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A SUBTEXTUAL IMPLICATURE OF SELECTED POLITICAL PROPHECIES ON 2023 ELECTIONS

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Abstract

A cursory look at the Nigerian situation during the 2023 elections has shown that despite the enormity of human capital, economic resources, and entrepreneurial abilities that Nigeria has in abundance to build and maintain a politically stable and harmonious society, democratic competency has eluded the nation. The 2023 elections in Nigeria brought with them hopes and fears, expectations and optimism for a better future. However, forces fought inadvertently to truncate the elections, imperil our nascent democracy, dim the light and bring all our political calculations to nothing. These seemingly imperceptible forces were powerful, subtle and distinct but not mutually exclusive. They include using intemperate language by the candidates; direct insulting or derogatory statements or innuendoes to vilify each other; the preponderance of fake news by the media; judicial rascality, fake calculations of votes and results, insecurity, food scarcity, cashless economy, etc. Amid the mayhem came prophecies from different clergymen and others. This study adopted a pragmatic approach to x-ray the subtextual implicatures of these selected political prophecies on 2023 elections, their contents, forms, hidden meanings and implicatures. Data for the study was mainly derived from social media and newspapers. Paul Grice's theory of conversational implicatures and John Searle's Speech Acts theory were deployed in analysing the prophecies. Findings reveal that unravelling the meanings of the prophetic discourses transcends mere decoding of textual messages, which is characterised by imageries, metaphors and innuendos. There is also a broad distinction between the semantic and the expressive. This study advises Nigerians to instead work towards good governance, equity, and justice and building a sound democratic nation where every individual, tribe and community is considered more important than relying on political prophecies.

Keywords: subtextual, implicature, political, prophecies, elections

Introduction

This paper investigates some selected political prophecies for the 2023 elections to examine their contents, forms, intended meanings and implications. The central argument of the paper is that political prophecies are incongruous and irritating against the background of Nigeria's political incompetence and our nascent democracy. To gain a plural audience, 'the prophets' who already share a singular audience raise controversial issues to draw attention to them, as well as for publicity. Questioning the wisdom of the adage, "Saying it does not make it so", the meaning of the saying is that in situations where things have to be decided on, done, planned, executed and so on, certain people are prone to engage in lengthy diatribes about what should be done rather than doing something to realise the plans. Some will forestall every anticipated movement and progress if the plan, no matter how positive, does not meet their selfish purposes. In such a situation, the other participants in the planning may be tempted to shut up the talker by remarking that no matter how much s/he discourses on the subject, nothing will happen until s/he does something about it, for indeed, saying it doesn't make it so. Similarly, when people are busy prophesying and believing in prophecies



without doing the appropriate things, which include being honest and selfless, working towards good governance by promoting the values of democracy, fairness, justice and equality, mutual understanding and collaboration, and familial supportiveness, again, 'saying it doesn't make it happen'.

Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly, Presidential and National Assembly elections of 2023 were considered the most controversial but wide-open elections Nigeria has seen since 1979. They were very competitive and were held at a time when there was rising tension in the country. Compared with previous elections, Nigerians, with great expectations, came out en masse to vote, believing in the change which they passionately desired. However, despite reports of electoral malpractices and BVAS (Bimodal Voters Accreditation System) machines that didn't work as expected, Nigerians were disappointed to the core despite the earlier assurances by INEC that they would function optimally. The international election observers, which include the European Union, African Union, Commonwealth, NRI(Non-Resident Indians), etc, have, in their statements, condemned the election process as fraudulent and far below international best practices. According to thisdaylive.com (2023), the whole process looked suspect and scripted with the abuse of and non-compliance with the Electoral Act 2022 regarding BVAS uploads and particularly the proviso to Section 65 of the Electoral Act, which empowers the Commission via the Chairman to review all the polling unit results and conflicts before final collation. The Chairman refused to apply that novel part of the amendment, which would have addressed the concerns about the irregularities. He claimed he would do that after the final collation but failed to do it. Hence, the 2023 elections became the worst elections in the history of the Republic of Nigeria because the entire nation was rigged in one swoop through technology. Little wonder, the victory of the Presidential election was greeted with graveyard silence for more than one week.

This study believes that prophecy has no place in politics if people should do what they are supposed to do honestly and judiciously. However, as a result of the high expectations of the people and the prevailing psychological despondency and mayhem in the society, some clergymen came up with their hit-and-run prophecies even before the elections commenced. The outcome of the elections confirmed them as fake prophets who were not sent by God. Hence, fulfilling the word of God according to Jeremiah 23:21-22 and 32, which says:

I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message. I had not spoken to them yet, yet they had prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and their evil deeds. I am against the prophets who wag their tongue and say, 'The Lord declares'. Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams. They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least, declares the Lord.

Given the above abuse of the prophetic office by these impostors, Problem Masau (2023), a Zimbabwean journalist, describes them as psychologists who prey on the minds of unsuspecting people and entrepreneurs who are in there to make a profit.

Speech Act and Politics

Speech Acts theories have been a considerable revolution in the development of the field of pragmatics as a course of study. According to Austin (1962), speech acts are premised on

the fact that people perform various actions through words, and when utterances are made, a particular act is performed. Whenever we talk, we do such things as greet, request, promise, invite, congratulate, advise, thank, insult, apologise, promise, etc. These Speech Acts are classified into three: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Pragmatics cannot be fully studied without taking into consideration discourse analysis since they are closely joined with each other. However, political discourse has been a major domain of language use and occupies a pride of place in the organisation and management of society. Furthermore, as posited by Ardita Dylgjeri (2018) since the politician's speech is mainly concerned with persuading and making others believe what you are saying, the Speech Acts play the most important role. It presents and documents some of the significant illocutionary acts that convey the intentions of speakers in political speeches.

Political prophecies are usually characterised by implicatures. Diane Macdonell (1960), in her book, 'Theories of Discourse', describes Prophecy as a discourse. Lodge and Kress, Copley and Barrell (1990) state that discourse is a particular range of language which provides a specific and exclusive way of talking about and viewing a subject.

Speech Act and Prophecy

Speech acts simply mean actions in words. The word, prophecy, originated from the Greek word prophetic, which means the gift of interpreting the will of God. In 1 Corinthians 14, St. Paul posits that prophecy is not what could be necessarily termed ecstatic or charismatic in the sense of a person being given a word during the meeting and then instantly speaking it. Prophecy is a prediction about the future which is believed to be inspired or revealed by God either to admonish, threaten, promise or bless the people. The speech act of prophesying is usually characterised by assertives, commissives, expressions and declarations.

Subtext

Subtext is a term used in literary criticism to describe the content of a text that cannot be explicitly stated because it is either too obvious or too meaningful. This meaning may not only be implicit but also symbolic and contextual. It is a literary technique that can be used to convey thoughts, feelings and ideas without overtly stating them. Malmkjaer (2001) posits that subtext is the unspoken or less obvious meaning or message in a literary composition, drama, speech or conversation. The subtext comes to be known by the reader or audience over time as it is not immediately or purposely revealed by the story itself. It is proof that a story is not surface-level. It has a wealth of information available when a reader decides to read between the lines and dig into what the story means. It is common in literature and sometimes missed due to its below-the-surface nature. Similar to the subtext for its hidden meaning are innuendos, which are specifically insinuations beneath the surface that imply that something else, often derogatory, is true. Innuendos, unlike subtexts, often have clear meanings to be readily understood close to the surface. Subtexts allow writers and filmmakers to insert hidden messages about politics, real life and controversies. They allow characters to say one thing but mean another and for authors to insert themes and ideas without overtly calling attention to them. Subtexts provide books with depth and meaning for readers who are willing to read between the lines. According to Forbes (2014), the subtext is the third dimension of creative writing. It is what endows drama with resonance, soulfulness, reality and poetic ambiguity. Walter de Gruyter (2002) says that in



the modern theory of texts, the underlying connotative meaning on which a text is anchored is commonly referred to as its subtext. The term, subtextual, is the adjective.

Implicature

Implicature is derived from the verb, 'to imply' as is its cognate, implication. Originally, 'to imply means to fold something into something else' (from the Latin verb, *plicare* to fold). Hence, that which is implied is folded in and has to be unfolded to be understood. According to Bilmes (1986), "in everyday talk, we often convey propositions that are not explicit in our utterances but are merely implied by them. In this, we are dealing with conversational implicature. However, to obtain a satisfactory account of implicature, we appeal not just to some general conversational principles but to specific pragmatic ones.

Subtextual Implicature

This simply involves meanings beyond the texts. It is the implicit or underlying meaning or theme of a written or spoken text which is often determined from the linguistic or social context.

Theoretical Framework

Conversational implicature, as developed by Paul Grice (1988) and Speech act theory by John Searle (1969) was adopted for the study. They are preferred here due to their entailment of prophecy. Conversational implicature is an indirect or implicit speech act. It is a speaker's intended meaning; a speaker can imply a meaning implicitly, confident that the listener will understand. Jacob Mey (2001) describes it as the way we understand an utterance following what we expect to hear and the context of the utterance. According to Peter Grundy(2008), pragmatic meanings are determined by context. The context of an utterance may extend to the physical or social environment and can also encompass general knowledge and the speaker's unspoken words. Each of these concentric circles of contexts can play a role in the interpretation of the utterance. A speaker's comment can reflect features of the context of utterance in that s/he has to watch their language by avoiding certain words or phrases.

John Searle's Speech Acts theory concerns the mind and linguistic communication. It is a subfield of pragmatics that studies how words are used not only to present information but also to carry out actions. It was originally introduced by J.L Austin in his book, 'How to Do Things With Words', and was further developed by the American philosopher, J.R Searle. In speech act theory, primacy is given to the speaker's meaning and intentions. Searle posits that to speak is to perform an act, to do something in the world. This is expressed in an illocutionary act, that is, an utterance that moves someone to perform a certain task. Searle proposes five basic performances of illocutionary acts. These are: 'assertive,' which is based on the way we tell people how things are; 'directive', which is based on how we get them to do things; 'commissive,' which is based on whether we, ourselves, are doing things; 'expressive' this is based on how we express our feelings and attitudes; and 'declarative', this is based on how we bring changes to our world through our utterances. Each of these may be further subdivided into directives, for example, commands, requests, pleas and others. Moreover, he describes each speech act as consisting of three variables that combine with the propositional content of the act: the illocutionary point, the direction of fit and the sincerity condition. The illocutionary point is the purpose of the act; the direction it describes a speech act as either an attempt to get the word to match the world or the world

to match the word; the sincerity condition describes the psychological state of the person making the utterance.

In all, one would deduce that the very core of prophetic language is performative. It is either the prophet performing the action of challenging or indicting, repudiating or convicting, announcing or pronouncing. On other occasions, they may commiserate with people, promise them prosperity and bless them. The perlocutionary aspects of their preaching may be seen in their encouragement and inspiration, their persuading of the people to act in specific ways, and, on occasion, their deception of the people.

Methodology

Qualitative data was used, comprising twenty political prophecies of some clergymen, which were purposefully selected. Data were sourced and collected online, employing the top-down analytical approach to revealing the context and illocutionary acts deployed. The clergymen and their ministries include:

1. Rev. Fr Camillus Ejike Mbaka, Founder, Amen Adoration Ministry, Enugu
2. Rev Fr Emmanuel Obinma(Ebube Muonso), Founder, Holy Ghost Adoration Ministry, Uke
3. Rev Fr Prof. Martin Obayi (Okunerere), Founder, Okunerere Consuming Fire Ministry, Nsukka
4. Rev Fr Prof. Bonachristus Umeogu (Mmuo na Mmadu), Founder, Communion Sanctorium Ministry, Awka
5. Rev. Dr Uma Ukpai, Founder, Uma Ukpai Evangelistic Gospel Ministry, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State
6. Evangelist Ebuka Obi, Founder, Zion Prayer Movement Outreach Ministry, Ago Estate, Lagos
7. Pastor William Kumuyi, Founder, Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Lagos
8. Bishop David Oyedepo, Founder, Winners' Chapel International, Ota, Ogun State
9. Pastor Dr Paul Idoko Enenche, Founder, Dunamis International Gospel Centre, Abuja
10. Apostle Johnson Suleiman, Founder, Omega Fire Ministries International, Auchi, Edo State
11. Dr Chris Okafor, Founder, Mountain of Liberation and Miracle Ministry, Enugu
12. Senior Prophet Jeremiah Omoto Fufeyin, Founder, Christ Mercy Land Deliverance Ministry, Warri
13. Late Prophet T. B Joshua, the founder of the Synagogue Church of All Nations
14. Primate Elijah Ayodele, the spiritual leader of the Evangelical Spiritual Church.,
15. Chris Oyakhilome, founder of Christ Embassy Ministry
16. Prophetess Bright Ndibunwa (Brighttheseer), Founder, The Lord of Host Miracle Chapel
17. Prophet Emmanuel Chukwudi, the General Overseer, King of Kings Deliverance Ministry
18. Reverend Jerry Nwachukwu, a lead pastor of the Bible-based Miracle Assembly
19. Pastor Christopher Olabisi,
20. Passion Java, a Zimbabwean pastor

These prophecies were subjected to a pragmatic analysis using Searles's speech act theory and Grice's conversational implicature theory.

Analysis of Data

The prophecies were analyzed using Paul Grice's conversational theory, which is of the view that every speech act has an intended meaning, and the speech acts theory of John Searle, which presents speech acts as commissive, declarative, assertive, expressive, etc.

1. Passion Java, a Zimbabwean pastor, prophesied about the outcome of the election: In the month of February, I'm going to Nigeria. We need to pray for Nigeria because I saw people dying. It is something that has to do with the youth, and I began to see people shooting each other. I saw elections taking place in Nigeria, and the elections were not that peaceful. I even saw the police getting in the streets trying to control people; I saw people trying to fight back. So, we need to pray and save lives in Nigeria. So that at least the elections should be peaceful. But then, people were asking, 'Who's going to win?' And I saw a man...spiritually, I see a man with glasses. He's of old age, he's not like a youthful man, and I see him wearing glasses and I see a name as 'T' and I see this one getting into power. So, this election is a waste of time for people to kill each other. This one with a 'T' I see him ruling Nigeria. So, this one is already a done deal.

The pastor used a lot of commissive and directive speech acts to express his intentions. Commissive speech acts include promises, threats, refusals and pledges, while directive speech acts include: commands, requests, challenges, invitations, summons, dares, etc.

"I'm going to Nigeria"...Promise...He promised his adherents that he would come to Nigeria.

"We need to pray"...directive and a request.

Here, **the implicature** is that he presented himself as the '**Messiah or Saviour**', who, when he comes to Nigeria, the political quagmire and tussle would cease.

Also, **ambiguity** appeared here. ... 'I see a name, 'T', and I see this one getting into power. Ahmed Bola Tinubu has a T', Atiku, Abubakar and Peter Obi have the letter T in their names, so how do we know the one he prophesied about?

Nevertheless, his prophecy was not real.

2. Primate Elijah Ayodele prophesied that Atiku, Abubakar of the PDP, would emerge as the president of Nigeria. He says:

Among these three candidates, Atiku Abubakar has been given an assignment by God to fix the nation within four years. If he wins and refuses to do the will of God for the people, he will see the wrath of God. He will not complete his term because God's anger will be placed on him. His assignment is to form an inclusive government, take care of security within six months, restructure before his term ends, reduce petroleum prices, fix the education sector, and revive the economy.

Here, **assertions** were made: Atiku Abubakar has been given an assignment.

Commissive: If he wins and refuses to do the will of God for the people, he will see the wrath of God. He will not complete his term because God's anger will be placed on him.

Directives: His assignment is to form an inclusive government, take care of security within six months, restructure before his term ends, reduce petroleum prices, fix the education sector, and revive the economy.

3. Chris Oyakhilomen, in his prophecy, says,
He is under the influence of the devil. the devil was mocking and laughing, scoffing at Nigerians. The devil is using him. it is a wicked spirit of darkness, a mocker. The devil's name is Jackal. A jackal is a trickster, a swindler, who usually operates on behalf of another for the purpose of deception. This demon is mocking Nigeria, but he has been cut off. In the spirit of the second candidate, if you let him get into the office, you'll have no country. You would have sold your country. The third candidate was winning. He didn't want to lose, but he was afraid of winning. Then I prayed, and God gave him wings to fly.

The prophet, here, employs expressive, commissive, assertive and directive in his prophecy.

Expressive: he expresses what he feels about the first presidential candidate.... Atiku.

He is under the influence of the devil. the devil was mocking and laughing, scoffing at Nigerians. The devil is using him. it is a wicked spirit of darkness, a mocker.

Commissive: he employs implicature here, indirectly telling the people not to vote for the second candidate: Ahmed Tinubu by presenting him as a devil.

In the spirit, the second candidate, if you let him get into the office, you'll have no country. You would have sold your country.

Direction: Also, employs implicature here. He, indirectly, tells the people that the third candidate is from God. They should, therefore, vote for him; and that is Mr Peter Obi.

4. Prophet Emmanuel Chukwudi claimed that he received a revelation. God says: "PDP's candidate will win the election".

Here, the prophet uses a declaration: God says: "PDP's candidate will win the election".

5. Reverend Jerry Nwachukwu said God told him that Obi would win the 2023 presidential election.

Here, the prophet uses assertion: Obi would win the 2023 presidential election.

6. Pastor Christopher Olabisi prophesied that he heard from God thus,

Atiku would win the election, and he would build a good foundation for his successor, whom everyone would know as a visionary president.

Here, the prophet uses assertion: Atiku would win the election **and directive:** he would build a good foundation for his successor that everyone will know as a visionary president.

7. Dr Chris Okafor, Founder, The Mountain of Liberation and Miracle Ministry, Enugu

God says: pray against the postponement of the election and a riot that may end the country called Nigeria. If the people do not do right beyond praying and voting right, for another eight years, Nigerians will eat sand. I saw angels wearing a particular man, called OBIDIENT, an agbada (culturally-made cloth) and that man became the president. But there would be a manipulation of results if Christians do not pray well. It would be another 8years of greater suffering.

The prophet used assertives, directives and commissives.

8. Prophet Jeremiah Omoto Fufeyin, Founder, Christ MercyLand Deliverance Ministry, Warri, Delta State

It is exactly 11th December 2022. Be my witness because my prophecies have never failed. The Lord said something would happen before the election, the killing would start, the youth killing youths during the presidential election, ballot boxes destroyed, and gunshots everywhere. Officers fighting the youths and the youths killing officers, what does it mean? Blood everywhere. Two people were contesting, and suddenly, one won. Someone announced the winner, and suddenly another announcement came, declaring another, the winner. Both presidential candidates went to court.

9. Rev. Fr Camillus Ejike Mbaka, Founder, Amen Adoration Ministry, Enugu

“Mr Peter Obi will never win the presidential election. That he has many followers on social media does not determine he is going to be the winner.”

The man of God used a declarative speech act to express the fact that Mr Peter will not win the election.

10. Evangelist Ebuka Obi, Founder, Zion Prayer Movement Outreach Ministry, Ago Estate, Lagos

No hope for the youths in a country where your loved one is sick and the doctors are on strike. Human beings die like fowls. If there is a country that should be the best, it is Nigeria. It is the duty of the government to put things right. Therefore, we pray that no evil man will rule this country again. Only the man who has the passion to serve the people will win the 2023 election. No matter the effort of the evil person to win, whether in the Senate, state governorship or federal, he will fail. This year, 2023, will determine how far we will survive. That is the foundation of our prayer.

The intended meaning here is both assertive and expressive. The man of God expressed his concern about the reality of the time.

11. Pastor William Kumuyi, Founder, Deeper Christian Life Ministry prophesied:

“Nigeria will rejoice, no man can stop God. At the end of the elections, Nigerians will rejoice. No pin drops anywhere in the world without God's knowledge and nobody goes ahead without God's control.”

The intended meaning here is to give hope to the already hopeless Nigerians and to draw their attention to God who seems to be the ultimate reality and last solace.

12. Prophetess Bright Ndibunwa (Brighttheseer), Founder, The Lord of Host Miracle prophesied:

The spirit said to me, Alhaji Tinubu is born to be a leader of so many black people with different languages and cultures, that when his late biological mom was alive before she took in with his pregnancy, they used to call her, Iya Oba'. Even when Tinubu was young, seers and spiritualists saw him as a leader. The spirit said that with the way things are, Tinubu is in the middle and that he is destined to bring the North, South, Eastern and Western parts of Nigeria together. He will win the 2023 election with more than 35 to 40 per cent votes.

The spirit said that he will win the election because it is spiritually destined that he will make Nigeria gradually reunite.

The prophetess used assertive and directive speech acts. Interestingly, her prophecy seemed to be the only one that came true.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

The results show that speech acts such as assertives, commissives, directives, and declaratives are all performed in prophecies. The study also reveals that the prophets are perceived as God's representatives and destiny changers, and that explains why people rely so much on them and become inactive, helpless and vulnerable to them. Furthermore, the result shows that these prophets have a common motive, which is to gain a plural audience and global publicity. Hence, they have to deploy the only means available, which is making controversial assertions and declarations. The study, therefore, cautions Nigerians to work on good governance and achieving democratic competence rather than falling prey to these religious charlatans who employ language to exploit and defraud them.

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