

POETRY AS A DRESS OF POLITICAL THOUGHT: A COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC EXPLORATION OF TEXTUALITY AND STYLE OF SOME CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN POLITICAL POETS

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Abstract

This paper investigates how style and textuality are integral parts in ensuring how poetry/songs are products of thought formation and keys to meaning making and gaining political popularity. The study is content and qualitative-based through which investigative spectrum focuses on the modalities and manner in which textuality and meaning making mechanisms like style, language, mental thoughts are amalgamated to achieve artistic integrity. The methodology of this study is straightforward as it uses data form audio documented songs in CDs and downloads from YouTube. A total number of poems are selected out of which five are from Rara and the remaining four from Ningi. In this work, Greenaerts and Cuyckens (2007) linguistic and social significations are used as analytical models. The investigation unveils series of textual and stylistic uniqueness of the poems and of the artists. Finally, the finding shows that Rarara's songs, as against Ningi's PDP, are more of attributing positive qualities to people in the politics than the party. This altogether probes how people are more than their party. Rarara also utilises language skilfully and resourcefully.

Keywords: Political Poets, Poetry, Textuality, Cognitive Linguistics, Style, Northern Nigerian Politics

Introduction

Prior to 1999, there was a proliferation of apathy in democracy which was connected with the serial coup d'état and sharp decay of political morale by our leaders. However, the situation has changed and one of the main factors has been the involvement of songs and singers in the political career or tradition. For instance, in the northern Nigeria where Hausa language is predominant, there has been a good number of Hausa political singers whose role can never be undermined. Two of such political singers is Dauda Kahutu, popularly known as Rarara and Haruna Aliyu Ningi. This study, thus, attempts to investigate and examine the cognitive insights of the textual formations and styles of these two singers. This is because their artistic works exhibit mental and artistic skills. By virtue of their artistic perspectives, the two poets (the former of APC and the latter of PDP) converge and diverge in so many instances. The focus of this work here does not hold on the style alone but how the style creates impression in affecting the political belief of the general public.

Many arguments are persistently raised as to whether or not Nigerian politics or other socio-cultural heritages can exist without song or any other act of singing. This means, songs serve and occupy great role as communicative vehicles in disseminating ideas and depicting literary qualities of artists. In politics, for example, it has become a tradition or necessity of patronizing singers in order to gain audience, achieving popularity, attacking opponents and selling party manifestoes. The songs are seen as among the basic tools for wider political mobilization and as tools of victory. For example, history will not forget great political poets like Saadu Zungur, Mudi Sipikin, Gambo Hawaja, Tijjani Tukur, Naibi Wali, Akilu Aliyu, and Zukogi in

depicting unique political trend. There is another category of northern poets who are distinct from the above English poets. They include Mamman Vatsa, Abubakar Othman, Idris Okpanachi, Ismaila Bala and Aissatu Magai. This reveals that the act of singing in politics has been a long-term tradition. For example, in the first republic, singers participated in the party politics through which many politicians prospered politically and even won elections. This tradition has persisted up to the present time where politicians rely on contemporary and popular singers.

Logically, every commitment to singing or composing poetry relies on the power or role of language, being it spoken, written, sign language or any other forms of communication. Looking at this linguistic quality, it is convenient to say that language of politics is not an exception as it is characterized with varied attributes such as idiosyncrasies and artistic genre. In their view for example, Rozina and Carapetjana (2009: 113) claim that,

Linguistic manipulation can be considered as an influential instrument of political rhetoric because political discourse is primality focused on persuading people to take specified political actions or to make critical political decisions. To convince the potential electorate in present time societies, poetics historically dominates the mass media, which leads to creating new forms of linguist manipulations, e.g., modified forms of press conferences and press statements, updated texts in slangs, application of catch phrases, phrasal allusions, the connotative meanings of words, a combination of language and visual imagery. To put it differently, language plays a significant ideological role because it is an instrument by means of which the manipulative intents of politicians become apparent.

Political and linguistic propositions as acknowledged by Yusuf, A. Y. et al (2017: 32) apparently indicate Nigeria nature of political and artistic heritages. The study views that the use of language is seen as not only a means of communication alone but as an instrument to interact or transact in various situations conventionally recognized as political environment. However, there is no one-to-one agreement between the language and its covert or overt meaning as the usage is characterized by rhetoric grandiloquence or bombast, cloudy vagueness or linguistic exuberance, innuendos, exaggeration, lies, scathing remarks and verbal violence, Adedimeji (2005).

Conceptual/Topical and Authorial Review

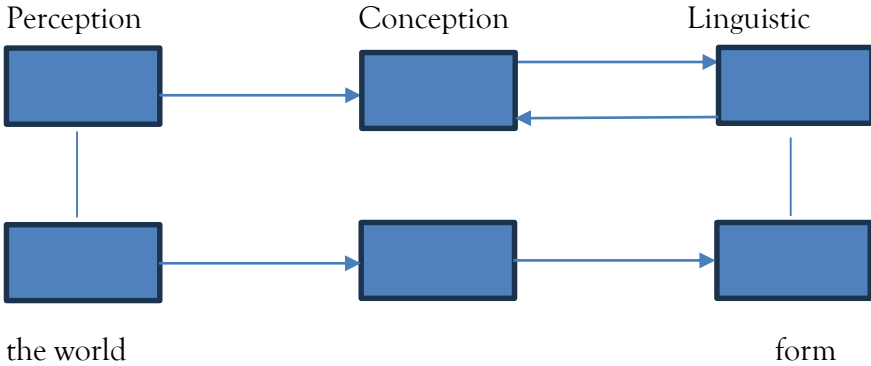
Most of the discernible channels of poetry or songs are through mental efforts of assessment and which are conveyed through linguistic interpretative models. The Linguistic area that spearheads the study of these thoughts and inner parts of human mental posture of language is cognitive linguistics. In this field, contributions are proposed and the topmost concern across the layers of the postulation focuses on how language and mental image are fused together and make meaning out of interactive display of conceptions and perceptions of ideas. Greenaerts and Cuyckens (2007) put that the thrust of language or what is generally known as cognitive linguistics is to see language as an instrument for organizing, processing and conveying information. In this, language is embedded in the overall cognitive capacities. However, this cognitive construct is formed by concepts which do not simply float around randomly in the mind. Through this scope, there are the relationships between words and their corresponding concepts described by structural semantics. Various hypothetical insights are raised as to how language is seen and used. These are: language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty; grammar is conceptualization and Knowledge of language is emerged from language use. This brings

together the interwoven relationship among language grammar, language use and perceptual knowledge.

All aspects of the grammatical expression of a situation involve CONCEPTUALIZATION. The role of conceptualization in language, here, is clearest when a single language provides alternative expressions for what appears to be truth in functionally equivalent situation. Going by the above description, language and any art of speech depend on conceptualization and speech comprehension or what Fillmore (1986) calls *perceptual metaphor*. He uses metaphor here to describe the understanding process: a speaker produces words and construction in a text as tools for a particular activity, namely to evoke a particular understanding; the hearer's task is to figure out the activity whose tools were intended to invoke that understanding.

Theoretical Models and Method of Data Study

Greenaerts and Cuyckens (2007)'s *Perception and Social Networks* and Lakoff (1987)'s *Communication System Network Identification* are used. From these standpoints, it can be deduced that cognitive linguistics is not a 'theory' but a 'movement' which has diverse range of complementary overlapping, there is common agreement on the general understanding of how perception of concepts, processing the concepts and how the perceptual patterning determine the communicative outputs. Below is graphical schemata and illustrative formats of symbolic nature of language:



Greenaerts and Cuyckens (2007) demonstrate the possible relationship manifested in processing of speech and determining meaning. First the sound is perceived indiscriminately which is later transformed in the mental bulk of the processor and finally come up with meaning. The meaning however is either contextually or noncontextually regulated. This is depended on the surrounding factors of the speech act. In order to showcase the extent of unitary flexibility of the above schemas, Lakoff (1987) illustrates in his *Communication System Network Identification* the analytical models through which cognitive insight of language is addressed. This includes as:

- Space up, down, left
- Scale/ empty, full, content, container
- Force balance, blockage, restraint
- Unity merging, collection, spilling
- Identity/ matching, removal, bounded spar existent

These two theoretical models probe how scientific frameworks are not just sets of concepts, models and techniques but are tools consisting of people, activities and channels of communication. From these attributive layers of conceptual description, as proposed by

Geeraerts and Cycney (2007), there is a full-blown demarcation of thoughts into *functional principles of linguistic organization* (iconicity and naturalness) and *categorization* (prototypicality and semantic polysemy). In each stanza, the boldface is the translated English version of the original Hausa songs

Dauda Kahutu Rarara- APC Songs

Da musulmai har da kiristoci
 Our Christians and muslims
 Har damaa duka addinai
 All people from all the religion
 Kudu da arewa yare duk mu aje banbanci
 Our northerners, all should shun tribalism

In this song, Rarara exhibits unique poetic content when compared it with his contemporary. This genre comes with linguistic and behavioural equations or what is technically called binary opposition, e.g. such as in Muslim/Christian, and north and south. His artistic commitment to call people to the right political path irrespective of religion, region and ethnic class guarantees his art to gain special pattern of structure and function, and this is stylistically rational, and this stimulates sense of communal belonging. One of the mental effects of this poetic formulae of binarism is to showcase mastery of language and how each lexeme share semantic relationship with its corresponding pair. In this, Rarara is mindfully open to how each upright society is expected to abide by changes in political doctrines and prioritization of personal choices between right and wrong or between good and bad candidate. Furniss in Abdu and Bhadmus (2008) discloses that Northern Nigeria is foremost a political creation that has socio-cultural, religious, geographical and other connotations. On this view, Rarara was able to clear the limitless barriers to unison entity.

BABA BUHARI UBAN GAYYA-REFRAIN (Baba Buhari
the spearheaded)

Sai Baba Buhari (Up Buhari)

Sai Buhari sai Baba (We are behind Buhari, our father)

Dodar ta tabbata (We actualize continuity)

Each of the stanzas is accompanied by a refrain which also makes the songs/poems more melodious. In displaying their forms, the refrains have a common disposition i.e. of referring to Buhari as Baba, i.e. by attributing Buhari as hilariously indefatigable figure. Thus, Buhari occupies the mental space of the audience, and this is due excessive respect. In this, there is contextual recoverability but is less gainful in the cognitive translation of reality. For example, there is connected relation between the cultural background of Hausa which relates Baba to old age, calibre and known for his impeccable character (as well argued). Cognitively, Rarara is artistically modest in instilling the cognitive window through which Buhari, as party presidential flag bearer, is seen as messiah and political fallible. This has close reference of language as mental conveyance and as a tool for emotional expression, hope and admiration. In view of this, it is basic to note that Cognitive semanticists like Vyvyan (2008) are of the view that language becomes extremely functional only if its grammatical resources have referential effect. For instance, Conceptual Metaphor Theory-CMT and Cognitive Semantics-CS in the representation power as used by Rarara in seeing Buhari as Baba is connected with the behaviour as man not man as behaviour.

Hausa poems/songs are organically unique from other poems and from other Nigerian cultures for example in terms of respect to supreme God. That is why they are considered doxological. Why this often happens? Many literary critics stress that this is by the inevitability of religion in whatever cultural ramifications. The presence of religion stirs up the thematic content of selfhood, self-respect, and self-

righteousness. In the Hausa community, people believe that whatever someone is doing deserves divine intervention and failure to incline to such belief amounts to taboo or blasphemous acts.

To achieve literary beautification, Rarara is known for excessive proverbial art. None of his poems is devoid of proverbs which usually ridicule or satirize their political opponents. This underscores the inextricable relationship of language, style, poetry and politics. Poets see it imperative to defeat their political opponents by impinging them with debased and moral-molestation expressions. For instance, in *Ganduje a Next Level*, he excessively attacks, perhaps, one of the APC opponents by calling him *Tsula* (a specie of monkey), and referring someone with deceptive mind but appearing as salient gentle man.

kubar tsula a next level (we should distant red monkey from the race) masu sitatinga a chanjasu (those in flamboyant dresses should be changed)

This stanza enables Rarara gain massive public audience and at the same time attacks political opponents. In another instance, he called one PDP member as *burgu*-a rodent which in Hausa societal setting, a rodent is characterized with thievery, destruction, mischiefs and other ill-mannered acts. Thus, he informs the public that such people with rodent character are corrupt and disastrous while APC as kindred party and its people are free from corrupt practices. In a survey I conducted, I discovered that 74.92% of Rarara's audience stand in this belief.

It is not surprising that Rarara is dexterous in his verbal art by ensuing stern effort to meet his audience and sell out ideas in an easy and comprehensible manner. In addition to the regular poetic agencies, he developed in his poems, shifted ground by lexical and semantic borrowings from English language such as next-level, *doje* from the word *dodge*, *propaganda*, *corruption* and *general*. He exemplifies such manifestations as above in *Ganduje a next level*,

Yan propaganda da su nake (I am referring to those propagandists)

Duk wanda ya karbi advance ya maida masu (They should return the bribe they collected)

Perhaps, Rarara's use of English vocabulary, which is a manifestation of linguist borrowing meant to extol the virtue of literacy of the present poets, or is another bulk of poetic stimulants deployed in ensuring him unique. This might be very common in most of the literary arts of our culture i.e. borrowing or code switching from one language to another or from one code to another code.

The poetic trend of Rarara can be subjected to in one instance as didactic representation and to another allegorical. He cites in so many verses lessons on social, political, religious and other humanitarian morals. He even compares equates the spirit of nationhood and patriotism as worships and as acts of religious sacrifice.

Kishi na kasa ibadane (Patriotism is a worship)

Ni naga wasu duk sun manta (But some have forgotten that)

Although Rarara is not a theological singer nor a freelance or court singer but ensures that general populace need sense of belonging that will guarantee them to modest life; life that is free from heinous acts.

Haruna Aliyu Ningi- PDP Songs

Refrain

PDP jamiyyar abunso a zukata (PDP, a party that attracts innermost love)

Mutanen naajeriya ku taso ku riketa (We Nigerians should have it embracement)

Na ce Bisimillahi Allah Makadaici (I start with the glorification of the holy God)

PDP ce sarauniyar duka jamiyyu (PDP is the queen of all political parties)

Mu dauketa don zata goyamu marayu (We need it because of its readiness to honor us)

There is unarguable common doctrine in the art of singing between Ningi and Rarara, however this does not mean they differ distinctly. Instead of Ningi to ridicule others or political rivals, he keeps on what Furniss and Wath (1966:10) refer to as focusing on questions about sincerity, feeling, emotional response and profundity of insight. The linearization modality provokes specific effect which indicates organic relationship between form and content. And this invokes poetic expression through deep-rooted preconception. Of course, Ningi's work is purely artistic by virtue of structural and functional outlooks. For instance, PDP is associated with of metaphor of *queen* and which glorifies its existence amidst success. He tailored the theme of beauty on the tenor of Gestal Reader Impression which stresses on the power of conceptualized mental abstractness. Schkolovsky 1917 in Furniss and Wath (1966) brings this view to the front view of beauty in artistic theorization and execution. He confers that the role of art in general is to remove the veil of familiarity which reaches idealization. This indicates the high-layered flexibility of the poem, and as inherent invocation that he meant not a thing but many things.

Bana hakkin mune mu kare matalauta (This is our time to protect our masses)

Da ga cin zalin mai kudi da mahukunta (From injustice of rich people and constituted authorities)

Admittedly, Aliyu Ningi exemplifies extreme cognitive signification and stimulation of language and of poem which is sending information of pole A to pole B. In view of this, the poem is befitting

in agreeing to serve as communicative exchanges of ideas, processes and products. Through this discourse fitness, Ningi is able to extend to the accomplishment of Jackson (1982) communicative functions of communication; *poetic, emotive, conative* and *referential*.

The poet is not only confined to exhibiting the PDP's ideologies but lamenting on the context that favours its emergence. In the poetic effort, he expresses dismay is political decency and righteousness. Righteousness and decency in the sense that, leaders are expected to be upright and responsive but the case differed as the then politics was militarized and squarely turned to autocratic.

The success of PDP was negotiable in legalizing the ill-gotten treasure of the public and wrath of democracy in which people were molested and castigated and the humanness nature is no longer viable.

Gari ya waye idon mutanenmu a bude (We should reawaken our people from slumber)

Mu dau PDP da safe da maraice (We should consider PDP in the dusk and the dawn)

A she yanci bai zukatan mahukunta (Our leaders are not ready to entrench us our right)

PDP shegiyar uwa (PDP the cursed mother)

rabbi~~~~~ (doxology)

In the formation or analysis of Northern Nigerian poems, there is strong respect and acknowledgment of religion. Perhaps, this tradition has long standing heritage. Furniss (1996) disclosed that northern poems and poets are tagged with incessant social and religious themes. He adds that since Islam involves not only theological spectrum but a socio-cultural or political issue, most of the poems tend to have a didactic tenor of moralizing. Why then Ningi for example dwells on theological belief, many contend that northern Hausa culture is a replica and an emblem of Afro-Arab/Muslim nature.

Yanzu jamiyya ta zama jaiba Now the party is becoming
disaster)
Ta kasha iyayenta har da yayanta kanana It stabbed its
stalwarts and forefathers)
Jamiyyarmuce mu mukace a bita (We waged campaigns for
its victory)
Mun zubar da tsarinmu na manufarta (The party loses its
initial manifestos)
Kan ta kar kasar gara kasar ta karta (Before it kills the
country let us see its end)
Jamiyyar da baa zabe cikinta (The party that now lacks
internal security)

In order for Ningi to impact the conscience and mental doctrine of the support people have for PDP, he lambasts the party of its indecency and violation of ethics. In the poem, there are zero or few citations of where the party violates its relationship with the electorate but with the party card members which has to do with intrinsic politics. He surrendered himself by being disillusioned and hopeless in safeguarding the political modesty of the party.

Conclusion

The study has sought so many linguistic, stylistic and idiosyncratic qualities of the two popular and giant political poets. At some levels, these poets have commonplace artistic essence such as in ensuring gaining audience through melodious tracks. This is not alone but how the duo dexterously use language to demarcate and create quite a number of political and social impressions to the wider audience. However, there are reasonable points of distinctiveness' of the poets and the poems. For instance, Rarara is tactically robust and linguistically resourceful by lexical borrowing (essentially from English)

and through which he uses wide range of neologism, adequate use of rarely used words which make his songs aesthetically oriented and which covers time, culture and artistic gain. Rarara also has attributed his works using extreme metaphorical and other aphorisms of language. On the other hand, Ningi is tactically salient in maintaining the voters and voted relationship. There is rarely metaphorical expression but plenty of words that show hope, admiration, and cultivating of communalist notion of self and otherness.

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