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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESSES DURING THE PERIOD OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN GHANA: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENT NANA AKUFO-ADDO'S SPEECHES

Abstract

This study examined the addresses delivered by the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. It addressed two research questions: a) What rhetorical elements framed the addresses; and b) What was the contribution of these rhetorical elements deployed in the

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Introduction

This study examined the addresses of President Nana Akufo-Addo during the COVID-19 period from the first quarter to the third quarter of 2020. The President used these addresses, which were delivered around 9.00 pm, to manage the novel disease by providing direction in the roles of the citizenry, the medical officers, and public and private institutions in all the sectors of the society. This research activity encompassed the addresses that were delivered during the period of the COVID pandemic in 2020 when the world witnessed its worst health crisis since 1918 due to the

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outbreak of SARS-CoV-2, following the discovery of COVID-19 on December 31, 2019**.** The World Health Organisation (WHO) had also declared the health crisis a public health emergency of international proportions under International Health Regulations (IHR)**.** WHO officially stated that this new version of the coronavirus had led to the spread of a respiratory disease and by March 11, 2020, the disease was formally described as a pandemic.

The President's addresses followed a consistent and systematic presentation style. First, it captured the socio-economic goal of the nation, which was to unite all the stakeholder groupings using this opener: "Fellow Ghanaians, I have come to your homes…", which provided a memorable part of his 'pandemic oratory' (Gyan-Appenteng, 2020). Second, the President presented the COVID situation in the country, indicating the government's strategy to fight the disease with a focus on 3-Ts: tracing, testing and treatment. Third, the President reminded citizens about the impact of the disease and the need to maintain lifestyles that support efforts against the disease. Occasionally, the addresses urged Ghanaians to be aware of the importance of good nutrition and some key vitamins (A, B6, C, and E) to be found in foods like "oranges, kontomire, millet, cashew nuts, crabs, plantain, okro, dawadawa, brown rice, and mushroom" (http://globecalls.com/full-text-akuffo-addo-9th-nation-19/).

Since the main motive of the President's addresses was to provide information and persuade citizens about 'staying alive' during the pandemic, this study approached the analysis from a rhetorical analytical perspective by exploring rhetorical devices employed by the President in the addresses. Wilkin (2011) believes that rhetoric is the art and science of presenting words to persuade. According to Malmkjaer (2002), rhetoric emanates from how best a communicator can deliberately deploy linguistic devices to persuade a target. In classical terms, rhetoric has three dimensions: logos, ethos and pathos. While ethos deals with the speaker's capability to display a personal character which makes his speech credible and trustworthy, pathos is concerned with the speaker's ability to stir and arouse the emotions of their audience; and in logos lies the power to provide truth employing a persuasive and rational argument (Beer and De Landtsheer, 2004).

The classical traditions of rhetoric went beyond the orator's act of communication to his qualities of character (ethos). Here, simple, direct and emotive language is deployed, and appeals are selected with the sole aim of persuading and effecting attitudinal and behavioural change.

Communicators under these circumstances intend to persuade their targets based on their ideological inclinations and orientation using particular rhetorical tools that appeal to their audience (Kennan, 2000). In addition, the political leaders in their speeches have the intent to convince the readers based on their ideological underpinnings and orientation. They do this through the selection of some rhetorical tools that directly appeal to the emotions of their audience.

The literature on the presidential rhetoric on Ghana's COVID–19 is evolving, and this study will be making a modest contribution to this type of presidential discourse. It should serve as a source of reference for future research into COVID–19 presidential rhetoric and still enhance other efforts in presidential rhetoric research in Ghana and Africa. President Nana Akufo–Addo happens to be the President who had to manage the COVID–19 pandemic during his tenure. There is a sizeable amount of African and specifically Ghanaian presidential rhetoric even though they often focus on the Aristotelian rhetoric aspects of such presidential addresses at the expense of other approaches like the rhetorical situations (Bitzer, 1968) and extrinsic rhetorical strategies (Hillbruner, 1966). A few authors, however, used these approaches in their studies on presidential rhetorical analysis. Monfils (1977) and Lacouture, (1970) are known to have provided some information on these approaches like the extrinsic rhetorical strategies which were used by Kwame Nkrumah, while Mensah (2014) offered the theory of situational dimensions in his thesis on Kwame Nkrumah. Another study also used the three appeals of Aristotle to compare the addresses of President Barack Obama of the U.S. and President Hassan Rouhani of Iran (Ghasemi, 2020). Most of the authors who wrote about political leaders did not incorporate an analysis of the situation, nor did they explain the extrinsic rhetorical strategies used (Mensah, Sarfo-Adu, & Archibald, 2018; Onwumechili et al, 2015; Sheckels 2001; Alo, 2012). The study addressed the following two research questions:

RQ1: What rhetorical elements framed President Akufo-Addo's COVID-19 addresses?

RQ2: What is the contribution of the rhetorical elements deployed by President Akufo-Addo in his COVID-19 speeches to the persuasive intentions of the addresses?

The study provides an opportunity to fill the gap in the literature relating to the analysis of presidential addresses, especially in Ghana and Africa.

African Presidential Rhetoric

Many studies have analysed the speeches of key political figures in Africa. In a study that undertook a discourse-a-text level analysis of a speech by a Nigerian leader, Peter Obi, the author used Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach which focused on both identifying and evaluating the rhetorical devices utilised by the speaker to influence his audience about bringing down administrative costs (Joe, 2023). The paper used five rhetorical devices like hypophora, repetition, allusion and anecdote. The anaphora captured and sustained the attention of the audience producing rhythm and cadence. Repetition provided an opportunity to put a premium on the speaker on the cutbacks and ensure identity and solidarity with his audience.

The addresses of three African leaders: Nana Akufo-Addo (Ghana), Cyril Ramaphosa (South Africa) and Muhammadu Buhari (Nigeria); through the Speech Acts Theory during the COVID-19 pandemic were analysed to explain the speech styles of these leaders (Anyanwu & Abana, 2020). The findings revealed that these presidents deployed constative and performative acts (implicit and explicit) to appeal, request, urge, command, and inform their various citizens about the pandemic and its devastating impact on all citizens. The addresses also explained the policies and activities which were aimed at fighting the disease. Some of these textual and contextual acts were undertaken under sincerity and essential conditions.

Onwumechili *et al.* (2015) undertook a rhetorical analysis of two of President Nelson Mandela's speeches, which are considered the two most important speeches in his life. The two speeches were delivered thirty years apart at critical milestones in South African history April 20, 1964, and May 10, 1994). The authors tried to determine how black South Africans received these speeches, first, and second how the messages were crafted to that audience. The first speech was a 'forensic' one which reviewed matters related to justice and injustice and the second 'epidemic', which was ceremonial and focused on 'praise and blame'.

Williams (2008) also utilised the rhetorical analysis vehicle to review four Nelson Mandela's speeches largely identifying the audiences as White South Africans and the international audience with one of the speeches targeting all South Africans and the global

audience (the Inaugural Speech in Cape Town). Sheckels (2001) who studied 15 of Mandela's speeches during his presidency, explained that the presidency, was committed to improving on the poor social circumstances of South African blacks.

Sixteen political speeches of African leaders from across the major regions: Southern Africa (Robert Mugabe and Thabo Mbeki); East Africa (Mwai Kibaki); West Africa (John Atta Mills and Olusegun Obasanjo); North Africa (Hosni Mubarak) and Central Africa (Joseph Kabila and Paul Biya) were analysed through Aristotelian rhetoric and Critical Discourse Analysis (Alo, 2012).

Relating the discussion to Ghana, speeches of political and business leaders have received research attention. Kwame Nkrumah's dressing on public occasions has been rhetorically analysed to construct various meanings (Lacouture, 1970). Monfils (1977) wrote that Kwame Nkrumah used dressing and appearance to evoke psychological associations and mood. For example, he wore a business suit to represent a straightforward factual presentation, while in a *batakali,* he might deliver a rousing CPP-inclined statement showing his pride in his achievements while condemning anti-party elements. In a *kente,* however, there is the context of the pomp and pageantry of a royal ceremonial occasion (Monfils, 1977). Every type of apparel was expected to tell a unique historical story (Monfils, 1977; Lacouture, 1970). Mensah (2014) in his examination of Kwame Nkrumah's political speeches, provided the historical, political and diplomatic context which underpinned Nkrumah's rhetorical framework involving Aristotle (2007) on levels of Proof and Rhetorical Regimes, Perelman and Olbrechts (1969) on Argument and Lloyd Blitzer on Situation (1968). The study which involved pre-independence, independence and post-independence speeches exhibited the rhetorical inventions, rhetorical strategies and tools utilised by Kwame Nkrumah. The study showed that Kwame Nkrumah consistently used symbolism to establish his ethos and to create solidarity with his audience. He also explained that Kwame Nkrumah utilised the collective memory to create pathos. One of the strategies that Kwame Nkrumah used was the Coercive Rhetorical Strategy. Taking the direction, that Kwame Nkrumah was pursuing, it was not surprising that he used protest rhetoric as a tool in his fight for independence. To deny coercion in any place in the process of social change is perhaps to hope for the attainment of the ideal and not to describe realistically the rhetorical process (Andrews, 1969, p. 187).

In a CDA study, Nyarko (2013) investigated some speeches on elections through persuasive strategies like literary devices, self-projection, and speech acts, among others. The speeches were delivered by two of the presidential aspirants, Nana Akufo-Addo and John Mahama who created power relations and deployed strategies that were ideologically driven in persuading their audience. Another study that investigated the campaign speeches of John Agyekum Kufour compared the challenger-incumbent strategies adopted by him. He had been victorious in the 2000 presidential election and won in 2004. The study was undertaken through a qualitative analysis of the campaign speeches (Mensah, Sarfo-Adu, & Archibald, 2018). As the authors explained, John Agyekum Kufour positioned himself as a facilitator of change and undertook negative campaigning underpinned by an aggressive rhetoric while presenting himself as the person who could cure the country's socio-economic challenges. On the other hand, Kufour then as an incumbent deployed a measured rhetoric while promoting his achievements and personal qualities. It can be concluded that, in campaign communication there is always the difference between the tactics employed by the incumbent when they are seeking another term and on the other hand the way the challenger attempts to take over. This study used the Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse developed by Benoit (1999). Another study which analysed Nana Akufo-Addo's party's (New Patriotic Party) manifesto launch revealed the leader's deployment of rhetorical devices like pronouns and repetition to establish a bond and facilitate a closer engagement with the voters whom he was wooing for his candidacy (Addy & Ofori, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The first theoretical underpinning for this study is the rhetorical theory which examined how speakers employ language and other persuasive strategies to influence their audience. This theory originated from ancient Greece, which had a distinguished tradition for training public speakers (Torto, 2020). The early resource material was produced by Aristotle who proposed the early forms of persuasion appeals: logos (appeal to logic); ethos (appeal to character); and pathos deals with an appeal to emotions. These appeals have now been established as the foundations of rhetorical theory. This forms the basis for analysing speeches through the examination of rhetorical devices like metaphors and repetitions to influence the behaviour of the audience and deliver emotional appeals. Burke (1951) improved on the classical Greek model by offering a

systematic way of analysing speech within various contexts (Hansen, 1996). Burke (1951) saw his theories as a facilitator to the "new rhetoric", where the "old rhetoric" was positioned as "persuasion". Where classical rhetoric created an environment for orators to use in creating the persuasive design for their speeches, the new rhetoric has developed larger concepts of the social application of language. This has led to the concept of "identification" as important within the new rhetoric. The new rhetoricians saw persuasion as one of the functions of discourse and focused on the utilisation of language as a way of dealing with "social exigencies" (Bitzer, 1980). Burke (1951) believes "identification" is a function of persuasive appeal and is reflected in situations where the politician attempts to identify him/herself with his audience. "Identification" becomes an appeal to the speaker's ethos. Larrazabal and Korta's (2002) have contributed to expanding the scope of the rhetorical theory. The authors argue for pragmatic and rhetorical devices and strategies to be used to identify and analyse texts separately. Accordingly, the pragmatic side of the current study includes identifying the elements of the rhetorical situation, while the rhetorical part deals with persuasive appeals and rhetorical devices.

The second theory that guided the analysis was the conceptual metaphors theory (CMT). This theory emerged due to the need to explain abstract concepts thereby requiring the use of metaphoric language to clarify such concepts through comparison and imagery (Wood, 2015; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Within the context of this theory, metaphors can be categorised as personification, metonymy, and synecdoche, among others. A metaphor is important in verbal communication since it helps the listener to explain and think about abstract concepts in relation to more physical and familiar notions (Lahlou, 2021). The conceptual domain from which listeners draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is the source domain. This domain is directly experienced and better appreciated. The target domain, which is more abstract, and less understood, is the conceptual domain that is understood through the source domain and metaphor (Kövecses, 2015).

Data and Methods

This rhetorical analysis of the Ghanaian President's COVID-19 Addresses to the nation purposively sampled text versions of the 6th, 10th, and 28th addresses as data. In all, 28 addresses were delivered between March 2020 and May 2022. As explained earlier, all the addresses had

almost the same purpose (to update Ghanaians about the Coronavirus disease, progress in combating the canker, and persuade citizens to adopt 'positive COVID' behaviours and attitudes) and followed a similar delivery pattern. Thus, using all addresses for this study would have merely duplicated the data. The author's prior assessment indicated that the three addresses selected have many of the features required for this analysis and can be representative of the 28 addresses. The speeches were public media texts and were downloaded from the Ministry of Health Website and manually transcribed. The data were then analysed textually, focusing on the research questions.   This entailed the investigation of the use of rhetorical devices like Christian allusions; collective focus; conversational speech; democratic rhetoric; imagery; justificatory discourse, and familiarity with followers (Cart, 2014; Andrews, 2011).

Analysis and Discussion

The rhetorical situation within the COVID-19 presidential address context, involved the exigence, the audience and the constraints. The exigence is the socio-medical context of the Corona Virus pandemic and explains the challenges citizens were confronted with, like expected behaviours that call for strict adherence to good hygiene and a commitment to the prescribed social distancing protocols and the important need to stay in-doors and to fight the possible surge in COVID-19 infections. Others are restrained from shaking hands and hugging one another, discomfort with wearing face masks every time citizens left their homes. The data below illustrate this point.

> *Let us maintain good hygiene and respect the social distancing protocols, even when you are going out to receive the food…. please stay at home. There have been unfortunate incidents of some persons, in some parts of the affected areas, where the restrictions are in force, flouting the regulations and continuing with the business-as-usual attitude, even to the extent of confronting members of the security services. That should not be countenanced.*

(Update No. 6: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19)

> *Yes, there exists the possibility of a potential surge in infections. As a precautionary measure, we have strengthened further our existing national,*

regional and district response teams, with the support of the security forces, to step up to deal with any eventuality. Over recent weeks, we have learnt from the cases at the fish processing plant in Tema, and in the Obuasi municipality, how to deal with such sudden spikes.

(Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus)

Our comprehensive strategy has entailed living with restrictions that altered our daily routine; we have been restrained from shaking hands and hugging one another; we have had to keep a distance from each other; we have had to put up with the discomfort of wearing face masks every time we left our homes; we have had to endure distress caused by the poking of our nostrils and throats with swab-sticks, each time we underwent a PCR or antigen test; we had to endure, for three weeks, the painful lockdown in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area and Kasoa and the Greater Kumasi Metropolitan Area and contiguous districts; and we have all borne the brunt of the ravages of the pandemic.

(Update No. 28: Measures Taken Against Spread of Coronavirus)

The texts talk about people finding it uncomfortable to abide by the new COVID-induced lifestyles, and the idea that the disease could claim more lives. Here, the constraints related to the citizens and local institutions that have the capability of heeding the rhetorical directions in the President's speeches. The attitudes and beliefs of the citizens and the overall world outlook as seen in their way of life are some of the constraints that had occasioned behavioural changes to meet the challenges of this pandemic.

Rhetorical Devices

Within the context of rhetoric, one notable component copiously exploited in the speeches was the use of linguistic devices to assist in explaining a text. Stylistic devices otherwise known as "figure of speech" impose figurative meanings on the language to construct vivid images of the issues carried in the speeches. These are discussed below.

<u>Use of the pronoun: "we", "us" and "our"</u>

The President's addresses are replete with inclusive linguistic references, such as the use of the pronouns "we", "us" and "our" as rhetorical devices that show a strategy of collectivisation.

We have learnt many lessons from this pandemic. The most obvious is that we have to fortify urgently our public health system. We have committed to the implementation of 'Agenda 88', that is building..., We have to empower and increase the number of our healthcare professionals across board…. We need to focus our energies on ensuring access of poor people to decent housing. We can no longer ignore this basic requirement of social justice. We have to make the things we use, and grow the foods we eat. We have to come out of this crisis better, stronger and more united than before. Ghana, free, united, socially just, self-reliant and productive, that is the Ghana we are going to create together after we have defeated this virus.

(Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus)

Fellow Ghanaians, today is Maundy Thursday, and tomorrow, a few hours from now, Friday, 10th April, Good Friday, is the start of Easter, which, for us Christians, commemorates the unique sacrifice that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, made for our salvation on the cross of Calvary. The season is a good opportunity for all of us to reflect on that ultimate sacrifice, and for each one of us also to make a sacrifice for the sake of humanity's survival.

(Update No. 6: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19)

Such inclusive references are used to create a sense of belonging in the fight against the disease among all Ghanaians. It also shows the ethos of the President as a caring person who identifies with his people.

Rhetorical devices were employed to improve on the persuasive nature of the speeches to ensure clarity, persuasiveness and richness of the President's language. As is associated with public speaking, these devices were deployed to construct the basic argument and make them

very compelling. The rhetorical analysis, process entailed the President's purpose, the identification of the tools especially the tools from the text, the connection of the tools to the modes of persuasion and the evaluation of the effectiveness of that appeal in achieving the purpose of the speaker. Here the values, beliefs, culture, and religion were considered within the historical and cultural context of Ghana. The tools, among others, covered repetition, metaphors, inclusive pronoun references, etc. The rhetorical tools were connected to the mode of persuasion in terms of ethos, logos, and pathos.

Modal auxiliary: "must" and "should"

Modal auxiliaries express moods such as obligation, necessity, possibility, expectation, and command, among others. The data indicate that the President often used *must* and *should* to express a strong obligation to achieve a designated goal (*must*). They also show commitment and political will. Others impose a sense of advice and strong expectations (*should*) from the listeners, as captured in the data.

> *The law must be upheld, and it will be….*
> (Update No. 6: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).
> *The introduction of this phased opening up of our country means that each and every one of us must continue to remain vigilant, and respect the enhanced hygiene and social distancing protocols…*
> (Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

> *A consensus has emerged from these consultations that we should embark on a strategic, controlled…*
> (Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

The above data contain other rhetorical elements that contribute to the rhetorical force of the President's speeches and make the language persuasive.

Greetings

Greetings are important in a rhetorical situation and they assist in creating an entry into a rhetorical situation which then help in capturing the attention of the audience. Greetings also serve as a rhetorical strategy to show solidarity, unity, and a sense of national belonging and cohesiveness. The greetings "Fellow Ghanaians" run through all his addresses. As Gyan-Appenteng (2020) explains, President Akufo-Addo's presentation style resonates with the socio-economic aspirations of the nation, which was to bring together Ghanaians using this opener: "Fellow Ghanaians, I have come to your homes…" offering an opening to his "pandemic oratory". It is deduced from the data that the President exhibits an image of a humble and personal leader. Thus, The President could be following in the tradition of other African leaders like "Fellow countrymen and women" (President Obasanjo, June 29, 2005); "Fellow Cameroonians", "My Dear Compatriots" (President Biya's, 2010); "My fellow countrymen" (President Kabila's speech, November 16, 2006); "Fellow countrymen" (President Mugabe, August 10, 2010); "Fellow South Africans" (President Mbeki, September 21, 2008) (see Alo, 2012).

Repetition

Repetition entails the duplication of a word, phrase or sentence, or generally doubling any element of language. It refers to the intermittent or continuous presence of a particular word or sentence to emphasise a designated meaning (Zhang Delu, 2016). It is a figure of speech that explains the logical emphasis that is important for attracting the attention of the listener to the keyword or phrase within a text. To achieve a compelling persuasive effect, certain phrases like "Fellow Ghanaians" and Modal auxiliaries like "must" and "should" and pronouns like "we", "us" and "our" are repeated throughout the speeches.

Christian Allusions

Religious, particularly, Christian allusions appear to be one of the commonly used rhetorical strategies for leaders in Ghana and Africa. President Akufo-Addo is noted for making religious references when communicating, whether at a political rally or when delivering a speech on any platform. One of the well-known Biblical references is his position that the "battle is the Lords".

(Update No.10 Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

The following excerpts from his addresses attest to his strong Christian leanings:

> *Friday, 10th April, Good Friday, is the start of Easter, which, for us Christians, commemorates the unique sacrifice that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, made for our salvation ...*

(Update No. 6: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19)

> *And, I dare say, that it is the grace of God*

(Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

> *God forbid, we be confronted by such a pandemic again…*

(Update No. 28: Measures Taken Against Spread of Coronavirus).

Narrative Technique

Most of the President's addresses employed the 1st person point of view, where the personal pronoun 'I' is used. As a result, listeners become very familiar with the speaker.

> *I have, first of all, to tell you how proud and privileged I am to be your President.*

(Update No. 6: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

> *In all of this, I say a special ayekoo to our heroic healthcare workers….*

(Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

> *I first came to your homes on Wednesday, 11th March 2020….*

(Update No. 28: Measures Taken Against Spread of Coronavirus).

Flashbacks

Due to the sheer number of addresses delivered by the president and the need to remind the citizens about what had been done earlier, updates were provided in order to have the audience

reflect on these speeches and be reminded. All these are previous records to reflect on and to remind us.

> *Today is the sixth time I am coming into your homes since we began our collective effort to combat the Coronavirus pandemic, and to implement measures aimed at containing and defeating it...*

(Update No. 6: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

> *Fellow Ghanaians, as I stated in my fifth (5th) address to the nation, we will protect people's lives, then their livelihoods. It is this principle that guided the decision to impose restrictions, and continues to guide me today…*

(Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

Alliteration

One of the hallmarks of the addresses was the liberal use of alliteration which showed the repetition of certain sounds like the 't' sound and 'w' sound.

> *...with faith in Him, we will emerge from this greater than before. We are one people, we are Ghanaians, and we stand together in joy and in times of trouble. We are a people with an exceptional history, and we are the proud promoters of the Black Star of Africa. We have all gone down together, we should all rise together…*

(Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

> *Our ability to trace, test, and treat persons with the virus has improved considerably; we now have a large army of efficient contact tracers; we have expanded the number of testing facilities from two (2) to ten (10) across the country*

(Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

The constant use of 'we' imposes an inclusive tone into the addresses, which could indicate the goodwill ethos of the speaker, thereby adding to the persuasive power of the addresses.

Metaphor

A metaphor uses the comparative technique in language to help people relate to more abstract concepts tangible and familiar things thereby creating imagery and fostering understanding. Some examples from the data are presented below.

> *I have come again, for the tenth (10th) time, into your homes to speak to you about the Coronavirus pandemic….*
>
> (Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

> *… outline to you the decisions I have taken about the next chapter of our common battle.*
>
> (Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

> *We decided that we would, (i) limit and stop the importation of the virus,*
> *(ii) contain its spread…*
>
> (Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

Within the larger context of linguistics, the metaphor is one of the frequently employed instruments that plays a key role in both language and thought. A metaphor performs various roles encompassing simplifying, persuading audiences and undertaking emotive functions. As an effective and persuasive technique, it has the power to control the thought processes of the target. In essence, a metaphor is an outcome that emerges from the utilisation of a word or phrase from the domain it is usually expected to appear in another domain where it is not expected. From the perspective of simplification, a comparison is between the two without utilising 'as' or 'like'. A metaphor is a strong rhetorical device which can be utilised in different contexts. Metaphors construct a feeling of intimacy between a communicator and the audience. A metaphor is a mechanism for appreciating abstract, ideas and for undertaking abstract reasoning.

Discussing conceptual metaphors in the COVID-19 speeches of American President, Joe Biden, Abdd-Qader & Al-Khain (2022) explained the use of the metaphor in 19 speeches. The results showed that the prevalent source domains were unity, object, person, spatial, and war metaphors. In a study on the use of the metaphor in Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's political speeches, Wiredu (2021) analyses how the first President used the metaphor to convey information. The

author concluded that the metaphor was heavily utilised in political communication, and it usually led to social action.

The Mood of the Speeches

Another notable aspect of the COVID–19 addresses was the mood of the speeches. This involved the use of a plea or a warning where appropriate.

Warning:

> *There have been unfortunate incidents of some persons, in some parts of the affected areas, where the restrictions are in force, flouting the regulations and continuing with the business-as-usual attitude, even to the extent of confronting members of the security services. That should not be countenanced. The law must be upheld, and it will be.*
> (Update No. 6: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

> *... let me also state that regulatory agencies will undertake random checks to ensure conformity with these rules, and the security services will be tasked to enforce them. Should any institution fail to adhere to these directives, its activity will be immediately prohibited, and relevant sanctions applied.*
> (Update No.10: Measures Taken to Combat Spread of Coronavirus).

Plea:

> *… I have come to you this evening to ask for your continued patience, as we continue to implement and extend the efforts that have, so far, proven to be helpful. It is important that we stay the course, and bear with the difficulties that come with it. The final result, hopefully, will be freedom from the virus.*
> (Update No. 6: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

> *I appeal to you, let us, in the meantime, continue to comply with the measures, let us maintain good hygiene and respect the social distancing protocols, even when you are going out to receive the food. But, above all, please stay at home.*

(Update No. 6: Ghana's Enhanced Response to COVID-19).

Modal auxiliaries within the context of linguistic devices offer a pathway for appreciating particular moods as they relate to obligation or expectation, as examples and this is expressed through the words should and must. The weight of such auxiliaries are reflected in revealing the political will and commitment of under the circumstances. They also provide a picture of a sense of expectation when should is used.

Warning is also succinctly expressed by the phrase … " the law must be upheld, and it will be."

Conversely, the mood can be rhetorically exhibited by this plea… " I have come to you to ask for your continued patience" and another … " I appeal to you to in the meantime, continue to comply with the measures…" These appeal signposts are personal and meant to affect listeners persuasively.

Conclusion

This research endeavour investigated the rhetoric of President Akuffo-Addo in his COVID-19 addresses to Ghanaians during the peak of the pandemic. The key issue was to determine the rhetorical styles and approaches he deployed to create the appropriate identification and solidarity with the citizens, and to assess the persuasive power of such styles and approaches. The first research question addressed the rhetorical elements that framed these addresses, while the second distilled the persuasive capacity of the elements. The rhetorical theory and conceptual metaphor theory provided a theoretical and conceptual grounding for the analysis. Several rhetorical devices were identified within these speeches including Christian allusions, imagery, and similarity, including rhetorical elements and devices like metaphors, mood, repetition, etc. The strength of the speeches lies in the discovery that the use of the elements and devices portend strong persuasive appeals. According to Bitzer (1980), rhetoric views persuasion as one of the functions of discourse and the use of language to deal with social exigencies. Burke (1951) believes that identification is a function of persuasive appeal and is exhibited in situations where the politician tries to identify himself with his audience.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the classical tradition of rhetoric goes further to incorporate the orator's act of communication into the qualities of his or her character or ethos as part of the rhetorical tools deployed. The major aim is to persuade the audience to effect attitudinal and behavioural change. As Kennan (2000) has observed, orators have the goal of persuading the audience based on their ideological orientation through appealing designated tools. These tools become effective where they resonate with the emotions of the audience.

As explained already, all these devices and elements were used effectively to persuade the audience. They offered an opportunity to exhibit the rhetorical prowess of the President during the period of the pandemic ranging from the effective use of pronouns, modal auxiliaries, repetition, flashbacks, anaphora, figures of speech, the resort to taking allusions from the Christian religion to the mood of the speeches (seamless transitions from pleas to warnings).

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