

# LANGUAGE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: A SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF MAMSER CAMPAIGN TEXTS

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## **Abstract**

*The mass mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) was an agency setup by the military administration of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida to sensitize and create political awareness towards creating a new political consciousness amongst Nigerians. This work examines the syntactic analysis of the sampled speeches with a view to identifying and describing syntactic structures within the framework of syntactic analysis. It also considers how some relevant semantic features such as word structure, word meaning, as well as sentence meaning co-occur in the texts and their possible stylistic effects are examined in relation to their contributions to effective communication.*

In order to achieve a deeper insight into the style of MAMSER Campaign speeches, a syntactic analysis of three related speeches is attempted. Syntactic analysis employs a scheme prepared by Crystal and Davy (1974). The scheme provides a means of identifying and describing syntactic structures within the frame work of stylistics analysis.

The speeches analyzed are Phase 1(AkwaIbom (8 pages), Kaduna/Kwara (5 pages) and Phase 11: Rivers (12 pages).

## **Data Analysis/Results**

Syntactic analysis employs the following structural descriptions: Sentences are described as simple, compound, complex or mixed depending on their internal structure i.e. the number and kind of clauses they contain. There are two element of sentence structure. The *obligatory alpha element*  $\alpha$  and the *optional beta element*  $\beta$ . The compound sentence consists of at least two clauses while the simple sentence is made up of only one  $\alpha$  clause.

A complex sentence consists of at least one  $\alpha$  clause and at least one  $\beta$  clause. The mixed type sentence consists of at least one  $\beta$  clause. In addition, reference is made to traditional contextual types of sentences, to enable the researcher comment on modality: declaratives, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory.

Clauses are described in terms of their elements: subject(s), predicator (p), complement (c) of which a number of types exist: extensive complement (e), intensive complement (c') and the z-element, so designated because it performs at one and the same time functions usually assigned to 5 elements of clause structure and adjunct (A). Nominal groups (N) are analyzed into the elements, modifier headword (h) and qualifier (q), where necessary, the verbal group (v), is analyzed in to the elements auxiliary (a), lexical (L), and extension (e).

Adverbial groups (Ad) are analyzed into their elements preprend (p) and completer (c).

The syntactic analysis presented in this study provides an insight into syntactic simplicity or complexity of grammatical speeches at the various level of description.

### **Inter Sentential Connection**

The speaker uses mostly the definite article, reiteration of lexical items and adverbial contrast to relate structure and meaning from one sentence to the other. Only very rarely is the anaphoric 'this' or 'it' is used, as the following examples show: Example (a):

We appeal especially to public officers who might be called upon to assist NEC in the administration of the forth coming elections, to please ensure justice, and fair play. The question of ensuring free and fair election lies at the core of peaceful transition to a durable and stable democracy (emphasis mine) (KD/KW;I). The definite article 'the' in conjunction with the meaning of 'ensuring free and fair election' refers back to the idea expressed in the first sentence contained in the words: 'to please ensure justice and fair play' the item 'ensure' is repeated but with a change in form, while 'free and fair' in the second sentence replaces and reiterates 'justice and fair play' in the first sentence.

### **Example (b)**

Wide spread ignorance of the masses clearly contributes to the collapse of democracy in the past. *Therefore* the aim of our political education programmed, is to ensure an

*enlightened conscious and vigilant electorate* which is the foundation for democracy (AK:3).

‘Therefore’ constitutes an adverbial contrast expressing the kind of relationship between the second sentence and the first.

Furthermore, the first, second and the third sentences are connected by the masses in the first sentence which becomes an ... electorate in the second and third.

Also, ‘democracy’ in the first sentence is repeated in the third.

But while the first sentence has ‘collapse of democracy’ the third speaks of ‘genuine democracy’.

Once again the sentences are bound together by contrast and the two sides of the argument brought out more forcefully and clearly.

## **Sentences**

### **Sentence Length**

Sentences vary in length from three to about fifty words, while an average sentence length is approximately twenty-four. The longer sentences are discursive in nature and occur in descriptive, explanatory or narrative portions of the texts. The shorter sentences range in function from exclamatory (especially of the formulaic kind).

Eg. Enough is enough!

So help us God!

(AK:4)

Get involved now! (RV;5)

Portions of short sentences and of long are mixed in such a way as to produce an overall variety in texture and in tempo through changes of pace, which makes for lively reading and interesting listening as the following discursive lines are checked by the shorter, which again ease off into longer sentences.

### **Sentence Types**

The large percentage of sentences are declarative (89%, while imperatives account for 10%). Exclamatory sentences make up the rest and interrogatives are completely absent, as the following table shows;

**Table 2.1: Sentences: Functional Types**

	AK	KD/KW	RV	TOTAL	%
Declarative	71	33	93	197	89
Imperative	5	4	13	22	10
Exclamatory	1	1	1	3	1
Interrogative	0	0	0	0	0
Total	77	38	222	222	100

The declaratives correspond loosely with the longer discursive sentences and imperative and exclamatory types with a shorter. However, directive types may also be found in longer constructions, as in the obligatory use of ‘must’ in;

All Nigerians of voting age (i.e. 18 years and above) must go to their nearest registration centre to cross-check and ensure that their names are on the voters register, and report cases of fraud, double registration and case of fictitious names appearing in the voters register in their areas. (RV;3).

Since the sentences described here are written to be spoken, it is in order that not many sentences are found.

Only one minor sentence, which is also complete, occurs here identified as C of the verb to say in:

MAMSER appeals to the Nigerian Press to resolve to say No to all forms of manipulations... (AK;7).

The judicious mixture of long and short sentences, which enables the speaker to regulate impacts, the predominance of simple declarative sentences, the fair representation of simple to complex imperatives, all contribute to communicative effectiveness in the oral medium.

## **Clauses**

### **Clause Types**

Most clauses examined here are of the independent kind as is expected from the predominance of simple sentences: Besides adverbial clause of condition eg.

*If a banned politician holds an office in you political association, your association will not be registered as a political party (RV;5)*

Comment Clauses:

*As you are well aware, the voters register... (RV;2). You’ll agree with me that, henceforth, youths shall cease to be... lepers (RV;2).*

Clauses of reason also occur;

*This is because political parties are not limited liability companies to be owned by a few wealthy “shareholders” (AK;4).*

The table below shows the distribution of beta clause types:

**Table 2 Clauses: Distribution and Types of Beta Clause.**

	AK	KD/KW	RV	TOTAL	%
Reason	2	0	2	4	9
Comment	4	3	12	19	44
Condition	5	2	13	20	47
Total	11	5	27	43	100

An examination of the arrangement of elements of clause structure (s) P (c) (A) reveals a rich variety of patterns, clauses, having their elements arranged in the unmarked SPCA sequence makeup 61% of the alpha and the beta types. Seven percent are of the ASPC type with adverbial occurring in clause initial position and 32% of the SAPC type with adverbial occurring in medial position in clause structure. The ASPC structure produces suspense by teasing the listener, and asking him to store information.

Instead of self-reliance and creative productivity, we have had slavish dependence and humiliating indebtedness. (KD/Kw;4).

The frequent use of catenatives result in what may be regarded as multiple rankshifting of recursive structures. Examples of catenative used in the text are: be, have resolve, mobilize, and again, appeal to:

MAMSER appeals to all Nigerians to decisively resolve that NEVER AGAIN should elections be rigged or manipulated in this country.

Whichever analysis is used, the common factor is elaborateness of style in which much information is processed within the sentence, betraying dexterity in the use of language, while at the same time, heightening interest in delivery.

In considering semantic analysis, we examined amongst other features such as: morphological processes, connotations/denotations of lexical items and synonymous expressions, highlighting how they individually or collectively contribute to the style employed by the speaker in the texts, as well as their contribution to meaning.

## **Morphological Process**

### **Prefixation**

Most of the prefixes are of the negative kind although other kinds occur in the texts.

**un** – unrest, unemployment, unfolding, unpatriotic, unpopular.

**in** – indiscipline, inequalities, incompetent, ineffective, injustice, instability.

**de** – dehumanizing, demobilize, dis-honest, disorderly, disgraceful etc.

### **Suffixation**

As a characteristic of suffixation in the English Language, variety is more pronounced here. Derivational suffixation involves choice on the part of the language user, as such, it is considered to be more stylistically relevant than inflectional suffixation. The following examples reveal a wide range of derivational suffixes to be found in the texts -ity- Prosperity, poverty, facility, community, stability, ethnicity, accountability, responsibility.

Also, the forms ‘officer’ and ‘official’ are used interchangeably and hence, synonymously. It is believed that this was done to avoid repetition and maintain variety.

### **Compounding**

Only a few compounds are employed by the speaker, most of them of general usage eg. trustworthy, guidelines, forthcoming, life-time, crosscheck, well-known, under-aged.

*The more novel are*

People oriented, popularly-based, nationwide, get-rich-quick, partners-in-progress.

The compound ‘age-grade’ in the expression ‘youth age-grades’ (Rv:7) is perceived to be culturally motivated, or put simply, is an attempt to translate in English a uniquely African societal phenomenon. The nearest in meaning to it is ‘Peer group’ but ‘age grades’ has certain connotations of custom, ritual and states symbol in traditional Nigerian society which ‘peer group’ does not convey.

### **Functional Shift**

Functional shift is observed in only two cases in the formulaic Enough is Enough  
And in: ‘this time around’

Here ‘around’ open used as a preposition is used as an adverbial in a q position of normal group structure modifying ‘time’ a nominal, this expression tends to assume

the statics of a campaign slogan where effect on the speeches of Nigerians in a variety of contexts today, both in official and in non-official circles.

### **Metaphoric Extension**

A few examples of metaphoric extensions are also isolated for discussion in this study, such as midwives in the process of 'the birth of a new social order' (Rv:2) The example above likens the process of bringing about a new system of government through political changes amongst the people to the process of birth.

The marginalization of youths in Nigerian politics is associated with 'leprosy', the 'degeneration' of standards' is seen as 'delay' suggestive of not and an unpleasant oddur.

'Nigerian Youths' are described as the 'back bone of the country' connotating their strength, energy and resilience.

The expressions used non-literally in the above examples are:

*Midwives, birth, lepers, decay, lie, backbone, laid, foundations, shaky grounds, limited liability companies, shareholders etc.*

It is the researcher's view that metaphoric usages in the speeches are not farfetched or hard to understand for an SS2 to a university undergraduate audience, but for a mass audience as varied in exposure to figurative usage in English as the MAMSER audience was, a good proportion of the meaning could have been lost through literally interpretation, which would be a clear case of noise, resulting from the medium itself.

An examination of the vocabulary of the speeches reveals morphological processes of word formation of up to six kinds. Prefixation, suffixation, compounding, functional shift and metaphoric extension.

In addition to these, there is acronym (for example NEC, MAMSER, TV). A wide range of possibilities here would include clipping, blending, reduplication, onomatopoeic creations and coinages

### **Connotations**

It has been noted before, that words of positive connotation have the propensity of being used by the speaker to describe the gains that could be described through the following line of action advocated by him, while in describing the undesirable political

experiences in the past. Examination of lexical items reveals connotative usage to cut across grammatical class and unit as the following examples illustrate.

**Nouns, Adjectives, Adverbs, Verbs**

In addition, words are selected for their connotation of force, emphasis, insistence and obligation. As such, the choice of lexical items produces an intensifying, emphasizing teeth-gritting effect.

**Nouns:** Bitterness, underdevelopment, manipulations, mediocre.

**Adjectives:** directionless, sordid, dehumanizing, vicious, incompetent, righteous, thoroughness, violent.

**Adverb:** extremely, totally, forcefully, blatantly, clearly.

**Verb:** must pay; must raise, must not be, must never be allowed to be; must survive; cannot stand for; cannot vote; should get involved; should resolve to disseminate; (never) should allow... to be subverted; guard against being misused etc.

In this sentence, the piling up of verbs and adjectives in subject position makes the structure ‘left-side heavy’ and by contrast, ‘right-side-empty’. The effect is much like the severe ticking-off a child would receive to make him ashamed of himself by enumerating his ‘crimes’ (as on the left) and giving punishment(as on the right).

**Pronouns**

The speeches reveal a variety in the uses to which pronouns are put and the connotative effects so produced.

**Some**

The indefinite pronoun ‘some’ occurs mostly in the Rivers speech. It use produces a certain indefinable presence, of a youth perceiving all the activities of the youth from an omniscient vantage point inaccessible to members of the audience  
*Some youths have been... misled some of them have now taken the anti social road of prostitution alcoholism and drug abuse.....(Rv:11)*

The next example brings out even more clearly how the connotations of verbs and the connotations of adjectives combine to produce the sense of a forceful impact. The following example captures vividly this scenario:



Complacency on your part to go now to scrutinize, tomonitor and to ensure an authentic, reliable, clean, trust worthy, good, effective and thorough review is an unpatriotic act (Rv:3)

This peculiar word patterning has a propensity of evoking feelings of respect in the audience for one with such deep insights into their feelings and frustrations as evidenced in the chairman's speech above.

## **We**

The first person, plural personal pronoun is of two kinds: The formal/polite more impersonal 'we' that allows the speaker a certain amount of distance from the audience while he speaks as a representative of the government of which he is no doubt a part as in:

*We encourage all communities to get properly organized (Ak:6)*

## **General Comments/Conclusions**

In considering the syntactic analysis in this paper, the study reveals the speaker's inter-sentential connective device, which has a strong advantage of emphasizing and reminding the listener of what has gone before and making it easier for the receiver to remember.

Most of the sentences in the materials are classified as simple, structurally, especially of the SPA types. An example of their morphology at clause and group levels also show the speaker's preference for the complex sentences which assist in regulating the impact of the speeches.

At the level of semantics, the study reveals a high degree of variety and complexity which could reduce communicative effectiveness by pointing receiver's attention away from the message but to the medium of delivery.

Secondly, the speaker used connotations and metaphoric extensions and other devices effectively to garner public support in achieving socio-political development in the country by carefully choosing words of negative connotation to depict the undesirable political experiences in the past while advocating a brighter future for the people in the years ahead. This work showed however, that these devices contributed to meaning sharing and became necessary tools for national integration.

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