

**LANGUAGE USE IN POLITICAL ADVERTISING: A RHETORICAL DISCOURSE
ON “SEE WHO WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT OF NIGERIA”**

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ABSTRACT: *Effective communication is essential in consensus building and public opinion. Language as the vehicle for thought expression generates feelings which are exploited for political gains in an electioneering campaign. It means that word choice and their purposes are explored in political communication to secure a berth for asserting justifications in a political context. This discourse, therefore, analyses how “See who wants to be President of Nigeria,” was used, through political advertisement, to expose incompetence and ignorance as unacceptable in a decent and democratic society, like Nigeria. It is an exercise in political communication, using language and word choice as the beacon for the rejection of a candidate in Nigeria’s presidential election of April, 2015.*

KEYWORDS: Language use, Rhetoric, Discourse, Advertising.

INTRODUCTION

Kaid (1981) tells us that politics “largely is a word game.” It uses carefully selected words, presented in a specific manner, in order to achieve a preconceived objective. It is the structuring of selected words in a particular order and expressed either as spoken or written, that extols the mode in discourse analysis. In the case of “*See who wants to be President of Nigeria*, the spoken word approach was adopted in the expression of the idea, contained in the political commercial used to canvas votes for political candidates, during the April, 2015 presidential electioneering campaign in Nigeria. It is probably, the functionalistic definition of discourse as the relationship which language creates in “topic, situation, intention and background knowledge” (Osuafor, 1983, p.19) that brings the essence of words and their meanings in the political realm to the fore.

Words are used in the generation of meaning in beings that have a common frame of reference, (Owuamalam, 2010). They are not static but dynamic in use and meaning, within specific contextual considerations (Graber, 1981). It is their style of presentation in a political scenario that produces the mood which greets statements and sentiments as well as condition feelings, as the psychological consequence of understanding. Word choice, therefore, enables rhetoricians to deal with contentious issues, like who is best qualified to be elected to a political position, such as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Although the formalists favour word meaning as linguistically provided, they however differ in the opinion of the functionalists, who prefer word use and its context, as the determinants of meaning (Fiske,

1990). It is the functional approach that excites the active humans who seek basis to justify their actions within a political milieu. The functionality of word use, therefore, forms the presentation style as seen in political commercials (Ozoh, 2014). It facilitates audience rapport for the achievement of a political goal (Owuamalam, 2014)

Conceptual Discussion

Politics is a game of numbers. It is the decision of the majority that is favourably sought in electioneering campaigns. It is believed that where the majority endorses a political idea, then support is assured in its propagation and acceptance. For instance, to become elected as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a candidate, according to the country's 1999 Constitution as amended, must win a simple majority of votes cast for that purpose among all contestants. In addition, such a candidate must win at least, one-quarter of votes cast in at least, two-thirds of all the states in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory.

It is the task of winning the election by a candidate that motivates political actions to be employed in political communication, in order to meet the stated stipulations. It means that political permutations and arithmetic are needed in the choice and execution of vote-catching strategies in such an election. It is also the combination of a strategy with a specific objective that culminate in political advertisements, which provide valuable voter information designed to influence candidate choice (Owuamalam, 2015a). Such a presentation on television is referred to as political commercials, like the one which provided information on "*See who wants to become President in Nigeria.*"

Political commercials use language for the expression of thoughts and ideas in politics (Kaid, 1981). The used language generates meaning capable of changing opinion, belief and attitudes, as to influence political behaviour (Oskamp, 1977). The language uses words, carefully selected and presented in a specific style, in order to attract voters attention, arouse interest in raised political issue and elicit voters support for the canvassed idea. The used words create moods and feelings which aid justifications in political behaviour. It means that wordsmithery is required in the manipulation of beliefs and opinions, in political communication. It is the expected behaviour that is desired by message sources in political advertisement, to achieve the goal of attracting more voters to their client, so as to ensure electoral success for the candidate.

The political commercial: "*See who wants to be President of Nigeria*", as an advertisement, was aired on the Nigerian Television Authority's (NTA) network news prime time, in April 2015, when majority of Nigerian voters were expected to be exposed to its message. It was believed that the use of NTA with 54 stations and hooked onto by state television stations and few others, (TV Guide, 2014), provided the easiest access and largest consumption reach for the message of that commercial, within Nigeria's political constituencies. The essence was to use the television channel, as the electronic medium, for providing political information, capable of influencing voter behaviour in the current media age (Borchers, 2002). The presented message was in the realm of political rhetoric, designed to persuade public opinion through propaganda (Agbanu, 2014), as political communication (Nimmo and Sanders, 1981).

According to Bitzer (1981, p.225), "political rhetoric serves the art of politics at every turn, both as a mode of thought and as an instrument of expression and action". The view explains why the political commercial is conceived to propagate a political idea as an expression that is expected to influence political action in the electorate, through voting at the presidential

election. The function of political rhetoric, therefore, is “to secure the persuasion and conviction of audiences” (Perelman, 1969) in political situations, such as the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. It is probably, the Aristotelian view that rhetoric discovers “the available means of persuasion in any given case,” (Bitzer, 1978), that the source of “*See who wants to be the President of Nigeria*,” used available words in testing the competence of a presidential candidate in the political scenario. It is “whenever a writer or speaker seeks through arguments to secure the assent of others to theses he advances, that rhetoric is at work,” concludes Perelman.

However, rhetoric is “rooted in an essential function of language itself... the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (Burke, 1969). Bitzer (1981, p.227), therefore, asserted that rhetoric “seeks to promote cooperation by use of symbolic, linguistic, and other strategies of identification”. The import is that rhetoric uses language as its expressional vehicle for influencing action in the political realm, such as voting in a presidential election, like in Nigeria. The expressed views as conceptually reviewed, provides a better understanding of how used language influences political behaviour in elections.

Synopsis of the Political Commercial

The presented political commercial, “*See who wants to be President of Nigeria*” is a political communication gambit, designed to alert the Nigerian electorate on the danger of voting an “ignorant” person to occupy the most prized political office in Nigeria. General Muhammadu Buhari of the APC was subjected to two simple memory tests in language use, based on word use and their meanings. The selected words by the political message source, were related to the political aspiration of that candidate, to become elected as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The first test was to pronounce correctly, the name of his running mate or Vice-Presidential candidate from his political party. Buhari was shown as he fluttered and stumbled while trying to pronounce “Yemi Osibanjo”. Also, he was asked to render the meaning of the acronym, “INEC”. He failed the answer since his response as presented in that political commercial was at variance with the correct expression as “Independent National Electoral Commission”. It is the acronym of the electoral body related to the conduct of the election in which he was a candidate that was unknown to him. Again, he stumbled, stutled and failed the simple word test. The arising ridicule, based on word use experience, exposed how “incompetent and ignorant” the candidate is, as to aspire to the presidency. The political commercial, therefore, marketed “a dunce that wants to be President of Nigeria,” as a political idea to the electorate in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The problem stated in this study was to ascertain if Buhari as presented in the commercial was “ignorant” as to be elected as President of Nigeria. The answer may seem obvious to commonsense as presented by the advertisement, but an empirical evidence is required to justify any answer, as a scientific approach to intellectual reasoning (Unanka, 2002). It is the desire to substantiate reasoning that the political commercial was subjected to content analysis through the rhetorical discourse approach, in order to see if observable data manifests findings that attest to the fact as presented on television or otherwise.

The finding could confirm that a candidate is ignorant yet other political exigencies enable that person to be selected by voters. Such a situation give rise to understanding those other factors

responsible for that candidate's selection by voters some in other studies. Also, the test items which produced the result may even be subjective in ensuring that a negative result as ignorance is posted for the concerned candidate. Again, this viewpoint is also researchable.

Method of the Study

The study analysed the manifest content of communication. The content analysis option (Nwodu, 2006) invariably became apt in analysing how word choice was expected to influence political consideration in the selection of a presidential candidate among others in the same race. It is the qualitative aspect of content analysis that was used from a rhetorical perspective, as the discourse approach for evaluating "*See who wants to be President of Nigeria*", presented in the political commercial on television.

Content analysis involves the measurement of a presented message, like in the political commercial under study. It measures the frequency of the used indicators in the assessment of communication content, in order to be compared with reality or real-life experience. It is through such findings that compared results give insight into how a message has been generated and dealt with in a communication medium such as in television. It "analyses the denotative order of signification," (Fiske 1990, p.137).

Content analysis must not only be quantitative as explained by Wimmer and Dominick (2000). There is also, a qualitative approach to content analysis, (Best and Kahn, 2006). The method uses the basic concept of result comparison to connect concepts to observations (Hofstetter, 1981, p.529). It is the connection between ignorance and observed evidence in the presented political commercial that provide the basis for any intellectual justification, which according to Krippendorff, (1980, p.16-18) involves "making replicable and valid references from data to their context," in communication. It is, therefore, the selected words as indices in language, that provide an insight into how a supposedly simple and trivial issue became the yardstick for assessing a candidate in an election situation.

It is the presentation of the observed data to the electorate as proof, through the political commercial on television that opinions, beliefs, attitudes and political behaviour were expected to be influenced. The expected shift in public opinion is to determine who is best qualified to be elected President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Rhetorical Discourse Approach

The adopted rhetorical discourse approach deals with "honest effective communication," (Osuafor, 2003, p.7). Such communication needs to be simple and clear to "the attention aggregate" (Schramm, 1974), who are participants in the interaction, even as observers. This view explains why the used indices in the test, rested on word "pronunciation" and definition of the "meaning of a common acronym," within the context of politics in Nigeria. It is how the candidate provided the required answers that would tell the audience, particularly the electorate, if he was ignorant or not.

The discourse aspect of this analysis concerned itself with the product of the purpose which the test indices served and the political context in which they became relevant. It was the functional paradigm of language use, as opposed to its formalistic consideration that becomes apt as a theoretical framework for this study. It shows "the functional relations with the topic, situation, intention and background knowledge," (Osuafor, 2003, p.19). The spoken words used in the test language became relevant as an explanatory mode of consideration.

Consequently, Schriffin, cited in Osuafor (2003) asserted that linguistic analysis “cannot be independent of the analysis of the purpose and functions of language in human life”. It is the purpose of the selected words that provided the rhetorical evidence, through observed data, in arriving at a reasonable conclusion, as to address the stated problem of ignorance. It means that proof is, therefore, the essential element in rhetorical discourse.

The Analysis

In April 2015, during the presidential election campaign period in Nigeria, a political commercial presented Muhammadu Buhari as a candidate for the position of President in that election. He was seated and clad in a white gown and a cap. He responded to two questions before the glare of television viewers. The questions were:

Voice: What is the name of your running mate?

Buhari: Professor Yemi Osu,. Osi, em, eh, oshi, Oshubanjo.

Voice: Wrong! The answer is Professor Yemi Osibajo

Voice: What is the meaning of INEC?

Buhari: International, em, eh, Independent Nigeria Election Commission

Voice: Wrong! The answer is Independent National Electoral Commission.

Voice: You can see who wants to be President of Nigeria.

The 45-second political commercial used word “pronunciation” in the first test to prove to Nigerians that the candidate does not even know who his running mate is, as a Vice-Presidential candidate. The inability to pronounce correctly, the name of his running mate became an issue for political consideration. Pronunciation required Buhari to produce the accurate sound that should convey proper identification of his running mate. He was expected to read the name aloud, so that viewers can ascertain the exact meaning of the asked words, in order to inform and educate the voters on a political issue like who the Vice-Presidential candidate is. Buhari was said to have failed in rendering the correct pronunciation of the name, hence, guilty of introducing confusion in the minds of voters as they ponder on who actually is the candidate’s running mate.

According to Lucas, (2001, GL5), “pronunciation is the accepted standard of sound and rhythm for words in a given language”. It means that words originating from a specific language has a standard format for pronouncing them, otherwise, they may mean something different from what they are supposed to convey. The selected word was obtained from the Yoruba linguistic group in Nigeria. The word was presented to examine an Hausa political candidate from another linguistic group in Nigeria, yet he was expected to pronounce it as if he were a Yoruba.

The political commercial, therefore, seemed to be designed to ridicule Mohammadu Buhari through “scornful jocularly”, in order to make fun of a presidential candidate in a serious political situation, like election. The essence or purpose of the word test in pronunciation was to “criticize and disapprove” Buhari as unfit to be the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He was, therefore, presented as a “jester”, instead of an intelligent and knowledgeable person, fit to become the President of Nigeria. He was simply reduced to a “comic personae” suitable for “comic relief” generation, in a serious political situation, like the presidency.

According to Hornby (2005), a jester is “a person in bright garb and a fool’s cap,” who amuses people. This picturization explains why Buhari was dressed in a white garment but presented in the commercial as a “dumb head”. The observed data emanating from response to pronunciation were used to disparage the candidate, by lowering his intellectual estimation, through the provided forensic evidence as proof. It was the emotional stress observed as Buhari tried hard to pronounce the name of his running mate that introduced the psychological basis for justifying his desired rejection as a presidential hopeful.

Again, the presented political commercial showed the inability of Muhammadu Buhari to provide the meaning of INEC. The acronym represents the name of the umpire that would conduct the presidential election in which Buhari was a candidate. INEC is a pronounceable word, formed from the various beginning initial words in the establishment’s name. Buhari’s inability to render the required meaning of INEC was intended by the political commercial to portray him as a “dunce” or one “weak in intellect” and so, incompetent to be President of Nigeria.

The presented proof generated observed data, capable of confirming Buhari as a “dullard” who wanted to become President in a country of enlightened and intelligent people, like Nigeria. It was the painted picture of “mumbling”, “rambling” and “stutling”, in a desperate effort to render the meaning of INEC that presented Buhari as an “intellectually unstable person,” who aspired to become the President of Nigeria. The reasoning arose from the poor articulation and lack of self-confidence, exhibited in the word test exercise, as presented in the political commercial under study. The established paradox exposed the candidate to the electorate as incompetent to be voted for in the presidential election of April, 2015, in Nigeria. In that wise, the character and disposition of Buhari as a presidential candidate, led to “a deeper truth” about who the candidate is, before the electorate, as presented in that commercial.

Specifically, the rhetorical discourse analysis adopted two major templates as indices for analysis. They include mode and field of discourse in order to understand the nature of proof, as evident in the political commercial. The essence is to have a better insight into how the review was made. It is also expected to explain the functionality of language use, particularly from word choice perspective. Those two strategies would explain the sources intention; project the provided message content and forecast the expected effect, which the political commercial was anticipated to exert on voter behaviour.

Mode as index of Analysis

The selected words in this study were meant to be spoken by the candidate who was expected to pronounce the Vice-Presidential Candidate’s name correctly. The exercise was in the phonic realm, to be appreciated for approval or disapproval by the hearer. It is the competence of the candidate’s prowess in word pronunciation that was tested. His response became a public issue since it bothered on politics in Nigeria. The evidence was brought to public forum through the television medium, as observed data. The examiner provided the parameter for candidate’s assessment by the Nigerian electorate. The substantiated proof derived from Buhari’s response was expected to influence voter behaviour negatively to the candidate’s political aspiration in that election.

Mode is associated with the linguistic reflection that relates the language user to the medium of transmission. The language users are Nigerians who are involved in the television political commercial as participants. The examiner and the examined understand that cultural

differences exist in a multi-cultural society, like Nigeria. The examiner may readily justify the test based on the fact that a president rules over every culture in Nigeria, without discrimination. It is this stance that the National Character concept markets in the Nigerian constitution. Buhari as the examined, therefore, was expected to rise above his Hausa linguistic group to show interest in other cultures, through word pronunciation, if he must be voted as president in that election.

It is the audio aspect of the medium of transmission that provided the avenue for people to assess the competence of the presidential aspirant on television. It must be noted, according to Chaffee (1997,p.293) that “advertisers have nearly made a science out of using language to influence people’s perceptions, beliefs, and actions... One basic advertising strategy is to associate positive or negative thoughts and emotions with the product or service being sold”. This assertion concords with Ogbemi and Akpoveta (2008, p.75) that “the expressive role of language involves emotions, feelings and attitudes that are expressed through language use”, like in the mass media.

Montgomery’s (1986) view about spontaneous speaking, like Buhari’s response to the asked question provides an insight into why difficulty was expressed in the word pronunciation and meaning generation. According to him, specific characteristics in speech delivery confront the speaker as one thinks, edits and talks at the same time. The triple tasks in speech rendition may result in repetitions, pauses, back channels behaviour, and stumbling, as obvious unacceptable speech mannerism, like was observed in the case of Buhari, during the examination. The experience may have resulted from the linguistic orientation of the candidate as one from a different linguistic enclave from that of the Vice-Presidential candidate. The lexical implication of word choice, therefore, took its toll on the candidate.

It is the disapproval of the owners of the language in particular that was sought in the political commercial, since they may feel offended by the mispronunciation of a name borne by their stock. In Nigeria, as much as a minimum of six Yoruba States, with voters numbering above 10 million, were targeted primarily by the political commercial. Also, voters from other states who believe that Buhari should have known and rehearsed the pronunciation since the name of his running mate was expected to be correctly obtained from him whenever asked were also targeted as the audience of the commercial. Such voters were likely to be irked by the level of the candidate’s intellectual capacity, since Buhari could not render the meaning of INEC, an important establishment in the political turf in Nigeria, where the presidential election would be conducted. The exposition painted the candidate as ignorant and incompetent.

However, it is important to note that the political commercial did not subject other presidential candidates to the same or similar tests, involving word use, pronunciation and meaning generation. It means that the Nigerian electorate was not provided with an equal opportunity to assess the candidates, using the same barometer in the politics of word choice and language use. It is probably, the understanding that linguistic differences could affect word pronunciation and their meanings that rendered the political commercial a mere entertainment for television viewers. It is yet to be empirically substantiated if that commercial changed public opinion against the election of Buhari as the President of Nigeria, even from any linguistic group, since the raised issue as word and their meanings had no direct consequence on the economy or socio-cultural expectations of the voters, for making voting decisions.

Also, the technical competence of the candidate’s image on the audio-visual medium was suspect. For instance, the use of cut as a transitional device and the alignment of the candidate’s

head in the sitting position, tended to suggest morphing, instead of scenic progression. This view is substantiated since there is no evidence in living memory from any television station programme or even a video rendition, where Muhammadu Buhari was so examined. The story would have been different, believable and acceptable if the presentation was a real life extraction, instead of a make-belief, concocted to demean the candidate before the Nigerian electorate and deny him of valuable votes at the presidential election.

Field of Discourse

Field of discourse refers to “the consequence of the speaker’s role, what his language is all about, what experience he is verbalizing, what is going on through language” (Gregory and Sussanne, 1978). In this context, it becomes necessary to ascertain actually what the political commercial was designed to achieve with the selected words. It is such understanding that would establish whether the used words were effective in achieving the desired communication result or not.

Communication is the exchange of meaning between persons involved in an interaction. Fiske (1990, p.2) believes that “it is concerned with how messages, or text, interact with people in order to produce meaning.” The implication is that it is the audience that give meaning to words in any communication situation. The encoder may strive to use words universally understood through a commonality of codes, yet the generated meaning may differ from his original intention due to various intervening variables within the communication environment.

The implication for this study is, therefore, to understand the relevance of a linguistic tonal delivery, like pronunciation, has with a candidate’s election as president of a country. It is probably, the cultural difference between the examiner and the examined, in relation to the selected word, used for the interview that may have resulted in the mispronunciation and not as communication failure, which was expected to be exploited by the message source, in the political commercial. The commercial expected the electorate, as television viewers, to return a verdict of ignorance in the issue of INEC as an acronym and incompetence on the issue of pronunciation of the name of Buhari’s running mate. It is through language use, particularly in word choice and delivery that the presidential candidate was tested.

The said test was made political through the inclusion of referents (Osgood, 1967) which directed audience attention and interest to the presidential election in Nigeria. For instance, the use of the word “running mate” for a presidential election conveys a specific meaning within the political context. Again, the choice of INEC as the acronym used for the test, also, directed voter attention to the election in which Buhari was a candidate, cleared by that body for the coming presidential election. It would, therefore, be absurd for a candidate not to know the name of that body he subjected himself to, for clearance to contest in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. The exercise, therefore, was designed to expose the intellectual capacity of the presidential candidate to voters in that election.

The topic under consideration bothered on Nigeria’s presidential election of April, 2015 and who wanted to become president. The interpretation derivable from the words used by the examiner, for testing the candidate, suggested that competence and eligibility were at stake in the political scenario. The political situation in which the examination was domiciled, related to the presidential aspiration of the examined or candidate. The intention of the exercise was probably to show who the candidate is, in relation to his mental capacity to be elected as President of Nigeria. It is the exposed lack of background knowledge of his running mate and

even the meaning of INEC, as an acronym that portrayed the presidential candidate as unfit to be elected the president of Nigeria.

However, such simplistic civic examination would be insufficient to provide any scientific proof or forensic evidence to show that public administration is dependent on pronunciation and word memory. The business of state management has no direct consequence from word pronunciation and recitation. It is a serious business above linguistic considerations, capable of introducing political divides, along ethnic orientation. It means that the test designers were more interested in providing a comic relief to a serious business, like electing a country's president.

The political commercial may have succeeded in ridiculing the candidate, Buhari, but the set media agenda (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), could fail to direct voters not to vote for that presidential candidate at the election. The generated public agenda, (McCombs, 1981) would consider cultural and linguistic difference as responsible for the mispronunciation of the name of Buhari's running mate. It is perhaps, the arrangement order of the posed questions that became the achilles-hill or pitfall of the political commercial in the achievement of its desired objective. For example, a linguistic question was asked first before the other on memorability.

The first question which bothered on cross-cultural expectations placed the candidate on an acceptable balance of reality. His performance did not produce any entropy different from the expected redundancy in cultural differences. An Hausa, like Buhari, cannot be expected to speak like a Yoruba that owns the name used in the test. His failure in that wise, was expected, hence, diminished the expected reaction from the electorate. In fact, it introduced a psychological slant, where pity as the candidate stumbled during the pronunciation exercise, gave approval to Buhari's sagacity in trying to surmount confronted difficulty. His action became a commendable effort, unlike if he had kept quiet and "moped" at the audience.

Again, the exercise was also capable of attracting stock interest where Hausas would see their own as being subjected to a pejorative test, outside the realm of national interest as the expected test for qualification to become President of Nigeria (McCombs and Weaver, 1977). If it is considered that a minimum of 10 states in Nigeria speak Hausa, with voters numbering more than 24 million, as against the Yoruba speaking people in a minimum of 6 states, with about 15 million voters, then the consequence of bias and ethnic factors, based on word choice and linguistic delivery become obvious. It shows that the said political commercial was capable of generating a backlash effect in favour of Buhari, as opposed to the expectations of the message source.

It is probably, the parochial consideration of words in their selection and use that may be responsible for any failure of that political commercial to achieve the desired electoral objective. This view, however, is subject to a further empirical examination, as an issue in communication research. Accordingly, Pool, (1980) Lerner (1980) and Graber (1981) agree that "given different settings, the same words may belong to different languages and may mean diverse things," to different linguistic communities, like in Nigeria.

Summary of Finding

The following findings were made in the course of this analysis:

- ❖ Carefully selected words were used in examining the pronunciation competence of Buhari, as a presidential candidate, in the April, 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

The candidate failed to pronounce the name of his running mate correctly before the television audience who watched the political commercial presented for that purpose

- ❖ Buhari was shown as stumbling, fumbling and stuttering, as he desperately tried to answer posed questions. Rendition of the meaning of INEC as a acronym portrayed the candidate as ignorant and intellectually incompetent to become the President of Nigeria.
- ❖ The television medium brought the candidate's performance at the test to public glare. It was calculated to make the Nigerian electorate "See who wants to be President of Nigeria".
- ❖ The exercise produces a linguistic issue in cross-cultural considerations. It showed how an Hausa candidate was subjected to pronounce a Yoruba name correctly, if he is to be voted as the President of Nigeria. It was also a test in memorability of Buhari's running mate's name.
- ❖ The test was not conducted for all other candidates, except Buhari. It shows that the political commercial did not provide an equal platform for assessing the competence of all, the candidates based on the same measuring instrument.
- ❖ The political commercial may have produced a comic relief to television viewers but it was doubtful if generated the mood and feelings were translated to the desired electoral success. The topic of the test had no direct relationship with national issues that determine preference at election by voters.

CONCLUSION

The political commercial provided a platform to understand that word choice and language use can lead to objective failure. It exhibited redundancy, since the amusement quality and effect of the used words in that commercial, were predictable and conventional in real-life experience. For instance, the selected words produced a hilarious comedy that removed shine from the intended process message of ignorance and incompetence, which would have been devastating to the candidate in the political situation. Rather, it generated humour as the stumbling and fumbling over pronunciation and memorability of words, presented the candidate as a jester or a comedian on the presidential political stage. The consequence is that the style of language use, in the application of the selected words in the political commercial, produced psychological noise instead of the physical noise that would have resulted in protest and the rejection of Buhari, as fit for the presidency.

The selected and used words had no direct bearing to the political needs of the electorate, which mattered at elections. The relationship of the words and style of presentation to political terminologies probably provided the weakest gambit in ethicising anticipated protest votes against ignorance and incompetence from the electorate. It shows that intended or expective communication result can only be achieved if used words and the style of presentation conjure the same impression to the message consumer as originally conceived by the message source. It means that words must have relevance to audience need satisfaction for the communication objective to be realized. Any disparity in audience expectation would produce an ancillary effect, different from the permutation of the message source, like the pleasurable satisfaction

of television viewers through a comic presentation in the political commercial, instead of producing candidate rejection at the presidential election in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATION

This study shows that the selection of words to be used in a political situation must be carefully made so as to produce the intended message in the mind of the receiver. Even if the chosen word is correctly placed to its situation of use, the style of language use must be such that its delivery will produce the expected audience reaction for communication to become effective. It means that the selected word must be phatic to attract audience response as expected. Linguistic characteristics of the receiving audience should be considered if a counter impact is to be avoided in word use. It should also be noted that messages as perceived by an audience may lead to action, based on individual differences and understanding. It must, therefore, be the task of word choice and language use to produce the psychological effect which is in tandem with the objective of communication. This is the essence of language influence on public opinion.

Also, word choice and selection must be apt in meeting the expectations of their receivers, within the context of the used language, else the intended result as anticipated may elude the desire of its source. For instance, the key issues in a language use situation makes a greater impact on the audience than the platonic association of words to the presentation environment. In the studied political commercial, references made to “running mate” and the meaning of a political institution, INEC, would not tell the voter that the candidate is actually ignorant and incompetent since the result can also mean forgetfulness and resilience on the path of the examined. The stumbling may show forgetfulness while the desperate attempt to respond to confronted situation may spell resilience. The weak effect therefore provides different meaning to different persons.

FURTHER STUDIES

There is need to ascertain the actual purpose of the political commercial: “*See who wants to be President of Nigeria*”. Such a study would establish if the objective was to ridicule Buhari as a presidential candidate and convert him into a competent, fit for comic reliefs instead of a serious contender to the post of President of Nigeria. It is when the objective is determined that the exact impact of the political commercial can be measured with deft accuracy.

Also, another study is recommended to establish if the words used in the said political commercial influenced voter behaviour against the candidacy of Buhari, as a contender in the presidential election. The study could provide an empirical evidence to substantiate that trivially considered issue can result into electoral fatality in general elections, if ignored. Such a study will not only aid a better understanding of the current work but will also scholars to understand how issues should be addressed in a political situation.

CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The study brings to the fore, the consequence of word selection and use in political communication. It advises the careful application of language style for the achievement of a desired communication objective. An inquiry into communication objective, no doubt would bring issues that are considered in the determination of communication effectiveness in political communication, to a better understanding. Rehearsals are essential in political communication in order to avoid obvious embarrassments that can cost a huge political fortune.

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