

# **GOMBE SAVANNAH**


**JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND  
COMMUNICATION STUDIES (GOSAJOLLCOS)**



**DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES  
AND LINGUISTICS  
GOMBE STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Volume 6 Number 2 & 3  
DECEMBER, 2025**



Savannah Journal of Language, Literature and Communication Studies (SAJOLLCOS)  
Vol. 6 No. 2 & 3: December, 2025 —  ISSN: 2787-0286 & 2811-2261 (Online & Print)

**SAVANNAH JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND COMMUNICATION  
STUDIES (SAJOLLCOS)**

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**VOLUME 6, NO. 2 & 3, DECEMBER 2025**

**ISSN: ONLINE: 2811-2261, PRINT: 2787-0286**

**A Publication of Department of Languages and Linguistics  
Gombe State University, Gombe State**

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**ISSN:** 2787-0286 Print & 2811-2261 Online

**Printed in Nigeria @Six-Sweet Printers and Publishers**

GSU, Gombe, Gombe State.

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Gombe Savannah Journal of Language, Literature and Communication Studies (GOSAJOLLCOS) is a peer-reviewed journal of the Department of English, Gombe State University. The journal is committed to the development of communication arts through researches in Language, Linguistics, Literature, Theatre Arts, Cultural Studies, Creative Arts, Media and Communication Studies. It has both print and online versions. The Editorial board hereby calls for thoroughly researched papers and articles on the subject areas already mentioned. Submissions of papers are accepted all year round but publication is expected to be done in May/June annually. All manuscripts should be accompanied with the sum of ten thousand (**₦10,000**) naira only. On acceptance of any manuscript, contributors will pay the sum of twenty five thousand (25,000) naira only as publication fee.



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## A Linguistic Stylistic Analysis of the Inaugural and Independence Day Speeches of General Ibrahim Babangida and President Muhammadu Buhari: A Comparative Approach

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### Abstract

*Stylistics studies the interpretation of texts in relation to their linguistic style and tone by linking literary criticism with linguistics. This study focuses on the linguistic stylistic analysis of the Inaugural and Independence Day speeches of General Ibrahim Babangida and President Muhammadu Buhari. The study investigates and analyzes a total of four speeches, two inaugural and two Independence Day speeches. It is anchored on Functional Stylistics and adopts the heuristic checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories presented by Leech and Short (2007). The findings reveal that Buhari's speeches are characterized by democratic vocabulary based on frequency and consistency. The speeches are persuasive in nature, and his choice of words reflects the socio-political background that brought him to power. The study concludes that General Babangida's speech style is communicative and indirectly forceful through the use of careful, simple declarative syntactic structures and patriotic lexical items such as independence, re-elected, and governance, which reflect democratic ideology in government and politics. President Buhari's speech style also indicates strong governmental and political vocabulary, supported by his eloquent use of complex sentence structures.*

**Keywords:** linguistics, stylistics, speeches, independence, military.

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### Introduction

An inaugural speech is a public address usually delivered after an electoral victory at the swearing-in ceremony of an elected political office holder. The speech typically focuses on motivating, educating, informing, and engaging the

audience and the general public in appreciation of their support, while presenting policy programme and outlining how they would be implemented. An Independence Day speech, on the other hand is a political speech usually delivered by a president or head of the



government of a country to mark the celebration of freedom.

A number of scholars have contributed to the enrichment of stylistics and linguistic stylistics at large. Ayeomoni (2004:177) sees Linguistic Stylistics as an analytical approach that helps readers to objectively study both literary pieces and nonliterary materials. Finch (2000), as cited in Sani (2016), defines stylistics as the branch of linguistics that applies the methodologies of linguistics to analyse the concept of style in a language.

This study consists of a total of four speeches. Two Inaugurals and two Independence Day speeches by General Ibrahim Babangida as a Head of State in 1985 and President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 and 2019 respectively.

### **Review of Related Literature**

A number of researches have been carried out with phenomenal contributions on both stylistics and political speeches which constitute the current topic under study. This section of this research reviews some specific works that are relevant to the existing subject of study with the aim of identifying the missing gaps to be filled by the current research.

Munir (2014) A Stylistic Analysis of Barack Obama's Second Inaugural Address employed a descriptive qualitative method since it emphasized on describing the use of

figurative language in Barack Obama's second inaugural address. The main instrument in this research was the researcher himself. The data were sourced from Barack Obama's second inaugural address via note-taking technique of data collection method. The researcher applied textual analysis since he referred to the theories when analyzing the data. The research findings revealed that Barack Obama employs seven types of figurative language in his second inaugural address, which are metaphor, synecdoche, hyperbole, personification, metonymy, paradox, and simile. The researcher also observes that the intentions of creating figurative language are to realize a new and different meaning of an object, to emphasize the idea being talked about, to give a more complete understanding of a concept, to give more profound meaning to common ideas, to reveal an insight into self-contradictory concepts, and to create a mental image of something in the audience's mind.

Using the theoretical framework of the analytic model of theme and rheme of Halliday's (2004) textual functions under Systemic Functional Linguistics, in "A Linguistic Stylistic Analysis of Gender Variations in Selected Television News Reportage", Sani (2016) finds out that there are significant systemic linguistic differences in the way male and females impart their information in such a way that they manipulate the listeners to interpret information in certain ways. The two reporters across gender do not just convey information but they infuse their



ideologies through the choices of powerful emotive words (insurgency, terror, attack, blast, killed, etc.). The study also establishes that the theme system can create a texture in the fabrics of the reportages. The study discovered that female reports are often much more descriptive and well explained compared to their male counterparts who use complex expressions comparatively.

Ayanwawu (2020) researched on Stylistic Analysis of President Buhari's Addresses of Nigerians in the Face of COVID-19 Pandemic. The study investigated two speeches of President Muhammadu Buhari during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to ascertain how he has employed language, the linguistic elements used and the stylistic and pragmatic imports. Using the theoretical framework of stylistics, the researcher found out that Buhari tactfully used words to address Nigerians on COVID-19 and stressed the measures to be taken to contain the spread of the virus. The researcher observes that the president used lexical devices such as transitional markers, repetition, alliteration, assonance, pronouns to project the theme/subject matter of the language discourse in order to achieve the pragmatic effect of his speeches. It was also found out that the speaker used coordination to denote relationship of grammatical units, show contrast and as a repetition of previous statements.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Halliday (1985) posits that language has evolved to satisfy human needs,

and the way it is organised is functional concerning these needs. The ways human beings use languages are classified in this theory into three broad categories known as Meta-functions and these are "Ideational", "Interpersonal", and "Textual" functions. The ideational function implies that language serves as an instrument for the encoder (speaker or writer) to articulate and express his idea and experience internally. The interpersonal function helps to establish and sustain social relations. The textual function of language implies the availability of an internal structure which makes it possible for the writer or speaker to construct texts that are coherent and situationally appropriate. Thus, the textual function concerns the organizations and cohesion of situations.

This study approach is anchored on Functionalist Stylistics which is concerned with the relationship between the forms of language as a system and the context or situation of its production, as well as the social, cultural and political (what we may collectively call ideological) factors that impact upon its construction and reception.

### **Methodology**

The research is a descriptive survey aimed at collecting data and describing it systematically, taking care of the features or facts about a given population. Precisely for this study, the research design is used to collect and analyse the selected inaugural and independence day speeches. In the words of Emaliku



(2013:6), the main objectives of a descriptive survey are to identify the present condition and point to the current needs to study the immediate status of a phenomenon and fact findings. The aim of descriptive analysis of any kind in linguistics is to describe the facts of language usage as they are, as opposed to how they ought to be, concerning some already existing models. The data for this research was primarily sourced from specific inaugural and Independence Day addresses of two different political dispensations by two distinct personalities; a military Head of State and a democratically elected President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The collection of data for this research involved in-depth reading of the selected speeches and underlining as well as making notes of these linguistically stylistic features that matter. The researcher thus employed a content approach to the analysis of the texts. Content analysis, according to Stone et al., is “a research technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within a text”. By so doing, those unattractive areas of the speeches were left out.

The analysis is based on the heuristic checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories presented by Leech & Short (2007). The checklist provides a “systematic basis” for collecting relevant linguistic data from the text for stylistic evaluation. They further proposed a pluralist model of linguistic analysis in a given text. This form of analysis has three

different levels: semantics, syntactic and graphology and is a form of stylistic analysis that is in tune with the orthodox linguists’ perception of language usage. This view stresses that style is multileveled and complex in both levels of choice and the importance attached to the selection. The pluralist idea of style is also associated with a plurality of language functions, as in the three-fold functional scheme of Halliday, who distinguishes between ideational, interpersonal and textual functions (Leech & Short 2007:108). The use of heuristic checklist in a study of this nature helps to bring out the different social meaning of words as used by the presenter in different social context.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

In this section of the study, the data is analysed and discussed accordingly.

### Lexico-Semantic Analysis

Frequently used words

#### Inaugural Speeches

Gen	Fr	Preside	Freque
IBB	eq	nt M.	ncy
		Buhari	
1.	14	Govern	13
Govern		ment	
2.	9	Nigerian	8
Nation		s	

#### Independence Day Speeches

1.	14	Nigerians
Government		10



2. Nation 7 Commitment  
9

### **RHETORICAL DEVICES**

#### **Rhetorical Devices from Babangida's Inaugural Speech**

Item A: Rhyme: suppression...  
stagnation (Paragraph 4, line 2)

Item B: Assonance: make...  
become (Paragraph 5, line 1)

#### **Rhetorical Devices from Babangida's Independence Speech**

Item A: Alliteration: transition...  
transparent (Paragraph 9)

Item B: Assonance: political...  
instability (Paragraph 10)

#### **Rhetorical Devices from Buhari's Independence Speech**

Item A: Personification:  
Administration (Paragraph 14,  
line 1)

Item B: Repetition: Change...  
change (Paragraph 4, lines 1,2,3)

#### **Rhetorical Devices from Buhari's Inaugural Speech**

Item A: Metonymy: the military  
(Paragraph 1, line 3)

Item B: Metaphor: journey  
(Paragraph 1, line 5)

### **Syntactic Features**

Syntactical Features in General  
Ibrahim Babangida's Coup Speech  
– 1985

#### **Use of Simple Sentence- 16 total number**

**Eg 1.** *The innocent cannot suffer  
the crimes of the guilty.*

(13)p 3-4L

#### **Use of Simple sentence in Babangida's Independence Speech**

#### **Use of Simple Sentence- 16 total number**

**Eg 1.** The time for action is now.  
(47)p

2L

#### **Use of compound sentences in Babangida's Coup speech**

Total number of compound  
sentences - Six (6)

**Eg.** The initial objectives were  
betrayed and fundamental  
charges do not appear on the  
horizon (4)p

(1)L

#### **Use of compound sentences in Babangida's Independence speech**

#### **Total number of compound sentences- five (5)**

**Eg.** We acknowledge and thank  
them all for their solidarity. (42)

(3)L

#### **Use of complex sentences in Babangida's Coup speech**

Total number of complex  
sentences- 23

**Eg.** When in December 1983, the  
former military leadership,



headed by Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, assumed the reins of government, its accession was heralded in the history of this country.

(1)p

(1-2)L

**Use of complex sentences in Babangida's Independence speech**

Total number of complex sentences- 11

Eg. I extend greetings and good wishes to you and all our compatriots throughout the world who are not able to join us in our celebration at home.

(1)p (3-

4)L

**Syntactic features in Buhari's Inaugural speeches**

Total number of simple sentences in Buharis Inaugural speeches- forty-nine (49)

Eg. I thank all of you.

(4)p (1)L

Total number of simple sentences in Buharis Independence speeches- 55

Eg. We are resolute in reforming the power sector.

(23)p (1)L

Total number of compound sentences in Buharis Inaugural speeches- seven (7)

Eg. I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody.

(6)p (1)L

Total number of compound sentences in Buharis Independence speeches-

four (4)

Eg. I thank you most sincerely and wish you a happy independence anniversary.

(50)p (1)L

Total number of complex sentences in Buharis Inaugural speeches- Twenty-

seven (27)

Eg. I am immensely grateful to God who has preserved us to witness this day and this occasion.

(1)p (1-2)L

Total number of complex sentences in Buharis Independence speeches- Twenty-nine (29)

Eg. This change can only be delivered if we are united in purpose, as individuals and as a nation.

(4)p (1)L



### Words constituting the Vocabulary of Government and Politics in Buhari's Inaugural Speeches

Item A	Democracy (Paragraph 1, Line 1)
Item B	Statesmanship (paragraph 2, line 2)

### Words constituting the Vocabulary of Government and Politics in Buhari's Independence Speeches

Item A	Independence (Paragraph 2, Line 4)
Item B	<b>Reelected</b> (Paragraph 3, line 2)

### Military Related Registers from Babangida's Coup speech

Item A	Major-General (paragraph 1, line 1)
Item B	Military takeover (paragraph 3, line 2)

### Discussion of Findings

The complete analysis shows that there are both variant and shared features between the speeches of President Muhammadu Buhari and General Babangida as identified for this research. This is observed at both levels lexicosemantics and syntax. It could be seen that the similarities are quite many. Still, since the two personalities are of different characters and belong to different political dispensations, certain variations must be found in their styles as shown in the data presentation and analysis.

After carefully examining the selected speeches, it is worth saying that the authors have expressed their voices vividly and powerfully. Considering the variable education backgrounds of their voters, they manage to convey their messages at a reasonable speed with great artistic techniques which have

largely sublimated the connotation of their speeches. The merits (high artistic achievement and universality have been merged perfectly). The speakers have demonstrated mastery in using words to express their ideas lucidly and clearly. Based on the literary standard, rhetorical devices have also played a significant role in the speeches. Certain words have been foregrounded in deviation from the standard graphological norm, and this is stylistic in nature. Also, words combined to form sentences, and well-organized structures are necessary for an inaugural address. The speeches have achieved extraordinarily high artistic attainment with positive effects on the audience.

In the first place, Buhari's speeches were analysed to be full of frequently used words defining his lexicosemantic



communication style. Such terms were presented with accompanying explanations. Several words in the speeches were observed to be foregrounded. These are words that receive special attention from the reader by the writer's intention, with which they make them prominent. The approach to foregrounding here was focused on talks with specific features of unusual capitalisation, obviously showing some kind of deviance from the typical style of capitalisation.

Attention was also paid to the figurative use of words in President Buhari's inaugural speeches. This refers to the form of language use in which expressions are made so that meaning is realised differently from the usual, ordinary, and familiar style in order to create particular mental pictures. The specific expressions with unusual meanings employed in Buhari's speech of 2015 were a metaphor, personification, repetition, assonance and allusion.

Buhari's choice of words also relates to the subject of the speech. A good number of words in the text, as analysed could provide the reader with an understanding of what the speech is all about without necessarily looking at the heading. The words

were analysed as relevant to the register of democratic government and politics as employed in the speech.

General Babangida's speeches were equally identified with particular lexico-semantic features, the foremost of which is the use of frequently used words common with any text. Yet, many of the words in Babangida's speeches were also marked with several rhetorical devices, the dominant of which is rhymes. There are also instances of assonance; some words alliterate, some are repeated; yet, many words in the speech have been personified. A good number of terms used in Babangida's lessons as found in the analysis, are suggestive of a military discourse; they give military colour to the speech in contradistinction to a democratic address as presented in the speech.

Certain syntactic features were also identified based on structure as against function in the speeches selected for this study. In the first place, Buhari's speeches mainly were marked with simple sentences. There were also observed instances of complex constructions, notably complex and compound sentences which form part of the syntactical style of President Buhari as presented in the speech.



Out of the syntactical structures analysed from General Ibrahim Babangida's speeches, the simple sentence was foremost. Irrespective of whether the simple sentences employed in the speech were semantically complex, their simplicity was observed from the syntactic sense and were considered for the analysis. The speeches were also marked with a complex style of complex constructions; these refer to such sentence types described explicitly as complex and compound.

The whole analysis showed that both shared and variant features between President Muhammadu Buhari and General Ibrahim Babangida's speeches were chosen for this research. This is observed at both levels of lexico-semantics and syntax. It could be seen that the similarities were quite many. Still, since the two personalities are of different characters and belong to different political dispensations, certain variations must be found in their styles, as shown in the presentation and analysis.

### **Stylistic Implications of the Inaugurals and Independence Day Speeches**

Under the implication of the speeches, the researcher discovered that it is more at the level of Lexico-semantics as there are peculiarities in the vocabularies/registers in each of the selected speeches, as words like *Major-General, Military-takeover, and Supreme military Council* where some of the registers that point at Babangida's speeches, especially the coup speeches even though his choice of words centred on bringing about good governance in the independence speech. General Babangida's speech style is said to be communicative and evocative though indirectly forceful through careful simple sentences. On the other hand, Buhari's speeches contain more registers like *democracy, statesmanship, votes, independence, reelected and governance* to mention but a few, which indicate the vocabularies of Government and Politics. President Buhari's speech style is said to be conversational yet highly persuasive, considering his eloquent use of complex sentences. See the table below.



## Similarities between Buhari's and Babangida's Speeches

Stylistics Features	President Muhammadu Buhari	General Babangida
Certain words used frequently	✓	✓
Foregrounded words	✓	✓
Rhetorical Devices	✓	✓
Use of Simple Sentences	✓	✓
Use of Complex Sentences	✓	
Use of Compound Sentences	✓	✓

### Conclusion

This study is generally concerned with the use of language in inaugural/coup and independence addresses, respectively of a democratically elected chief executive officer and a military head of the Nigerian nation-state. This study concludes that one's use of language defines one's style, and an individual's style equally defines who they are. When Buffon said, "The style is the man himself," the attached sense is that every speaker or writer has a distinguished style of their own, which obviously means that style is personal. Indeed, no two humans have an absolute resemblance, and when a man speaks or writes, therefore, he expresses himself. This manner of self-expression is equal to his distinctive movement, mode of dressing and personal habits that

are linkable to the emotional state of the heart.

The study concludes also, that context of situation as earlier studied determines style. Apart from showing who one is in speech or writing, the environment is undoubtedly observed to have some influence on the choice of words and sentences. Another conclusion of the study is that in addition to already established fact that besides the general choice of vocabulary and structure, some aspects of which have revealed the men of President Buhari and General Babangida of Nigeria, the political situations at the time of their speeches had also influenced their deliberate use of language.



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