, odd punctuation, under-specification and over-specification, interesting vocabulary and grammatical choices, striking similes and metaphors, recurrent thematic motifs, unusual narratological presentation and unusual textual layouts (Emmot and Alexander p. 290). Yankson adds to the list of foregrounding techniques: category rule violation, breach of selectional restriction rule, and pattern repetition (3). An attempt is made in this paper to investigate how these foregrounding devices are employed in the Democracy Day Speech under study.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative research design. Relevant excerpts from the Democracy Day speech made by President Muhammadu Buhari on 12th June 2019 were drawn for textual analysis using purposive sampling technique. **The sentences in the text totaling 152 are numbered sequentially as 1-152 to enable a characterization of the structural symmetry and proximity of the linguistic patterns employed in the text. Thus, the sentences are referred to in the analysis according to their number in the speech.** Foregrounding, as employed in the data, is multilayered, cutting across different stylistic levels. The implication is that an examination of one level often dovetails into another level. Thus, the organization of the analysis into Phonological, Syntactic and Semantic Foregrounding may not be stringent.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Phonological Parallelism

The analyzed speech, belonging to the spoken mode of discourse, is crafted to linger longer on the minds of the hearers many of whom may not have access to the written speech. Thus, alliterative sound patterns

are deployed to foreground key words and phrases that contribute to the overall message encoded. Some of the examples include:

...the recent elections ... were **free, fair** and peaceful. (7)

We must **continue** to be **Good Neighbours** and **Good Global Citizens**. (43)

The problems call for increased regional and international cooperation in developing a **sustainable solution**. (94)

In 7 the alliterative pair *free, fair* is targeting at foregrounding those attributes as being characteristic of the conduct of the 2019 elections. This stylistic ploy is significant considering the fact that the results of the elections were vehemently being challenged in court. The velar plosives *g* and *k* are repeated in 43 at the beginning of words creating a rhythmical effect that increases their memorability to justify the role Nigeria has played in global peace-keeping missions notwithstanding the insecurity and threats of disintegration confronting the nation. Also, in 94 the phrase *a sustainable solution* is rendered more conspicuous and attention-arresting by dint of the alliterative *s* to underscore the nature of the *solution* that the country needs.

Another phonological device is repetition of words with the same syllable structure or stress pattern and rhythm (stress isochronicity) in a stretch of utterance. In *And we will do **more*** (85). ***Muchmore*** (86), this device is employed in conjunction with alliteration of the bilabial nasal *m*. All the words in 85 and 86 are monosyllabic; all the syllables are open except for *and* and *much*. The brevity of the syllables is accentuated by the brevity of the sentence structure. Furthermore, 86 is a detached construction from 85. Its unusual independence occasioned by the preceding full stop accords it a greater degree of significance and prominence by intonation. This structure is deliberate, enabling the administration to present its communicative goal clearly, emotively and forcefully. The use of monosyllabic words all through makes the promise sound sincere and genuine, suggesting that the promise to do a lot more is non-negotiable and as basic as the words that encode it.

Syntactic Foregrounding

The most palpable foregrounding technique found in the data is parallel construction. At the level of syntax, parallelism occurs when

constituents within the sentence or successive sentences have equivalent or near equivalent syntactic patterns or are begun with the same lexical item for rhetoric effect. Parallelism may constitute an internal deviation from the code created in the text or may be a non-deviation type that draws attention to itself.

Instances of structural parallelism abound in the data as demonstrated in the following:

I thank all the **people** who worked for our party, **who campaigned and who voted for us** (8). I thank my fellow **Nigerians**, **who**, since 2003 have consistently **voted for me** (9).

The excerpt numbered 8 and 9 has two structurally equivalent sentences which can be represented as Subject + Verb + Object (SVO). The main clauses underlined have near verbatim or direct parallelism. Each is in a syntagmatic relationship with an embedded rank-shifted relative clause qualifying the head of the noun phrase (NG) functioning as the object depicted in bold face. The structure of the NG object in (8) is *modifier + modifier + head + qualifier + qualifier + qualifier (MMHQQQ)* while that of 9 is *modifier + modifier + head + qualifier (MMHQ)*. The *Q* constituent – the relative clause – deserves further analysis: The internal structure of the *Qs* in 8 is the same: Subject + Verb + Adjunct, while the structure in 9 has internal deviation: an adjunct occurs to the left and to the right of the auxiliary verb. This internal deviation is targeted at foregrounding the fact that some Nigerians have believed in the speaker's vision and consistently voted for him for two terms. Furthermore, both the NG objects and their qualifiers do not only share internal syntactic parallelism but also belong to the same semantic field, having expressed synonymous propositions. The synonymy derives from the fact that since only Nigerian citizens participated in the election the NGs *All the people* and *my fellow Nigerians* have the same referent. However, the parallel construction suggests that while the two NGs are semantically general, the second NG has an extra emotive effect of implying a fraternal bond between the speaker and the addressees. Furthermore, the verbs *worked*, *campaigned*, and *voted* (twice) in the relative clauses are in a paradigmatic relationship of synonymy with each other within the field of discourse, sharing the semantic feature [+support]. Thus, the pattern repetition and the elaborate postmodification of the head nouns place the message on the

forefront of the hearer's mind. The elocutionary effect is that it foregrounds the gratitude of the President and delineates the special class of Nigerian citizens worthy of the presidential thanks for their unflinching support. The repetition creates rhetorical emphasis that elicits special hearer attention and prolongs the memorability of the message.

In another excerpt:

I have worked and served in ... (16). Throughout my adult life, I have been a public servant (17). I have no other career but public service (18). I know no service but public service (19).

Four simple sentences are stylistically employed in close succession with carefully chosen and arranged lexical items to foreground the patriotism of the speaker and portray him as a humble servant deeply committed to serving Nigeria. To achieve this illocutionary goal, the imagery of life-long-selfless service is foregrounded both syntactically and semantically. The repetitive positioning of the first-person singular pronoun clause initial has a rhetoric undertone. It is suggestive of the intention to foreground the speaker's personal disposition to service. Beard corroborates this view when he writes that "Pronoun reference is always important in putting over a piece of political persuasion" (23-24). The repetition of *public* and *service* and the parallel use of the near synonyms *worked* and *served* are thus not linguistically neutral but are stylistically motivated. Furthermore, the stylistic significance of the brevity that characterizes the simple sentences embodying the message is that it gives the message a frenetic rhetorical and persuasive effect. The illocutionary goal of convincing the audience that the speaker has been a devoted, altruistic public servant is therefore pursued by using pattern and lexical repetition to capture attention and nudge the decoder to think deeper. The extra linguistic effort made is intended to emotively portray the speaker as having national interests and love of country, Nigeria.

The stylistic significance of using simple sentences to foreground a message is again demonstrated in the excerpt below:

This task is by no means unattainable (53). China has done it (54). India has done it (55). Indonesia has done it (56). Nigeria can do it (57). China and Indonesia succeeded under

authoritarian regimes(59). India succeeded**in a democratic setting**(60). We can do it (61).

The co-textual context of 53-62 captures an unusual array of ten simple sentences used in succession. The seven sentences presented from the lot are deliberately short making them more frenetic, urgent, and thought-provoking. In the context of the sentences, the speaker addresses the spate of insecurity ravaging the country in the form of Boko Haram, kidnappings and banditry, linking it to the former regime and trying to convince the citizens that the present government has recorded giant strides in curtailing the menace. In a bid to underscore the huge progress claimed and to urge the citizens to join hands in pushing it further, a lot of linguistic energy is deployed by way of pattern repetition and parallelism to foreground the potential of the nation to overcome the emasculating security and economic challenges that seem daunting and to assure the electorate that if other countries that faced similar situations succeeded, Nigerian can. This observation corroborates Leech's view that "... repetition is a fundamental if primitive device of intensification.... it presents a simple emotion with force. It may further suggest a suppressed intensity of feeling – an imprisoned feeling, as it were, for which there is no outlet but a repeated hammering at the confining walls of language" (78).

The most profound feature noticed at first glance in the excerpt is that the verb phrase in the first three sentences and that of the fourth and seventh are composed of verbatim repetition. This sort of parallelism is multimodal, being realized by graphological, phonological, lexical and syntactic repetition. The verb groups (VGs) are semantically broadly related, in that each has the feature [+ability]. Besides this relatedness in meaning, five of the VGs are in a syntagmatic relationship with *it*. This implies that the avowed ability is focused on the same tasks of economic emancipation and maintaining Nigeria's unity, denoted by *it*. Although distinct tasks, the two are referred to as *it* to underpin their complementarity. Although the noun phrase subjects are varied, they form a semantic compound. Their paradigmatic relationship with each other draws a foregrounded nexus between Nigeria's mutual syntactic substitutability with these developed countries with a similar background and its potential to join the league of these developed nations under the current leadership within the defined timeframe.

Additionally, the substitution of *Nigeria* with the personal pronoun *We* in (61) is a motivated choice, conveying that the predicted economic emancipation can only be feasible through collective responsibility. Thus, the pattern repetition foregrounds the communicative meaning of the excerpt. Also, the adjuncts in bold in (59) and (60) has two antonymous lexical items in paradigmatic relation, which sets up an equivalence of contrast to hammer home the point that the actualization of the feat sought is inexcusable for Nigeria, having been in the same sort of authoritative and democratic regimes. The antonymous relation between the two modifiers brings the phenomena to the fore, making them more potently perceived.

Many other aspects of the speech are brought to the fore court of the reader's/hearer's mind through pattern repetition. Examples are:

It still takes too long for goods ... (76). It still takes too long for goods ... (77).

A database of **poor and vulnerable households** ... (82). A database of **unemployed but qualified youth** ... (83).

We shall make ... (100). We shall source ... (101). We have ... (102).

We will continue to **listen to your ideas** ... (110). We will continue to **count on your support** ... (112)

I also thank **the labour unions** ... (111). I especially thank **our traditional leaders** ... (113).

The sentences have patterns of equivalence within equivalent constituents. Underlining is used to indicate verbatim equivalence and anaphora while bold is used for structural equivalence. The equivalence of similarity demonstrated in the textual patterning of the above excerpts is salient and significantly motivated to create a foregrounding effect. It depicts clear cases of de-automatized use of language targeted at rhetoric emphasis and aesthetic effect. This proves that a writer/speaker can go to great length to devise elaborate linguistic parallelisms to intensify his message, which underpins Eliot's explicit recognition that every creative writer wrestles with words and meanings in order to convey his unique vision (Cited in Yanksonp. 15). The intriguing over-regularity elicits the attention of the text recipient and prolongs the processing of the message with implication for enhancing its perception and persuasive effect.

Semantic Foregrounding

We have touched on the lexical relation of synonymy in which lexical items that belong to the same semantic field are used to achieve syntactic parallelism. Another type of foregrounding in the text is the parallelism of two diametrically opposed phenomena (antonymic relation) as seen earlier in “...succeeded under **authoritarian** regimes (59). ...succeeded in a **democratic** setting (60). In excerpt 8 below the problems associated with three key national issues: economic inequality, insecurity and corruption, which the government has identified as “three cardinal and existential challenges of our country” (45) are aptly presented by setting up equivalent structures with relationships of similarity and contrast to show the intersection within the phenomena.

When economic inequality **rises**, insecurity **rises** (88). But when we actively **reduce** inequality ..., insecurity **reduces** (89). ... **if you fight corruption, corruption will fight back...** (97). nationwide development **cannot occur** from Abuja alone; **it must occur** at States (103). ... The Nigerian economy **rises** and **falls** on the strength of your investments and productivity (109).

There are also many instances of semantic deviation arising from non-literal use of language to drive home the point and provoke the decoder to think analogously. Examples are

“Elsewhere, Nigeria is **the Big Brother** to our neighbours. We are the **shock-absorber** of the West African sub-region, the **bulwark** of ECOWAS and Lake Chad Basin Commission” (40- 41).

“When I took the oath of office on 29th May 2015, insecurity **reigned**” (47).

“...to maintain our unity ...**lift the bulk of our people out of poverty and onto the road to prosperity**” (52).

“This Administration is laying the foundation and taking bold steps in transforming our country and liberating our people from the **shackles** of poverty” (67).

“...to rebuild and reposition our country as the **heartbeat** and reference point for our continent” (72).

All the above expressions are metaphors, which supports Christopher

Awonuga's claim that metaphor, especially metaphors of sports and war, is one of the major characteristics of political speech (33). Paul Ricoeur in Akwanya sees metaphor as "any shift from literal to figurative sense" (259). This usage employs organized labour to defamiliarize phenomena in order to heighten their aesthetic appeal, prolong their processing in the mind and deepen their perception. For instance, the first metaphor distorts our familiar awareness of the peace-keeping role Nigeria has played in other West African countries by subtly comparing this role to the way an elder brother protects younger siblings from any external threat. Thus, Nigeria is accorded the status of "the big brother", "the shock-absorber", and "the bulwark" (a more mature, developed, strong and virile nation) helping younger siblings who are less strong or advanced in age and experience. The utility of the metaphor is that it enables the hearer to visualize in his mind's eye the fraternal bond between Nigeria and other West African countries, which seems to justify why the country expends huge scarce resources on peace missions undeterred by potential harsh consequences on the nation.

The findings show that the relevant linguistic levels at which foregrounding occurs in the speech are phonology, syntax and semantics; and that foregrounding manifests in form of linguistic deviation and parallelism. The specific devices of deviation and parallelism identified in the data substantiate Emmot and Alexander's assertion that foregrounding is achieved through an array of stylistic devices within the linguistic levels such as repetition, odd punctuation, over-specification, interesting vocabulary and grammatical choices, striking similes and metaphors, unusual text layouts, among others (290). Of all the foregrounding devices in the speech, structural parallelism constitutes the foremost linguistic constructional device deployed. The parallelism is manifested via an interaction of the linguistic levels in an assortment of marked, complex ways. The overtly marked linguistic construction drives the text recipient to be aware that some meaning deeper than what is semantically encoded must be sought thereby activating their inferential radar. This approach to text interpretation breaches the unconscious and automatic processing typical of normal linguistic codes. The unusual is wont to attract our conscious attention and interrupt normal processing and perception of the message.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the lexical and syntactic choices made in presidential speeches are not perfunctory but are shaped by the discourse goals of the speaker. Given that the speaker wants to influence the perception of the audience to win their confidence, sustain their loyalty and spur them to decisive actions, the speaker is bound to draw from his linguistic cache the most effective resources to achieve his goals. The interplay between linguistic form and content induces the reader to think deeper and construct their own unique interpretation of the text based on linguistic evidence.

Works Cited

Abiodun, Jombadi and Zakariyah Moshood. 'Style and National Integration: An Analysis of President Muhammadu Buhari's Post 2015 Presidential Election Speech'. *TAJ: Journal of English Language Literature and Culture*, vol. 3, no 3, 2017, pp.2-19.

Abuya, Eromosele John. A Pragma-Stylistic Analysis of President GoodluckEbele Jonathan's Inaugural Speech'. *English Language Teaching*, vol.5, no. 11, 2012, pp. 8-15.

Akwanya, Amechi. *Semantics and Discourse: Theories of Meaning and Textual Analysis*. Acena, 1996.

Alazawi, Sarab Khaleil. 'A Foregrounding Analysis of E. E. Cumming's 'next to of course god america'' *مجلة كلية الآداب / العدد 91*, pp.31-46, University of Baghdad.

Awonuga, Christopher. 'What Does this Text Mean? Stylistics and the Process of Interpretation.' *Covenant University 8th Inaugural Lecture*. Covenant University Press, 2017.

Azuike, Macpherson. 'Style: Theories and Practical Application'. *Language Science Journal*, vol. 14, nos. 1-2, 1992, pp. 109-127.

Beard, A. *The Language of Politics*. Routledge, 2000.

Bolarinwa, Olusanya Ray. 'A Stylistic Analysis Language of Politics in the Acceptance Speech of President Goodluck Jonathan.' *International Journal of Research in Education Studies*, vol.2, no.12, 2016, pp. 37-46.

Butt, David and Annabelle Lukin. 'Stylistic Analysis: Construing Aesthetic Organization.' *Continuum Companion to Systemic Functional Linguistics*, (Eds) by Halliday, M.A.K. and Jonathan J. Webster, Continuum, 2009.

Emmott, Catherine and Marc Alexander. 'Defamiliarization and Foregrounding: Representing Experiences of Change of State and Perception in Neurological Illness Autobiographies.' *The Bloomsbury Companion to Stylistics*, (Eds) by Violeta Sotirova, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, pp. 289-308.

Gregoriou, Christiana. 'The Linguistic Levels of Foregrounding in Stylistics'. *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*, (Eds) by Michael Burke, Routledge, 2014, pp. 87-100.

Halliday, Michael A.K. and Christian Matthiessen. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 3rd ed., Hodder Education, 2004.

Hasan, Ruqaiya. 'The Place of Context in a Systemic Functional Model'. *Continuum Companion to Systemic Functional Linguistics*, (Eds) by Halliday, M.A.K. and Jonathan J. Webster. Continuum, 2009.

Koutchade, Innocent. 'Discourse Analysis of General Buhari's Official Acceptance Speech: A Systemic Functional Perspective.' *International Journal of English Linguistics*, vol. 5, no 5, 2015.

Leech, Geoffrey and Michael Short. *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. Longman, 1984.

Miall, D. and Kuiken, D. *Foregrounding, Defamiliarization, and*

Affect: Response to Literary Stories (1st ed.). University of Alberta, 1994. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?>

Okafor, Virginia C. and Gloria U. Issife. 'Mood and Modality in Nigeria's President Mohammadu Buhari's Inaugural Speech: A Stylistic Study.' *International Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, vol. 6, no 5, 2017, pp.27-40.

Simpson, Paul. *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2004.

Leech, Geoffrey. *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. Longman, 1980.

Wales, Katie. *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. 2nd ed. Longman, 2001.

Yankson, Kofi I. *An Introduction to Literary Stylistics*. Pacific Publishers, 1987.