
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Stylistic Analysis of President Mahama's 2024 Electoral Victory Acceptance Speech

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| ABSTRACT

An acceptance speech acts as an opportunity for speakers to relate, share their journey and express gratitude to others. Speakers utilize these speeches to show appreciation, personal reflection, motivational elements, and resonate with the audience while celebrating their achievements. For politicians, their vision, ideology, and relationship with the electorate are encapsulated in their pivotal political acceptance speeches. Due to the multi-purpose nature of this speech, writers employ several stylistic devices aimed at portraying their unique idiosyncrasies while also persuading the audience. They use implied language as a means of expressing ideas, emotions, and desires. This study analyses the language and stylistic elements found in President-elect Mahama's acceptance speech following the 2024 electoral victory. It examines how the speaker's idiosyncratic nature and particularity are reflected in his language use. The analysis employs the analytical frameworks mainly in a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) fashion with other related frameworks serving as associations. (Fairclough 1992, 1993, Halliday 1978, Wodak, 2002,1999). The data reveals the use of stylistic devices such as over-wording, cohesion and coherence, logical connectors, repetition, pronouns, and the use of active sentences in conveying the themes of hope, unity, progress, and confidence. The president-elect skillfully applies these techniques to enhance the effectiveness of his message and relate to his listeners on both intellectual and emotional levels. This creates a narrative of optimism, resilience, and inclusiveness, qualities needed by the speaker as he sets out on his journey of resetting the country.

| KEYWORDS

Acceptance Speech, Discourse Analysis, Stylistic Analysis, Political Discourse

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the language and stylistic devices employed by the president-elect, John Mahama, after his electoral victory for the 2024 Ghana presidential election. Acceptance speech serves as opportunities to unify victors and their supporters to connect as they celebrate their journey (Koutchadé, 2015). It is used to show gratitude, personal reflection, inspire others, and resonate deeply with an audience while celebrating personal achievements. Speakers further use it to honor those who helped by recognizing their hard work and dedication (Orji et.al, 2023; Kampf, 2015; Sharndama, 2015; Dunmire, 2012). For politicians, their vision, ideology, and relationship with the electorate are encapsulated in their pivotal political acceptance speeches. Political acceptance speeches not only serve as official recognition of election victories, but act as platforms for outlining future agenda(s) and building relationships with the public (Orji et.al, 2023; Kampf, 2015; Sharndama, 2015; Dunmire, 2012). Due to the multi-purpose nature of this speech, writers employ several stylistics devices to portray their unique idiosyncrasies while

also persuading the audience. They employ coded language and varied linguistic styles to express their ideas, emotions, and desires. Politics is essentially a race for power-- power to earn the exclusive right to make decisions, control resources, influence behaviour and shape values, and language serves as a vital tool for exercising that power. In cognizance of this, politicians are strategic in the choice of words and the role of linguistic relativity. Writing on the usage of language as a communicative tool, Lyons (1981,2009) mentions that language serves as the main communication tool utilised by specific groups to their respective societies and linguistic communities. Fairclough (1995) adds that language is intrinsically tied to society to facilitate social processes. These viewpoints suggest that language use in an acceptance speech is socially influenced by interpersonal relationships and the need to reinforce or alter them. Halliday (1978) identifies three interrelated meta-functions of language -- ideational function, which structures experience and reflects the relationship with social structures; the interpersonal function, which establishes relationships among participants; and the textual function, which ensures coherence and cohesion within a text. Language choice for the use of acceptance speeches (use) is mostly planned to fulfill these meta-functions (Cervera et.al, 2006). While these studies highlight the persuasive and ideological functions of political discourse, a little work has been done on Mahama's 2024 acceptance speech. This paper therefore examines the language use and stylistic elements identified in the speech, as well as the relational values that are conveyed by the grammatical features in in speech and how logical connectors are employed in the speech. The data for this study is the acceptance speech delivered by the president-elect for the 2024 election. The data is available online for public perusal (<https://www.myjoyonline.com/full-text-mahamas-victory-speech-delivered-after-declaration-by-ec-chair/>).

2. Literature Review

Several scholarly works highlight the deliberate use of language as a vital tool for persuasion, propagating ideologies, and forming identities (Ofori, 2023; Ofori et al., 2021; Obeng, 2020; Ravio, 2020; Sarfo-Adu, 2018; Nyarko, 2013; Ilie, 2010; Opeibi, 2006). For instance, in his analysis of the stylistic and rhetorical devices employed by Blair, Obama, and Churchill, Ravio (2020) observes the use of stylistic devices such as metaphor as cognitive and cultural instruments to shape political myths and affect public opinion. The speakers in their political speeches used metaphors to arouse emotional resonance and create powerful narratives that conform with their ideological stances and cultural schemas. Ilie (2010) in her comparison of parliamentary address forms in Sweden and the UK, notices that politicians deliberately employ language choice to support or contradict institutional power. They strategically use linguistic devices like pronouns, active sentences, titles and naming conventions for ideological purposes.

On African political discourse, Opeibi (2006) shows that linguistic strategies influence voter perception and political participation. Supporting this view, Obeng (2020) confirms that rhetorical devices like intertextuality, strategic honesty, and reverential style are utilised as linguistic tools for navigating the political landscape. Similarly, Israel (2022) in his pragma-stylistic study of language in Ghanaian politics demonstrate that expressive and strategic use of language affect both public opinion and public acceptance.

Nyako (2013) critical discourse analysis of the campaign message of John Mahama and Nana Akufo-Addo during the 2012 elections in Ghana reiterates that language is employed to express power, rally support, and encode ideological positions. His findings closely align with Agyekum's (2017) study on presidential speeches in Ghana which reports that repeated illocutionary acts such as assertive and commissive expressed via words legitimize political authority and mandate. Again, exploring the figurative dimension of political discourse, Ofori et al. (2021) confirm that the use of metaphors and similes in political discourses shapes grassroots-level involvement and the shaping of opinion in political decision-making.

These works demonstrate the diverse ways language act as tool for persuasion, identity construction, and negotiating power politically. They provide background information to aid in the analysis of the study.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of van Dijk (2015) and Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) (Halliday, 2006, 1978) in its analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach that examines how language, power, and ideology interact. According to CDA, language is not neutral; it is filled with ideological underpinnings that could affect behaviour and public opinion. Based on the theory's ability to examine how social power is manifested via speech, it is an excellent instrument for evaluating political communication. van Dijk (2015, 2013, 2011) explains that the relevance of CDA is seen in its ability to account for language's role in discourse or communicative events in the production and re-production of dominance and inequality. He describes CDA as a discourse analytical tool that examines how social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and battled via text and talk in the social and political context. CDA does not merely focus on the formal properties of a text; it situates the text within its broader social, economic, historical, cognitive, and political contexts. It explores how text shapes and contributes to existing social practices, and the formation of new social practices in public discourses such as advertisements, newspaper articles, political propaganda, official documents, laws and regulations (Wang, 2010). The CDA is

guided by ten questions that are categorized into three areas, namely: vocabulary, grammar and textual structures (Fairclough, 1995). Some of the questions are outlined as follows:

1. What experiential value do words hold? Are there ideologically contested terms? Is there evidence of rewording or excessive wording? What ideologically significant meanings (such as synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy) exist among words?
2. What relational values do words possess? Are there euphemistic expressions present?
3. What expressive values do words carry?
4. What metaphors are used?
5. What relational values do grammatical features have? - What modes (declarative, grammatical questions, imperative) are used?
6. What expressive values do grammatical features have? -Are there important features of expressive modality?
7. How are simple sentences linked together? - What logical connectors are used? Are there complex sentences characterised by coordinators or subordinators?
8. What interactional conventions are used? - Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?
9. What larger scale structure does the text have?

The analysis in this study revolves around how some of these questions are answered in the speech.

3.1 Systemic Functional Grammar

The Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) (Halliday 2006, 1978) emphasizes the functional features inherent in language use. It explains how language serves as a social tool for meaning making as against a mere collection of words to form sentences. The theory identifies three main functions of language, namely Meta-function of Ideas, Textual Meta-function of Ideas, and the Interpersonal Meta-function (Halliday 2006, 1978). The first, which is the Meta-function of Ideas, explains how ideas and experiences are conveyed via language. It considers the circumstances (contextual information), the players (entities involved), and the processes (activities). The second, which is the Interpersonal Meta-function of is concerned with how language is used to communicate attitudes, opinions, and social connections. It encompasses components such as the mood (the grammatical structure that signals a clause as either declarative, interrogative, imperative, etc.), and the modality (a speaker's attitude towards the likelihood or necessity of an event). The third is the Textual Meta-function which borders on how language is used to arrange data in texts. This includes coherence (the logical flow of ideas), and cohesion (the connections between textual pieces) and how these direct how information is conveyed to the audience. These theories will help us reveal the underlying ideologies and power relations in language used in the acceptance speech under the study.

4. Background to the Analysed Speech

Mr. John Dramani Mahama is a Ghanaian politician born on 29th November 1958. He previously served as Vice President of Ghana from January 2009 to July 2012 and President of Ghana from 24th July 2012 to 7th January 2017. He took office as President on 24th July 2012, following the death of his predecessor, John Evans Atta Mills.

Mr. Mahama has had a relatively rich political journey. A member of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), a Member of Parliament for Bole Bamboi from 1997 to 2009 and served as Deputy Minister for Communication between 1997 and 1998 before becoming the substantive Minister for Communications in 1998. Mahama is the first vice president to assume the presidency following the death of his predecessor and the first head of state of Ghana to have been born after Ghana's independence in 1957. He was elected during the December 2012 election to serve a full term as president. He contested re-election for a second term in the 2016 election but lost to the New Patriotic Party candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo. This made him the first president in the history of Ghana not to have won a consecutive second term. Undaunted by his defeat in the previous elections, Mahama was again the NDC's candidate for president in the 2020 election, where he lost to Akufo-Addo.

He was re-elected president in the 2024 election, defeating the incumbent vice president, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, making him the first president in Ghanaian history to be democratically elected to a non-consecutive second term. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Mahama)

5. Analysis of Selected Speech

The selected speech is analysed using Fairclough and Dijk's CDA models and Halliday's systemic functional grammar. The analysis shows that the function of language goes beyond communication to function as an authoritative tool through which speakers

shape social realities and foster community among its listeners. Some of the stylistic devices identified in the speech include over-wording, lexical repetition, and parataxis.

5.1 Over-wording

Fairclough (2001), in his descriptive analysis, explains **that over-wording is** an unusually high degree of wording, which usually involves using many words which are near synonyms in a statement. Over-wording shows preoccupation with some aspects of reality which may indicate that it is a focus of ideological struggle. In over-wording, a speaker excessively and repetitively uses words to highlight important themes or ideas in a speech (Bukhari, 2013). In President John Mahama's acceptance speech, he strategically utilises over-wording to underscore major points and to purposefully reinforce his message. We see this in excerpt 1 below with the over-worded words highlighted.

Excerpt 1

- *"It is that **WE WANT** a much better Ghana. **WE WANT** a Ghana that works for everybody, not just a few. **WE WANT** a Ghana that considers the well-being of all her citizens and accords them each the ability to live a life of dignity, a life of limitless opportunities."*
- *"I promise you that I will assemble and lead a government that will carry the **WEIGHT** of those **HOPES** and dreams, whether you voted for me or not because every **victory** is a **victory** for the people--ALL of the people."*
- *"It is **NOT** by accident that we were the first nation in Black Africa to win our independence from colonial rule. It is **NOT** by accident that the first Black person to serve as the UN Secretary-General, the late Kofi Annan, was a Ghanaian. It is **NOT** by accident that so many Ghanaians are out in the world blazing new trails and being recognised as leaders in their industries."*

In the above excerpts, we notice the words **WE WANT, VICTORY, NOT**, are frequently mentioned in non-essential contexts that could have been phrased more economically.

By using **WE WANT** repeatedly, Mahama tries to move attention from himself to the people, thereby portraying governance as a collective enterprise. The essence of these is not to fill space, but to foster a spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility.

5.2 Lexical Repetition in the Messages

Closely related to over-wording is lexical repetition, where a speaker intentionally repeats key phrases to reiterate important messages and to accentuate their usefulness to the audience. In the selected speech, the speaker continually repeats certain words to send a message of hope and purposefulness to the listeners. This not only underscores the important themes but also increases the emotional character of the address. This frequency distribution is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Lexical Repetition and Rhetorical Functions in Mahama's Acceptance Speech

Lexical Item	Frequency	Rhetorical Function
Ghana/Ghanaians	24	This is used o promote national identity and collective pride.
All	17	This statement encourages inclusivity and universality.
Not	15	This statement rhetorically creates contrastive framing concerning what to reject and what to accept.
Thank (s)	13	This statement articulates appreciation and reinforces relational ethos.
Country	9	This rhetorically highlights territorial belonging and common home.

God	5	This invokes divine authority and moral legitimacy.
Brothers and Sisters	4	This is used to build familial bonds and closeness with audience.
Reset	4	This is used to indicate revitalization and fresh starts.
Reminder	3	This stresses recall, continuity, and collective obligation.
This Country	3	This situates the discourse in immediate, lived national reality.
Know	3	It emphasizes conviction and common understanding.
Hope	3	The word is used to stir optimism and future orientation.
Already	2	Its usage recommends earnestness and closeness of change.
Change	2	This is a call for transformation and improvement.
New	2	'New' used here denotes innovation and exit from the past.

The table depicts the occurrences of the keywords. The repeated call of GHANA/GHANAISANS fosters national pride and positions the people at the center of the message. Also, the frequent use of NOT seeks to contrast, and hone the line between failed governance and the envisioned bright future. As religious as most electorates are, the religious reference to GOD add a moral weight to the speech, whereas the use of kinship terminologies like BROTHERS and SISTERS evoke a sense of closeness and camaraderie. Other repeated expressions such as RESET, HOPE, CHANGE portray progressive vision and urge the audience to embrace positivity and renewal. The amplification of the words, coupled with the speaker's tone, evokes emotions, unearths optimism, and demonstrates the willingness of the president-elect to offer hope to his nation. Collectively, these repeated expressions create a measure of encouragement and unite the people towards a shared purpose while connecting with the speaker's political vision.

5.3 Parataxis

Parataxis is placing independent clauses side by side without an intervening conjunction or connective words to achieve coherence. This is done to create rhythm and balance to create emphasis. Speakers utilise this technique to convey a sense of urgency, emphasis, and send multiple ideas in a forthright way. Examples of parataxis from the speech are shown in excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2

1. *"To my campaign team members and the countless volunteers who spent uncountable hours, day and night working to secure victory, I cannot thank you enough."*
2. *"We must never forget that the people of Ghana have chosen us to represent their wishes and best interests."*
3. *"This country, this land, is not for one person, for one family, for one tribe or ethnic group".*
4. *"We must also be able to LIVE here with satisfaction. We must be able to love, dream, laugh, eat, dance, drum and share all aspects of the culture that was handed down to us."*
5. *"Every vote that was cast in this election carried the same WEIGHT. Every vote also carried a HOPE for the future of our country."*

In example 1, we see two independent clauses presented without conjunctions. The speaker uses the structure to highlight the contribution and hard work of various groups without resorting to complex sentence structures. In example 3, the speaker uses a straightforward presentation of ideas to reinforce the importance of accountability. The use of parataxis in example 4, underscores the numerous satisfaction that should come from life, that it should be enjoyed, creating an uplifting tone. These occurrences of parataxis throughout the speech contribute to its rhythmic quality and enhance its persuasive power by presenting ideas clearly and emphatically.

5.4 Revelation of Hope

Semantically, the diction and tone of the speaker evidently bear hope and freedom for the listeners (Abubakar, 2022). Numerous key words and phrases itemized in excerpt 3 drives home a message of hope to Ghanaians. These words reflect optimism and further stress a shared vision of a better future. Example of these phrases are listed in excerpt 3:

Excerpt 3

- Our best days are ahead of us:
- *Hope for the future:*
- *A Ghana that works for everybody:*
- *Limitless opportunities:*
- *We must create sustainable and well-paying jobs:*
- *Every victory is a victory for the people--ALL of the people*
- *A life of dignity:*
- *Together we can overcome*

The implicit meaning of these words represents hope and prosperity for Ghanaians. Phrases such as '*Our best days are ahead of us*', '*Hope for the future*', '*A Ghana that works for everybody*', '*We must create sustainable and well-paying jobs*' set positive tones and improvement for the nation, potential growth for all Ghanaians, and optimism for the future of Ghana. The speaker's choice of words communicates inclusivity, opportunities, and collective action. This not only inspires hope and confidence among Ghanaians but also assures them of progress and a new era of governance symbolized in the votes cast. Indeed, this language of hope aligns with campaign rhetoric universally, but resonates distinctively in Ghana where political speeches often highlights unison after antagonistic elections (Agyekum, 2017).

5.5. The Use of Simple Sentences

To enhance clarity and create emotional impact while engaging with the audience, political speeches employ simple sentences. The use of simple sentences makes it easier for the speaker to access a wider audience who may lack education or fluency in the language. This promotes inclusivity which is vital in political speeches. The speech under discussion contains 79 sentences. Forty-nine (49) of the 79 sentences are simple sentences. This is exemplified in excerpt 4 below:

Excerpt 4

- *"Our best days are ahead of us."*
- *I give thanks and praise to God almighty because this successful outcome is the doing of the Lord.*
- *I want to thank the Vice-President for his statesmanship in conceding the election long before the Commission declared the results.*
- *This concession largely diffused the tensions that characterise high-stakes elections such as this.*
- *We have, therefore, been bestowed with a very outstanding mandate by the good people of Ghana.*
- *I am deeply honoured and humbled to receive such an overwhelming endorsement from the Ghanaian people.*
- *I thank all Ghanaians for your continued belief in our democracy despite the severe crisis our nation is going through.*
- *I also congratulate our Parliamentary Candidates who have also swept the electoral landscape with a resounding victory.*

Simple sentences enhance clarity, create emotional impact, ensure the audience the political realities of the time. These sentences present ideas candidly, permitting the audience to effortlessly appreciate the speaker's vision. Phrases like "*I give thanks and praise to God almighty*" clearly convey the speaker's gratitude in a manner that will not create confusion in the minds of the listeners. With a simple phrase like "*We must also be able to LIVE here with satisfaction*" the speaker echoes the basic needs and aspirations of the audience without using complex structures. This linguistic choice echoes well with the collective audience experiences, predominantly their economic state.

The use of these simple sentences strongly appeals to the audience's emotions as it enhances memorability and retention of key messages.

5.6 The Use of Active Sentences

When sentences are written in the active voice, the subject acts; in the passive voice, the subject receives the action. Active sentences are about what people (or things) do, while passive sentences are about what happens to people (or things). In passive sentences, the subject of the sentence is distanced from the action. Some of the rhetorical strategies utilized in political speeches include the use of both active and passive sentences. Politicians usually resort to active voices to highlight their achievements and to assert their dominance, whereas passive sentences may be used to soften blame and divert attention from controversial situations. Mahama's acceptance speech under consideration makes extensive use of the active voice. His use of the active voice is to calm the listeners and assure them of his readiness to shoulder the responsibility bestowed on him. Examples of these from the speech are seen in excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5

- *I accept this clear mandate that you, the good people of Ghana, have given me to lead this great nation.*
- *I promise you that I will assemble and lead a government that will carry the weight of those hopes and dreams. Let us maintain AND even MAGNIFY this joy and positivity we feel.*
- *We must also be able to LIVE here with satisfaction.*
- *I will repay your abiding confidence with loyalty, understanding, and a devotion to duty.*
- *We have arrived at THIS moment because so many of you believed that CHANGE was possible*
- *Let us continue to believe that we are ALREADY moving towards the Ghana we want, the Ghana of our hopes and dreams.*
- *We must never forget that the people of Ghana have chosen us to represent their wishes and best interests.*

The extensive use of active sentences in his speech is to show direct address and responsibility. For instance, in the example "*I accept this clear mandate that you, the good people of Ghana, have given me to lead this great nation*", the speaker directly emphasizes his new role and the mandate it carries, and assures the listeners of accountability and strong leadership. He further shows commitment via the active sentence "*I promise you that I will assemble and lead a government that will carry the weight of those hopes and dreams*". Using the active voice, he demonstrates his proactiveness and portrays himself not as a passive leader, but an active one poised to take charge of issues. Again, to call the audience to action, the active sentence "*We must also be able to LIVE here with satisfaction*" is used. The use of the pronoun "*we*" and the modal "*must*" impresses on the listeners the need for collective responsibility, unity and inclusiveness in the shared purpose.

Through the active sentence "*I will repay your abiding confidence with loyalty, understanding, and a devotion to duty*" the president-elect conveys his vision for the future. He buttresses his commitment and dedication to the citizenry as a trustworthy leader. In the statement "*Let us continue to believe that we are already moving towards the Ghana we want*", he invites Ghanaians to action and motivates them to support his vision for the country.

Indeed, the use of active sentences in the acceptance speech clarifies the speaker's intention and makes him understandable to the audience. This avoids ambiguity, which can lead to misinterpretation. The speech reverberates with the hearers and makes them feel a part and parcel of the governance. Again, by using active sentences, Mahama reveals himself as an accountable, responsible and dependable leader. This reinforces his message and personality as a proactive leader dedicated to the ideals and ambitions of Ghanaians.

5.7 The Use of Logical Connectors

Conjunctions, also described as logical connectors, are used to show the relation between ideas and serve as guides for the audience of a speech. They include *and*, *also*, *so*, *because*, *but* etc. Users employ them to demonstrate the addition of thoughts, contrast of ideas, and conditions related to thoughts. Examples of these contained in the speech are seen in excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6

- I give thanks and praise to God almighty **because** this successful outcome is the doing of the Lord,
- I know that many of you are feeling frustration and anger, **but** I ask you today, please do NOT give in to negativity and pessimism
- *Let us maintain AND even MAGNIFY this joy and positivity we feel*
- *And now we KNOW that not only is CHANGE possible, but it is also ALREADY in process.*

- This mandate **also** serves as a constant reminder of what fate awaits us if we fail to meet the aspirations of our people **and** govern with arrogance.
- My brothers **and** sisters, there is much to do to salvage our country **and** reset it.
- It would have to start with a reset of the relationship between citizens **and** elected officials.
- We must never forget that the people of Ghana have chosen us to represent their wishes **and** best interests.
- I give thanks **and** praise to God almighty **because** this successful outcome is the doing of the Lord.
- **Because** of you, the people of Ghana can celebrate the fact that we have made history by electing our FIRST WOMAN as Vice-President.
- The journey will not be smooth **because** the outgoing government has plunged our dear nation into an abyss
- We have arrived at THIS moment **because** so many of you believed that CHANGE was possible.

The effective use of the logical connectors or conjunctions not only contributes to organizing the speech effectually but also refines complex ideas and allows the listeners to reason and engage with him. This amplifies the persuasiveness of the message as it employs pathos and logos to permeate the minds and hearts of the listeners.

5.8 Cohesion and Coherence

Coherence is about the flow of understanding in a writing, whereas cohesion relates to how words are linked together lexically and grammatically. Both concepts relate to the unity of a message, which ensures that the ideas and thoughts are allied and linked to the entire message. An incoherent text is fragmented and meaningless. The speech under study is coherent and cohesive. The speech achieves cohesion mainly through grammatical devices and lexical repetition, such as the repetition of 'Ghana' and 'hope', which buttresses national identity and optimism, as exemplified in excerpt 7 below:

Excerpt 7

1. **Our best days are ahead of us my brothers and sisters!** *A while ago, the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana declared me the winner of the 2024 presidential elections.*
2. *For all its historic undertones, this mandate represents many things for all political actors and those who seek to lead our country.*
3. *It shows that the Ghanaian people have little tolerance for bad governance, particularly of the sort witnessed in the last eight years, and that they are willing to take decisive action at critical moments when it matters most.*
4. *And now we KNOW that not only is CHANGE possible, but it is also ALREADY in process.*
5. *Let us continue to believe that we are ALREADY moving towards the Ghana we want, the Ghana of our hopes and dreams.*

A look at sentences 1 and 2 in the excerpt shows a continuous connection of ideas. In sentence 1, the speaker establishes a point which is built on by sentence 2. Also, in the extract "*For all its historic undertones, this mandate represents many things for all political actors and those who seek to lead our country*" there is a linear progression of ideas from the onset to the end. This logical flow of ideas improves comprehension and allows the audience to connect with the message conveyed. This boosts the persuasiveness of the message and increases the emotional connection with the audience.

5.9 Use of Pronouns

Pronouns primarily refer to an existing entity in a discourse. However, pronouns in political speeches are used to create and enact power relations and ideological elements. They convey inclusivity, camaraderie, and personal connection with the audience. When used with the first-person plural "we", the pronouns hide the accountability of the user, whereas when used with the first-person singular "I" signal liability on the part of the user (Owusu Ansah, 2024; Kolu 2018; Alfaki, 2014; Thomas and Wareing, 2004). When political speakers employ pronouns, they usually convey a significant message, either to evade responsibility or accept it. Indeed, the strategic use of pronouns can enhance an emotional connection with the audience.

Table 2: Distribution and Rhetorical Functions of Pronouns in Mahama's Acceptance Speech

Pronoun	Frequency	Example from Speech	Rhetorical function
I	12	I pledge to work tirelessly for all Ghanaians	This is used to highlight personal accountability

We	18	Together, we will rebuild our beloved nation.	This is to create collective identity and inclusiveness.
You	7	I urge you to channel your anger into positive action	This openly engages the audience and mobilises the citizenry.
Our	15	Our nation has endured challenges but will rise again	This statement emphasizes shared ownership and unity among all.
Us	9	This victory belongs to all of us.	This is used to strengthen solidarity and shared achievement.

Table 2 presents the repeated use of the first-person singular (I, ME and MY). These pronoun uses are a deliberate rhetorical approach. For instance, the first-person singular ("I") showcases Mahama's personal responsibility and credibility as a leader. This expressively depicts individual identity – that is, the speaker reflects his acknowledgment of personal responsibility by presenting clear and explicit information, hopes, and plans while also calling on Ghanaians to hold him accountable. The first-person plural ("WE, OUR, YOUR, YOU, US"), denotes collective or institutional identity. Their use frames governance as a collective task and encourages inclusiveness. In the speech, the speaker uses more of collective pronouns to express the need for collective effort or inclusivity in resetting the nation Ghana. By extensively using these collective pronouns, the president-elect promotes communalism and shared goals and encourages all to unite for a better Ghana.

5.10 Metaphors

Metaphors are employed most in literary and political discourse because of their ability to render meaning in concrete and relatable representations (Israel, 2022). They are powerful discourse tools of persuasion as they tend to simplify complex political concepts into concrete experiences that are familiar and relatable to the audience. To influence public perceptions and opinions, politicians resort to metaphors to construct their messages in ways that resonate passionately with their listeners. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) contend, metaphors are not just decorative but constitute important means of enclosing thought. They serve as strategies to shape ideology and collective identity Charteris-Black (2005) adds that metaphors legitimize political powers because it is imbued with persuasive ideas in that are relatable.

In his 2024 electoral victory acceptance speech, Mahama uses metaphors to concretize the abstract complex ideas in his speech and make them easier for the listeners to understand. Some of the metaphorical statements used in the speech are grouped into three broad conceptual categories and presented in excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8

1. Nation as a Person

- *"When Ghana rises, we all stand tall and rise with her."*

In this expression, Ghana is personified as a living being whose wellbeing directly impacts on the citizens health and growth. By making Ghana a living entity, the speaker drums home collective responsibility and inclusiveness, and creates solidarity and national identity. This encourages the listeners to consider themselves inseparably from the fortunes of the country.

2. Politics as Struggle

- *"Plunged our dear nation into an abyss."*
- *"Shattered confidence."*
- *"A table before me in the presence of my enemies."*

These statements portray the economic and political difficulties of the past as a battle against destructive forces. This metaphorical use creates a dangerous fall into darkness, and conveys a sense of urgency for change. The use of "shattered confidence" creates images of broken trust and aligns the new leader as a beacon of hope and a restorer of faith. By alluding to the biblical phrase of

"a table before me in the presence of my enemies", Mahama legitimizes his authority in the face of opposition by framing himself as a leader divinely empowered.

3. Renewal and Transformation

- *"Reset our nation."*
- *"Channel your anger and frustration into the positive enterprise of resetting and rebuilding our beloved nation."*
- *"Every vote carried the weight of those hopes and dreams."*

These phrases metaphorically present the nation as a machine or project that can be revitalized and renovated. The metaphorical usage considers votes as more than just numbers, but a representation of the collective aspirations of the people and legitimizes the call for hope. Mahama used these to send messages of optimism and resilience and further evoke emotions as he relates complex political issues to relatable things like divine protection, burden, and health.

These functions to legalize his power, create sense of urgency in resetting the country, and consolidate a common sense of national unity.

6. FINDINGS

The data analysis proves that language use and discourse structures have significant implications for power and ideology. This confirms Fairclough, (1992) assertion that language is never neutral but imbued with ideological connotations that have the tendency to influence and shape public opinion. Mahama's acceptance speech is marked by recurring themes of hope, unity, progress, and confidence conveyed through stylistic devices such over-wording, cohesion and coherence, logical connectors, repetition, pronouns, active constructions, and metaphors.

Over-wording in Mahama's acceptance speech serves the purposes of creating attention, evoking emotions, redundancy, and collectively enlisting Ghanaians against the NPP government. The continual use of phrases like *together, we can*, and *our future*, highlights the relevance of collective mobilisation for the attainment of common goals and visions. Other phrases such as *"we must act now"* or *"this is our moment"* are employed to drum home the critical nature of the political scene and to rally Ghanaians in the democratic process of the country. Through these emotionally charged words, Mahama signals a need for urgent change and action. Again, the speaker constantly restates his promise to address issues bedeviling the country such as corruption and ensuring good governance. The multiple use of these phrases assures Ghanaians of the president-elect's commitment to address the needs and concerns of the people, which ultimately is about improving their lives. This technique improves the impact of his message and makes it notable and convincing.

Generally, the speech is cohesive and coherent. Mahama creates a sense of continuity via the use of pronouns and demonstratives, which have already mentioned antecedents. For example, in the phrase *"this mandate or our beloved Ghana"*, he connects different sections of the speech. His use of conjunctions like *"and"*, *"but"* and *"therefore"* links clauses and ideas guiding the listeners through his arguments. The phrase *"We must flip the coin from competition to cooperation"*, evidently suggests a transition in thought. The reiteration of keywords like *cooperation*, *vision*, and *Ghana* underpins the central themes vibrating throughout the speech, and this enable the listeners to follow his train of thoughts. Coherence revolves around the general arrangement and logical structure of the speech, enabling the listeners to grasp the intended meaning of the message without difficulty. The speech has clear sections which outlines different aspects of the president-elect's vision for the country. The speech commences with appreciation and further moves to outline the responsibilities that come with the position, mentions the need for collaboration, and ends with a call to action. This logical progression enables the audience to relate to the flow of thoughts and how each aspect links to the main message.

The speaker's style of rhetoric involves the use of active sentences. The speaker employs active sentences to express gratitude, directly addresses the people and lays bare his responsibilities. For instance, the direct construction in the sentence *"I accept this clear mandate that you, the good people of Ghana, have given me to lead this great nation"*, highlights the speaker's acknowledgment as the bearer of the mandate and draws out his obligation and leadership. In the phrase, *"I promise you that I will assemble and lead a government that will carry the weight of those hopes and dreams"*, he further articulates his commitment to action. The use of active sentences displays his proactiveness and readiness to shoulder the responsibilities that come with the mandate. He further uses the active voice to lay bare his vision for the future and reiterate his commitment to the people. He unequivocally calls Ghanaians to action when he says, *"Let us continue to believe that we are already moving towards the Ghana we want"*. This statement functions as an inspiring call rather than a simple request for support for his dream and vision. Indeed, throughout the acceptance speech, Mahama uses active sentences to clearly outline his intentions and responsibilities memorably.

The analysis also portrays the use of diverse logical connectors in Mahama's speech. He uses the connectors logically to show transitions in the speech, a movement from acknowledgments to calls for action. He employs causal connectors, contrastive connectors, additive connectors and emphatic connectors (Logogye, 2021) to accentuate different aspects of his message. He uses the causal connectors to clarify reasons behind certain actions or feelings. For example, in the statement, *"I give thanks and praise to God almighty because this successful outcome is the doing of the Lord"*, he links his appreciation directly to a heavenly divine source of influence. Also, in the statement *"I know that many of you are feeling frustration and anger, but I ask you today, please do NOT give in to negativity and pessimism"*, he recognizes the frustration of Ghanaians and encourages them not to give in to negativity. This contrasts dissimilar states of being or perspective. Here, he stresses resilience amidst challenges. He further uses additive connectors to consolidate his ideas, encourage unity, and call for a united effort. Using phrases such as *"Let us maintain AND even MAGNIFY this joy and positivity we feel"*. *"We WANT a Ghana that works for everybody"* the speaker smoothly transitions from gratitude to outlining his vision. In concluding the speech, the speaker utilises connectors to recapitulate the key points in the speech and inspire confidence and hope. This is seen in the closing remarks, *"And now we KNOW that not only is CHANGE possible, but it is also ALREADY in process"*.

Pronouns are widely used in the acceptance speech. Both inclusive and exclusive pronouns are extensively used. The frequent use of exclusive personal pronouns such as *"I and MY"* is used by the speaker to express personal gratitude in statements like, *"I am deeply honoured and humbled to receive such an overwhelming endorsement from the Ghanaian people"*. Phrases like *"I promise you that I will assemble and lead a government that will carry the WEIGHT of those HOPES and dreams"* underscore his commitment to the people, making them feel involved in the governance process. These personal pronouns create a personal touch and a direct connection with the audience. Also, the inclusive pronoun *"YOU and WE"* are also prevalent in the speech. These pronouns are skillfully used to directly address people, create inclusiveness, and call for support in the political journey. Again, the use of plural pronouns such as *"US"* and *"OUR"* highlights solidarity and shared identity. In statements like *"This country... is for all of us"*, he stresses that governance calls for collective efforts. This technique evokes a sense of belonging and responsibility among citizens.

Another finding is the use of lexical repetition. As a powerful discourse technique, lexical repetition in Mahama's speech emphasizes his crucial message about optimism, hope, unity, accountability and financial success. Indeed, words like *"hope"* and *"change"* are mentioned severally to denote the need for a new direction for the country. The regular mention of these words evokes in the citizens a sense of optimism and enthusiasm in achieving a brighter future. Again, inclusive phrases like *"together we,"* and *"our best days"* are repeated in the speech to further bolster a feeling of collectivism among Ghanaians. This belief is paramount for the progress of the country. Major concepts related to accountability such as *"transparency," "integrity,"* and *"responsibility"* are regularly mentioned to emphasize his devotion to guaranteeing good governance, transparency and accountability and situates him as a leader who will prioritize these values. He also repeats words such as *"jobs," "opportunities,"* and *"prosperity"* to remind his listeners of the need to focus on economic advancement and create a better economic environment for all Ghanaians. This lexical repetition ensures that Mahama's ideologies are well-transmitted and memorable to the audience. This discourse technique evokes strong sentiments, motivates the listeners, and makes them hopeful about the country's future. This helps create a rhythmic quality in speech and makes it more appealing, convincing, and motivational.

The analysis also found the use of metaphors in the speech. Mahama skillfully employs metaphors to strengthen his ideological positions and additionally generate a narrative that synchronizes with his agenda. For example, a metaphorical phrase as *"Plunged our dear nation into an abyss"* portrays a severe crisis and a feeling of hopelessness and paints the picture that the current economic condition of the country is hazardous and must be redeemed. Also, he uses the phrase *"Reset our nation"* to advocate for a fresh start, indicating a desire to positively transform the existing situation and improve the governance system in the country. In skillfully applying these metaphors, the President-elect increases the effectiveness of his message by relating to his listeners on both intellectual and emotional levels. These together create a narrative of hope, resilience, and collective action, and encourage the people to unite for a bright future regardless of their challenges.

These findings confirm the three main meta-functions of language use mentioned by Halliday. The contextual use of information to express concepts and experiences via language depicts the Meta-function of Ideas. Also, the Interpersonal Meta-function is perceived in how the speaker utilises discourse tools like metaphors, repetitions, and parataxis to communicate his attitude, share his views, and connect with the audience on a social level. The logical arrangement of the texts to ensure coherence and cohesion in the speech, coupled with the varied use of connectors to convey the information in a meaningful way to the audience showcase the Textual Meta-function.

7. Conclusion

This study analysed the language and stylistic elements found in President Mahama's 2024 electoral victory acceptance speech and has confirmed that language and discourse structures act as powerful resources through which politicians express their

ideology and influence public perception. The analysis confirms that political communication is not merely a ceremonial address, but it strategically employs stylistic devices to convey narratives of emotions that align with the speaker's vision for governance. We show in the analysis that Mahama uses varied devices such as over-wording, repetitions, pronouns, logical connectors, active constructions and metaphors to create the feeling of optimism, unity and oneness among Ghanaians. These devices not only beautify the speech but also convert his ideological and political commitments. For instance, the central themes of hope, change, accountability, and prosperity are reinforced via metaphors and repetitions. While coherence and logical progression were used in the speech to guide listeners smoothly from gratitude to national collaboration, the use of the pronouns helped to personalize the message, strengthen the bond between the speaker and the listeners and demonstrate accountability. The speaker uses his language choice to create a narrative of optimism, resilience, and inclusivity--qualities needed by the speaker as he sets out on his journey of resetting the country.

The implication of this study extends beyond Mahama's speech to other political speeches. In Ghana political legitimacy is usually contested through electoral processes, hence the stylistics analysis of speeches used in these processes will enrich the study of Ghanaian political rhetoric and contribute to deeper research in African democracies by offering insight into how language functions as instruments of persuasion, legitimation, and identity shaping in political systems.

The study has demonstrated that political acceptance speeches should not be viewed literally as a ceremonial speech, but as a multidimensional discourse that encapsulates a speaker's vision, ideology, and relationship with electorates. They are key discourses in politics for influencing listeners to connect with a speaker. Because of the multipurpose nature of the speech, writers purposefully apply a rich array of stylistic devices not only to portray their unique idiosyncrasies, but also to persuade the audience. By identifying the stylistic devices embedded in Mahama's victory speech, the research has demonstrated that language and ideology traverse to produce power and sustain democratic participation. To advance the study on stylistics and its ideological underpinnings in political discourse, future studies may dwell on comparing acceptance speeches from different African leaders or even political parties.

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