

DEIXIS AND EXOPHORIC REFERENCES IN SPEECHES OF NASARAWA STATE GOVERNOR

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Abstract

This study examines cohesion in selected speeches of the governor of Nasarawa State. It explores the language of political speeches using cohesive devices such as deictic and exophoric references to determine a coherence between text and context in language use. The aim is to examine how the speaker's use of these cohesive devices reflects on the assumptions he shares with his listeners that bring about language understanding. A descriptive design was employed. Two speeches were randomly

selected for study from a series of speeches made by the governor. The findings show that there exists a remarkable linguistic relationship between the two coherence features studied. However, whether or not the cohesion or coherence truly reflects the assumptions between the speaker and the audience was not investigated as that requires administering of questionnaires to presumed listeners of the governor's speeches. This is beyond the scope of the research.

Introduction

Language is very diverse in terms of what human beings do with it. This is what Akmanjian et al. said while distinguishing between using language “in doing something” and using language “to do something” (244). While the former, according to them, could be used in abstract thinking, the latter has to do with “what a person is doing with words in particular situations, i.e. the intentions, purposes, beliefs, and desires that a person has in speaking. Language, as a means of communication therefore, is recognized in terms of human social interactions. Thus, according to Akmajian et al., language “usually takes place within the context of a fairly well defined social situation”, where the speakers share common knowledge. In this situation thus, “rather than spell everything out, the speakers rely on shared understandings to facilitate communication” (245). This is what Levinson refers to as the connection between what the speaker says and the assumptions he holds, or shares with the hearer. Language, therefore, is the most vital tool of communication.

Accordingly, the aim of this research is to explore cohesive features which are to be present in

a speech to make communication meaningful. **Cohesion**, as a linguistic term, is defined by Halliday and Hassan (14) as a text or a passage, spoken or written, of whatever length that forms a coherent whole. It refers to a relation of meaning that exists within the text whose occurrence is a presupposition of one lexical or linguistic stretch into another whereby the interpretation of the latter depends on the realization of the former.

The study is, thus, looking at *cohesion* as related to, but not restricted to the formal system of language, but extended to extra-linguistic conditions. In other words, the research examines *cohesion* as a pragmatic inference which according to Levinson “connects what is said to the assumption held by the speaker and the hearer, or on what is said before, which becomes basic for language understanding” (34). This is to basically find out how such reference (cohesion) connects what the speaker and the audience share as experience which comes to bear on their conversational interaction.

It is important to acknowledge that there have been researches to investigate either textual or contextual cohesion, as the case may be. However, to the best of our knowledge, these researches are more or less based on abstract analysis without connecting the text with the context to determine how such coherence brings about the function of language. It is for this reason that this study attempts to look at both the cohesion in the 'text' which Halliday and Hassan say “is not a structural

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unit but a semantic relation with no necessary syntactic definitions” (6), or what Levinson says “connects what is said with the assumption held by the speaker and the hearer, or what is said before” (34). In examining these cohesive devices, therefore, the study was set to determine how the written language coheres with the context of utterance to bring out the appropriate use of language in the context it is serving. The research explores and analyzes selected speeches presented by the late governor of Nasarawa State, Alh. Aliyu Akwe Doma between 2007 and 2011.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Since the evolution of language from its philosophical point of view, there has been continued dichotomy between form and function of language – the aim of which is to see how the written words are related with things in the world, i.e. the relationship that exists between the form or structure of language and the function it performs in the context of utterance. The notion of form or structure as the most important aspect of language could be traced to the Renaissance period when the theoretical or technical grammar shifted to “prescriptive grammar” suited for pedagogical purposes. This was more clearly seen in the works of Wilhelm von Humboldt quoted in Micheal Losonsky(25) who, in his emphasis on “the connection between national languages and national character” evolved a theory of 'inner' and 'outer' forms of language. He identifies “the outer form” as the 'raw material (the sound)'... and 'the inner form' as the pattern or structure of grammar and meaning....” This structural conception of language was to become dominant up to the 20th Century through the works of De Saussure and Noam Chomsky, among other contemporaries.

However, later linguists tried to relate the form of language with the context of utterance. Mey, for instance, says that:

A linguistic description that has been syntax based, or at least, syntactic oriented has been overtaken by extra syntactic or extra linguistic factors which play a major role in what is called “the rules of the language...” and problems having to do with users and contexts turn out to be the decisive factors

in determining what is being uttered at any given time, at any given place (2).

It is this recognition of the relevance of extra-linguistic or contextual factors in language use that informed this research. This is to say that, though the textual coherence plays an important role in language formation, what is most crucial is how the text is connected to the context. In other words, there should be connectivity between what is said (as indicated in the text), and the context in which it is said, including the participants.

Deixis, which comes from Greek word 'deiktikos' i.e. 'able to show', 'pointing' or 'indicating' is defined by Levinson to concern the ways in which languages encoded features of context of utterance ... in which the interpretation of the utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance” (57). The traditional meaning of the term *deixis* therefore refers to a set of words whose meanings are conditioned by contexts in which they are used. *Deixis* is used to account for how the features of context of an utterance or speech event are encoded in the grammar of a language, making it necessary that deictic utterances are interpreted with reference to the context in which the utterances are made.

The initially recognized five main types of *deixis* according to Alan Cruse (24) are person deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, social deixis and discourse deixis. For the purpose of this study, however, the research only looks at person deixis and spatial deixis which would be briefly explained as follows:

I. Person Deixis: Cruse says person deixis “involves basically the speaker, known as the first person, the addressee, known as the second person, and other significant participants in the speech, neither speaker nor hearer...” (333). Since this research is based on 'text' that relates to 'context' in which the speaker and the hearer are at the centre, it is imperative to note that the analysis of deictic reference would concentrate more on the first and second person forms whose reference Halliday and Hassan say “are defined by the speech roles of the speaker and the hearer, hence they are normally interpreted exophorically by reference to the situation...” (48). This is because, as argued by Nwogu, the first person pronoun 'we', for instance, is sometimes used by royal people, or people in

authority to reflect the assumptions the speaker holds with his audience. By the same token, person *deixis* is realized by means of kinship terms such as titles or proper names often in form of *vocatives* or *honorifics*, (e.g. cousin, uncle, sir, madam, et cetera) which are separated by a comma (,) from the body of the sentence. Example:

“The reality is, fellow citizens, we have to sacrifice.”

In the sentence above, the vocative “fellow citizens” implies the second person ‘you,’ which refers to the hearer(s).

Vocatives, which are identified in the corpus as representing the second person ‘you’, are such written to denote a reference to the addressees, as explained by Portner. They are pragmatic in nature because their contribution to the meaning of a sentence, according to Zwicky (qtd in Portner) is that “the meaning expressed by the clause is of special relevance to the referent of the vocative (the addressee)” (5). Their contribution can, thus, be analyzed as expressive meaning, as they indicate the attitudes of the speaker towards the audience, as well as the event (content).

Accordingly, like honorifics and vocatives are, according to Potts (qtd. in Portner), basically references to emphasize the presence of, and respect for the addressee (s) in which the information that follows “is mutually presupposed by the speaker and the hearer(s)” (5). What this implies is that *vocatives*, representing the second person ‘you’ in a sentence or clause is made by a speaker emphasizing the relevance of the addressees to the clause or information that follows to their shared understanding, or what Levinson (6) refers to as assumption held between the speaker and the hearer.

For instance, the following statement:

“My dear compatriots, the importance of each one of us at this event is a testimony of our corporate determination”

as presented in the corpus indicates that the *vocative* “My dear compatriots” is an emphasis on the relevance of the audience to the statement “the presence of each one of us at this event is a testimony of our corporate determination...” which the speaker assumes the addressees share with him. Therefore, vocatives, concludes Portner,

“are pragmatic in nature as their contribution to the meaning of a sentence does not seem to be truth-conditional in nature, but can be analyzed as ‘expressive meaning’ (1).

ii. Spatial Deixis: This is manifested in adverbs and demonstratives/determiners such as; *here, there, this* and *that*, to show location. They are, again, categorized into ‘distal’ and ‘proximal’. The term proximal according to Cruse is referred to as referent (region) close to the speaker as denoted by the adverbs *here*, while *there* (distal) means relatively distant from the speaker. However, Cruse emphasized that all these are “contextually determined” (334). This view was supported by Nwogu (2004:9) who contends that *here* could contextually have no defined space as it includes the location of the speaker in, say, a classroom, and refers to the entire school as *here*, which, by implication, he is not in view of the whole school apart from the square-meter of the classroom in which he stands. Again, *there*, which is a distal location, or distance away from the speaker’s location at coding time (CT), could also mean close to the addressee at receiving time (RT), or a place previously mentioned in the text. The same could be said about the word *this*, whose interpretation could either be proximal or distal, depending on the context of utterance. Some instances are given by Nwogu below:

- i. “I will buy a car *this* week” and
- ii. “I will buy a car *this* August.”

The utterance in (i) is proximal as it implies the week in which the speaker is making the utterance. Utterance (ii) however is distal, being that *this* in the context of utterance “does not necessarily mean the month in which the speaker is making the utterance. Rather, it might mean the ‘August’ of the year” while the utterance might be made in the preceding month(s).

Exophoric reference, on the other hand, according to Halliday and Hassan, does not contribute to the interpretation of lexical items to form part of the same text. It only contributes to the creation of text by linking the language with the context of situation. They identify: *we, you, that, et cetera* as exophoric reference which do not make verbal cohesion, but are identifiable in the context of situations. This is because reference to them implies making sense to the addressees in the

context in which they are uttered. And specifically, they, Halliday and Hassan, identify the first and second person forms to be the most dynamic in making reference to the context as they (first and second person form) “do not normally refer to the text at all, (but) their referents are defined by the speech roles of the speaker and the hearer. Hence, they are normally interpreted exophorically by reference to situation...” (48). This study therefore examines the deictic and exophoric references which in themselves are reference to the context of situation in the selected speeches of the governor of Nasarawa State to determine how such combination accounts for language use.

Theoretical Review

The theoretical framework in this study is investigating the relationship between text and context which Halliday and Hassan say are “the examination of the relation within the language and the relation between the language and the relevant features of the speaker's and hearer's material, social and ideological environment” (20). The research, thus, looks at deictic and exophoric features which the speaker makes use of and how utterances cohere with the assumptions the speaker holds with the audience. These elements of cohesion are what Halliday and Hassan refer to as “relations of meaning that exist within the text whose occurrence is a presupposition of one lexical item into another; whereby its interpretation lies outside the text; but linking the text with its situational context...” what they refer to as “cohesive ties”, i.e. a semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to its interpretation (4, 8).

The term cohesion, as also contended by Levinson, is seen as a pragmatic factor or phenomenon that accounts for “inferences that connect what is said to the assumption held by the speaker and the hearer, or what is said before”. “To an extent”, he argues further, “cohesion also connects what the speaker and the hearer share as an experience that serves as a common bond to them, and how this comes to bear in the event at hand. This is basic to an account of language understanding”. So, though there is a reference (cohesion) within the text “where the same entity is referred to twice in the sentence”, and whose grammatical (pronominal) rules give the structural

cohesion, reference is actually situational”, according to Halliday and Hassan (49). This is why deictic and exophoric references, in which interpretation is with reference to the context of utterance, are chosen as the bases of this study.

Research Methodology

The research design is descriptive, exploring some pragmatic factors or conditions that constrain the speaker's choice of language. The corpus for this study consists of about 214 complex sentences used in situational contexts out of which about 163 were purposively found to contain the linguistic features set for the study. However, only 25 sentences were selected from the 163 relevant sentences through simple random sampling method and analyzed. The reason is that most of the sentences contain similar linguistic features. Thus, analyzing all would duplicate our effort in the research.

The method used in collecting the data depends on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are the two purposively selected speeches in the series of speeches as presented by the late governor, Alh. Aliyu Akwe Doma of Nasarawa State from 2007 – 2011. The secondary sources are textbooks and other materials on Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, Semantics and General Linguistics from which the models set for exploration are derived.

The analysis and interpretation of the data were based on textual analysis of the primary data anchored in the concept of *cohesion* as discussed by Halliday and Hassan. The models set for the linguistic analysis, thus, are the concepts of *deixis* and its exophoric references. The aim, as explained earlier, is to look at how the occurrence of these factors, side by side, contributes to the meaning of language in context, taking into cognizance the participants, their relationships and the assumptions they share that become the context of situation.

Analysis and Findings

In analyzing the data collected, an attempt was made to relate the text to the context of situation. In this regard, the research looks at person deixes which are characterized by first, second and third person references, as could be realized in the extract below:

“We believe that we had enough energy in our hands to spur the kind of development that will benefit our people”.

In the extract above, it could be seen that the use of 'we' represents first person that is “defined by the speech roles of the speaker and the hearer” (Halliday and Hassan 48). 'We' in this connection could be interpreted to presuppose the speaker and, or the inclusion of other persons “among whom the addressee(s) may or may not be included. 'We' in this context therefore implies the speaker's assumption or understanding of his audience's frames of mind. Thus, instead of using 'I' as a singular pronoun to signify an exclusive preserve of the speaker, so to speak, the use of 'we', which Halliday and Hassan call “the royal we” is meant to present the assumptions held between the speaker and the listeners as contended by Levinson.

This is different from some few instances of first person singular 'I' in the data which implies that only the speaker can represent himself as is done in the following extract:

“... I took the oath of office with a pledge to work for the peace, growth, development and economic transformation of Nasarawa State”(Text 2, paragraph 5).

Here, in the context in which the utterance is made, the use of first person singular 'I' as the speaker chose is understandable since what he is saying, or what 'I' carries, is only a matter of his mind that the audience do not share.

Found in the corpus also is the use of *vocatives* which are also *person deixis* in form of kinship, titles, proper names, et cetera that represent the second person form 'you'. Some examples from the texts are presented below:

“I wish to thank you, Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the Nasarawa State House of Assembly, for graciously accepting to receive me today...” (Text 1, paragraph 1).

In the extract above, the noun phrase “Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members...” which is separated by commas is a vocative that indicates the title of the addressees.

Another example is:

“My dear compatriots, the presence of each one of us at this event is a testimony of our corporate determination to achieve what we have all hoped for” (Text 2, paragraph 7).

Here, the vocative “My dear compatriots” is the preceding phrase to call the attention of the addressees to the importance of the statement that follows.

There are also some few cases of third person reference in the speeches as exemplified below:

“It is in this light that the policy thrust of 2008 budget emphasizes accelerated economic transformation” (Text 1, paragraph 11).

'It' as presented above is a third person deictic reference that denotes an event within the text that refers to neither the speaker nor the audience, thus, “a secondary or derived form of reference”, according to Halliday and Hassan (32).

From the foregoing presentation, apart from some few instances of third person reference, the data are replete with the first person reference 'we' and second person reference in form of *vocatives*. As explained by Halliday and Hassan, person's deixis is “defined by the speech roles of the speaker and the hearer...” (48). The roles of these participants (the speaker and the hearers) are characterized by the first person 'we' and the second person (vocatives above). The few instances of third person deictic reference 'it' is therefore understandable. This is because reference to the participants (in this instance 'we' and the vocatives) who form the context of the situation is, according to Halliday and Hassan;

the prior form of reference, and reference to another item within the text is secondary or derived form of this relation... it is certainly possible that in the evolution of language, situational reference preceded textual reference... 'the thing you see in front of you' evolved earlier than 'the thing I have just mentioned...' (32).

The research has also found out that exophoric references such as *we, you, this*, et cetera were used in the speeches. This could be seen in the extracts from the corpus below:

“We believe that we had enough energy in our hands to spur the kind of development that will benefit our people. That will transform our agriculture and enable our farmers to produce crops...” (Text 2, paragraph 8).

Here, the use of 'we' which has been discussed earlier may denote the shared understanding between the speaker and the listeners. The cohesion here therefore is how this assumption reflects in the second sentence that follows. This is seen in how the entire statement in sentence one was captured in the demonstrative 'that' of sentence two. 'That' therefore is the exophoric reference that coheres with 'we' as it also refers to the whole statement in sentence (1) which signifies the assumptions held by the participants. The cohesion above is therefore not grammatical, but based on the context of situation. This is because the reoccurring linguistic item 'that' has no grammatical relation with 'we' of the preceding sentence.

Another example is seen in the extract below:

“The sum of Thirty-two Billion, Nine Million, Eight Hundred and Eighty-one Thousand... has been earmarked in 2008 budget... This represents 59.7% of the total budget size” (Text 1, paragraph 15).

In the above extract, the reference is seen in sentence two with the demonstrative 'this' as the exophora referring to, or retrieving the entire information contained in sentence one. Thus, 'this' becomes the referent (context) that connects “what is said” in the statement that follows to “what is said before” as contended by Levinson.

From the foregoing, the analysis carried out on deixis and exophora as elements of cohesion has shown that there is a considerable adherence to the deictic features, especially, the person deixis and exophoric reference in the speeches selected. The result, as stated earlier, has shown that there is a considerable adherence to cohesive devices in the speeches under study. Specifically, the findings

indicate that person deixis is more adhered to, followed by exophora. This, as the study shows, has given credence to the statement by Halliday and Hassan that “first and second person forms are defined by the speech roles of the speaker and hearers, hence, they are normally interpreted exophorically by reference to the situation” (48).

As explained earlier, since the research is based on 'text' that relates to 'context' in which the speaker and the hearers are the centre of discussion (the most important part of the context), the use of person deixis, largely to about 70% of cohesive devices under study, has significantly satisfied the context, in this perspective.

By the same token, exophoric reference as explained by Halliday and Hassan earlier is information to be retrieved from elsewhere, not necessarily encoded in the grammatical sequence in the text. The exophoric reference is, thus, also considerably used in the corpus which has also satisfied what Levinson said that Cohesion should connect what is said (i.e. text) to the assumption held between the speaker and the listeners (the context).

From the analysis of the data, the research has observed that, in the writing of the speeches, the principles of cohesion adopted for the study as discussed by Halliday and Hassan have been significantly adhered to.

Conclusion

So far, this research has been able to explore political speeches, and has tried to establish the relationship between the form and function of language that make for excellent communication to foster language understanding. The analysis has revealed that the speaker makes use of 'person deixis' more frequently than others, and also refers more to “first and second person forms” than others. This explains his adherence to the proposition by Halliday and Hassan (48) that “first and second person forms are defined by the speech roles of the speaker and the hearers; and their reference is a prior reference. By these findings, thus, the research has established the fact that reference to person deixis, especially, first and second person forms, is done to satisfy the assumptions shared between the speaker and the hearers as opined by Levinson which form the context of communication.

Pragmatic Analysis of Selected Speeches of the Governor of Nasarawa State is a research informed by the need to examine how language functions in government activities. It is an attempt to investigate how government makes the public understand its policies and programmes presented through political speeches. This, as explained earlier in the research, is important because political speeches are some of the viable means through which government presents its policy directions to, and seeks consent from the civil society. Language, therefore, has to be used systematically to understand human nature and social behavior.

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