

THE POWER OF TRUTH-DRIVEN PROPAGANDA: A RHETORICAL
CRITICISM OF GOVERNOR AJIMOBİ'S POLITICAL SLOGAN: 'KI OYO LE
DA'A, AJUMOSE GBOGBO WA NI'

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Abstract

Oration is a major factor that determines the effectiveness of political slogans. In its absence however, some other factors must account for the success of a political slogan. Adapting a combination of the rhetorical situation and the pentad, this study presents a rhetorical criticism of 'ki Oyo lee da'a, ajumose gbogbo wa ni', slogan of Governor Abiola Ajimobi of Oyo state. Kenneth Burke's theories of identification and equipment for living constitute the theoretical framework. The governor carefully and successfully devised the ajumose slogan with strong cultural and democratic appeals that resonate also with acceptable practice in global development activities. These kinds of appeals are more effective in an ideologically incoherent political context where people resort to ethnic biases in making vital political decisions. The truth appeal in the slogan is made to serve political propagandistic purposes of the governor which is an instance of symbol misuse. Finally, the slogan engages the public in a sustained but one-sided conversation which attains amplification which the governor abuses in presenting the slogan as an answer to every question and a counter-argument for every argument that might be raised against him.

Key words: political slogan, *Abiola Ajimobi*, amplification, rhetorical criticism and *ajumose*

Introduction

Politicians have long understood the significance of indigenous languages in mobilising the support of local people for political goals. Since most Nigerians, who are politically active beyond discourse level, are non-literate, proficient only in the use of indigenous languages, it is apt for a political leader to relate with such people through the indigenous language. Having realised that their political success, to a large extent, depends on this class of the society, politicians do adopt indigenous languages in campaigns, advertisements and other mobilisation activities. Adopting a local language by politicians is not just an exercise in linguistic proficiency; it is a calculated attempt to use a people's weapon 'against' them.

The indigenous language becomes particularly powerful in a linguistically diverse country like Nigeria. In a context where local languages are already endangered species, having become informally prohibited in official quarters by unstated rules of sophistication, elitism and modernism, it is a welcomed practice when political elites associate with linguistically marginalised people through the local language. Having realised that party mottos mostly cast in English may not

successfully mobilise the local people, Nigerian politicians do adopt slogans cast in the language of their local audiences.

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This practice is in line with the power attributed to the use of the indigenous language by Burke (1950) cited by Maggie (2007:8) thus: ‘...you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his.’ In the past few years, the use of slogans cast in indigenous languages has made local politics in the Southwestern Nigeria very interesting as it often forms a basis for socio-political discourse among citizens. It does provide observers with a starting point for evaluating the general state of the polity and of the people.

However, despite its potency, the indigenous language is not a magic wand that always works in every situation. Its choice can make or mar a political speech or even career, depending on how it is used. The reason is simple: the local people understand their language and can decode even the unstated and at times unintended assumptions embedded in statements. In other words, they can fit a political slogan into the context of their culture and arrive at meanings that politicians may not even intend. That is why some politicians have successfully used slogans cast in local languages in linguistically complicated contexts while others have failed. Against this background, this study attempts a rhetorical criticism of Oyo State Governor, Ishaak Abiola Ajimobi’s political slogan: ‘*Ki Oyo le da’a, ajumose gbogbo wa ni.*’ It specifically appraises the potency of the linguistic and cultural appeals in the slogan and the purposes the appeals serve in the polity.

Kenneth Burke’s Theories of Identification and Equipment for Living

When one critically examines how Governor Abiola Ajimobi uses the slogan: *Ki Oyo le da’a, ajumose gbogbo wa ni*, what comes to mind are Kenneth Burke’s Theories of Identification and Equipment for Living. In theory of identification, Burke distinguishes human beings from animals and objects on the basis that only humans are capable of actions (which are purposeful, voluntary behaviours); animals and objects are capable only of motions (which are non-meaningful and non-purposeful). He describes humans as symbol-creating, symbol-using and symbol-misusing creatures that create symbols to name things and situations; for communication; and often abuse symbols by misusing them to their disadvantage (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011).

Berger (2000:38) cites Saussure who distinguishes symbols from other types of signs in the following words: ‘One characteristic of the symbol is that it is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty, for there is the rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and the signified. The symbol of justice, a pair of scales, could not be replaced by just any other symbol, such as a chariot.’ Symbol therefore is a sign rooted in people’s cultural traditions. Berger (2000:38) concluded that ‘symbols have enormous significance in our lives and play an important role in our thinking and behaviour.’

This study explores how appeal to cultural values in the political slogan resonates with popular democratic and development ideals and how these layers of appeals together amplify the message of the slogan. We also examine how the appeal creates a form of identification between the creator of the slogan and the intended audience. Since politics is a ubiquitous part of modern life, understanding the making of the symbols, and in this case, political slogan, which politicians employ in relating with citizens is crucial.

In equipment for living, Burke states that rhetoric assists the audience in coping with or manoeuvring through life. Littlejohn and Foss (2011:358) identify specific functions of rhetorical work thus:

It can provide a vocabulary of thoughts, actions, emotions, and attitudes for understanding and interpreting a situation. It also can facilitate acceptance of a situation that cannot be changed. Rhetoric can even provide justification for actions, offering ways of framing actions so they are more tolerable or acceptable.

In sum, the study of rhetoric can unveil the motive behind action in particular situation. Brummett whom Littlejohn and Foss (2011) cite suggests that audiences derive their own motives from discourse and not vice versa. Discourse therefore becomes a source of motive for the people. We examine how the symbol (slogan) created acts as an associative paradigm and provides the people with a basis for relating with the government.

Truth and Propaganda in Political Rhetoric

Aristotle defines rhetoric as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion (Aristotle, 350BC). He is of the opinion that truth is an effective means of persuasion because 'things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites....' Political rhetoric persuades but contrary to Aristotle's view, it is widely believed that propaganda rather than truth drives political rhetoric. Even in most instances, political rhetoric is used interchangeably with deception or propaganda.

In a study of selected political speeches, Heritage and Greatbatch (1986:111) conclude that verbal structuring of political statements and use of certain rhetorical devices generated about two-third of the applause. In essence, applause is not always an indication of soundness of reasoning or truthfulness in political rhetoric; audience may simply applaud the elegance of delivery style. They may also use applause to demonstrate a ritualistic support for certain political party or candidate. The power of speech in generating this kind of effect is underscored by Hitler (1943) cited by Loeb (2010) as saying: 'I know that men are won over less by the written than by the spoken word, that every great movement on this earth owes its growth to orators and not to great writers.'

Adolph Hitler provides a classic example of the power of political propaganda. Loeb (2010) identifies repetition as a key principle in Hitler's

propaganda. He cites Hitler thus: ‘propaganda must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over again.’ Hitler’s justification for repetition is because:

[T]he receptivity of the masses is very limited; their intelligence is small, but their power of forgetting is enormous. Consequently, all effective propaganda must harp on a few slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan (Loebs, 2010:5).

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Baran and Davies (2012:76) cite Pratkanis and Aronson (1992) who brilliantly articulate the goal of propaganda thus: ‘the ultimate goal of propagandists is to change the way people act and to leave them believing that those actions are voluntary, that the newly adopted behaviours—and the opinions underlying them—are their [the people’s] own.’ A successful propagandist therefore is one who masquerades his idea as that of the people and gets the people accept it as such – their own.

Reasonably, applause, clapping and cheering may not be indicators of public approval of the ideals that a political slogan represents. This study will identify the indicators of public approval of the *ajumose* slogan; examine how the power of repetition is used in the rhetoric of *ajumose* slogan to amplify it from the Governor’s private political discourse to public discourse, identify instances of dissociation that make its use propagandistic.

Nature of Political Sloganeering

A slogan is an expression used to advertise or promote a product, service, political candidate, or organization. A slogan is a short interesting statement which crystallises a few memorable words in such a way that differentiates a product from other products by predicting and emphasizing certain distinguishing qualities of the product (Khan, 2006). A slogan should be worthy of continuous repetition in advertising and so phrased that the public is likely to remember it (Whittier, 1955). Political candidates rely on slogans to promote themselves as the better choice against their opponents. Sloganeering is as common in commercial activities as it is in politics. In fact, the close connection between how slogans are used in selling and in politics makes Colberg (2012:297) to argue that political slogans are ‘commercial speech rather than political discourse.’ In his view, ‘political slogans have minimal informational value and that politicians choose to adopt a commercial mark for its associative and market power rather than for its content.’

In ‘*A Comparative Analysis of American and Chinese Political Slogans*’, Fltkunaga and Zhang (2007:86) predicate the acceptance of political slogans on their consonance with culture: ‘Political slogans can be accepted in a variety of ways according to the type of culture where they are used.’ They describe political slogans as ‘an effective and efficient way for politicians to achieve their goals.’ On their usefulness, they say that political slogans ‘play significant social roles in a manner that is pervasive, aggressive, repetitive and intrusive.’

Colberg agrees with Fltkunaga and Zhang on the significance of political slogans and relates it to the entire career of a politician:

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In many instances, a political slogan serves not just as a marketing tool but also as a representation of a politician's ideals. Thus, the slogan becomes vital to the politician because it is his or her beliefs, platform, and legacy. The use of those political slogans does not end with the campaign; their relevancy lasts, at least, throughout the career of the politician (Colberg, 2012:311)

He added that political slogans capture the essence, viewpoint, and message of a politician and serve to distinguish him from his competitors. On the influence political slogans have on citizens Colberg writes:

Political slogans can boost the involvement of citizens in a political movement. The accessibility and prevalence of these slogans in the media can make it easier for the electorate to become motivated and involved in the political process because they feel as if they are a part of the campaign. (Colberg, 2012:301)

This view of Colberg may facilitate the goal of the propagandists who intend to influence people's actions and yet make them believe they act voluntarily. If political slogan is powerful enough to achieve this, then Colberg's view that political slogans have 'minimal informational value' is contestable.

Ajumose and the Communal Worldview of the Yoruba People

As a whole, the Yoruba people reflect the African worldview in most of their endeavours. Among other tenets, scholars agree that Africans are defined by a communal view of life. This is well captured by Mbiti (1969) cited by Chalk (2006:182): "Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.'" This is what Ojebode (2012) refers to as the 'kin first' worldview. Like other Africans, the Yoruba evaluate the rightness or acceptability of actions not on the basis of an absolute standard but on the likely social impact of such in specific situations. Right conduct is that which affects or influences human condition positively. Therefore, social acceptability is dependent on observance of the unwritten communal codes that define the community and life in it (Chalk 2006). Fayemi (2009:64) summarises this communal tie and the expectations that arise from it thus: 'In Yoruba societies, as well as many other African societies, cooperation and mutual helpfulness are the moral virtues highly prized and enjoined as essentials.'

Ajumose literally means 'doing together.' It implies 'cooperation', 'all inclusiveness' and 'collectivism.' This concept has a deep root in Yoruba culture. The worldview of the Yoruba people, like that of most Africans, is characteristically communal. The Yoruba exhibit this in important aspects of their daily lives. One essential context where the concept finds full preservation and expression is in

Yoruba proverbs. Here are provided five Yoruba proverbs that explicitly portray the crucial position the doctrine of collectivity occupies in the Yoruba philosophy of governance.

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The first is *'Igba eke ni f'owo tile'* (It is many beams that hold a house). This is an architectural reality. Although there may be major beams in a building, it is the collectivity of these that holds the building. The collapse of one of the beams, no matter how unimportant it seems, affects the entire building. Therefore, all the beams in a building play crucial role in its strength.

Another proverb that reflects this communal view is *'Agbajowo l'afi n soya, ajeje owo kan ko gb'eru dori.'* This proverb comes in two parts with the latter part reinforcing the truth claim of the former. 'We beat the chest with the whole hand' just as 'a single hand cannot successfully lift a load from the ground to the head.' The purpose of beating the chest is to produce a sound with a communicative effect which no one finger can successfully produce. *'Ajeje owo kan ko gb'eru dori'* connotes the role of collectivity in accomplishment. The Yoruba use this proverb to indicate what it means to be successful: a successful person is one whose load is no longer on the ground but on the head. It is a feat that just one hand can hardly achieve.

'Ka f'owo we 'wo l'owo fi n mo' means 'washing the hands each with the other washes cleaner.' Washing a finger without the help of other fingers is impossible and produces only futile outcomes. The proverb clearly presents interaction as requisite for success in the Yoruba socio-political context. It reflects the democratic principle of participation which is predicated on the assumption that every member of the society has a role to play in governance, no matter how little.

'Asa woo, awodi woo; ohun a ba jo wo, gigan ni i gun' is another proverb that reveals the deep cultural roots of the concept of *ajumose*. 'Asa' and 'Awodi', both of the hawk family are birds of prey. They are notable for strength, sight and high flight. The proverb is an invitation to people to consolidate their strength because it assures greater achievements.

The fifth proverb, *'Igi kan o le da igbo se'*, is the Yoruba version of 'a tree does not make a forest.' It is neither by the size of a tree nor by the fullness of its foliage, but by the strength of number is a forest made. This proverb likens a ruler or a leader to a tree. Its stature may be great and towering, yet he needs the citizens' support to succeed. Even a tyrant requires the support of the citizens and often coerces them to give it. Any king that must reign successfully must derive its legitimacy from its subjects. This becomes imperative with the system of checks and balances that provides the Yoruba with instruments for addressing rulers' excesses.

From the foregoing, one may conclude that a deep sense of togetherness and collective responsibility forms the basis of interaction among the Yoruba people. This sense of togetherness permeates all aspects of their life, governance inclusive. It can be regarded as given because the principle becomes registered in people's subconscious mind in the course of everyday living. For the Yoruba, the concept is life defining. As a result, it is only a bastard that will dismiss it as meaningless.

The choice of the Yoruba language for his political slogan aligns with this principle of collectivism. Yoruba, a decamillionaire language with a hegemonic status among other local minority languages in the Nigerian linguistic context (Awonusi, 2007) is spoken by the indigenous population of Oyo State and by several million others from neighbouring southwest states. The National Bureau of Statistics (2010) puts the population of Oyo state residents who are literate in the English language at 62.6%. Oyo state with a population of 5,591,589 is the fifth most populous state in the country. If the governor had adopted the English language, given the figure above, he would have excluded approximately 2,091,255 (37.4%) residents of the state from the sphere of influence of his slogan.

Participation, Democracy and Development

The bedrock of democracy is people's involvement in the decision making process. Originally, it was practiced as a village square governance style in which all adult males had the right to participate. With the complexity of the modern world however, it becomes practically impossible to sustain that system of direct participation. Indirect democracy, a form of democracy in which power is held on behalf of the people by representatives elected by them, was introduced to make up for the insufficiencies of the previous version of democracy.

However, election and representation do not automatically exclude citizens completely from governance. It has even been observed that a more radical endorsement of modern democracy is linked to the virtues of political participation (Heywood, 2003). Citizens still play a vital role in modern democracy. One platform for this participation is the public space. Basically, the mass media constitute the public space. A healthy public space is that in which people and government meet to negotiate public issues. A healthy democracy is dialogued into being through newspapers, magazines, radio and television which are classical constituents of the public space. The Internet and modern Information and Communications Technologies have revolutionised the public space. The space has become liberalised as more people now have access to air their opinion in public. They have extended the frontiers of people's participation in politics which have implications for development.

In both democratic and development discourses, participation has been a principal ideal for decades. Prior to the proposition of participatory approach in development practice, government did (and many still do) adopt a top-bottom approach to development. That approach was criticized for demonizing local culture as antithetical to development, regarding people as incapable of any meaningful input into their own development, defining development in economic terms and figures alone and giving too much attention to the mass media as the conduit for transmitting development from the developed countries to developing countries. Theoretically, scholars rejected this modernisation approach and proposed the participatory approach (Ojebode, 2006; Mefalopulos, 2008; McPhail, 2009).

Unlike the modernisation approach, participatory approach to development gives local culture a central position in the practice of development. Local culture is

regarded as the collectivity of people's history and philosophy with which they have ensured their survival through time. People do not have to repudiate their culture in order to attain development any longer. People's status also changes from that of clueless entities to development stakeholders who are capable of contributing meaningfully to the development process (Ojebode, 2006). However, all this has not become a reality in several contexts. The study will consider whether the promise of inclusion in the slogan suggests both discursive and practical realities.

Methodology

Since rhetoric is always persuasive and language functions as a mode of action (Blitzer, 1968), this study adopts as methodology rhetorical criticism which is situated in the interpretive research tradition to appraise the *ajumose* slogan. Lloyd Blitzer's 'rhetorical situation' and Kenneth Burke's 'dramatic criticism' also known as the pentad are adapted for the study. The rhetorical situation is rooted in the situational criticism tradition that looks to external characteristics for explaining an artefact. It is based on the argument that artifacts are best understood when studied in the context of the culture that produces them (German, 1985). The meaning of an artifact is fully realised at the intersection of the audience, the exigence and the constraints.

Kenneth Burke's pentad belongs to the sociological criticism tradition. It is suitable for textual criticism of the interaction among the elements in a rhetorical artefact accounts for its effectiveness. Sociological systems focus on language as a response to social situations in which communication is a means of action as well as a record of thoughts, attitudes, and values. Burke identifies action, agent, agency, scene and purpose as elements constitutive of the rhetorical power of an artifact (German, 1985). Since the exigence to the rhetoric of the slogan emerges from the scene, the two are treated together.

The *ajumose* slogan constitutes the text for this rhetorical analysis. The slogan was selected from the various media adopted by Governor Ajimobi in promoting his political agenda. The media adopted for propagating the message of the slogan can be broadly divided into discursive media and non-discursive media. In the non-discursive media such as tricycles and buses, the slogan exists as a standalone statement. In the discursive media such as radio and television, the slogan is used within full political discourses. While the non-discursive media were tracked for the pervasiveness and mobility of the slogan, the discursive media were examined for the context clues that are significant to understanding the socio-political implications of the slogan.

The projects executed by Governor Ajimobi's administration were observed for the inscription of the *ajumose* slogan on them. Also, radio and television jingles aired on the state-owned television and radio stations, the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) and Radio OYO respectively, in which the *ajumose* slogan is used were purposively selected for analysis. The advertisements were recorded directly from the radio and the television sets and were analysed along the lines of use and misuse. The use of the slogan as a message from the Governor to the people

constituted the proper use while the use of the slogan as a tool for pre-empting public opinion and as a counterargument in the public space constituted instances of misuse. Particular attention was not given to the numerical value of the slogans as the study adopted an interpretive research approach.

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The combination of rhetorical situation and dramatic criticism made it possible to explore important aspects of the *ajumose* slogan that made it effective as a tool of political persuasion. The slogan arose from a political context with certain peculiarities that infused it with meaning. This makes the rhetorical situation an appropriate analytical tool. In addition, the slogan cast in Yoruba language appeals to values that are rooted in the Yoruba culture and provides a link between the ideal historical past, the precarious political present and the desired better future. This also justifies the adoption of the Pentad which is established in the sociological tradition.

Analysis

The Exigence in the Scene

Blitzer (1968) defines the exigence as an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be. The scene is the context of the action. The exigence here resides in the political terrain from which the slogan emerged which is far from normal. It was characterised by bitter acrimonies and power tussles between major political contenders. There were clashes among political groups in different parts of the state primarily through the instrumentation of different factions of the state NURTW (Alabi and Sakariyau, 2013). Senator Ajimobi's victory in the 2011 gubernatorial election came as a shock to the incumbent governor and the ruling party in the state then.

Prior to the gubernatorial election, politics of thuggery had already installed a reign of terror in the state. Even though the major political godfather, Chief Lamidi Adedibu, often held responsible for most political disruptions in the state was out of the political scene, having died on June 11, 2008, violence kept growing in intensity. Leaders and members of a faction of the Oyo State Chapter of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) were alleged of being the instrument of terror in the hand of the then governor, Otunba Adebayo Alao-Akala. Another faction of the same union was also alleged to be in the service of major opposition parties. Clashes between NURTW factions in the state often disrupted the polity, leaving many casualties (Omobowale, 2008; Alabi and Sakariyau, 2013). On May 4, 2011, eight days after the gubernatorial election, the Vanguard reported as reason for the previous day clash between the two major factions of the NURTW in the state which left at least 10 people dead the internal rift within the union: 'As a result of the intra union crisis (sic.), some members supported the out-going (sic.) Governor of the state, Otunba Adebayo Alao-Akala while others were said to have supported the Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN' (Vanguard, May 4, 2011). Thirty three days later which was Ajimobi's eighth day in office, the Vanguard reported another clash, which also left at least 10 people dead, many wounded and 30 shops or more looted and burnt, between the factions (Vanguard, June 5, 2011).

Within this near collapse, the then governor was busy blowing his own trumpet. His slogan, *'Ise rere ko duro'* meaning '[our] good performance ceases not' had a largely negative connotation in the public that either chose not to see the acclaimed good works or concluded there was none to see. His picture was everywhere, on bill boards and on public cabs. He named a road after himself instead of creating a form of association with the citizens. All this further deepened the negative sentiments many people held about the governor. All this eventually culminated for him in a defeat at the 2011 gubernatorial poll. Senator Ajimobi rose from the silence of the 2007 defeat to the success of the 2011 gubernatorial election.

The battle appeared to be over but it was not. The sweeping success of ACN over PDP in the south west created another on-going battle in the state. While ACN wants to maintain its hold on these states, PDP is attempting a comeback. All these sketches of history are inscribed in the collective memory of the people in the state. This is the imperfection to which the slogan responds. It is the nature of the socio-political realities from which the slogan emerged that constitutes an obstacle to the rhetoric of the slogan.

Another exigence found in the context from which the *ajumose* slogan arises is lack of a clear-cut political ideology. In the absence of an ideology, it is the governor's responsibility to provide one for the polity. In Nigeria, need, ethnicity and religious sentiments are the rules of political game. These three largely influence political decisions among citizens at all levels. However, the strongest among them is ethnicity, followed by religion. Need occupies the lowest rung of the political ladder, even though it is what has perpetuated the country in the category of developing nations for the past 53 years. While ethnicity divides at the national level, it unites at the local level. This exalted position that ethnicity and the culture that defines it occupy in local politics is what the governor exploited in casting his political slogan. The absence of ideology is an imperfection in the polity to which the governor responded appropriately through appeal to cultural ideals in the *ajumose* slogan.

The Audience

In an ideal democracy, the object of political scramble is the consent and cooperation of the electorate. Blitzer (1968) describes a rhetorical audience as consisting only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change. The primary audience of the slogan is the Yoruba speaking population of Oyo state. They are the ones who decided the success of the governor at the polls. While in office, the governor still needs their continued support for a successful administration. The governor identifies with them in the slogan on linguistic and cultural grounds and the identification accounts for the patronage that the slogan enjoys among them.

In addition, the slogan appeals to all other sections of the society. Whether they are political, apolitical or anti-political, all members of the state have a responsibility to the state. The slogan is also an open invitation to members of other

political parties, serving in the administration or not and to all other stakeholders in the state and beyond.

The Constraints

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Constraint is anything that stands in the way of the audience responding appropriately to the exigence (Blitzer, 1968). The primary constraint of the rhetoric of *ajumose* slogan is the exclusion of a section of the state on linguistic ground. Another is that, ideologically, the slogan is a standalone statement. Although the slogan has a philosophy of mass mobilisation and development that drives it, there is no coherent party ideology or philosophy within the context of which the slogan is to be interpreted. For example, Obama's "Yes, We Can" has a philosophy of hope and democratic ideology that drive it. That philosophy is rooted in the ideology of the Democratic Party to which President Obama belongs. Such formalised party ideology or philosophy is absent in this context. That other governors from the same political party adopt slogans that stand on different philosophical foundations is a witness to this fact. For instance, Governor Raji Fashola of Lagos State adopts 'Eko oni baje' as his slogan while Governor Rauf Aregbesola of Osun State adopts 'Ipinle Omoluabi' as his own slogan. There is no obvious uniting element among these slogans and this may impede proper ideological placement of the slogans. The *ajumose* slogan, thus, becomes a summary of the governor's political philosophy and roadmap for governance and what Burke calls the equipment through which the people understand and interpret the political reality in which they live.

This becomes more complicated as the first part of the slogan '*Ki Oyo le'e daa*' which bears the essential message of the slogan is not as vocalised as the second part '*ajumose gbogbo wa ni*.' Essentially, the slogan is an invitation to members of the public to participate in their respective capabilities in governance. However, its essence becomes underplayed with the neglected part of the slogan and the vocalised part stands the risk of becoming a typical empty political rhetoric.

The Agent

What often defines great politicians is the power of spoken words. President Obama's 'Yes, We Can' slogan became a major driving force of his first term political campaign. The constant and consistent use of the slogan raised the tempo of Obama's political campaign. He employed a strong, direct association with the slogan as it became a refrain in his public speeches. The slogan was largely amplified by Obama's oratory power and the socio-economic realities of the USA. It could be said that Obama spoke 'Yes, We Can' into the people's consciousness (Letts, 2009). It came not just as an empty political promise, but as a call to action and as an assertion of ability on the part of a people who had been buffeted by the realities of a harsh economy. It did not just sell the Obama brand to Americans; it sold them 'The Audacity of Hope' that dared to take the future even when many things appeared to be falling apart.

Senator Ajimobi who was once a senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria had a political pedigree to ride on into state power. He became the governor of Oyo

state in 2011 after a failed attempt in 2007. While he has been doing what is constitutionally expected of him, he is being regarded as the messiah of the downtrodden and reformer of the metropolis. In acknowledgement of his accomplishment, the traditional ruler of the state capital, Olubadan of Ibadan, Oba Samuel Odulana, Odugade 1 conferred on the governor the chieftaincy title of *Aare Atunluse* of Ibadan which literally means ‘the beautifier and restorer of the dignity of Ibadan’ (Daily Independent, June 18, 2013). On July 21, 2013, Moses Makinde of *The Nation* chronicles members of the opposition parties who have applauded Governor Ajimobi’s performance to include: the Deputy Speaker of Oyo State, Mr Babatunde Olaniyan of Accord Party; Bose Adedibu, wife of late strongman of PDP and Ibadan politics, Chief Lamidi Adedibu; and PDP Minority Leader, Mr Rafiu Adegunle. Without the oratory power of great politicians however, Ajimobi finds an alternative route into public acceptance and applause.

The Agency

Agency is the means through which an act is accomplished. The *ajumose* slogan reaches the target public through diverse media. It is prominent in political advertisements featured on the state-owned radio and television stations. Radio and television presenters also invoke it as a basis for mobilising members of the community for government activities. It features, though not prominently, in the Governor’s speeches and addresses as well. Most actively, it is borne by public shuttles and government publications. The tricycles introduced by the government also had ‘*keke ajumose*’ printed on them. Most government activities are named after ‘*ajumose*.’ Through this system of nomenclature, the essence of the slogan becomes pervasive as people encounter it in all spheres of the state.

However, the strongest medium that bears the slogan is the indigenous language in which it is cast. In all the contexts earlier cited, the slogan is used in the Yoruba language. No effort to reproduce the slogan in the English language was identified in the course of this study. Even in speeches rendered in English, the slogan is used in the original language. These are two instances: ‘We have promoted peace in the State through a journey that featured a partnership with the people, encapsulated in the theme, *Ki Oyo lee daa, Ajumose gbogbo wa ni*’ (Budget Speech, 2013) and ‘I, once again, ask for your support, cooperation and collaboration. Always bear in mind that, *Ki Oyo le da’a, ajumose gbogbo wa ni*’ (New Year Message, 2013). This creates a kind of peculiar identity for the slogan and in turn for the government.

‘Ajumose Gbogbo Wa Ni’ in Action

A critical consideration of how the governor uses the *ajumose* slogan reveals a careful and systematic approach. It is observed that the governor does not always use the slogan in his speeches. Unlike President Barack Obama who would use his ‘Yes, we can’ many times in a speech occasion, Ajimobi uses his less frequently. In the discussion session the governor had with state workers, the Governor did not use the slogan once. The governor uses the slogan in his 2013 New Year goodwill

message only as the concluding statement. In other speeches, he hardly does. Despite the direct underuse by the governor, the slogan is on the lips of the majority. The slogan finds a way into public consciousness primarily through its official use in naming government activities.

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The governor frames most of his activities with the concept of *ajumose*. The tricycles the governor introduced are called '*Keke Ajumose*.' The wife of the governor distributed food to women in five local governments of the state and named the gesture '*Ajumose Fook Bank*.' The governor introduces public shuttle and named it '*Ajumose Shuttle*.' The official newsletter of the State is named '*Ajumose Magazine*'. An estate also is being proposed by the name '*Ajumose Oodua Estate*.' There is a drama series running on the state-owned television, the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) titled '*Ajumose*.' The governor himself has come to be known as '*Ajumose Governor*.' In fact, *ajumose* is having a corrupting influence on the spelling of the governor's name as some people do refer to him as '*Ajumobi*' instead of '*Ajimobi*.' This usage trend shows a systematically concurrent process of dissociation and association. While the governor distances himself from the slogan to avoid overuse which may erode the significance people attribute to it, he associates with it through every possible means. In practice, instead of the Governor publicising the slogan through oration, it is the slogan that is speaking for itself or rather for the governor.

These popular association and personal dissociation have implications for governance and the public space. Some of the activities of the immediate past governor of the state constitute good examples here. In his own time, the former governor also introduced brand new cars into the public transport system. That should ordinarily be an achievement that the public would applaud, most especially in Oyo state where most cabs were dilapidated, but the public did not. It was neither because the cabs were bad nor because the people did not appreciate good things. The problem was presentation. On all the cars was the picture of the governor, his name, the emblem of his political party and an overt declaration of interest in a second term in office. Rather than endear the governor to the people, the effort became a factor that worked against him. This was because he made an undisguised political statement with public property procured with tax payers' revenue. He distances members and sympathisers of opposition parties from the achievement. As a result, that section of the public most likely saw the former governor's effort as an effrontery, and a mere political machination designed to deceive. In Governor Ajimobi's case however, the shuttles do not bear any overt political statement. At the superficial level, the *ajumose* after which the shuttles are named is a neutral concept that reinforces the fact that the shuttles truly belong to the public. This personal dissociation provides a strong basis for popular association through which all sections of the society identify with the governor's achievement.

Since the slogan speaks for the governor, we need to explore to whom it speaks. If people have come to know the Governor as '*Ajumose Governor*' and many of his activities bear the same title, it is logical to conclude that the slogan engages the public in a conversation. The ubiquity of the *ajumose* concept suggests

that the conversation it creates is a sustained one. Thus, the slogan has become for the governor an identity marker which moderates public discussion about him and his activities.

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The *ajumose* slogan in action therefore coalesces into an amplification which is a situation in which the personal slogan of the governor assumes the status of public discourse as a result of its constant, consistent and continuous public engagement. This amplification is activated by the common grounds the slogan creates with the citizens. Essentially, its logically sound appeal to cultural ideals is the primary force that activates and sustains the conversation it generates. The *ajumose* slogan provides the public with cultural tools for evaluating the polity, confirming the position of Burke in theory of equipment for living. It therefore becomes possible to evaluate the *ajumose* discourse, apart from the text of the Governor's speeches, on the basis of the massive text produced from the public conversation the slogan generates in the state. The slogan translates from a mere element in the private political discourse of the Governor into a public discourse which aggregates and accommodates the views of all sections of the society. This negates the view of Colberg (2012) that political slogans have minimal information value.

It should be noted as well that it is not all political slogans that reach this stage. Some slogans never successfully activate any form of public discourse. Others are dead on arrival as nobody gives them attention the politicians who introduce them might have anticipated. It is only the slogans that are built successfully on concepts that resonate with the people that attain amplification. If a slogan can activate some concepts that are rooted in the subconscious of the people, it has a high chance of attaining amplification. This is because the people have a ready sociological basis for engaging it in a conversation. In this case, the strong appeal to the concept of *ajumose* that is deeply rooted in the Yoruba culture provides the slogan and the people with a sociological platform for engaging one another in a sustained conversation that results in amplification.

***Ajumose* Slogan – Association and Dissociation**

When one examines it critically, one would see that the slogan has become a double-edged sword in the hand of the government and that the both edges are against the people. In the first instance, the government is using the slogan in a way that provides a ground for externalisation of failure. If eventually for any reason it fails, the government may heap the blame of its failure on people's non-participation. Since he professes to build his government on the principle of collectivity, Governor Ajimobi may find a claim to inerrancy plausible. Then, the public becomes the culprit on the ground of non-participation or non-cooperation.

A strong basis for externalisation of failure is the governor's political propaganda across the state border. In addition to having monopolised the state-owned radio and television stations for government propaganda, Ajimobi extends the tentacles of his political propaganda to other south-western states of the federation. He is the first state governor to adopt this highly sophisticated

propaganda portfolio in the south-west democratic politics. He is using political advertisement of different sorts, most of them carefully produced for and adapted to the immediate audiences, to make a categorical statement home and abroad about his intentions, commitment to development and achievements. Some people in those states might be limited in their assessment of the government to the carefully produced political advertisements to which they are exposed in the media. The message of *ajumose* becomes to such people a testimony which absolves the governor in case of any failure. Again, the public becomes the culprit on the ground of non-participation or non-cooperation.

The other edge of the slogan is that which is sharp enough to silence the opposition's criticism. This is very dangerous for democracy. The strength of democracy ideally is the alternative voice often being raised by opposition parties. This point needs contextualisation at this point. It is important to note that the governor included members of other political parties in his government, despite protests from his ACN party members. Governor Ajimobi selected from Accord Party alone Kazeem Adeniyi, Commissioner for Trade and Investment, Yunus Akintunde, Commissioner for Works and Transport and Bosun Oladele, Information and Orientation. Former Governor Lam Adesina was reported to have categorically instructed Governor Ajimobi to sack the Accord Party members in his cabinet:

I want you to terminate your agreement with Ladoja. All the appointees in your cabinet should be ACN card-carrying members. There are so many party members who suffered with us and have not yet been compensated. They should be compensated instead of giving non-party members appointments. Accord Party members in your government should either decamp to our party or resign their appointments (*Daily Independent*, April 20, 2013).

However, the Governor would not heed the advice until he had different reasons for sacking the Commissioners. As a replacement for Bosun Oladele, Governor Ajimobi appointed Pastor Taiwo Otegbeye of Action Alliance. This again reiterates his commitment to the principle of *ajumose*. Since major opposition parties are also represented in his government, his failure becomes theirs as well. He can always invoke the slogan against the opposition parties to make them realise how they equally share in his failure.

The latter is especially dangerous for democracy. A political environment that stifles life out of alternative voices is not ideal. Such an environment poses a danger to the survival of ideal democracy. As observed earlier, ideal democracy is dialogued into being. It is also sustained through public dialogue. While it is true that the *ajumose* slogan provides a basis for public political discourse in the state, it is also true that it has the tendency to weaken alternative perspective or stifle it out completely. The discourse the slogan generates is one-sided. Anybody who questions the activities of the government may be regarded as '*omo ale*,' the Yoruba word for someone who is disconnected from the ideals of his social environment.

This misuse of symbol manifests in the governor's advertisements. In one advertisement, the leader of a group of public drivers-touts invokes the *ajumose* slogan as an exclusive answer to the myriads of situations that threaten the activities

of the group. In another advertisement, the slogan stands stronger than all arguments that might ever be imagined by opposition parties against the governor or its activities. An advertisement that features a conversation between a husband and wife is produced here to substantiate this point. It is introduced by a song which is a variation of *ajumose*,

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‘E je kajose, e je kajose’ which means ‘Let’s do it together, let’s do it together....’

Orin: E je kajose, e je kajose...

Intro (song): Let’s do it together...

Wife: My dear,

Wife: My dear,

Husband: *Hun?*

Husband: Yes?

Wife: *B’Abiola Ajimobi ba fi se ‘joba saa meji, b’ilu oyinbo ni ipinle Oyo o ri o. E gbo, ta lo gegun t’Ibadan i fii sin ‘yan leemeji?*

Wife: If Abiola Ajimobi should govern for two terms, Oyo state will become like London. See, who cursed that Ibadan must not serve a leader twice?

Husband: *Nigbati Ibadan o go, bawo ni Ibadan o se sinyan leemeji? Awon alaimokan lo n so pegun ni. Asaaju ti o sin Ibadan ni Ibadan n wa; ki I seni Ibadan o maa sin. Awa dupe pe ohun ti Ibadan n wa, a ti ri lara Abiola Ajimobi to n fi tokan tara sin Ibadan ati ipinle Oyo lapapo ni t’osan t’oru. Gbo, asaaju to gbawa lowo awon amunisin, to da Alafia ati ogo ipinle Oyo pada; to nse aimoye ise idagbasoke lai ya kobo nibikankan; to se ona onibeji sawon ilu nla nla n’ipinle Oyo; tose afara oloke ni Mokola; t’ora oko ton gbe awon osise atakeko lofe; t’on sanwo osu ketala f’awon akeko; to n ko oja igbalode f’awon ontaja, so funmi, kilo nse fun wa?*

Husband: When Ibadan is not foolish, how can it serve a person twice? It is ignorant people that call it a curse. Ibadan wants a leader who will serve it, not the one Ibadan will serve. We are grateful that what Ibadan seeks, we have found in Abiola Ajimobi who day and night is serving Ibadan and the entire Oyo state heart and soul. Listen, a leader who delivers us from slave drivers; who restores peace and glory to Oyo state; who is executing many development projects without taking any loan; who constructed dual carriageways in Oyo state major cities; who constructed overhead bridge at Mokola; who bought buses that convey workers and students to their destinations without charge; who pays state workers 13 month salaries; who is building ultra-modern markets for traders, tell me, what is he doing for us?

Wife: *K’ama paro, O n sinwa ni o.*

Wife: Truthfully, he is serving us.

Husband: *E en, asaaju toba sin Ibadan ati ipinle Oyo lapapo, awa naa setan lati gba a laaye boba setan lati sinwa leekan si, k’awon ojelu o le mo wipe, Ibadan ati ipinle Oyo lapapo, aki I se afibi su oloore. Adu’a ni kawa kunfun o k’o le gba lati sinwa leekan si.*

Husband: Yes, a leader who serves Ibadan and the entire Oyo state, we are also ready to allow him serve us again, so that corrupt politicians may realise that Ibadan and Oyo state are not ingrates. However, we should be prayerful so that he may agree to serve us once again.

Wife: *Amin o!*

Wife: Amen!

Orin: E je kajose...

Song: Let's do it together...

Three months into his third year in office (August, 2013), Abiola Ajimobi is already campaigning strategically for a second term in this advert. The advert presents him as the ideal leader Ibadan has been seeking. All the achievements of the governor that are mentioned in the advertisement are true evidence that the *ajumose* ideology is working. However, the concluding part of the conversation presents the flagrant abuse. Instead of the governor asking the citizens for their mandate, it is the citizens who must pray that the governor will agree to contest for a second term. This is both denying the obvious and trivialising citizen's reasoning ability. It is contradictory for the governor to invite the citizens to 'let's do it together' and at the same time ask them to pray that he agrees to serve them the second time. This example reflects the propaganda principle of originating an idea and making it seem it is the invention of the citizens.

In all, the invocation of the *ajumose* slogan resolves all arguments and brings all deliberations to an end. The advertisements engineer public views and present the rhetoric of *ajumose* slogan as an answer to every question. In other words, the views of the public that the *ajumose* slogan is said to aggregate and accommodate are in reality a creation of the governor – created through political advertising. From this careful orchestra of political advertising, the governor emerges irreproachable, and omniscient – speaking for all sections of the society. This produces a form of closed-ended discourse that may send people on a deliberate fault-finding mission which will eventually produce an avalanche of counter-discourse.

Conclusion

Contrary to the position of Hitler on political rhetoric, this study reveals that it is not only distorted information that persuades the citizens. As found in the *ajumose* slogan, a strong appeal to both cultural and popular democratic ideals is capable of increasing the truth worth of the rhetoric of political slogan, even when it is being used for propaganda purposes. The reason is that it is difficult for citizens to deny symbols that are rooted in their culture and successfully divorce themselves from the symbolic implications of such. Such symbols are accorded much importance in a context where a case is being made against linguistic and cultural imperialism. Even the elites in some quarters now find it appealing to reconnect to their cultural roots through their local language. Globally, indigenous knowledge also is being accorded recognition in development activities. All this makes appeal to cultural and democratic ideals a potent legitimizing element in the rhetoric of the *ajumose* slogan.

Besides, a context where there is weak ideological orientation is very fertile for this kind of occurrence. Generally, politics in Nigeria as highlighted earlier does not incline on coherent political ideologies, but rather on strong ethno-religious biases. Here, a cultural level of identification with the people proves effective in winning them over for political advantage. The success the *ajumose* slogan has recorded so far is largely dependent on this cultural identification from which the linguistic exploitation derives its potency. This is in agreement with Burke's view in theory of identification that carefully created symbols can form a basis for identification and association among people. The Governor's potential undoing however is the propaganda style in which the slogan is being used and misused.

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