

A Speech Act Analysis Of Obama's Speech: Politics And Faith

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Abstract- Politicians, in legitimising their ideologies exploit language. They consciously produce specific kinds of speech acts in order to covertly authorise their beliefs and persuade their audience. A plethora of studies exist on propositional meanings in Nigerian political speeches nonetheless a paucity exists on utterance meanings in foreign political speeches and on discordant concept of Religion and politics. Therefore, this paper investigated the kinds of speech acts Obama employed in legitimising his ideology about religion in his 2006 political speech titled *Faith and Politics*. The mixed method was adopted. A total of 182 sentences in the speech formed the population of the study while only 18 purposively selected sentences tagged utterances (UT) constituted the sample size of the study. Allan Speech Acts Theory was employed. The findings revealed that Obama used both direct and indirect speeches. In the direct category, the speaker used a preponderance of Constative Assertive acts 10 (94.4%) and only 1(3.57%) directive act for affirming his beliefs about religion and the interconnection between religion and politics. However, for the indirect category, the eloquent speaker employed verdictive acts (55.5%), 1(5.5%), directive requisitive acts (33.3%) and assertive act 1(5.5%). The indirect verdictive acts were used to covertly judge the aberration of religion-its reduction to a tool of discrimination, terrorism, and manipulation of believers' minds etcetera. Obama thus, employed the directive requisitive act in imploring his listeners to turn a new leaf to religion and rather exploit religion to teach moral values-discipline, tolerance and ultimately give hope to the people thereby making religion serve as a panacea to critical social ills, and thus a veritable complement for global politics. This paper, therefore, concludes that the combination of religion and politics is required for an effective global politics. This paper recommends that religious-political discourse should not be parochial so it can cater for the needs of the pluralistic world.

Index Terms- Language, Pragmatics, Politics, Speech Acts.

I. INTRODUCTION

Generally, the genres of religious and political discourse are not exactly under-researched. Pioneering linguistic works on religious discourse have been undertaken mainly within the framework of stylistic analysis especially regarding graphological, semantic, syntactic and morphological features that characterise the discourse (e.g. Crystal and Davy (1969) Oladosu (2003)). On the other hand, political discourse has attracted the attention of linguists from Systemic Functional Linguistics (Osisanwo 2017,

Arema 2015, Kalejaiye 2012Opeibi 2009, Odebanmi 2008) (in Soyombo 2019). However, there is a paucity of studies on utterance meanings on the discordant concepts of religion and politics.

This paper presents a Speech Act analysis of President Barack Obama, the first black American president's speech titled 'Politics and Faith'. It applies Allan's Speech Act model which originated from Austin 1962's notion of 'speeches are actions'. The significance of this paper is to establish and imports of the speech acts President Obama exploited in articulating the synergising the divergent concept of religion and politics.

Religion and Politics have both been adjudged divergent and yet intricately connected. Mark (2018p.1) tracing the concept to two Latin words *Religio*, meaning 'restraint' and *Religiosum*, which denotes 'to show respect for something sacred, defines religion as an organised systems of beliefs and practises revolving around or leading to a transcendent spiritual experience'. This definition contrasts greatly with politics. According to Obafemi (1961 p1) 'politics is the science or the art of the managing public affairs'. Obama (2006p1) maintains that 'Politics depends on man's ability to persuade his fellow humans of common aims based on a common reality.

Despite the divergence hinted at above, religion and politics are reliable because they are both concerned with power, are both interdependent and expected to solve human problems. Buttressing the foregoing, Obafemi (ibid) posits that although they are different- religion being spiritual and politics being materialistic, nonetheless 'living man is a combination of matter and spiritand for him to be the real image of God,he must not only be well-developed and wealthy but must also function in harmony with and under the control of his spirit...Explicating the connection, Obama (2006 p1) averred that politics involves the compromise, the art of what's possible, but religion does not allow for compromise- It's the art of the impossible'. He affirms that religion seeks the interest of few; Politics seeks interest of all.

Language is a veritable instrument of power exploited by both politics and religion. It is not just a human vocal sound or graphic symbol via which man communicates- ideas, emotions, or achieves other communicative human purposes but an instrument of instilling and legitimising power. The foregoing is certainly true as the acquisition of power and its enforcement can be achieved in a number of ways: one of the obvious is through physical coercion, which involves the imposition of desire on a people, via force or violence- a style of leadership common with the military rule. However, in democracy, just like in religion, leaders depend on the onus of effective use of language to

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