

# LANGUAGE TECHNIQUES AND LITERARY DEVICES FOR NATIONAL MESSAGING IN PRESIDENT BUHARI'S DEMOCRACY DAY SPEECH

---

ISAIAH ALUYA

Bingham University Karu, Nigeria

and

SAMUEL EDEM

Nigeria Police Academy, Nigeria

**Abstract.** That language is used to convey a broad sense of meanings and that the meanings that are conveyed with language are moulded by our immediate social, political and historical conditions are safe assumptions about the efficacy of language. This paper discusses language techniques and literary devices for national messaging to ascertain their functions in national discourse. To achieve this aim, the study examines purposively sampled excerpts from Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari's Democracy Day speech on June 12, 2019, using insights from practical stylistics. This is to determine whether the language and literary devices have been deployed effectively to the speech's content. The language and literary devices observed were reference items, to signal solidarity and inclusivity; evidential clauses, to consolidate the argument raised; capitalisation, to foreground the issues discussed; name-calling, to ridicule political opponents; the praise tactic, for self-promotion and positive representation, the blame-game tactic, to evade responsibility and denigrate previous administration; hasty generalisation, to advance personal agenda; and allusion, to draw knowledge from historical events. The study submits that the aforementioned devices, depending on how they are used in communication, can either foster or jeopardise national integration. Consequently, it recommends that national discourses be cautiously constructed using pertinent linguistic and literary devices.

**Key words:** language techniques, literary devices, national discourse, national development, national integration

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, a nation with a variety of people and differences in cultural norms, is gifted with bountiful natural resources. On the rich resources with which the country is endowed, Adebisi (2007: 20) notes that 'Nigeria is a truly great country in every respect, given its arsenals of materials and human resources'. He further mentions the country's skilled manpower, agriculture and mineral resources, moderate climate, the general hardworking labour force, etc., factors capable of transforming the country to the exalted position of a developed state. However, the reverse is the case as the country is perennially confronted by social, political and economic problems which have impeded its speedy development (Aluya, 2018: 12). The nation's independence from British rule on 1 October 1960 paved the way for its leaders to assume political and military control over its territory. However, since 1966, Nigeria has been under severe threats of collapse. One of the challenges confronting the nation is its inability to maintain cohesion among the hundreds of ethnic nationalities, as each strives to exert force and supremacy over the other (Balogun and Otti, 2007: 226). While some members of the federated unions agitate for the disintegration of the polity, others believe that national integration must be maintained by all means (Baba and Aeysinghe, 2017: 2).

National integration is considered a process by which a country's population regard themselves as one, treats one another fairly and collaborates for the benefit of the country. It is the amalgamation of a collection of individuals into a single entity and the unification of all the forces inside a nation. National integration is one of the components that foster national development (Ugochukwu, 2018: 269). National development is the expansion of a country's infrastructure in the areas of science, technology, politics, healthcare and the economy (Olaoye, 2013:749). The problems of national integration in the country are enormous although they have been attributed to Nigeria's socio-political history, which is rife with inter-ethnic rivalry, mutual mistrust, bigotry and ethnic disparagement (Adebisi, 2007: 21), as well as the constant violence and unrest caused by the fight for socio-political and economic dominance among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria (Balogun and Otti, 2007: 226). The aforementioned warning signs coupled with the marginalisation and resource control agitations have all contributed to the nation's very low socio-political and economic progress (Adetiba, 2012: 179).

To achieve national integration, there must be a concerted effort on the part of all citizens, as well as government cooperation, to remove the barriers to national unity and protect the interests of the country (Ugochukwu, 2018: 269). Without efficient government and mass mobilisation, national integration cannot be achieved. Efficient government and mass mobilisation are functions of effective communication that, in turn, can only be achieved through the use of appropriate language. Hence, this paper examines the role of language techniques and literary devices in national messaging. To accomplish this aim, the study first defines the idea of national messaging, then explores communication as a tool for national endeavours and, finally, analyses President Muhammadu Buhari's Democracy Day

speech from June 12, 2019, to ascertain how language and literary devices have been used to either foster or jeopardise peaceful and harmonious coexistence in a diverse country like Nigeria.

## WHAT IS NATIONAL MESSAGING?

Any discussion of the concept of national messaging or the role national messaging plays in promoting integration in Nigeria or other countries should first begin with a delineation of each of these terms. The phrase ‘national messaging’ comprises two words: *national* and *messaging*. The adjective *national* is derived from the noun *nation*. Deuter et al. (2015: 1029) define *national* as ‘connected with a particular nation or shared by a whole nation’ and *nation* on the other hand as ‘a group of people with the same language, culture and history’. The word *messaging* is a verb derived from the noun *message*. While *messaging* is conceived as the process of transmitting the message, *message* refers to the information, idea or feeling that is shared and from which meaning is generated (Okesipe and Okolo, 2013: 3).

From the foregoing, ‘national messaging’ may be defined as any type of communication that takes place on a national level. It entails the creation and dissemination of discourses that are significant to the nation, whether they are spoken or written. The messages may be communicated verbally, in writing, or electronically. They may discuss issues on integration, development, security, economy, education, politics and healthcare to acquaint the general masses with the government’s plans, programmes and policies as well as the nation’s state of affairs. Hence, national messaging from the perspective of this study is synonymous with political messaging. As a communication means, it is characterised by political reasoning towards a target electorate or audience to address and tackle pressing national issues of concern as they affect the people. As such political elites, including presidents, governors, legislators at various tiers of government, ministers, advisers and political officers, exploit national messaging as a platform to create political awareness and socio-political stability, advance the interest of the nation, achieve and sustain their political ambition. The aforementioned roles cannot be achieved without effective communication.

## COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR NATIONAL UNDERTAKINGS

One of human beings’ essential traits is the capacity for communication. To communicate is to exchange information or socialize through language. Language is therefore the most useful tool of communication to mankind because it is an ‘index of identity which serves as a repository of a people’s culture, industry and exploits’ (Olaoye, 2013: 748), the pointer to history and self-identification (Solanke, 2006: 44) and the key to the heart of the people (Nwadike, 2004: 16). It

is on this note that Ogunsiji (2013: 32) affirms that anyone without language access cannot lead a normal life and attain self-actualisation. Language plays a vital role in all communities. Every member of a linguistic community employs the speech sounds that are generally recognised in that community in expressing thoughts, ideas, beliefs, needs, etc., thereby contributing to the smooth running of that community (Atolagbe, 2004: 179).

The language of a community tells us a lot about that community which aids to corroborate the assertion that language and society are intertwined. Language is used to promote and support government development objectives. Similarly, the government's programmes and policies reach the grassroots through the use of language (Olaoye, 2013: 748). Political manifestoes, party slogans, the constitution, democracy speech, national addresses, government plans, policies and programmes are realised through language. This is why, in political undertakings, language is manipulated by political actors for political manoeuvring (Ogunsiji, 2013: 30). Language is a potent means for creating and maintaining social cohesion. The roles language play at the individual, family and group levels are replicated in the societal domain. If government policies and programmes are to achieve their objectives, the people must be carried along and language is the only means by which this can be realised.

However, to fix the social, political, economic and religious issues, promote unity and maintain interpersonal relations and social order in any nation, there must be effective communication through language. This is the main reason why the choice of language and literary devices employed in constructing and discussing subjects of national importance must be cautiously selected. Hence, this study examines the language and literary devices used in the Democracy Day speech of Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari on June 12, 2019. *Literary devices*, as used here, are writing techniques used to communicate ideas, construct meaning and identify significant subjects in a piece of writing.

## METHODS

The primary aim of the present paper is to investigate how language techniques and literary devices have been used in national discourses to either promote or jeopardise national integration. The data for the study is the Democracy Day speech of Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari delivered on 12th June, 2019, at Eagle Square, Abuja. The president's 2019 speech for Democracy Day was chosen for this study due to the need to verify the accuracy of its contents as well as to determine whether his use of language and literary devices have either helped to promote or jeopardise national integration. Another justification for this choice is that the speech heralds the end of the president's first term (2015-2019) and the start of his second term (2019-2022). To this end, it is anticipated that the president will comment on his performance during the first term as well as his objectives and expectations for the second. The speech was extracted online from the website Sahara Reporters. The study employs a data-driven approach

in analysing the speech. The choice of this approach is based on the fact that it enables the authors to focus completely on the data and base their decisions on facts instead of intuition. The data-driven approach is complemented by the *practical stylistic theory* which is 'a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language' (Simpson, 2004: 2). Thus, the practical stylistic method adopted in this study involves interacting with purposively selected excerpts from the speech to evaluate and determine the forms and patterns of linguistic structure that constitute an important index of their functions. To conduct the analysis, the speech was read critically several times for the authors to familiarise themselves with its content. Afterwards, portions relevant to the investigation were purposively sampled and subjected to analysis using insights from stylistics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language techniques and literary devices are resources used to create emphasis and clarity in texts. These resources support the addition of texture to a text to create a distinctive and focused effect, and enhance the effectiveness, persuasion and impact of the desired message. They also capture the readers' attention and help them relate to the discourse subject more deeply. The message can then be understood more fully by readers as a result. This section analyses President Muhammadu Buhari's Democracy Day speech (henceforth, MBDDS) for the use of language and literary devices to determine how they either promote or jeopardise national integration and long-term development in the nation. The speech, which was delivered on June 12, 2019, at Eagle Square, Abuja, was intended to honour the country's uninterrupted practice of democracy. In this discussion, the term *paragraph* (henceforth, para.) will be used. Also, the term *president* will occasionally be substituted with *speaker*.

The following is an excerpt from the president's opening remarks:

- [1] All Praise is due to GOD Almighty Who spared our lives to be present at this great occasion. We give thanks also that the democratic process has been further entrenched and strengthened. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 1)

National messages frequently use reference items, capitalisation and hasty generalisation (Powers, 1994:16). The utilisation of these devices can be seen in [1]. To begin with, the speaker foregrounded the word *God* by rendering it in uppercase. The aim might be to acknowledge His supremacy over all beings and to also accord Him reference for the sustenance of life. Observe that the pronoun *we* as noticed in [1] is a reference item employed to refer to all Nigerians. This reference item is an expressive phrase used to signal inclusivity thereby establishing solidarity with the audience (Ogunsiji, 2008: 118). Additionally, it gives the audience the impression that their presence is valued by the president. However, the speaker proceeded to express appreciation for the consolidation of the country's democratic process in the second clause. This appreciation is captured in the expression

'We give thanks also that the democratic process has been further entrenched and strengthened'. What this expression implies is that an ideal democracy that had been practiced in Nigeria over the years has been further consolidated. An 'ideal democracy' is the type that should be characterised by independence of the judiciary, respect for the rule of law, civil liberties and freedom of the press among others. The questions we need to ask are: Has the democratic process in Nigeria been further entrenched and strengthened as enunciated by the president? Who between the president and the Nigerian masses is in a better position to assess the practice of democracy in the nation? It is imperative to state that over the years, the nation's democratic system has been battered by issues ranging from suppression of the judiciary, intimidation of the press and flagrant violation of the rule of law to electoral abuse and ethnic divisions among others (Sanni, 2019: 7). Considering the prevalence of these issues which have eaten deep into the fabrics of the nation's democracy, one cannot accept the speaker's proposition that the nation's democratic process has been further consolidated as articulated in [1]. In fact, an expression of this sort is considered a *hasty generalisation*, a term which Gregory (2002: 8) sees as a conclusion based on inadequate evidence. Hence, the speaker's claim on the consolidation of democracy in the country is a reflection of his own opinion.

The president in [2] comments further on the nation's democracy in a bid to eulogise the system. This is captured in the lines below:

[2] Today, we are privileged to mark the longest period of unbroken democratic leadership and 5th peaceful transfer of power from one democratically elected government to another in Nigeria. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 3)

The language devices used here are pronominal reference and evidentiality. The reference item *we* in [2] as sighted in 'we are privileged' refers to all Nigerians. It is an inclusive language utilised to evoke a sense of commonality and rapport between the speaker and his audience (Ogunsiji, 2008: 119). To capture the audience's attention, the speaker introduced the evidential clause 'the longest period of unbroken democratic leadership and 5th peaceful transfer of power' as observed in [2]. According to Beebe and Beebe (2012: 9), evidentiality relates to the use of evidence or fact to reinforce a claim. A close scrutiny of [2] indicates that it contains the following facts: Nigeria's unbroken democratic leadership since 1999 and the peaceful transfer of power from one government to another. These statements are glaring facts and cannot be disputed by the general public. From the foregoing, the facts contained in [2] serve as evidence utilised by the speaker to build a strong case to corroborate his claim.

Remarking on the 2019 presidential election which accorded him the opportunity to be re-elected the second time, the speaker declares:

[3] All interested parties agreed that the recent elections, which except for pockets of unrest, were free, fair and peaceful. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 5)

Another instance of the utilisation of evidentiality and hasty generalisation can be seen in [3]. Evidentiality in [3] is signaled by the expression 'which except for

pockets of unrest'. This expression is considered an evidential clause because it alludes to an occurrence that actually happened in reality. Nigerians from different parts of the country witnessed the violence that erupted during and after the 2019 presidential election. To this end, the incident cited by the speaker is a fact or an evidence utilised to validate his proposition (Lucas, 2012: 12). However, the expression 'All interested parties agreed that the recent elections were free, fair and peaceful' is considered a hasty generalisation. This is because the 2019 presidential elections were flawed by violence, violation of ballot secrecy, and harassment of voters and journalists (Sanni, 2019: 7). All these flaws were captured by various media outlets. Again, if all the parties interested, as enunciated by the speaker, agreed that the elections were free, fair and peaceful, some of the aggrieved parties who participated in the elections would not have proceeded to the court to contest the result of the election. From the foregoing, generalisation such as the one made by the speaker in [3] according to Gregory (2002: 8) lacks substantial evidence as it does not accurately represent the opinions of the general public and the political parties involved in the election.

In addition to praising the nation for having the longest stretch of uninterrupted democratic rule in its history, the speaker thanked God and all those who worked tirelessly and nonstop for his party before, during and after the election. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

- [4] I thank all the people who worked for our party, who campaigned and who voted for us. I thank my fellow Nigerians, who, since 2003 have consistently voted for me. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 6)

Pronominal reference and allusion are the language and literary devices deployed in [4]. The pronominal references utilised in [4] are namely: *I* and *me*, representing the president; *our* and *us*, denoting the president's political party; and *my*, signalling the Nigerian people. Apart from expressing solidarity and collectivity as observed in [1-3], pronominal references as seen in [4] are used to distinguish personality and class. For instance, the president, his party members and fellow Nigerians as sighted in [4] are three categories of people with varying personalities and social classes. With the choice of these pronouns, a form of demarcation is identified among the president, his party members and the Nigerian people. This corroborates Ogunsi's (2008: 121) view that language performs the function of demarcation. Also, the expression 'I thank my fellow Nigerians, who, since 2003 have consistently voted for me' can be considered an allusion. This is because the speaker, while delivering the speech in 2019, took a distant dive into the past as far back as 2003 in order to call to mind his supporters who have been voting for him. It is imperative to state that allusion serves as a significant device to improve the mental content of [4] by providing further meaning. Without this device, alluding to past events would not have been possible. Finally, the nominal expressions 'all the people' and 'my fellow Nigerians' are worth commenting on. Although the speaker cannot identify the exact Nigerians who have been supporting his political career since 2003 apart from his party members, he deploys the above nominal expressions

which serve as emotive language to signal collectivity. The aim here might be to avoid divisive tendencies.

Commenting on the accomplishment of his administration during the first term and the efforts being made to consolidate the achievement, the president observes that:

- [5] In my first term, we put Nigeria back on its feet. We are working again despite a difficult environment in oil on which we depend too much for our exports. We encountered huge resistance from vested interests who do not want CHANGE, But CHANGE has come, we now must move to the NEXT LEVEL. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 71)

Idioms, reference items, capitalisation and sarcasm are language and literary devices noticed in [5]. Idioms are frequently used in national messages owing to their significance in communication. They are an important part of the language used by politicians to communicate to the masses. To begin with, the utilisation of idioms is seen in the expression ‘we put Nigeria back on its feet’. ‘To put someone back on ones feet’ is to help someone stand up after a fall. What this idiomatic expression implies is that during the first term, the president and his team were able to resuscitate the nation from its state of total collapse. Hence, the idiomatic expression as sighted in [5] is metaphorically deployed to signal the major achievement made by the president and his team during his first term in office. Apart from the use of idioms, pronominal items are equally deployed in [5]. For example, the pronouns *my* and *we* in the first clause refer to the president and his party members respectively. While the first reference item functions to indicate individuality, the second signals collectivity. The first occurrence of the pronoun *we* in the second, third and fourth clauses indicates collectivity because it captures the president and his cabinet, while its occurrence in the latter part of the second clause denotes the Nigerian masses. The choice of pronouns in [5] serves as a device for identifying participants (Wales, 2011: 344) as well as solidifying interpersonal relationships (Ogunsiji, 2008: 118). Observe that in [5] the words, ‘change’ and ‘next level’ are rendered in uppercase. The repetition and rendering of these words in uppercase serve to underscore the party’s slogan during the first and second term. To accentuate the president’s party’s commitment towards improving on the previous achievements; the slogan for the second term is equally rendered in uppercase in a bid to foreground the catchphrase. Finally, the phrase ‘vested interests’ as used in the context above can be described as sarcasm, a literary device deployed by the president to taunt all those who were opposed to the next level agenda (Abrams and Harpham, 2009: 167).

To evoke a stronger emotional response from both the audience in attendance and all Nigerians who were listening to the speech, the president makes the following promises as encapsulated in the lines below:

- [6] We will continue to listen to your ideas and plans not just about how we can secure more investment, but how your plans can help create a more equitable economy. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 60)



Making promises before, during and after an election is a typical feature of politics around the world. In order to win a nomination or votes, promises are made to the voter or stakeholders. A promise given to the public by a politician or political party that is running for office or has already won once is known as an election or campaign promise. Politicians are frequently held to their commitments in the developed world. This does not imply that they always keep their campaign pledges. According to a study of politics in the western world, political parties that hold executive office following elections typically fulfill significant portions, and occasionally extremely high percentages, of whatever pledges they made during the electoral process. For political parties in Africa, especially Nigeria, we cannot make the same statement (Eghagha, 2021: 9). The above typical feature is exemplified in [6] where the president pledges commitment to the Nigerian populace. This is seen in the expression ‘we will continue to listen to your ideas and plans’. This expression underscores the readiness and determination of the president and his cabinet to cooperate with the people as a way of involving them in politics. The question is do politicians in Nigeria listen to the electorates or involve them in politics as enunciated by the speaker in [6]? The answer is no. After taking office, they keep the people at arm’s length and rule as if the electorates did not matter (Osundare, 2011: 235). Politicians forget the electorates and never bother to carry them along in their plans and policies. Apart from making a promise, pronominal items equally feature in [6]. These pronominal items perform different functions. For example, the pronoun *we* represents the president and his team, while *your* refers to the Nigerians. The first pronoun expresses solidarity and collective action while the second signals inclusivity (Ogunsiji, 2008: 118). The use of alliteration is also identified in [6]. It is observed in the phrase ‘equitable economy’. According to Wales (2011: 15), alliteration creates a reinforcing connection between words in a text. Hence, in [6], the alliterative structures function to capture part of the president’s promise made to the Nigerian masses.

Furthermore, the president also discusses the value of national unity and sustainable development, as well as strategies for advancing them. He makes the following observations regarding some of the obstacles to national integration and sustainable development in the country. This is contained in [7] below:

- [7] Fellow Nigerians, Your Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen, at the heart of inequality and insecurity, is pervasive corruption. When we took office we realised that if you fight corruption, corruption will fight back and we have seen this at all levels. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 51).

The problems mentioned in [7] are widespread corruption, inequality and insecurity. The speaker uses allusion as seen in the expression ‘When we took office we realised that if you fight corruption’ to call to mind some of the challenges that confronted his administration during the first term. Other devices utilised in [7] are sarcasm, personification and symbolism, as evidenced in the expression ‘if you fight corruption, corruption will fight back’. While sarcasm is employed to tease the corrupters and looters of the public fund, the abstract phenomenon

of corruption in the expression ‘corruption will fight back’ is largely personified. It provides animating potential which helps to illustrate how challenging it is to battle Nigeria's corruption issue (Aluya, 2018: 203). The lexical item *corruption* is symbolic in that it signifies corrupt Nigerians. So, when the speaker remarked, ‘corruption will fight back,’ it suggests that people who engage in it will oppose attempts made to eradicate it in the nation.

After addressing the persistent problem of corruption and its negative effects on the nation, the president proceeds further to present two opposing truths about Nigeria. He makes the following declaration in [8] below:

- [8] For Nigeria to progress, a collective resolution to address corruption and foster broad-based prosperity is required to create a country that is not only for a few privileged, but for all Nigerians. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 52)

The expression ‘a few privileged, but for all Nigerians’ sums up the two contradictory facts in [8]. This is made apparent by the linguistic tool of contrast which according to Crystal (2019: 5) makes a distinction between two categories. In [8], the tool is deployed by the speaker to make a demarcation between two social classes. The alliteration in [8] as identified in the expression ‘create a country’ reinforces the connection between the message the speaker sought to convey to the audience.

In [9], the president speaks of three concerns identified in his 2015 manifesto which he had worked to address in his first term in office. This is contained in the lines below:

- [9] When, therefore we came to office in 2015 after a decade of struggle, we identified three cardinal and existential challenges our country faced and made them our campaign focus, namely security, economy and fighting corruption. None but the most partisan will dispute that in the last four years we have made solid progress in addressing these challenges (MBDDS, 2019: para. 27).

One observes the use of pronominal reference, evidentiality and rash generalisation in [9]. First of all, the pronominal reference *we* serves to capture the president, his cabinet and party members. The use of the pronominal reference in [9] according to Ogunsiji (2008: 118) acts as a sign of inclusivity. Therefore, when the president uses the pronoun *we*, he is not just referring to himself alone but also to other party members. However, lexical items such as *security*, *economy* and *corruption* are real issues identified by the president. These lexical items are facts deployed to consolidate his argument (Lucas, 2012: 12). Finally, hasty generalisation features in the expression ‘in the last four years we have made solid progress in addressing these challenges’. Gregory (2002: 8) views hasty generalisation as a conclusion arrived at without sufficient evidence. Hence, the generalisation in [9] by the speaker is rash because it lacks adequate evidence considering that the general public has witnessed cases of destruction of lives and property across states, the deteriorating economic situation, and the embezzlement of the country's resources by some political figures and public office holders. The tactic of hasty generalisation is deployed by the speaker to sway public opinion and advance the ideology of his party.

Commenting further on some of the challenges bedevilling the country before his administration, the president observes in the following lines:

- [10] The disturbing increase in rates of kidnapping, banditry and other criminal activities can be attributed to the decades of neglect and corruption in social investment, infrastructural development, education and healthcare. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 46)

Here, [10] illustrates the blame-game technique that is frequently used in Nigerian politics. Politics in Nigeria is distinguished by the blame-game mentality, in which politicians hold one another accountable for the problems the country is facing. This feature is sighted in the expression ‘The disturbing increase in rates of kidnapping, banditry and other criminal activities can be attributed to the decades of neglect and corruption in social investment’. The blame-game tactic, as observed here, is exploited as an excuse by the speaker to escape personal responsibility to keep his head above water. In addition to using the blame-game strategy to evade responsibility and denigrate his political opponents the speaker utilises evidentiality as seen in the expression ‘the disturbing increase in rates of kidnapping, banditry and other criminal activities (Osisanwo, 2021: 228). This expression is considered evidentiality because the subject highlighted in the discourse focusses on life issues threatening national integration in the country. As such the speaker provides facts to support his claims.

The following [11] indicates the speaker’s use of the praise strategy to comment on the nation’s abundant natural riches, in contrast to [10] where the blame-game approach was used to portray his political opponent negatively. The excerpt below contains this:

- [11] We have water, arable land, forest oil and gas, vast quantities of solid minerals. We are blessed with an equable climate. However, the bulk of our real wealth lies in Agriculture, Live-stock, forestry and mining. We possess all the ingredients of a Major economic power on the world stage. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 20)

The praise tactic in [11] is captured in the expressions ‘we have water’, ‘we are blessed with an equable climate’ and ‘we possess all the ingredients of a major economic power’. This is a strategy deployed by the speaker to applaud and represent the Nigerian nation positively. This corroborates the view that praise is a verbal tool for creating solidarity and maintaining rapport (Osisanwo, 2021: 228). A close study of [11] indicates that apart from serving as a solidarity-enhancing device, the tactic enables the speaker to communicate his involvement with the audience thereby securing their cooperation.

The use of the praise strategy is conspicuously exemplified in [12] below:

- [12] This Administration is laying the foundation and taking bold steps in transforming our country and liberating our people from the shackles of poverty. (MBDDS, 2019: para. 38)

Contrary to [11], where the praise strategy was employed to applaud the Nigerian masses and to represent them positively, it is utilised in [12] to create awareness about the speaker, his intentions, programmes and the achievements of his administration. Lexical expressions such as ‘This Administration is laying the foundation’, ‘transforming our country’ and ‘liberating our people from the shackles of poverty’, as noticed in [12], illustrate the praise strategy deployed by the speaker to sway the Nigerian masses to secure their support.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the language and literary devices utilised in President Buhari’s speech on democracy from June 12, 2019. The goal was to draw attention to the many language and literary techniques utilised in the speech and to demonstrate how they were either used to advance or obstruct national integration and the country’s sustainable development. In order to achieve this, the study used a data-driven methodology supported by the practical stylistic model to analyse excerpts from the speech. The data analysis reveals that some of the language and literary devices used in the speech included references, evidential clauses, capitalisation, allusion, praise and blame tactics, and hasty generalisation.

Reference items were employed to convey inclusivity and solidarity. Evidential clauses helped to strengthen the argument raised. The issues discussed in the speech were emphasised by capitalisation. Political rivals were made fun of through name-calling. The blame-game tactic was used to avoid accountability and disparage the previous government. Conversely, the praise tactic was employed for self-promotion and favourable representation. The president drew information from past events through allusion and made hasty generalisations to further his own agenda. The discussion further revealed that these devices were used to tackle issues, promote unity and construct and maintain interpersonal relations and social order. Apart from creating emphasis and clarity in his speech, the devices produced a special and pointed effect which made his message more effective, persuasive and impactful.

Although the speech made use of allusion, pronominal references, emotive language and evidential statements to engage the audience and carry them along, fostering a sense of oneness between them and the speaker, there were times when premature generalisations, self-praise and the blame-game strategy were used for negative purposes. These devices should be avoided in national messages because they have the potential to foster divisive tendencies. The study submits that, depending on how they are used in communication, language and literary devices can either promote or obstruct national unity and integration. As a result, it advises employing appropriate linguistic and literary resources to carefully craft national discourses.

## REFERENCES

- Abrams, M. H. and Harpham, G. G. (2009) *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 9th ed. Canada: Michael Rosenberg.
- Adetiba, C. T. (2012) Socio-political and economic development under threat: the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 2 (5): 179-189.
- Adebisi, M. A. (2007) Ethnic relations and politics in Nigeria. In U. A. Igun and A. Mordi (eds.) *Contemporary Social Problems in Nigeria* (pp. 20-223). Nigeria: Shebiotimo Publications.
- Aluya, I. (2018) *Meaning Construction in Selected Political Essays of Niyi Osundare and Ray Ekpu*. PhD thesis. Nigeria: University of Ibadan. Available from <http://140.105.46.132:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/588?show=full> [Accessed on 15 May 2022].
- Atolagbe, A. A. (2004) Addressing societal problems through communication in social work. In A. Ogunisiji, A. Kehinde and A. Odebumi (eds.) *Language, Literature & Discourse* (pp. 179-184). Nigeria: Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd.
- Baba, I. and Aeyisinghe, C. (2017) Repositioning Nigeria towards sustainable national unity. *Global Journal of Human Science: Interdisciplinary*, 17 (4): 1-10.
- Balogun, F. U. and Otti, V. U. (2007) Peaceful co-existence of the people of Nigeria: the contesting issues. *Social Sciences*, 2 (2): 226-230.
- Beebe, S. A. and Beebe, S. J. (2012) *A Concise Public Speaking Handbook*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Crystal, D. (2008) *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 6th ed. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing.
- Deuter, M., Bradbery, J. and Turnbull, J. (eds.) (2015) *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 9th ed. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Eghagha, H. O. (2021) Promises made, promises kept or broken. *The Guardian*, 27 July. Available from <https://guardian.ng/opinion/promises-made-promises-kept-or-broken/> [Accessed on 10 January 2023].
- Gregory, H. (2002) *Public Speaking: for Colleges and Career*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Lucas, S. E. (2001) *The Art of Public Speaking*. Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Nwadike, E. (2004) The role of Igbo in enhancing national unity. In A. Oyewole (ed.) *Nigerian Languages for National Development and Unity* (pp. 44-60). Ibadan: Longman Communication.
- Ogunisiji, A. O. (2008) Pronominal reference as a discourse strategy in Soyinka's *Ake, Isara and Ibadan*. *Ibadan Journal of English Studies*, 5: 115-125.
- Ogunisiji, A. O. (2013) The power of language. In A. Ogunisiji, A. Kinde and A. Odebumi (eds.) *Language, Literature and Discourse* (pp. 23-36). Nigeria: Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd.
- Okesipe, K. and Okolo, M. S. C. (2013) *Essentials of Communication in English for Nigerian Universities*. Ibadan: Rebuttal Books.
- Olaoye, A. A. (2013) Towards vision 20-2020: the role of language and literature in national development. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2 (5): 748-753.
- Osisanwo, A. (2021) Self-praise, other-assault: representations in selected political campaign songs in Southwestern Nigeria. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics*, 10 (1): 228-250.
- Osundare, N. (2011). The distance of power. In N. Osundare (ed.) *Dialogue with My Country* (pp. 235-238). Ibadan: Bookcrakt.

- Powers, J. H. (1994) *Public Speaking: The Lively Art*. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers.
- Sanni, K. (2019) Violence, harassment of journalists, other irregularities marred Nigeria's 2019's elections. *Premium Times*, Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>, June: n.p.
- Simpson, P. (2004) *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge.
- Solanke, J. (2006) What has folklore got to do with it? Endangered languages and the electronic age. *Proceedings on National Workshop on Best Practices to Safeguard Nigerian Languages* (pp.1-20). Abuja: UNESCO Publication.
- Ugochukwu, N. C. (2018) Promoting national integration in Nigeria through indigenous languages: illustrations from the igbo language. *Hofa: African Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 3 (1): 268-284.
- Wales, K. (2011) *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, 3rd ed. London: Pearson Education Limited.

## TEXT ANALYSED

[MBDDS] Muhammadu, B. (2019) *Democracy Day Speech*. Available from <https://saharareporters.com/2019/06/12/full-speech-president-muhammadu-buhari-2019-inaugural-june-12-democracy-day> [Accessed on 5 October 2022]

**Isaiah Aluya** (Ph.D. in English, Senior Lecturer) is currently working at Bingham University. His research interests include stylistics and discourse analysis.

🔗 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4169-5817>

Email: [isaiah.aluya@binghamuni.edu.ng](mailto:isaiah.aluya@binghamuni.edu.ng)

**Samuel Edem** (Ph.D. in English, Associate Professor) is currently working at the Nigeria Police Academy. His research interests include stylistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis.

🔗 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3276-2371>

Email: [dmsamuel19@gmail.com](mailto:dmsamuel19@gmail.com)