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Linguistic Obfuscation in the Name of Legislation: A Stylistic Analysis of 234next Online Magazine *Op-Ed* of 21st January, 2011

OLUSAANU, James Boaner, M. A.

Abstract

This paper examines the stylistic analysis of the article titled: *Excuse Me, Igodomigodo Must Not Comatose*, written by Victor Ehikhamenor about the erstwhile magniloquent member of the House of Assembly in the last political dispensation, Hon. Patrick Obahiagbon whose style of communication on the floor of the Lower House could be best described as ‘linguistic obfuscation in the name of legislation’. The article under analysis is an online *Op-Ed* of the 234NEXT Magazine published by Timbuktu Media Ltd., Lagos. The paper examines the notion of style and stylistics as a sub-discipline of linguistics, it looks at language as used in the political arena and the theoretical framework on which the work is predicated is Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics and Register Configuration. The issue of communication is also critically examined against backdrop the socio-cultural context of the article as every text is a product of a specific context. The lexical density of this 879-word article is also used to evaluate its level of difficulty and readability. This makes us come to the conclusion that the text is relatively obfuscating in its diction but wittily and

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aesthetically interesting in its satirising posture. Other literary and stylistic aesthetics employed by the author to embellish the piece are also examined.

Introduction

Style has been traditionally defined as the manner of linguistic expression in prose or verse – as *how* speakers or writers say whatever it is that they say. The style specific to a particular work or writer, or else distinctive of a type of writing, has been analysed in such terms as the rhetorical situation and aim; the characteristic diction, or choice of words; the type of sentence structure and syntax and the density and kinds of figurative language. A very large number of loosely descriptive terms have been used to characterise kinds of style, such as “pure,” “ornate,” “florid,” “gay,” “sober,” “simple,” “elaborate,” etc. Lawal (2003) identifies the different ways in which the notion of style has been perceived.

Stylistics

“The study of the use of language in literature,” involving the entire range of the “general characteristics of language . . . as medium of expression.” Abrams and Harpham (2009). Stylistics incorporates most of the concerns of both traditional literary criticism and traditional rhetoric. It insists on the need to be objective by focussing on the text itself and by setting out to discover the “rules” governing the process by which linguistic elements and patterns in a text accomplish their meanings and literary effects. Stylistics, as a sub-discipline under linguistics, has been variously defined and described by various scholars. David Crystal and Derek Davy (1992) adopt this broad linguistic view of stylistics: “Stylistics is simply the employment of linguistic tools in the analysis and interpretation of linguistic events, including religious, sports, legal and literary discourses.” Hartman and Stork (1972) describe Stylistics as “the application of linguistic knowledge to the study of style”. Leech and Short (1981) describe Stylistics simply as “the study of literary style, or... the style of the use of language in literature.” Katie Wales (1990) observes that Stylistics, as the study of style, has the goal “not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the text; or in order to relate literary effects to linguistic causes where these are felt to be relevant.”

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Theoretical Construct

The theoretical framework adopted for this analysis is the Systemic Functional Grammar by M.A.K. Halliday (1961) as expatiated by Tomori (1977:46-56). It highlights the basic assumption of the Systemic Functional Grammar, which is also referred to as Scale and Category Grammar. Systemic Functional Linguistics recognizes language analysis at the levels of syntax, semantics and pragmatics. It also recognizes various layers and relationships in the communication of a message which are *Substance, Form* and *Situation*. Halliday (1985) as referred to by Taiwo (2006) succinctly captures the major theoretical claims of Systemic Functional Linguistics: language is functional, the function is to make meaning, these functions are influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which they are exchanged, and the process of using language is a semiotic process, the process of making meanings by choice. Halliday's semiotic structure of situation, also known as Register Configuration, (Field, Tenor and Mode) is also used in the analysis of this work. Some refer to it as Register Theory. Taiwo (2006:160), citing Halliday and Hasan, (1976:22), explains that: "Systemic linguists are not just interested in what language is, but why language is; not just what language means, but how language means." He further offers:

Register is variety that is determined according to the use the language is put to. There are three kinds of situational factors that determine the kinds of selection made by speakers/writers in the linguistic system. These situational features are called the **variables of register**. The register variables are **field**: what is happening, the kind of social activity taking place; **tenor**: the nature of the participants in a particular discourse, their status, their roles and their roles relationships; **mode**: the channel of communication, written, spoken, etc. The register therefore, is constituted by *the linguistic features which are typically associated with a configuration of situational features – with particular values of field, mode and tenor*.

Language and Politics

Ayeomoni (2005) opines that language and politics are widely conceived to be interconnected. Language is considered to be the means of expression in politics. It is the means by which politics or political discourse and ideas are widely disseminated. Mario Cuomo, a U.S. politician once said: "You campaign in poetry. You govern in prose." Mazrui (1975:48) corroborates this when he writes that: "Language is the most important point of

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entry into habits of thought of a people. It embodies within itself cumulative association derived from the total experience of its people.” In the same vein, Harris (1979:58) states that “in politics words have a powerful effect”. Furthermore, he asserts that George Orwell is interested in demonstrating how “political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable.” In his discussion of Disraeli, Harris opines that he (Disraeli) is of the view that “with words we govern men”, and in his own contribution to the issue of language and politics, Harris opines that “language is the means by which political ideas are transmitted to the community,” It is apparent that according to the various opinions stated above, language is the key factor in political behaviour intended to mobilise the people into action, revolution, participation, etc.

The Text as a Political Satire

Satire involves the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking towards it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation. Satire has been justified by its practitioners as corrective of human foibles and follies. Abram (2009) identifies: **Formal Satire**, in which the satiric *persona* speaks out in the first person. **Horatian Satire**, the speaker manifests the character of an urbane, witty, and tolerant man of the world, who is moved more often to wry amusement than to indignation at the spectacle of human folly, pretentiousness, and hypocrisy, and who uses a relaxed and informal language to evoke from readers a wry smile at human failings and absurdities – sometimes at his own.

The text under analysis aptly fits into the above described categories. The writer satirises Hon. Patrick Obahiagbon, a linguistically bombastic member of the House of Assembly who enjoys spewing out verbalism with a locomotive concatenation at the expense of the comprehension of his fellow lawmakers, that of his immediate constituency and of the generality of Nigerians. As a well-read legal luminary and experienced parliamentarian, he claims that there is no deliberate attempt to confuse or obfuscate his teeming audience in a state of *hugger-mugger*. As an *omnivorous*, *elliptical* and a *polyvalent* reader, he has taken it upon himself to know the meaning of every word he comes across. He asserts that these words spew out of him like the *rattle of the gun*, and this, he claims, goes beyond his control. In an interview with *The Vanguard's* Luka Binniyat (March 10, 2010), he admitted to not wanting to confuse his listeners. The trouble was that even that admission was high flown: *I*

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do not set out to deposit my audience in a portmanteau of indecipherability... (Obahiagbon's words italicised). But with all the self-abnegation of his alleged linguistic indecipherability and recondite abstruseness, it is obvious that the essence of his communication is not always realised. He has taken his penchant for bombast as a pastime and he is seen also as a captive to it.

Babajide (2004) posits that if the essence of communication is not realised, some linguistic and paralinguistic factors can be adduced to. He identifies "ambiguity, use of jargon, use of language in a non-literal sense, inappropriate use of words, inability on the part of the reader to decipher the message owing to lack of knowledge about the immediate context and extensive background information". Most of these issues have to do with the encoder of the message. Communication has to be made as clear and simple as possible so that the reader would benefit from such. To show that communication has not been achieved, an online reader responded thus:

- I wish you would write an article about this article saying exactly what you intend in YOUR own language and style so that even Obahiagbon would understand it. (Posted by **Atilaawi** on Jan 22 2011)

Use of Bombast

We see this judiciously employed by Victor Ehikhamenor in his *Op-Ed*. Bombast denotes a wordy and inflated diction that is patently disproportionate to the matter that it signifies. The magniloquence is at times inappropriate to its sense. The style is over-elaborate and the language pompous. An idea that could have been expressed in simple terms is presented in a convoluted manner. Instead of saying "the fact is that burglary involves not only heavy financial loss but quite often irreparable loss of life," Echeruo (1977:9) calls our attention to how a correspondent of a newspaper says it in Victorian English:

apart from the heavy amount of pecuniary losses collateral with and inseparable from the act of burglary, the far more imminent danger of irreparable loss of human life which is the natural sequence frequently attending the act of burglary, is most certainly neither a mere wanton jest nor is it a frivolous idle thought, but a real tangible and solid fact. . .

Ubahakwe (1974) noted that this type of English represents the prototype of bookish Nigerian English with its bombast. Achebe in a passage in *No Longer at Ease* (1961:32) refers to the audience applauding this type of English read out by the Secretary in an address:

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He wrote the kind of English they admired if not understood: that kind that filled the mouth, like the proverbial dry meat. Obi's English, on the other hand, was most unimpressive. He spoke 'is' and 'was.'

This variety of English is satirised by writers. Wole Soyinka makes Teacher Lakunle in *The Lion and the Jewel* denounce the payment of bride price as:

A savage custom, barbaric, outdated
Rejected, denounced, accursed
Excommunicated, archaic, degrading
Humiliating, unspeakable, redundant
Retrogressive, remarkable, unpalatable . . .

The epithets came to a sudden end because the entries in his dictionary have been exhausted. In *Veronica My daughter*, Ogali makes his character, Bomber Billy, a student and master of bombast, come up with the most linguistically outrageous expressions, including English-sounding nonsense words:

I must advise you Madam to let your conversational communication posses (sic!) a cherified consciousness and cogency, let your extamporaness discernment and unpermitted expectation have intangibility, veroness and versity. Avoid pomposity, proticity, verbosity and rapacity.

As far as Bomber Billy is concerned, what he is saying here is not what really matters but the sheer display of big words. In trying to say *as I was walking quickly down a slope yesterday, I tripped and fell on the tarred road*, Bomber renders it this way: *As in was decending (sic!) from declivity yesterday, with such an excessive velocity, I suddenly lost the centre of my gravity and was precipitated on macamadised (sic!) throughfare (sic!).* George Orwell exemplifies this in his article *Politics and the English Language* when he demonstrates how a simple unambiguous text extract could be semantically veiled by the use of stilted expression. Quoting from a passage in Ecclesiastes: *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth.* He then renders it in modern English: *Objective consideration of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.*

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Ehikhamenor, in this *Op-Ed* under analysis, has obscured his readers. If they would have to pause and check the dictionary before they are able to comprehend what is being said, then the whole essence of communication is defeated and meaning is lost. There are many expressions he could have rendered in a more plain way, rather than resort to the long stilted and unwieldy sentences he employed to deploy his mind. Alo (1998) opines that language communication begins in the mind of the encoder of thoughts who picks out suitable words which comprises thought or ideas in the mind. The encoded message must be intelligible to the receiver. He posits that communication is effective when the encoder adequately conveys what is desired to be said and when the message is reciprocally intelligible to the receiver who is able to comprehend the words and meanings of the speaker. The use of bombastic language has shrouded the meaning of the text being analysed.

Field, Tenor and Mode of Discourse

Scholars of register studies and stylistic variation have identified three abstract situational features, which, influence language use. Halliday particularly developed these three main parameters, which are useful for characterising the nature of the social transaction of the participants, to understand how the language acts and how it is being used in a particular field of discourse. Halliday classifies the semiotic structure of situation as ‘field’, ‘tenor’ and ‘mode’, which, he suggests, tends to determine the selection of options in a corresponding component of the semantics. Eggins (1994: 52) refers to these as “register variables.” The field of discourse refers to what the text is all about, that is, the social activity in which language plays a part. This, according to Rothery (1980:7), is most clearly reflected in the lexical items chosen. The mode of discourse refers to the channel of communication (written, spoken, spoken-to-be-written, written-to be-cited, etc.). It involves distances of two kinds:

- How far the language of the text is from the activity it describes, for instance, speech is close to the activity it describes, while writing is far from it.
- How far removed speakers and listeners are from one another, for instance, speakers and listeners are closer in face-to-face interaction while they are farthest in writing.

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Downes (1998:316) recognises two distinct aspects within the category of mode and suggests that not only does it describe the relation to the medium: written, spoken, and so on, but also describes the genre of the text. Halliday refers to genre as pre-coded language, language that has not simply been used before, but that predetermines the selection of textural meanings. The tenor of discourse refers to who is taking part, and this includes the role relationships, which obtain between the language users in a particular situation (teacher-pupil, preacher-congregation, parent-child, *etc*). The tenor of a discourse also determines the choice of lexical items, which may reflect intimacy, equality, solidarity, friendliness and so forth, as in the situation of lovers' conversation, conversation of colleagues, friends and peer group.

The vocabulary may also be highly specialized and technical such as used by professionals in the pursuance of their jobs, or the language of research article, which presupposes that the co-participants have the same intellectual and research concerns. The field of discourse has a primary influence on the tenor variable. A field with a high degree of formality relations produces an impersonal, official and frozen linguistic behaviour, while a field with a low degree of formality relations produces a personal and intimate behaviour. In a highly institutionalized setting, a higher degree of formality will tend to prevail, like in public lecture. The levels of formality will tend to be lower where the institution is more in the nature of a social practice in the society. Farinde and Ojo (2005) classify field, mode and tenor of discourse as "situational features of register". They distinguish between field and subject matter because they have been equated in the past. Subject matter, according to them, is subsumed under field. Field is megalithic while subject matter is monolithic.

The **field** of the text of analysis is an essay, an Opinion-Editorial of the NEXT Online Magazine. It is constructed in an electronic environment and it focuses on the political trauma of Hon. Obahiagbon, popularly referred to as *Igodomigodo*, while at the same time lampooning his style of speech which tends to throw his listeners and audience into a state of abstruseness – an ironic instance of using language as a barrier when it ought to be an access. The **mode** of the discourse is in the written form. A detailed analysis on the mode of discourse is attempted later in this work. The **tenor** of discourse in this work cannot be completely seen as formal. Under normal circumstances, *Op-Eds* always carry the air of formality in terms of its language. But this construction of this article has some elements of

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informality in it. The writer makes use of indigenous loan words as though he and his audience already share a Mutual Contextual Beliefs (MCBs). His lexical choice tethers around comic, which may be justified by the goal of the write-up – to satirise the linguistic style of *Igodomigodo*.

Analysis under Mode of Discourse

Under this we shall look at the following:

Graphology - This considers elements of foregrounding, spacing, paragraph structure, punctuation, deviation, etc. No element, apart from the title and the author's name, is foregrounded. Spaces are used to set off one paragraph from another to present the logical development of the author's ideas. There is however, a clear case of deviation. All the locally loan words are written in the normal case when they are actually supposed to be italicised, written in bold, put in inverted commas or quotation marks, underlined or capitalised so as to mark them off from the conventional English lexical items. This makes the reader struggle to know whether they are lexicalised English words or not. Examples include: *Igodomigodo*, *Obeche*, *igbanaka*, *oduma*, *Atikuated*, *Nwodonised*, *iyemen o*, *Edegbe* and *dotoa*.

Paragraph Structure – There is a general agreement among scholars that a paragraph as a unit of text is easy to recognize in the graphic medium with its marginal indentation or greater space between lines, but it is not so easy to define it linguistically. According to K. Wales: “the paragraph can be seen as a subdivision (or macro-structure) of a text that comprises a unit of thought or a single topic (or aspect of topic).” Although it is sometimes difficult to decide where a paragraph boundary should be placed, the advantage of paragraphing is that it enables the stages of an argument to be made visible on the page and more coherent. Unless the paragraph is highly descriptive there is usually one key or topic sentence, which determines the subject matter of each paragraph: usually occurring in a focus position at the beginning. Some obvious functions of paragraphs are illustration, temporal sequencing, comparison and contrast (Wales 1990:334). The whole article is structure into 7 paragraphs comprising, 29 sentences and 879 words.

Lexico-Semantic Features

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Lexis has to do with word organisation in a language. It tries to elucidate how words mean and how they interact with one another meaningfully. A language user is not recognised by the size of his vocabulary or his knowledge of formal grammar. Rather, his ability to choose words appropriately in a context is what makes him an effective user of English. In talking about the style of discourse, that is, Writer-Reader Relationship, Alo (1998) posits that it is instructive for a writer to ask the following questions about his audience:

- What do they need to know?
- What do they already know?
- Are all the readers alike or are they a mixed group?
- What are their attitudes to the subject, to the writer and to the writer's objectives?
What are the social and psychological contexts within which the new information will be received?

He further stressed that a good writer endeavours to communicate by:

- Making the message clear to the reader.
- Telling them what they need to know.
- Keeping to the topic and purpose of writing; and
- Stating something for which evidence is available.

The following are noticed in the work in terms of its lexical choice:

The Use of Jargons (Professionally Marked Lexis) – this is also known as professionalisms (informal language of people of the same profession or professional interests). It involves professional expressions which often create a whole complex of language means. This dotted the essay but the writer may have used their less technical referents so as not to veil himself or put his readers at a loss on the subject of his treatise as shown below:

- Biological/Medical/Psychological Jargons - malady, medulla oblongata, fibular, tibia, encephalo, cranium bifidum, defibrillator, ventricular, psyche and cephalo.
- Culinary Jargons - mandibles, masticated, oral-cavity, digest, gastronomical,
- Chemical Jargons - calcium carbonate, helium, cadmium.

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The use of these jargons by the writer may however look abstruse; the writer has employed them to further heighten his satirical undertone of Obahiagbon's language. The meanings of these jargons are a puzzle to non-initiates and as such, a good technical dictionary is needed to crack out the meanings from their esoteric kernels.

Indigenous Loan Words: Instances of Code Mixing – Some words specifically from the *Esan* language are used by the author without any graphological foregrounding to mark them off as non English expressions. They include:

- **Igodomigodo** - *Igodomigodo* is the ancient name and home of the Edo of Nigeria now located at Edo State, Nigeria. According to oral history of the Edo, *Igodomigodo* was the named given by king or *ogiso Igodo*. The *ogiso, Igodo*, was the first *ogiso* who took on the title and the *ogiso* era was the first dynasty of what would be in modern times known as Benin Empire (1180-1897). The *ogiso* era would be replaced by the 'oba' era and the name *Igodomigodo* changed to Edo by *Oba Eweka 1*
- *Igbanaka* - ladder
- *Aruanran* - gorilla
- *Iyemen o* – exclamatory cry of despair, dejection, anguish and woe.
- *Oduma* - lion
- *Edegbe* – the name of a popular mass transit enterprise in Edo State used as a verb in the sense of 'transport' as in "I am yet to 'transport' (*Edegbe*) myself to see Hon. Obahiagbon..."
- *Dotoa* – an expression meaning "sit down"

All these loan words from the writer's indigenous language may not be understandable to a non-Edo individual, but he has used them to help convey some particular images which he believes will retain and highlight the picture he has in mind when he employed those indigenous words. To a reader from Edo socio-cultural context, the meaning of the words in the context of their usage will better drive home the point the writer is making. Babajide A. (2004) opines:

That language and culture rub off on each other is a fact that has been long established in language, communication, and cultural studies. Neither the knowledge of the culture of a people nor proficiency in a language is all alone sufficient to fully understand a discourse. As

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much as both knowledge of a culture and proficiency in a language are crucial to proper interpretation of a discourse, knowledge of the context of text (co-text) equally deserves serious attention in decoding a message.

Background information of a particular cultural aspect of language is veritable tool in decoding meaning. Birch (1995:3), as quoted by Babajide (2004), asserts: “The sets of knowledge needed to interpret the text lie not in the context of the situation, as is the case in the texts of casual conversation in particular but in the context of text and the context of culture.”

Coinages – Because a writer is the ‘creator’ of his text, he has the right to use language as a wordsmith. He sees language as a malleable entity through which he shapes or fashions whatever word he deems fit for his purpose; though this must obey the rule of grammaticality and acceptability. It is akin to the concept of ‘poetic license’. Some of these coinages may not be found in the English lexicon, the writer has deliberately employed them to convey his meaning or intention within a particular context. Instances of this include the highlighted words below:

1. Those that are guffawing...must be reminded Hon. Obahiagbon is a seasoned centaur who has **Phoenixial** prowess...*Igodomigodo* will soon **cohobate** to cohabit with PDP that sculpted him to a gigantic figure in Nigeria's flatulent opinionated quagmire square...he must take succour in the gospel genuineness that he was not a peculiar specimen in the Niger area's **Atikuated** primary experimentations...Most hopefuls were woefully **Nwodonized**.

The highlighted as used by the writer are not found in contemporary English dictionaries; though it is obvious that ‘Phoenixial’ has to do with ‘Phoenix’. There are referents to living personalities in the political sphere whose names were lexicalised – *Atikuated* as adjective and *Nwodonized* as a verb. Abubakar Atiku was a PDP presidential candidate who had earlier left the party but later returned and eventually lost in the presidential primary elections. One of the comments posted by a reader who goes by the identity ‘truth seeker’ compares *Igodomigodo* with Atiku:

I was disgusted when he left PDP for AC, in the first place. I had always thought of him as someone very intelligent. He spewed his usual stuff, interpreted along the lines of 'I want to go and join my Governor who is doing well'. The usual excuse of every political whore... And in the end, he got 'done' like a whore...Dumped. He can be

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of no value to PDP now, other than as a comical figure and likeable person. Maybe LP will have him. A lesson to other would-be political prostitutes... In the end, you end up on the pavement outside. It is not by accident that those who have risen to the top of the political food-chain in Nigeria (good and bad Characters) are those who have remained relatively honest to their platform. Atiku is a high profile case of political whorism and its dangers for political careers. Only the very smart and very lucky can make successful jumps back and forth.

The writer used that coinage to ‘console’ Igodomigodo that he was not the first to be involved in political harlotry. The usage also gives the reader a picturesque form of what the writer is saying and it brings to the reader the context of Atiku’s political escapades, details of which space may not permit the writer to include. Nwodo was the former PDP chairman who was sacked from the post because of his ignominious forgery of court papers which allegedly claimed his reinstatement as the party’s chairman, so that he could preside over the party’s presidential primary election. The writer implies that many have also fallen victim of Nwodo’s situation. Through the lexicalisation of a proper noun as an adjective, the writer has achieved elliptical and laconic effects— he has said a lot without necessarily saying so much. This kind of a coinage is not strange to the Nigerian politics. There is a precedent in the case of Joseph Tarka and Dabor, who were *Tivs* from Benue state. One of them threatened to release incriminating material about the other and the reply of the other birthed the statement: “if you *Tarka* me, I will *Darbor* you.”

Allusions

This has to do with a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary, historical, mythological or biblical person, place or event. Most allusions serve to illustrate or expand upon or enhance a subject. Since allusions are not explicitly identified, they imply a fund of knowledge that is shared by an author and the audience for whom the author writes. In the text being analysed, three forms of allusion are identified. They are:

- **Classical** – “He might be discombobulated now by the errant *Brutus that anchored a usurious sword* in his promissory broad back . . .” (Sentence 18, Paragraph 4). This is a reference to the powers that be in the PDP that call the shot.

- **Mythological** – “. . . Hon. is a seasoned *centaur* who has *Phoenixial* prowess . . .” (Sentence 14, Paragraph 4). Centaurs are half-human, half-horse. This is a probable reference to the centaur Chiron, who was noted for his goodness and wisdom. Several Greek heroes, including Achilles and Jason, were educated by him. The Phoenix is a legendary bird that lived in Arabia. According to tradition, the phoenix consumed itself by fire every 500 years, and a new, young phoenix sprang from its ashes. In the mythology of ancient Egypt, the phoenix represented the sun, which dies at night and is reborn in the morning. Early Christian tradition adopted the phoenix as a symbol of both immortality and resurrection. This implies Obahiagbon’s political comeback.
- **Historical** – “Hon. Obahiagbon was a staunch reminder of. . . Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh aka Omimiejour. . .” (Sentence 4, Paragraph 1). Okotie-Eboh was the former Nigeria's Finance Minister who was renowned for his outlandish sartorial flamboyance. Hon. Obahiagbon too is renowned for his outlandish grandiloquent flamboyance and both of them are from Edo State.
 “. . . he was not a peculiar specimen in the Niger area’s Atikuated primary experimentations.” (Sentence 13, Paragraph 4)
 “Most hopefuls were woefully Nwodonised” (Sentence 14, Paragraph 4).

This reference to ‘Atiku’ and ‘Nwodo’ has been discussed under ‘coinages’.

Collocations

Words exist both in paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. Tomori (1977) sees syntagmatic relationship as “a number of linguistic units joined in a structural bond according to the rules of utterance formation in that language.” It is necessary to touch on this because of its relationship with collocation. There is a tendency for linguistic items to co-occur in a syntagmatic relationship. When this happens, such words are said to collocate. When words share the same range of collocational possibilities, they constitute a ‘lexical set’. Halliday (1961:276) in Tomori (1977) sees collocation as “. . . the syntagmatic association of lexical terms, quantifiable, textually. . .” For the purpose of achieving cohesive structural bonds in his linguistic choice, Victor Ehikhamenor judiciously allows his words to collocate. This heightened the semantic deportment of his message in the instances where such collocations occur.

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Examples as drawn from the text:

Paragraph 1

- "...mandibles . . . masticated..." (Sentence 1)
- "...wetlands . . . moat..." (Sentence 1)
- "...jaw-jaw . . . oral cavity..." (Sentence 5)
- "...coagulated . . . jargon..." (Sentence 7)

Paragraph 2

- "...turbulence . . . pounding..." (Sentence 8)
- "...fanned . . . embers..." (Sentence 11)

Paragraph 3

- "...ascension . . . Everest altitude..." (Sentence 12)

Paragraph 4

- "...hues. . . iridescence. . . razzle-dazzle. . . peacock's plumage..." (Sentence 15)
- "...specimen . . . experimentations..." (Sentence 19)

Paragraph 5

- "...navigate . . . track..." (Sentence 21)
- "...lion . . . roars..." (Sentence 22)
- "...ventricular . . . heart..." (Sentence 23)

Paragraph 6

- "...lexis . . . structure..." (Sentence 28)
- "...Niger area . . . country..." (Sentence 29)
- "...lingers on . . . choo-choo locomotive."

The Use of Personal Pronouns

We find from the text that the writer uses such personal pronouns as "I", "my", "we", "our", "you", "your", "their" etc. This is due to the fact that in write-ups of this nature, the relationships among the participants in the discourse situation are mediated by personal pronouns "which delineate a social or political 'space' in which people and groups have a 'position'" (Chilton and Schaffner, 1997: 216). Examples from the text are given below:

- **I** submit to **you** that **I** was overtly flabbergasted beyond **my** usual bemusement in matters related to **our** motherland's political lowballing. (Sentence 3)
- **I** usually wear hard hat whenever Hon. Obahiagbon jaw-jaw with **his** oral cavity. (Sentence 5)
- **I** qualm if **your** answer is dissimilar to a million fans that once fanned the embers of Igodomigodo's lingo. (Sentence 11)
- Those that are guffawing...must be reminded that Hon. Obahiagbon is a seasoned centaur...and this...must reverberate even in **their** egalitarian slumbering. (Sentence 14)

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- **We** the people need to chortle again, despite the sordid rituals of **our** current democracy's insidious repercussive and cataclysmic exigencies. (Sentence 25)
- That is the only way **we** from the Niger area can snicker again at **our** wanton encumbrances... (Sentence 29)

Lexico-Syntactic Features

The syntactic arrangements of words to form group/phrase, clause and sentence patterns are examined under this section. In his article, the writer makes use of various types of sentences that can be classified both structurally and functionally.

Structural Classification - The writer makes use of 5 different sentence types in his work. They include the simple, complex, compound, compound-complex and multiple complex sentences. The table below shows the statistical distribution of the sentence types:

Text sections	Simple	Complex	Compound	Compound-complex	Multiple-complex	Total
Paragraph 1	2	3	1	1	-	7
Paragraph 2	1	3	-	-	-	4
Paragraph 3	1	1	-	-	-	2
Paragraph 4	2	-	3	1	-	6
Paragraph 5	2	1	2	-	1	6
Paragraph 6	-	1	1	-	-	2
Paragraph 7	1	1	-	-	-	2
Total	9	10	7	2	1	29
Percentage	31%	35%	24%	7%	3%	100%

From the table above, it is obvious that there is the dominance of the complex sentence pattern and this is closely followed by the simple sentence pattern. The whole extract is dotted with complex expressions and this gives the text a complex coloration. But from a critical standpoint, the text is not beyond what could be understood. As a political satire which satirises Hon. Obahiagbon's obfuscating linguistic flamboyance, the work thrives on the mimicry of his manner of speech, hence the bombastic language and syntactic jugglery

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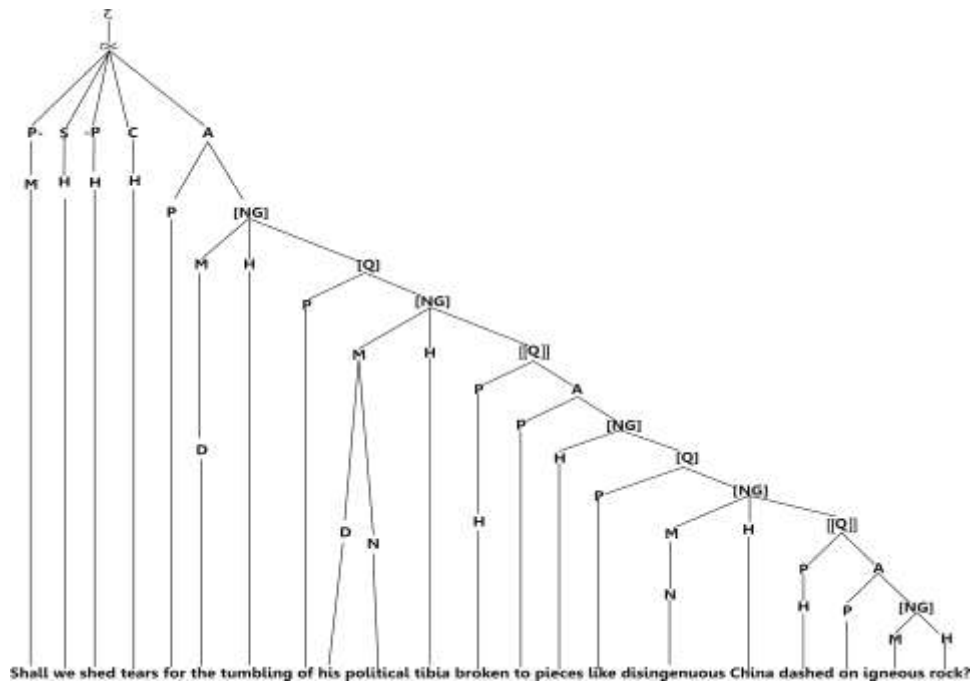
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that permeated the text. What has happened to the writer is a contagion of Igodo's style in his presentation, though this is deliberately done by the writer. The message of the text is however clear and simple:

All and should rally around and reposition the great and gaudy Hon. Patrick Obaiagbon a.k.a. *Igodomigodo* who has been schemed out of the centre point of political activity via some calculated political dexterity, so that his political occupation should not comatose. Though he might have been a victim of double-dipping, he should take solace in the fact that he is not alone; he should find a way of realigning himself with the powers that be and take respite in the public support he incontrovertibly enjoys.

This then explains the reason why the sentence pattern that comes after the preponderance complex sentence pattern is the simple sentence pattern. On the whole, simple sentence accounts for 31% of the overall sentences, while non-simple sentences altogether account for 69% of the total sentences used. Relatively, the text is somewhat obfuscating.

Functional Classification – according to the functions they perform, sentences can be classified into four categories: declarative, exclamatory, interrogative and imperative. In the article, the writer makes an astounding use of 28 declarative sentences out of the total 29 sentences that constitute the work. This accounts for 97% of the total sentences used while only one interrogative sentence which accounts 3% of the total sentences used. The preponderance of the declarative sentences shows that the writer's main preoccupation is to provide his readers with the information, educate and enlighten them about the political trauma of *Igodomigodo* while at the same time, satirising his high-flown language with which his readers are obfuscated. Since *Op-Eds* are used to disseminate certain information, persuade the public to perform some action or arouse the enthusiasm of the audience, declarative sentences are most favoured by the speakers to describe the events, express their feelings, or publicise their beliefs. The interrogative sentence helps the writer to evince his feelings about Hon. Obaiagbon's political double-dipping. (This is discussed more under 'Rhetorical Question'). A tree diagram of the interrogative sentence is shown below, where the syntactic formation process is that of Subject-Operator inversion:



Intensely Modified Headwords in the Nominal Groups

In the text of analysis, a trend is discovered in the nominal groups that dotted the 29 sentences of the text both at the subject and complement positions. The writer has profoundly modified the headwords in the nominal groups in order to intensify the meanings of the nominal groups by giving them a vivid image. Tomori (1977:58) posits that in the pre-head position, it is possible to have eleven modifiers with each occupying a unique position relative to others. He gave the example of this nominal group below:

- All the first five strong huge rotund young white African sea horses...

However in everyday life, it is not usual to have more than two or three modifiers before the headword. But in the article, the writer used modifiers ranging from one to six modifiers.

Examples include:

M H

- "...ostensible mandibles..." (1 modifier - N)

M M H

- "...federal financial finagling..." (2 modifiers – E, N)

M M M H

- "...the dead ventricular muscles..." (3 modifiers – D, E, N)

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M M M M H

- "...Nigeria's flatulent opinionated quagmire square..." (4 modifiers – E¹, E², E³, N,)

M M M M M H

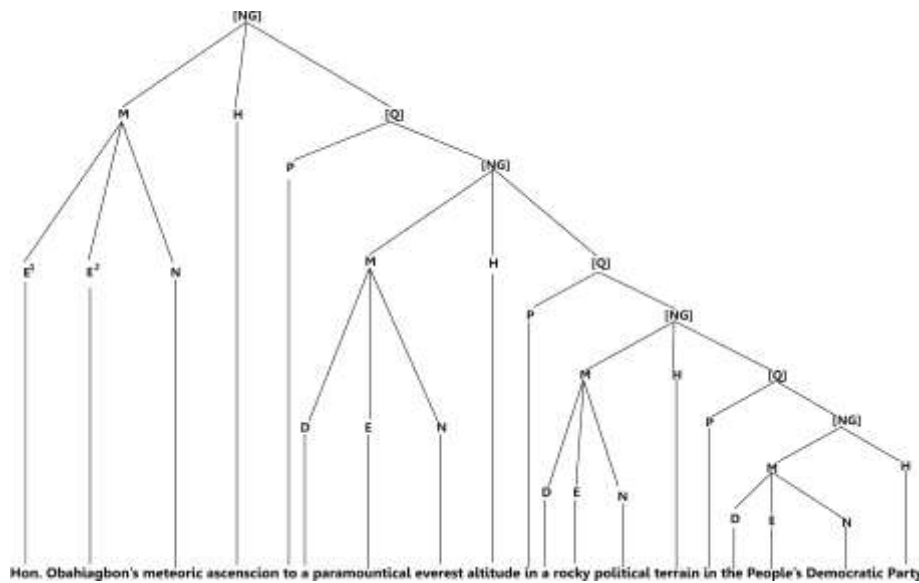
- "...a razzle-dazzle palace peacock's plumage..." (5 modifiers – D, E¹, E², E³, E⁴, N)

M M M M M & M H

- "...our current democracy's insidious repercussive and cataclysmic exigencies..." (6 modifiers – D, E¹, E², E³, E⁴, E⁵, N)

(Key: M-Modifier, H-Headword, D-Deictic, E-Epithet, N-Nominal)

Some of the nominal groups in the subject position are very long and have other groups rankshifted under them. This is to convey so many descriptive pieces of information about his subject of discourse. This could also be to conserve space and at same time, say all he intends to say within the shortest breath available to him. This gives the nominal group a semantically congealed outlook. Two of such nominal groups (Sentences 12 – Paragraph 3 and 20 – Paragraph 5 respectively) are described with phrase markers below:



The adjective-headed nominal groups in the text are also richly modified with adverbs. This is also to enhance the meanings of the adjective-headed nominal groups and to convey them in vivid terms to the readers. Examples include: "...highly flamboyant, egregiously high falluting, popularly gregarious, mysteriously askew, woefully Nwodonised..."

Highly Embedded Clauses

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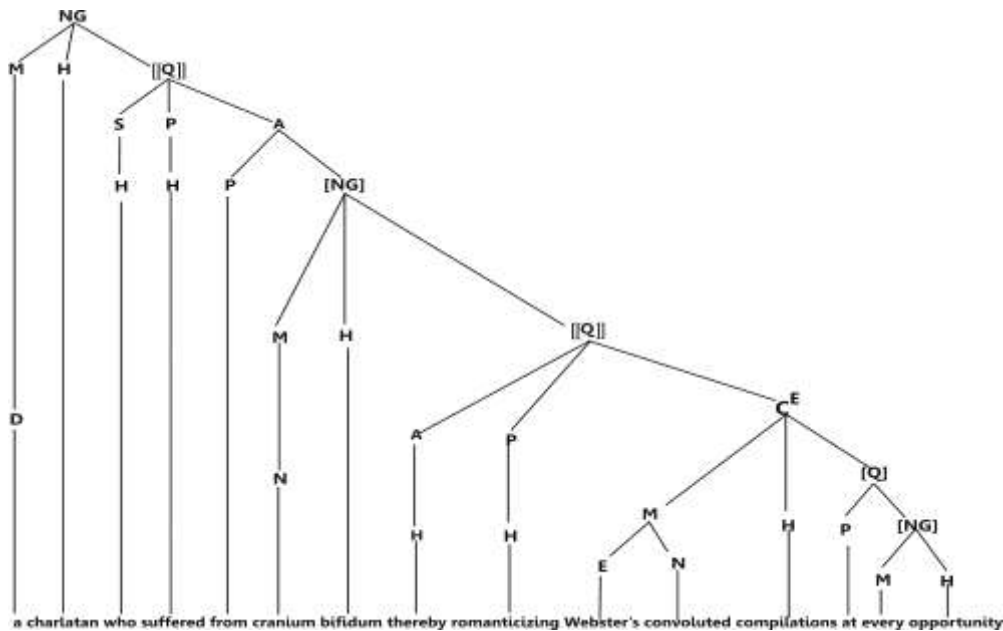
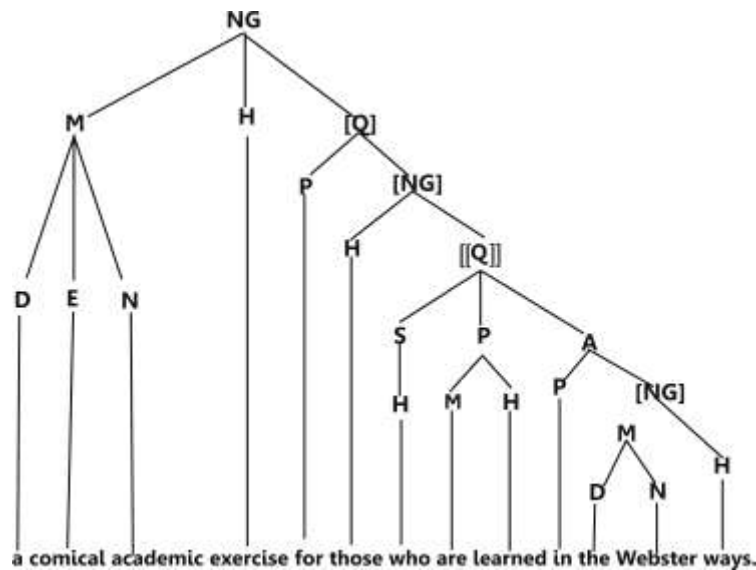
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Another striking feature of this text of analysis is the use of embedded clauses in the post-head modifiers or the qualifiers. This is due to the fact that the writer is wont to expressing too many ideas in few sentences, so he resorts to using embedded clauses at a position which ordinarily a clause should not be found. This phenomenon is known as ‘Rank-shifting’. Tomori (1977:51) describes a rank-shifted clause as one that operates within another clause or goes lower down by one rank to operate in a group. All the embedded clauses are also instances of relative clauses which provide additional information about the antecedent nouns or pronouns. Examples of the embedded clauses rankshifted to operate at the qualifier position in the nominal group include:

- “...the textile elongation *that spanned kilometres behind Chief Okotie-Eboh.* (Sentence 4)
- “...a comical academic exercise for *those who are learned in the Webster ways.* (Sentence 6)
- Igodomigodo was not a charlatan *who suffered from cranium bifidum thereby romanticizing Webster's convoluted compilations at every opportunity...*” (Sentence 15)
- Igodomigodo will soon cohobate to cohabit with *PDP that sculpted him to a gigantic figure in Nigeria's flatulent opinionated quagmire square.* (Sentence 17)
- He might be discombobulated now by *the errant Brutus that anchored a usurious sword in his promissory broad back...*” (Sentence 18)

Two of the sentences are represented by tree diagram to graphically depict the point being discussed:



Cohesion and Coherence

In general any text consists of sentences which are connected or woven together by linguistic means. The analysis of these linguistic means (which make the parts of the text hold together) is in fact the analysis of cohesion, cohesion models or cohesive links. A text is an integrated structure where all cohesive ties are invisible, implicit but palpable connections between words in different sentences. Cohesion ensures the compactness using reference devices which link up items within an extract. The reference could be anaphoric, cataphoric and exophoric. The writer ensures cohesion in the work through the devices mentioned above.

Examples include:

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Anaphoric References

- “The ostensible mandibles of Edo political juggernauts masticated Hon. Patrick Obahiagbon aka Igodomigodo and spat him...”
- “I usually wear hard hat whenever Hon. Obahiagbon jaw-jaw with his oral cavity.”

Cataphoric References

- “PDP...his old party.”
- “But I am persuaded that soon the honourable and my very individual self will dotoa in his palatable palatial palace...”

Exophoric References

- “deceptive gargantuans.”
- “Edo State's political igbanaka...rest in the hand of a fierce oduma...”

Rhetorical Figures

These depart from what is experienced by competent users as the standard, or “literal,” use of language. This has to do mainly with the arrangement of words to achieve special effects, like metaphors and other tropes, by a radical change in the meaning of the words themselves.

Examples include:

Alliteration

- “mandibles...masticated...” /m/
- “...Webster’s ways.” /w/
- “...coagulated...lingua...legal...jargon hard juggernauts to digest and caused...gastronomical malady.” /g/ and /dʒ/

Assonance

- “...palatable palatial palace in the capitol...” /ʌ:/
- “...a gaudy god of lexis...” /ɒ/
- “...choo-choo locomotive.” /əʊ/

Onomatopoeia

- “...choo-choo locomotive.”
- “...abracadabra...”

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- “Igodomigodo”
- “...jaw-jaw...”
- “...razzle-dazzle...”

Euphemism

- ...”he must take succour...that he was not a peculiar specimen in the Niger area's Atikuated primary experimentations.”
- “Most hopefuls were woefully Nwodonized.”

Metaphorisation

- “The ostensible mandibles of Edo political juggernauts...”
- “...deceptive gargantuan...”
- “...a seasoned centaur...”
- “...the revelling lions...”
- “...gaudy god of lexis and structure...”

Hyperbole

- “...a gaudy god of lexis and structure that wakes one's laughing bones from a thousand years of solitude.”

Simile

- “...his political tibia broken to pieces like disingenuous China dashed on igneous rock?”
- “...while the country lingers on like a malfunctioning choo-choo locomotive.”

Rhetorical Question

- “Shall we shed tears for the tumbling of his political tibia broken to pieces like disingenuous China dashed on igneous rock?”

Latinised Expression

- “... Igodomigodo must find a clever *modus operandi* to navigate...”

Other stylistic aesthetics abound in the text; but the highlighted ones would suffice for the purpose of analysis.

Conclusion

This work has focused on the stylistic values of the article “Excuse me: Igodomigodo must not comatose.” This work is rich in its linguistic choice, stylistic variation/deviation, Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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syntactic arrangement and semantic import. Language is a dynamic concept and having a linguistic competence brings one into a realm of semantic omnipotence – a state where a writer, speaker, poet or any literary minded individual becomes a wordsmith. The work has also examined the importance of meaning in communication. This thrives so much on the mode of encoding one’s message. This could either be esoteric or exoteric to the reader. In any linguistic interchange, one’s audience is of primal importance. Effort should be geared towards making oneself lucid enough so that the essence of communication can be achieved. Social actors like politicians, especially lawmakers, should endeavour to deploy language appropriately and appositely, taking into consideration their socio-cultural context and their audience. This will enhance effective governance where it is not the volume of words spoken that matters, but how these words translate into the betterment of the lots of the masses and the generality of Nigerians; and into the infrastructural development of the nation at large. Victor Ehikhamenor of the NEXT Online magazine has displayed linguistic artistry through his aesthetically woven and a satirical discourse on the political adventures and stupendous verbosity of the great Hon. Patrick Obahiagbon, also known as *Igodomigodo*.

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APPENDIX

EXCUSE ME: Igodomigodo must not comatose - Victor Ehikhamenor – 21st January, 2011

The ostensible mandibles of Edo political juggernauts masticated Hon. Patrick Obahiagbon aka Igodomigodo and spat him out to the wetlands of Benin mote dug by aruanran giants who knew how to arm-twist abracadabra gods. When I first read the communiqué in the by-product of Obeche trees, I somersaulted. I submit to you that I was overtly flabbergasted beyond my usual bemusement in matters related to our motherland's political lowballing. Hon. Obahiagbon was a staunch reminder of the great son of Niger Delta, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh aka Omimiefor, though Igodomigodo does not match the textile elongation that spanned kilometres behind Chief Okotie-Eboh. I usually wear hard hat whenever Hon. Obahiagbon jaw-jaw with his oral cavity. Though egregiously high falluting, his means of communication was highly flamboyant, a comical academic exercise for those who are learned in the Webster ways. While in the House most makers of law fundamentally found his coagulated British lingua franca and legal Latin jargon hard juggernauts to digest and often times caused them gastronomical malady.

It is hard for one to be suffused with emotional turbulence which could exacerbate the pounding of one's medullar oblongata because of his miscalculated political calculus. Igodomigodo, though popularly gregarious with the powers that be, decided to oscillate to a party who's fibular is still too feeble in federal financial finagling. Shall we shed tears for the tumbling of his political tibia broken to pieces like disingenuous China dashed on igneous rock? I qualm if your answer is dissimilar to a million fans that once fanned the embers of Igodomigodo's lingo.

Hon. Obahiagbon's meteoric ascension to a paramountical Everest altitude in a rocky political terrain in the People's Democratic Party was hitherto devoid of flukiness, until he dabbled into double-dipping in the hands of deceptive gargantuans. Igodomigodo should have known that Edo State's political igbanaka which helps neophytes in climbing to the apogee of senatorial castles rest in the hand of a fierce oduma whose face is mysteriously askew.

Those that are guffawing off Igodomigodo's downward inclination from the acme of Abuja politics must be reminded that Hon. Obahiagbon is a seasoned centaur who has Phoenixial prowess and this factual appurtenance must reverberate in their Encephalo, even in their egalitarian slumbering. Igodomigodo was not a charlatan who suffered from cranium bifidum thereby romanticizing Webster's convoluted compilations at every opportunity, he was a man of many hues with characteristics more radiant than the iridescence of a razzle dazzle palace peacock's plumage. One could articulate his profundity of profitable politics as riding the high horse of uncertainty after the primaries, but only chronological prolongation

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of Homo sapiens' existence will be able to discombobulate or corroborate such hasty conclusiveness. Igodomigodo will soon cohobate to cohabit with PDP that sculpted him to a gigantic figure in Nigeria's flatulent opinionated quagmire square. He might be discombobulated now by the errant Brutus that anchored a usurious sword in his promissory broad back, but he must take succour in the gospel genuineness that he was not a peculiar specimen in the Niger area's Atikuated primary experimentations. Most hopefuls were woefully Nwodonized.

As an ex-legal luminary in the metro-political geographical enclave of Edo State he must not kowtow and confine himself to a snail house of calcium carbonate, instead he should imbibe public supportive helium and soar above this reckless display of narcissistic hedonism by disloyal recalcitrant and be parsimonious instead of the expected profligacy. The recent gory cadmium topography of Edo campaign terrain does not allow for a protracted political highhandedness, therefore Igodomigodo must find a clever modus operandi to navigate the shark-infested and crocodile guarded track back to his PDP kibbutz. He should not placard any Homo sapiens with compulsive rhetoric; instead he must placate the revelling lions that roar in the godfather's expanse fiefdom in our sedimentary FCT city. This is the time to deactivate the defibrillator that will arrest the fibrillation of the dead ventricular muscles of the heart of his old party. Igodomigodo must not dissipate teaming loyalists by wailing about his primary trouncing and yelping iyemen o, iyemen o, which could lead to the comatose of his fascinating political occupation. We the people need to chortle again, despite the sordid rituals of our current democracy's insidious repercussive and cataclysmic exigencies.

I am yet to Edegebe myself to see Hon. Obahiagbon since the debilitating debacle and indiscriminate fiasco that finagled his fathomless and inestimable bird-at-hand from his grasp in Edo State. But I am persuaded that soon the honourable and my very individual self-will dotoa in his palatable palatial palace in the capitol to rub our psyche and situate our cephalo together in locating a means of rescuing the people of Niger area from a burgeoning conflagration that is currently brewing in our body polity.

I bawl out to every non-apolitical personage without timorous tendency to augment support and reposition the great Igodomigodo, a politician with cacophonous communicative prowess, a man whose consternation could re-arrange one's homily faculty, a giant with low tolerance for unjustifiable judiciary acrobatic manipulation, a gaudy god of lexis and structure that wakes one's laughing bones from a thousand years of solitude. That is the only way we from the Niger area can snicker again at our wanton encumbrances while the country lingers on like a malfunctioning choo-choo locomotive.

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