CIRCUMSTANTIAL ADJUNCT IN SELECTED PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL SPEECHES

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Abstract

This study analyses circumstantial elements in selected Nigerian presidential inaugural speeches, paying attention to their frequency distributions and rhetorical implications. Three purposively selected presidential inaugural speeches, which were culled from the newspapers' website constitute the data for the study. Anchoring on Halliday's classification of circumstance, the study identifies Location as the predominant circumstance (47.3%), which suggests a strong emphasis on spatial and temporal references to situate governance actions within spatial and temporal contexts. Next to Location is Cause (22%), which provides justifications for governmental policies and decisions. Manner (9.3%) and Role (8%) play significant roles in defining the leaders' self-presentation and governance perspectives. Sparingly used but significant circumstances include Accompaniment (3.3%), Matter (2.7%), Angle (2.7%), and Contingency (2.7%). They contribute to expressions of alliances, subject focus, perspectives, and conditionality. Extent (2%) is the lowest. Its low occurrence may be attributed to a preference for qualitative over quantitative assessments. Tinubu's speech exhibits the highest circumstantial occurrences, followed by Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan's. This point to varied rhetorical and policy-driven strategies. The study demonstrates how linguistic choices in political discourse reflect governance priorities, national unity, and leadership styles.

Keywords: Circumstance, Systemic Functional Grammar, Inaugural Speech

1. Introduction

Presidential Inaugural addresses are very crucial and play a unique role in the political world. Aside from serving as the formal commencement of a new regime, inaugural addresses are used by the president-elect to connect with the nation, acknowledge challenges, articulate his visions and missions, and set the tone for the new administration. These speeches are usually carefully crafted and loaded with rhetorical acts, designed to inspire, unify, and persuade the citizenry. Duranti (2006) posits that with the meticulous manipulation of linguistic resources, speakers delivering a public speech can actualise their ultimate goal, which is to make the audience believe what they are asserting is worthy of wholehearted and unconditional support. Hence, newly elected presidents leverage the persuasive power of language to shape and influence public perception, define national priorities, and, in the end, leave their indelible mark on history.

The persuasive power of language lies in the strategic deployment of linguistic devices such as metaphors, rhetorical questions, and specific word choices to achieve specific desired effects. Among these devices are the circumstantial adjuncts which point to lexical items or phrases that denote the time, place, manner, or reason for an action. Investigating how presidents employ these adjuncts in inaugural speeches will offer valuable insights into their rhetorical strategies and how they construct meaning, initiate and sustain connections with their citizenry, and project a particular vision for the nation. This work examines the use of circumstantial adjuncts within selected presidential inaugural speeches in Nigeria to unveil their contribution to the overall persuasive power of these crucial addresses.

2. Theoretical Concept of Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Grammar, a linguistic theoretical construct developed by M.A.K Halliday, views language as an interconnected network of systems. It focuses on the two central dimensions of language – systematicity and functionality. The systematicity foregrounds Saussure's paradigmatic approach to how language works - any act of communication involves choices on many scales, which are mapped using the representation tool of the 'system network.' As noted by Halliday (1985), the term *systemic* refers to the view of language as 'a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning.' This is further entrenched in Halliday (1994: 26), which holds that 'a language consists of a set of systems and the speaker or the writer may choose the ways of expressing meaning.' The functionality points to Halliday's position that language is what it is because of what it has evolved to do. Invariably, Halliday focuses on the relationship between language and its functions in social settings, thereby treating grammar as a meaning-making resource. Hence, SFG is concerned with the interrelation of form and meaning.

In Systemic Functional Grammar, language performs three functions technically referred to as metafunctions; namely, ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. The ideational function describes how language is used to construe human experiences in the real and sub-conscious worlds (Bloor & Bloor, 2004: 10). This is concerned with clause as representation, which is captured in the grammar of the transitivity system. The transitivity system is 'a set of grammatical systems which construes the world of experience into a

manageable set of Process Types' (Halliday, 1994: 106). Three basic elements (participant, process and circumstance) constitute this system (Halliday, 1994, 107). The third element (circumstance), which is our focus here, will be thoroughly discussed subsequently. The interpersonal function examines the use of language to initiate and maintain social relations. This is captured in the clause as an exchange through the mood system. The textual function of language is the use of language to create a coherent and cohesive text as opposed to mere isolated and disconnected structures. This is captured as clause as message through the theme-rhyme system.

2.1. Circumstantial Adjuncts

Circumstantial adjuncts, which constitute the third element in the transitivity system, are very crucial components of the clause that contribute significantly to the overall meaning within the clause structure. As a crucial part of clause structure, they often occur in various types of processes. Halliday (1994:150) specifies three key dimensions of circumstantial adjuncts. First, he describes them as elements that accompany the process, such as the location of an event in terms of time or space, its manner, or its cause. This notion holds that expressing when, where, how, and why events take place are typically conveyed through adverbs and not nouns. This is akin to the traditional description of an adverb as a word that modifies or adds meaning to a verb, adjective, another adverb, or an entire sentence, answering questions such as 'how?', 'when?', or 'where?'.

The second dimension views circumstantial elements as adjuncts. As defined by Leech and Svartyik (2002: 154), an adjunct is a clause element that is not required by the verb but adds extra meaning, such as information about time, place, or manner. For instance, in the sentence *The man arrived on Monday*, the word 'Monday' functions as an adjunct, pointing to the similarity between adverbs and adjuncts. The third perspective is that circumstances are usually expressed not as nominal groups but as adverbial groups or prepositional phrases, as illustrated in the sentences, 'I met the man *at the car park and* She addressed her mum *very rudely*.' This is corroborated by Matthews (1997), who posits that circumstantial elements specify the external context of an event, particularly in relation to space and time, as evident in examples such as *in Nigeria*, *last week*, and *from Ghana*. In this regard, terms such as 'complement' and 'circumstantial adjunct' can be used interchangeably. Summarily, circumstantial adjuncts provide additional information about an event/action, answering questions such as 'when?', 'how?', 'where?', 'to what extent?', and 'why?' Thus, circumstantial adjuncts in conjunction with process types contribute to a broader understanding of clause complexity.

Types of Circumstantial Adjuncts

i. **Extent**: Extent adjuncts indicate the duration, distance, or frequency of an event. They answer interrogative forms such as *how far?* which points to spatial distance, *how long?* Which indicates duration, *how many*? which shows measure units and *how many times?* which indicates frequency.

ii. **Location**: Location adjuncts show when and where events occur. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014:318), they 'situate the event in space and time.' Usually, circumstantial elements of location are indicated through interrogative forms such as *where*? and *when?* They are realised by adverbial group or prepositional phrase, such as *around, downstairs, in Paris, long ago, parallel to, close to, beyond, on the right of, behind, between the two tables*, etc.

iii. **Manner:** This category of circumstantial adjunct describes how actions are performed. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), a circumstantial adjunct of manner construes the manner of the process in terms of means, quality, and comparison.

a. means
   This is usually realised by a prepositional phrase that begins with by or with which, specifying the means where the process occurs. It is indicated by interrogative forms; *what means*?, *how?* and *what with?*

b. Quality
   This is expressed by adverbial group with –ly adverb expressing the way an action happens. Quality expressions tell the how of events in the clause structure, and they are probed by the interrogative form, how?

c. Comparison
   The circumstance of comparison is realised by a prepositional phrase introduced by like or unlike or an adverbial group showing similarity or difference. It is expressed by the interrogative form, *what like?*

iv. **Cause:** Cause adjuncts state why an event or action occurs. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014:322), *cause adjuncts 'provide the motivation behind a process.'*

a. Reason
   It is usually realised by a prepositional phrase that states the reason for which a process takes place and what causes it. Such prepositional phrases include: as a result of, consequently, because of, and thanks to, among others.

b. Purpose
   This indicates the purpose for and the intention behind a process. Circumstance of purpose is expressed by prepositions such as for the purpose of, in the hope of, and the corresponding interrogative form is *what for?*

c. Behalf
   The circumstance of behalf is typically represented by a prepositional phrase with for or a complex preposition (for the sake of, in favour of, on behalf of, etc.), and it indicates an entity, usually a person, on whose behalf or for whose sake a process is undertaken. The corresponding interrogative is *who for?*

v. Contingency adjuncts stipulate the condition(s) under which an action takes place. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 324), contingency adjuncts are 'circumstances that define conditional relationships in discourse.'

a. Condition
This indicates under what condition and it is expressed by prepositional phrase like in case of, in the event of etc., for instance, the italicised segment of the sentence, *if the rain stops early enough*, we will go to the party, stipulates the condition that must hold before the process of going can take place.

b. Concession
It represents the notion of *despite what?* and often expressed by a preposition despite or prepositional phrase, in spite of.

c. Default
It is represented by prepositional phrases such as in the absence of, in default of, etc.

vi. Accompaniment
Adjuncts of accompaniment indicate who or what is involved in the action. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) state that accompaniment adjuncts 'indicate whether the process involves another participant' (p. 326). This category of adjunct is expressed by prepositional phrases with prepositions such as with, without, instead of and besides. The corresponding interrogatives are *with whom? and who/what else?.* It is subcategorised into commutative and additive.

a. Comitative
This represents the process as a single instance of a process even though it involves two entities/participants. The italicised portion of the sentence, She has been held down *with about five others,* is an instance of commutative.

b. Additive
The additive represents the process as two instances in which the participants share the same function, but one of them is represented circumstantially for contrast purpose. For example, The children *as well as their parents* were invited.

vii. Role
The circumstance of role describes the capacity in which someone acts. It represents the meaning 'be' and 'become' circumstantially. It is of two categories:

a. Guise
It represents the meaning of 'be' and corresponds to the interrogative, what as? For example, Tinubu has been elected as the Nigerian president.

b. Product
It represents the meaning 'become and corresponds to the interrogative, what into? For instance, All carbohydrate foods are broken down into glucose.

viii. Matter
This circumstantial element is equivalent to verbiage in the verbal process as it refers to that which is said, described, referred to or narrated. The interrogative is *what about?* Matter is expressed by prepositions such as about, concerning, with reference to and sometimes, of. E.g. Tell me about the incoming president.

ix. Angle

This includes circumstantial elements that refer to perspective or source of information. It is expressed by complex prepositions such as according to, in the words of, from the standpoint of, etc., usually, it is related to the sayer of the verbal clause and the senser of a mental clause. For example: It seems, *to me*, the president will not do much. The italicised element is an instance of angle.

3. Methodology

This study used a descriptive qualitative and quantitative approach to explore the role of circumstance in the selected inaugural speeches. Three purposively selected inaugural speeches of Nigerian presidents constitute the data for the study. The speeches are those of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and two former presidents, Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, respectively. The three speeches were culled from three different online websites, (thecable.ng, geriaunmission.org, and vanguardngr.com). For convenience, the speeches were labeled Text A, Text B, and Text C. After thorough reading, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the speeches was carried out by identifying the various circumstantial elements deployed in the speeches using Halliday's classification of circumstantial adjuncts. The quantitative aspect focused on the ideological opinions projected through the lexical choices of circumstance, while the quantitative aspect of the study presents the percentage distribution of the various types of circumstance.

4. Data Analysis

This section attempts a classificatory analysis of the circumstantial in the selected speeches.

4.1. Classification of circumstantial options:

Table 1 Circumstantial options in the selected speeches

S/N	Circumstances	Tinubu's Speech (Text A)	Buhari's Speech (Text B)	Goodluck's Speech (Text C)	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Extent	1	1	1	3	2
2.	Location	38	26	7	71	47.3
3.	Manner	6	3	5	14	9.3
4.	Cause	14	13	6	33	22
5.	Accompaniment	1	0	4	5	3.3
6.	Matter	0	0	4	4	2.7

7.	Role	4	3	5	12	8
8.	Angle	2	2	0	4	2.7
9.	Contingency	0	1	3	4	2.7
	Total	66	49	35	150	100

As evident in the table above, Text A has the highest number of circumstance, amounting to 66, followed by Text B, which has a total of 49 and then Text C, 35. Circumstance of location is dominant in all the speeches, totaling up to 71 occurrences (47.3 %). Cause is also highly used in the speeches, especially in Text A and Text B, totaling up to 33 (22%). Another category of circumstance that plays a significant role in the speeches are Manner and Cause, with 14 (9.3%) and 12 (8%) occurrences, respectively. Accompaniment occurs 5 times (3.3%), while Angle and Contigency have 4 appearances each (2.7), indicating that they also help in realising the messages of the speeches. Extent has the least occurrence, 2 (3 %).

4.2. Interpretation of the content of Circumstance Options
Instances of circumstances in the selected speeches are discussed below.
4.2.1 Extent
Circumstance of Extent is sparingly used in the speeches. Its occurrence either quantifies and measures problems or measures the degree and scope of action. This is evident in the following examples.

Excerpt 1
i.   …not less than 6% growth … (Text A)
ii.   …to explain Nigeria's poor economic performance over the years … (Text B)

In the first example, extent helps us to know the magnitude of action the government will take to increase the GDP significantly. The second example points to Nigeria's poor economic performance.

4.2.2 Location
Excerpt 2
i.   …from one government to another … (Text A)
ii.   …to Maiduguri… (Text B)
iii.   …whether in the North or in the South; in the East or in the West … (Text B)
iv.   … **is due to end in December**… (Text A)
v.   … **before I assume office** … (Text B)
vi.   …Earlier this year… (Text C)

The above examples reflect spatial and temporal locations which encapsulate or express the WHERE and WHEN of the ideas or events captured by the process within the clause.

4.2.3 Manner
Excerpt 3
i. … as Africa's most populous nation and as the best hope and strongest champion of the Black Race (Text A)
ii. .. is a mindless, godless group who are **as far away from Islam as one can think of.**. (Text B)
iii. …bold and majestic yet bright and full of spirit, **as is our precious nation**…(Text A)
iv. …with prosecuting the fight against Boko Haram… (Text B)
v. …With unity, hard work and collective sacrifice… (Text C)
vi. … through productive partnerships… (Text C)

In the above instances, manner occurs in the form of analogies and comparison, highlighting Nigeria's resilience by contrasting it with other nations (see I – iii). Coupled with comparison, means is employed to depict the practicability and realization of the objectives and plans of the government.

4.2.4. Cause

Excerpt 4

i. …to bring about growth and development to achieve a GDP much better than we have today…(Text A)
ii. ..to revive major industries and accelerate the revival and development of our railways, roads, and general infrastructure… (Text B)
iii. ..to determine its origins, remote and immediate causes of the movement, its sponsors, the international connections… (Text B)
iv. …because I am one of you..
v. …to enable them exercise their franchise…
vi. … to tackle poverty and under-development…
vii. …verwhelmed by the joy of our victory…
viii. … for our people

In the above instances, the circumstance of cause is used to state the reason or purpose for which an action takes place, except for the last, which shows on whose behalf the event/action is carried out.

4.2.5. Accompaniment
Excerpt 5
i. …In partnership with the African Union… (Text C)
ii. …members of the PDP family and members of other political parties… (Text C)
iii. … with my fellow citizens… (Text A)
In these structures, accompaniment tells us with whom certain events occurred.

4.2.6. Matter
Excerpt 6.
    i.   ...**on infrastructure... (Text B)**
    ii.   **...** The resolution of the Niger Delta issue...(Text C)
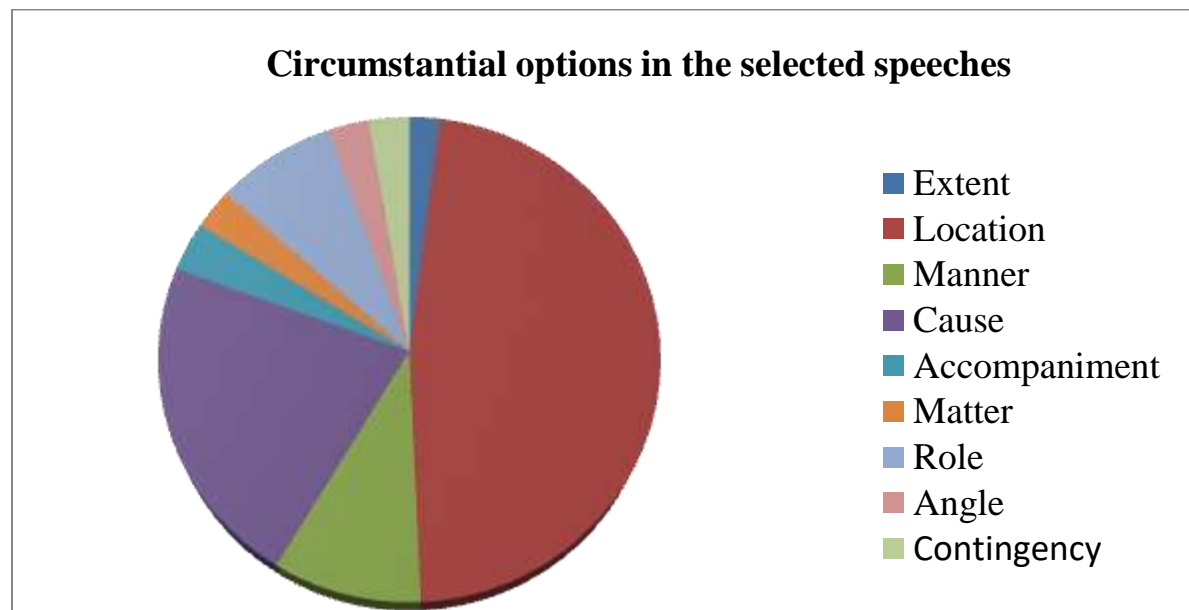Here, matter tells about certain events in the speeches
4.2.7. Role
Excerpt 7
    i.   ...as your president ... (Text A)
    ii.   ..as one unified people...(Text C)

From the above illustrations, role indicates what a certain participant appears as.

    4.3.   Discussion of finding
The above analysis of circumstances in the selected speeches of Tinubu (Text A), Buhari (Text B), and Goodluck Jonathan (Text C) offers significant insights into the study of speeches; particularly, how political ideologies, governance priorities, and rhetorical strategies are projected through linguistic choices.

Circumstantial options in the selected speeches

Legend: Extent, Location, Manner, Cause, Accompaniment, Matter, Role, Angle, Contingency

The analysis reveals that circumstance of location has the highest number of occurrences, totaling 71 instances (47.3%) across the three speeches. This shows a strong emphasis on time and place, which are very important in situating the actions of those in power within a temporal and spatial context. The spatial reference (such as... whether in the North or in the South; in the East or in the West) shows concern for national unity and the inclusion of all parts of the country while temporal references (such as earlier this year, before I assume office) signals transition of power, pointing back to past action and looking forward to future expectations. Aside from location, cause is also preponderantly used in the speeches analysed.

It has 33 occurrences (22%), making it the second most frequently used in the speeches. Of the three speeches, Tinubu's speech has the highest use of circumstance of cause (14 instances), indicating a high policy-driven narration and justification for every governance action. Role and Manner circumstances are used on average with 12 and 14 occurrences, respectively (8% and 9.3% respectively). While manner highlights approaches to governance through comparisons and analogies, role is used to specify identities and positions. Other circumstances such as Accompaniment, Matter, Role and Contingency, though sparingly used, are significant in the realisation of the overall messages in the speeches. Accompaniment, which has 5 instances (3.3%), is used to show political alliances and cooperation with other political parties and fellow citizens at large. Matter, Angle and Contigency have 4 occurrences each (2.7%). Matter specifies the subject of discourse, Angle shows perspective/opinions, while contingency stipulates conditions for some governmental actions

5. Conclusion
This study, through the lens of Systemic Functional Grammar, has highlighted how linguistic choices shape political discourse and governance narratives and influence public perception. It is evident in the finding that Nigerian presidential speeches rely heavily on linguistic choices to establish their authority and responsibility as well as connect to the general masses. Through the various linguistic choices, the newly elected presidents are able to create spatial awareness, reinforce national identity and patriotism, situate events within a temporal frame, reinforce historical transition in leadership, promote unity and collective efforts, among others.

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