

An analysis of rhetoric of identification and consubstantiality in President Hage Geingob's 30th independence day anniversary and inaugural speech

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Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to analyze rhetorical identification strategies in President Hage Geingob's 30th Independence Day Anniversary and Inaugural Speech. Rhetoric has been flourishing in some countries with new methodologies and ideas. Yet, rhetorical analysis in speeches remains in its infancy stage especially in Namibia to be specific. The study is qualitative in nature and the speech is purposely selected because it emanates from the competitive 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections that were never experienced in Namibian electoral history. Kenneth Burke's theory of identification and consubstantiality is used as the basis of the analysis of this paper. The study reveals that President Geingob identified with his audiences by means of inclusive language, hierarchy, religion, common challenges, emotional appeal, past challenges and accomplishments. The study concludes that President Geingob employed identification strategies that can enable him to unite his audiences and encourage them to work together and achieve a common goal.

Keywords: *identification, audience, speaker, language, common, rhetoric, consubstantiality, unity*

Introduction and Background

In Namibia, studies on political communication especially in presidential rhetoric are scarce (Nanyeni, 2014). Zhou and Kazemian (2015) also share the same sentiment that rhetoric has been neglected in political discourse analysis to some extent; however, in some countries, it is now flourishing with new ideas and methodologies. Furthermore, President Hage Geingob's 30th Independence and Inauguration speech has come after his victory in the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections. The Commonwealth (2019, p. 3) notes that "the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections, the sixth multiparty elections since independence, were the most competitive in the country's electoral history". The Commonwealth (2019) further comments that this could have been intensified by the candidacy of the Independent candidate, Dr Panduleni Itula, a SWAPO card-carrying member at the time and the candidacy of a woman, NUDO's Esther Muinjangu; they were seen as notable developments in the country's electoral history. Although President Hage Geingob was re-elected to the presidency, his vote share was reduced from 87 % in 2014 to 56 % in 2019.

Despite the competitive nature of the 2019 elections, the president has to deliver a speech that is meant to address all the Namibian people to unify the nation, create a sense of social harmony

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and promote the wellbeing of all the people. To achieve the desired social harmony, President Hage Geingob and the audience should have some kind of connection at a certain level. This can be achieved through identification when the interests of the speaker are joined with that of the listeners (Jackson, 2013). In doing so the speaker has to see his/her audience as separate individuals that have different viewpoints on economic, social and political issues, yet, the aim is to accomplish the common goal. The speaker's language may exhibit authority to govern his/her political stance in society and at the same time lessen the seriousness of the impact the authority may have to establish and maintain a good relationship with the audience. Furthermore, the speaker can use the language to point out common ideas, acts, and attitudes that motivate the significance of working together as a nation. Thus, politics and language are intertwined because neither language nor politics can function on its own as Lakoff (1990) emphasizes that politics is language, and at the same time, language is politics.

The objective of the study

The study aims to analyse and discuss President Hage Geingob's identification strategies that are meant to unite the audience, identify with the listeners and encourage cooperation with the Namibian and international audiences.

Research Methodology

The study was limited to a desktop design due to its qualitative nature. Maritz and Visagie (2006) note that good qualitative methods focus on textual analysis that is interpretive in nature. It is concerned with the understanding and interpretation of the social world. Thus, the selected speech was interpreted to determine the extent of identification use. The population of this study was all Namibian presidents' inaugural speeches from 21 March 1990 to 21 March 2020. Purposive sampling was employed as the researchers intentionally selected Dr Hage Geingob's 30th Independence Day Anniversary speech, 21 March 2020. The choice was enthused by the competitive nature of the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections that was never experienced in Namibian electoral history. The study was based on critical reading where already published works related to the topic were read to substantiate the analysis of the speech. The selected speech was analysed using Kenneth Burke's Identification and Consubstantiality, supplemented by the reviewed literature.

Literature Review

Identification and the Issue of Language

Burke's concept of identification with the context of language as symbolic action cannot be disregarded. Human beings are regarded as actors and using language is a way of acting. Using language is one of the most defining characteristics of human beings and we are beings that respond to symbol use, use symbols and abuse symbols (Burke, 1969). Within this perspective, Burke (1969) defines rhetoric as "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or induce actions in other human agents or the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation on beings that by nature respond to symbols" (p. 41). Human beings are constantly involved in the use of symbols systems for their ideas and images to be understood by others. In addition, in the theory of Dramatism, Kenneth Burke likens life to drama; "life is not like drama; life is drama" (Griffin, Ledbetter & Sparks, 2015). This means human beings share messages through the use of language and the desire to understand and be understood, hence, it is crucial for the speaker's language to identify with the audience if he/she wants to gain influence. Griffin et al. (2015) further propound that by identifying with the audience, politicians give social validation to their supporters. The followers are identified with when they are made to feel that they are part of the movement, process or change for the better world. To Burke persuasion, identification and communication are tied together in realistic functions that aim to gain the cooperation of the speaker and audience (Hardesty, 2013). Therefore, there is a way to make

significant links with one another if we can speak the same language or at least understand how and why that language is used for the purpose of identification which is the ultimate aim of this paper.

It is necessary for the speaker to be considerate of the language used if identification is to be attained. Lei (2019) expounds that inclusive language is employed as a form of identification to constitute emotions. For example, during the presentation of the speech, if the speaker utilizes inclusive language by using inclusive pronouns 'our', 'us' to identify the relationship between herself/himself and the audience. Inclusive pronouns indicate that the orator and audience share the same concerns. Zhoa and Kazemian (2015) illuminate that John F. Kennedy's inaugural address uses first plural pronouns which can help the speaker to establish identification with the audience unconsciously or subconsciously. Similarly, these pronouns shorten the distance between the speaker and the listener, showing that they belong to the same category. Using figurative language helps the speaker to send the message across in a forceful way and to impress the audience (Zhoa & Kazemian, 2015). Nanyeni (2018) notes that figurative language intensifies the power of the speech and creates some kind of lasting meaning to the audience. The metaphors used in President Pohamba's speeches capture the audience's attention by unifying the vision the speaker and audience have in common. It can be deduced that one of Burke's definitive goals for the theory of identification is that we understand the process used in building social cohesion through the use of language. The language can be used properly or abused, create confusion, cloud vision, create cooperation, hence we need to understand how it is used as a way of identification.

Shared Limitations and Achievements

Connecting the past events to the present events has elements of identifying with the audience. Burke's rhetoric of identification "offers a means of reading history as well as reading into history; a means of connecting all sorts of 'symbolic action' to ideology and the programme of palpable action which underlies it" (Burke, 1969, p. 17). The speaker should empower the audience with the connection to historical obligations that maintain good cultural ties; that yielded good results and look at the importance of upholding great works. One can connect this historical evidence to Aristotle's persuasion with logos where the speaker persuades the audience with the logical evidence that is known by both the speaker and listener. For example, the analysis of former President Nuuyoma's epideictic speeches by Nanyeni (2014) concludes that his speeches persuade the audience by highlighting the challenges and achievements faced by both the government and its people. Also, Nuuyoma called for the Namibian people to be unified in the fight against ignorance, poverty and racism. However, this paper looks at rhetoric from a different perspective; how identification seems to be strengthened by making reference to the shared knowledge of the audience and speaker.

Hardesty (2013) clarifies that Burke's aim for us to understand the rhetoric of identification is not necessarily to make excellent speakers but to understand both the limitations of language and human limitations. "In understanding our shared limitations, and in identifying ourselves with others, Burke hoped we may find means to a discourse of cooperation rather than war" (Hardesty, 2013, p. 34). The speakers need to use rhetorical ways that can build cooperation that leads to harmonious ways of living rather than causing divisions. This cooperation can be emphasized by encouraging international cooperation as Lei (2019) points out that Chiang's speech employs family metaphors that connote the relationship between China and America. The metaphors highlight the importance of rethinking the meaning of international interdependence, allowing listeners to realise that all countries are members of a large global community.

It is pertinent to note that identification can be highlighted through moral obligation. Lei (2019) comments that in the process of identification, the speaker can connect audiences with common interests, values and beliefs. At the same time, the speaker can show an attempt to empower audiences to act by asking them to fulfil the responsibilities of protecting their beliefs and interests. This is to say the speaker may empower the audience to connect with historical obligations that maintain good cultural ties that yielded good results and look at the importance of maintaining them. In Burke's view, rhetoric is more than just forming arguments, but it is an instrument to analyse and understand the world. "Rhetoric does much more than just evoke changes, it also shows the desires and values of a community" (Dixon & Velten, 2016, p. 12). Therefore, the audience should not act in a suggested way as a matter of persuasion because there is no speaker that can propose radical ideas without making himself/herself understood by the audience; understanding is one of the bases of the Identification Theory.

Theoretical Framework

Burke (1969, p. 41) defines rhetoric as "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or induce actions in other human agents". Burke chooses the term 'identification' to make a distinction between his rhetorical perspective and the traditional perspective 'persuasion'. Burke notes that his focus on identification does not negate the traditional focus on persuasion, but his contribution is a supplement to classical rhetoric (Quigley, n.d.). Burke clarifies that the "need to identify arises out of division; humans are born and exist as biologically separate beings and therefore seek to identify through communication in order to overcome separateness" (Quigley, n.d., para. 2). Due to this division, identification seems not to merely persuade but has a profound effect in (consciously or unconsciously) surpassing division and identifying with the audience. Even though we are biologically alone, we internally and rhetorically seek identification with others as Burke (1969) explains it with the concept of consubstantiality:

A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B, or he may identify himself with B even if their interests are not joined if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so. (p. 20)

Consubstantiality plays a very important role in the concept of identification in constructing unity which does not occur in classical rhetoric. Identification acts like communicative cooperative therapy. The speaker identifies with the target(s) so that everyone may be regarded as belonging to a special body though it is not stated directly. Therefore, Burke perceives rhetoric to be more than persuasion; the audience does not just want to be persuaded from point A to B, but be given the information they can benefit from to make their own decisions.

Discussion of the Findings

Identification through Hierarchy

In most cases, inaugural speeches are well prepared to appeal to audiences and to ensure that despite the differences in political campaigns, the country should be united for a common goal and harmony. The researchers take note of Dr Hage Geingob's rhetoric of consubstantiality in his inaugural speech delivered on 21 March 2020. As stated earlier, this speech becomes notable as it comes after a competitive 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections that was never experienced before in Namibia history. The president starts his speech by acknowledging his listeners (present at the event or watching from different platforms). The president identifies with his audience as he acknowledges them according to their occupation in the social hierarchy. This hierarchy implicitly tells the most important people in the audience and that may have implications on how identification can be viewed. The audience may deem that the social hierarchy exerts division because it highlights the importance of some members of the audience.

On the other hand, this seems to indicate that the president is aware of the existing differences in social classes or positions. In order to overcome divisions, “we look for ways in which our interests, values, experiences, perceptions and material properties shared with others, or could appear to be shared” (Quigley, n.d., para. 3). In as much as the president would want to see everyone as “the same” in the listeners, it might not be possible; the division cannot be disregarded. The division exists in all spheres of life and might be visible to the listeners. Burke clarifies that the “need to identify arises out of division; humans are born and exist as biologically separate beings and therefore seek to identify through communication in order to overcome separateness” (Quigley, n.d., para. 2). Hierarchical recognition is one of the ways of identification with the audience as Quigley highlights. Furthermore, the recognition starts from the high ranked to the low ranked members of the society. This is not only done to underscore the differences in societies but to generate a sense of commonality between the speaker and the audience. Thus, Burke consubstantiality is necessary for any way of life to build communities together.

The Use of Inclusive Language

President Geingob employs an abundance of inclusive language to identify with the listeners. Geingob has seen that consubstantiality is the key to persuasion and promotion of social cohesion. He tries with different avenues to come up with a strong impetus to pull the nation that had a competitive 2019 Presidential Election together. The speech brings forth a sense of commonality by using uniting phrases such as “As we honour” (p.2), “We also owe” (p.2), “Our journey” (p.3), “Let us” (p.4). The use of inclusive pronouns ‘we’, ‘our’, ‘us’ is to build a close relationship with the audience (stating that the speaker and the listeners belong to the same category) and to promote a community of feeling. The use of personal pronouns unconsciously or subconsciously shows that the speaker and the audience belong to the same category or group and share common interests which help to shorten the distance between them (Zhou & Kazemian, 2015, p.13). For example, “Together we shall overcome” (p.4), the president wishes to assure the nation that no arsenal is bigger than the common fight. He explains in the address that if it was possible for the nation to defeat the Apartheid Regime, the enemy the nation faces today can be overcome if he and the nation work together as one. The president illuminates the principle for which he stands, that he cannot succeed alone as the government leader, but everyone’s courage and determination are needed to reach a common goal.

The president constantly uses inclusive language, “Let ‘us’ therefore continue in the spirit of ‘our’ narrative of pulling together in the same direction, in order to build ‘our’ Namibian House” (p.5). Again, he is calling for a politically divided nation that despite the differences in political affiliations, we need to march towards a common destiny of building ‘our Namibian House’. He is fostering a sense of belonging of all members and also attempts to certify that it is everyone’s responsibility to promote unity. Wales (1996, p. 59) emphasizes that political speakers often use inclusive language not only to represent their party or government but also on behalf of the audience. In other words, the president represents everyone in the country and ‘we’, ‘our’ show the same involvement of all in the country’s undertakings. Nanyeni (2018) also observes that President Hifikepunye Pohamba’s speeches unify his audience by the use of inclusive to emotionally appeal to them that he did not develop the country in isolation, but the success enjoyed today is a collective task and responsibility of all the Namibian people.

Common Beliefs, Achievements and Challenges

Another strategy that demonstrates that Dr Geingob is consubstantial with his audience is an appeal to common values and beliefs. “This is the day that the Lord has made” (p. 2). “Thanks be to God for the liberty, unity, peace and stability that we enjoy every day” (p.2). He identifies with the listeners on the basis of their belief in God and reminds them that good things being enjoyed today are bestowed upon by God. In making this reference to God, Geingob unites himself with

his audience by ensuring them that they belong to one body of faith. (Aquino, 1986 as cited in Lei, 2019, p. 38) states that the rhetorical connection between religious faith and presidential speech is a way of saying my contract with my people and commitment to God. The president appeals to the audience's sense of emotions and interests, hence they may gain the speaker's trust believing that his term of office is going to be guided by the Grace of God. The question is, does he identify with all the religions? What happens to non-Christians? This is when the conflicts come in when the audience feels divided (accepted or rejected). Identification is crucial when divisions occur to reconstitute the perceptions of everyone's worth and value that the former actions damaged.

In addition, the president uses emotional appeal through shared values where he called upon his audience to be obliged to the fruition of "human dignity" (p.4), "spirit of unity" (p.4) and reminded them of the achieved "social harmony" (p. 4), "democratic stability" (p. 4). The president reminds his listeners that what they anticipate as a nation can be achieved as they had done in the past; which is proof of the possibility of positive achievements. In doing so, Geingob has explicitly indicated that "perseverance" (p. 4) should be inherent to have that practicality. As a president, he offers to generate his unwavering support for commonness to be realized. "As a president, I shall never depart from the narrative of Nation Building" (p. 5). In this way, he identifies himself through ethos to convince the audience of his commitment towards the promotion of the spirit of national unity. Geingob's courage to have a good impact during his time in office would earn him respect from the listeners, "a speaker must imbibe the appeal of ethos into his speech to bring on the right impacts on the minds of his audience" (Murthy & Ghosal, 2014, p. 253). Geingob achieves this through the use of 'I' that shows his authority of responsibility and reveals that he is conversant with the needs of the audience. Also, if the president says "I shall never depart" (p. 5), he is fostering a positive relationship between him and his audience. The listeners are assured of his commitment to nation-building. In some cases, the audience may be confused by the repeated switches of pronouns from I, we, you, our, us, however, this approach is employed to ascertain that persuasion is achieved as Wales (1996) indicates that shifting identity through pronoun choice enables politicians to appeal to diverse listeners.

Moreover, Geingob utilizes Burke's identification in reference to a common enemy that Namibia and other nations have. Identification is evident when Geingob states that COVID-19 is a common enemy that affects our country, regional and international friends. "The global outbreak of COVID-19 is presenting humanity with one of the greatest challenges of the 21st Century" (p.3). The president enacts the spirit of solidarity by calling the world to be unified in pursuit of finding amicable solutions to eliminate the pandemic. This is what Lei (2019) resonates with as the importance of rethinking the meaning of international interdependence, allowing the audience to realize that all countries are members of a large global community. In the same vein, the president states that "the emergence of COVID-19 places our economic recovery in jeopardy" (p.4). Geingob would impress the audience in Namibia as he mentions the persistent economic challenge that the nation has been battling. He provokes national responsibility for unity: informing the nation that COVID-19 is an issue to be tackled in unison.

He appeals to the people of Namibia that COVID-19 "threatens all of us" (p. 4), thus calling for people to pull together to overcome the common enemy. The use of the inclusive pronoun 'us' functions as identification by antithesis because the speaker refers to the enemy that affects all. This reinforcement of identification by antithesis can also arouse fear when the word 'threatens' is mentioned; it enables the listeners to anticipate that COVID-19 is a serious issue. The president's aim is not to arouse fear, but to offer detailed information surrounding COVID-19.

President Geingob also lessens the distance between him and the audience by relating to the past events that the Namibian nation alone or in conjunction with other nations achieved. "We

have faced uncommon hardships over the past years” (p.4), “We must emulate the brave deeds of thousands of Namibian men and women, who from all corners of our country rose as one people to defeat the brutal Apartheid Regime” (p.4). He encourages people to renew their courage, camaraderie and hope to overcome hardships, as it is feasible. Consubstantiality is shown through evidence (logos) given to substantiate the claim of necessitating the promotion of social unity that will enable the country to overcome the current challenges. This may help the listeners to recognize the importance of sticking together and embracing challenges as a process of conquering the common enemy. In this way, the president is acknowledging the individuality of his audience, but each individual is part of the whole as Burke (1969) states that we are “both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with one another” (p. 1020).

Furthermore, President Geingob attempts to encourage international cooperation by identifying with them through the past challenges that they overcame together. He directs the attention of his audience to the achievements Namibia and the international community have in common.

The independence of Namibia would not have been attained without the support and solidarity of the Frontline States and Nigeria, the Socialist and Scandinavian countries, and the rest of the international community, whose unwavering support paved the way to our independence (p. 2).

This indicates that through cooperation, friendship with the international community they had overcome the past challenges and encourages the listeners to emulate the similar spirit of the mutual relationship between nations. Lei (2019) emphasizes that the process of identification is enhanced when the speaker reminds the audience of the past relationship between countries, the reminder implies that the nations can work together again as partners who share the common goals. Therefore, President Geingob provides concrete support to identify with the listeners by referring to past achievements. In addition, his rhetoric maintains that they embrace the same ideological values and interests that need to be celebrated. He also promotes a diplomatic relationship between Namibia and other nations.

Conclusion

The researchers conclude that President Hage Geingob has used the rhetoric of identification in various ways. It might be evident that his aim is to maintain the unity of the Namibian nation by relating to past accomplishments and pinpointing what they expected to do to march to the common destiny. In addition, the president used both persuasion and identification strategies. The fact that he sometimes shows that he is in authority contributes significantly to his ethos. Also, he finds it necessary to use evidence (logos) to convince his audience about the truth to further emphasize the necessity of unity. Moreover, the speech is addressed to every Namibian and in some instances, also to Namibia’s international friends; an appeal to the audience to appreciate and trust that he is striving for ‘commonness’.

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