

# Pragmatic Study of Speech Acts in the Inaugural Address of Hyacinth Alia, Governor, Benue State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Language and political discourse are inseparable. It is with the instrumentality of language that political leaders frame ideological representations that help them keep in touch with the people that they govern. This study undertakes a pragmatic analysis of Hyacinth Alia's Inaugural Speech which he presented on 29th May, 2023 as the sixth democratically elected governor of Benue State. The data is Alia's Inaugural Speech which was downloaded from the internet with the use of mobile phone. The Inaugural Speech contains about fifty-six paragraphs with hundreds of locutionary and illocutionary acts depending on the analytical viewpoint of the researcher. The Inaugural Speech contains expressive and assertive acts through which the Governor appreciated those that voted him into office as well as affirm himself into leadership position as a responsive and accountable Governor. He also used commissive, directive, and declarative acts to inform, persuade, warn, state and direct Benue citizens and other stakeholders about his administrative policies. The study concludes that the identified speech acts were instrumental in conveying meaning in Hyacinth Alia's Inaugural Speech. The speech acts also reveal the ideological stance of the speaker regarding an alternative style of leadership he promised to offer Benue citizens which would bring about meaningful socio-political and economic transformation of the state.

**Key Words:** Context, Inaugural Speech, Political Discourse, Pragmatics, Speech Acts,

## Introduction

Benue State, one of the 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was created in 1976 from the defunct Benue Plateau. Since then, the State has had six democratically elected governors. Hyacinth Iormem Alia became the sixth governor of the state after winning the 2023 governorship elections. Speech making is a major element of political discourse at all levels in a democratic nation like Nigeria. It brings the government closer to the masses as well as makes government policies popular. It is a common practice globally for a politician upon been inaugurated to become the leader of an elective office such as governor of a state to immediately assume such a responsibility through inaugural speech. Thus, it became necessarily compelling for Hyacinth Alia to present his inaugural speech immediately after he took the oath of office to become the governor of Benue State. His effective use of language to endear his administration to Benue citizens who would subsequently help him as co-builders of the state became a crucial matter.

Language is the most veritable means through which humans communicate. This is why Azikiwe (1998), Sapir (1961) and Brumfit (1985) agree that language is the means by which humans express themselves. It is used to communicate thoughts, ideas, and beliefs and it applies to all facets of human existence. As a result, language is used effectively in politics. It is an essential device employed by politicians to carry out political activities. Opeibi (2009) refers to the relationship that exists between language and politics as symbiotic. It is symbiotic since both language and politics depend on each other. Childs (2003), Osisanwo (2017), Yina (2011),

Agantiem and Aongo (2022) all assert that language is the key to the heart of human beings. One can speak directly to the mind of a people through effective use of language. It can be used to unite people to champion a particular cause. Politicians through language gain political power and maintain relationships with the electorate who give them this power. This means that language is indispensable in political discourse.

It follows then that in any communication event of the above magnitude, politicians supposedly choose their words carefully because they believe in the power of language and how language can be used to control others. By so doing, they perform different speech acts which could be direct or indirect to convey overt or covert meanings that may not be easily deciphered without conscientious linguistic investigation. That is the case with Hyacinth Alia's speech under investigation. He intentionally deployed certain acts to thank party members and Benue citizens in general for voting him as their governor; to accept to be an accountable leader, to address critical socio-political issues confronting the state and the procedural steps for addressing such issues; and finally, to canvass for support from Benue citizens and other stakeholders to develop the state.

There are a number of previous studies conducted on the inaugural speeches of some past governors of Benue State and a few about Hyacinth Alia's inaugural address but none of the scholars have taken a pragmatic approach. Thus, the present paper aims at identifying the specific illocutionary acts in Hyacinth Alia's Inaugural Speech as well as how the speaker effectively deployed such acts to achieve different perlocutionary effects that endear Benue citizens to his government and bring new ideological paradigms in the polity.

### **Conceptual Review**

This section clarifies relevant concepts that are related to the present study. Specifically, concepts reviewed under this section include pragmatics, context, politics, political discourse, as well as inaugural speech. Mey (1994) avers that pragmatics deals with the use of language in a real-life situation, and the conditions that enable the users to employ linguistic techniques and materials effectively and appropriately. Yule (2006, p. 112) defines pragmatics as the study of 'invisible meaning', or how we know what is meant even when it is not actually said or written. Mey (1994) states that traditionally, pragmatic has been considered as forming a triad with syntax and semantics. He explains that syntax deals with the study of the formal relations of one linguistic sign to another, while semantics looks at the relations of signs to object in the outside world and lastly, pragmatics examines the relation of signs to those who interpret the signs, the users of language. This means that pragmatics focuses more attention on the language user.

Wilson (2006) views pragmatics as the study of meaning in context of language use. This view implies that context is an important element in pragmatic studies. Upholding the argument, Ibileye (2021, p.55) posits that context is very crucial in deciphering the meaning of utterances as well as the intentions of language users. The scholar avers further that context determines both what one can say and what one cannot say. As such, for a better analysis of a speech, its contextual background should be taken into consideration. Wodak and Meyer (2001) and Fetzer (2015) present four main types of context, *viz.*: linguistic, social, socio-cultural and cognitive contexts. 'Linguistic context' refers to linguistic material that surrounds the linguistic unit under investigation namely: clauses, phrases, and constructions in syntax and morphology, propositions in semantics, and phonemes in phonology. 'Social context' comprises the extra-linguistic context

of a speech situation and its constitutive parts namely: participants (e.g., speaker and audience) and their interactional roles, such as animator, principal, strategist, the immediate concrete physical surrounding including setting and time, and the global concrete surroundings including institutional domains. 'Sociocultural context' represents a culture-specific configuration and interpretation of social context and its basic parameters, such as time, space and institution. 'Cognitive context' refers to a psychological construct, as it relates to the mind comprising mental representations, propositions and assumptions, for instance. It follows that speakers and writers may mean much more than what they say/write through direct acts or indirect acts and they expect the hearers/listeners to understand what they mean. This is possible because there is the general belief that some aspects of meanings that are not obvious can be deciphered from the context. This assumption is based on the shared environment, knowledge, background or world view of the communicators which give them link to interpret meanings beyond words or grammatical structures. The ultimate goal in pragmatics is to rightly interpret the speaker's intended meaning with the help of context.

Politics is primarily concerned with the capture, control and retention of power (Odogwu & Akpojishi, 2017; Wilson, 2001; Abdullahi, 2018). Discourse refers to any instance of language use that is above or beyond the level of a sentence. In political governance, effective communication is a major means of bridging the gap between government and the masses. Therefore, political leaders tend to be conscious and deliberate with their choices of language use in order to get the masses on their sides. Language is the only means of expressing thoughts and sentiments especially when it comes to politics. The language of politics is said to be persuasive because politicians are careful about their choices of language in order to present their various ideological stand points to get to the mind of the masses as well as shape public opinions. Scholars have described the nature and roles of political language in different ways. Balogun (2012) describes the language of politics as persuasive and emphasising. Oha (1994) views political language as a manipulative tool which politicians use to achieve their political ambitions.

Political discourse, therefore, means the use of language to conduct political discussions. As simple as the above definition appears, political discourse is however, an ambiguous term with fuzzy boundaries. However, this study, as Wilson (2001, p.399) recommends, views Governor Alia's Inaugural Speech as a genre of political discourse. Specifically speaking, Ayeomoni and Akinkuolere (2012) aver that political speech generally dwells on matters concerning the people or state, which is intended to influence, incite, educate, inform or even persuade them. Political speeches are delivered at public symposia, rallies, inaugural ceremonies, campaigns, debates, on radios, televisions, newspapers, interviews etc. Political speech of any kind is aimed at convincing the masses logically or emotionally to have faith in what the speaker says and therefore, act in a particular manner accordingly. Such speeches may be delivered before elections (pre-election speeches); or after elections (post-election speeches). An inaugural speech is a post-election speech. It has always been the constitutional duty of a governor or president to present an inaugural address on his assumption of office as the head of that elective office. Traditionally, an inaugural speech reaffirms the leader's commitment to the campaign promises he made before the election that brought him to office. Inaugural speech also persuades the general masses to be committed to the policies of the new administration as well as provide the desired support to move the state

forward. This makes the administration of the leader enjoy legitimacy and wider participation of the citizenry.

In essence, a gubernatorial inaugural address is the first speech delivered by the governor on the day of inauguration to assume office as the governor. May 29th, as it is the case with Nigeria is Democracy Day where the winners of the nation's general elections are sworn in. Thus, it was on May 29, 2023 that Hyacinth Iormem Alia delivered his inaugural speech as the sixth democratically elected governor of Benue State.

Hoffman and Howard (2009) submit that up to the point of an election, most of the activities in the political contest have been primarily partisan and the general electorate has not been engaged. From such a speech, the public can judge what kind of leader the Governor might be. Scholars like Abdullahi (2018) and van Dijk (2001) are of the view that since political discourse is produced by a politician, it must be produced within the context of an institution and must have a purpose to serve that institution. Meridji (2003, p.177) agrees that a political discourse must be enacted by a professional politician and produced in an institution. Moving a step further, Meridji argues strongly that any political discourse must achieve a result. Governor Alia's inaugural speech firmly fits into the above criteria in the sense that it was delivered by the speaker himself (politician) during the May 29, 2023 Inauguration Ceremony in Benue State (institution) with the intention of presenting his administration policies to the Benue citizenry and mobilising them to support his administration (intended result). Abdullahi (2018, p.84) aptly notes that such a genre of political discourse could be studied from different points of view namely, from pragmatic, syntactic, semantic, lexical, sociolinguistic or critical discourse analytic perspectives. The present study adopts a pragmatic approach using Speech Act Theory.

### **Speech Act Theory**

Speech Act Theory is traceable to the Austrian philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, but was given prominence by the British philosopher, John Langshaw Austin, in his William James' Lectures at Harvard in 1955. Austin's ideas, however, were refined and systemised by his student, John R. Searle, the American philosopher. Griffiths (2006) defines speech acts as the "basic units of linguistic interaction" while Yule (2006) and Osisanwo (2020) submit that an utterance that is used to perform a particular function is a speech act. The scholars further describe speech act as a process in which a person uses an utterance to perform an act such as stating a fact, stating an opinion, confirming or denying something, making a prediction or a request, asking a question, issuing an order, giving a permission, giving a piece of advice, making an offer, making a promise, thanking somebody or condoling somebody. The implication is that in any statement a person makes, an act is performed. This, therefore, means that a political speech like Hyacinth Alia's Inaugural Speech is not just a speech act but a succession or series of speech acts with different functions.

Austin (1962) states that whenever utterances are made, three things are done at the same time, namely:

- i. **The locutionary act:** The production of the utterance either in spoken or written language form.

- ii. **The illocutionary act:** The speaker's purpose or intent in producing the utterance (e.g. to state a fact, apologise, issue a command, etc. Illocutionary aspects of utterances are generally referred to as their illocutionary force.
- iii. **The perlocutionary act:** The actual effect of the utterance on the hearer whether the effect is intentional or non-intentional.

Under Searle's (1975) taxonomy, speech acts can be broadly grouped into five categories. These include:

- i. **Assertives:** To convey information, make a statement, or express a belief.
- ii. **Commissives:** To commit to a future course of action (e.g. promise, threat).
- iii. **Directives:** To cause someone to do something (e.g. command, request, advice)
- iv. **Expressives:** To express emotion, attitude, and mental state.
- v. **Declarations:** To make announcement or pronouncement about something.

Searle makes profound contributions to the speech act theory and one of such notable contributions is the introduction of indirect speech act which he defines as a case in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of doing another (1975, 60). It is without doubt that speakers, especially politicians perform more than one act through a single utterance. For instance, a person might say, I cannot hear you; this utterance can be understood as a request to be audible or a complaint that the speaker is not loud. The inclusion of indirect speech act by Searle into speech act theory gives way for another aspect of analysis that shows how people use language to accomplish certain tasks.

This implies that speech act can be a direct act or an indirect act. For instance, the sentence, 'Close the door' is a direct act while 'Please, the door is opened' is an indirect act requesting the addressee to either close the door or vacate the room depending on the context. Hyacinth Alia deliberately makes use of both direct and indirect acts in his speech. While the direct acts convey superficial and first-value meaning of the utterances, the indirect acts convey hidden and deeper meanings of intended messages. Perhaps, giving his priestly background, his deployment of language, especially to hold particular persons or past administrations of the state accountable is non-confrontational. Nonetheless, the message is conveyed with full force through indirect acts.

### **Methodology**

The primary source of data for this research is Alia's 2023 Inaugural Speech as governor of Benue retrieved from the Internet ([www.premiumtimesng.com](http://www.premiumtimesng.com)). The secondary sources of data used for conceptual clarifications were obtained from books and journal articles. The inaugural speech contains a total of fifty-six paragraphs. The paragraphs further contain sentences or locutionary acts with more than two hundred illocutionary acts depending on one's analytical viewpoint. This is because some of the illocutionary acts have direct and indirect acts. This phenomenon is typical of political speeches where politicians use one act to perform several communicative functions.

Content analysis is used for data analysis due to the nature of the research. Hancock (1998, p.429) submits that "content analysis is a procedure for the categorisation of verbal or behavioural data, for purposes of classification, summarisation and tabulation". The raw material for content

analysis may be any form of communication, usually written materials like textbooks, novels, newspapers; or other forms of communication such as songs, pictures/images, or political speeches. Thus, content analytical approach is suitable for the research because the sources of data for the paper provided all the needed raw materials for analysis.

For ease of analysis, the Inaugural Speech is broadly categorised into three main parts namely: Part One - 'Renewed Hope for Benue People' which resonates Alia's administration Seven Pillars of development that are set to rekindle the dashed hopes of Benue citizens who have suffered unjustly due to bad socio-economic policies of past administrations. This section of the Inaugural Speech also identifies specific problems responsible for the backwardness of Benue State; Part Two - 'Economic and Social Reforms through Implementation of the Seven Point Agenda' is where the Governor reaffirms and restates the campaign promises he made to voters during electioneering and offers procedural approaches to achieving each of the promises; Part Three - Politics, 'Leadership, and Governance of Inclusion' is the longest section of the address where Governor Alia promises to run an inclusive administration that would embrace the Federal Government and the fellow contestants that lost out in the governorship race. He also promised that his government would include investors community and development partners of the state as well as all Benue citizens irrespective of political affiliations. The governor further makes a promise to review existing laws that are counterproductive as well as enact new ones that will promote economic prosperity of the masses.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Part One: Renewed Hope for Benue People**

The first part of the Inaugural Speech which can also be referred to as introduction, majorly contains expressive and declarative acts where Hyacinth Alia conveys his vote of thanks and appreciation to Benue people who offered various sacrifices to make sure that he was elected as governor of the State. Through a declarative act, he announces that, "Today marks a new beginning in the history of our beloved state as I take office as your governor". In another declarative act, he quickly states that great challenges lie ahead of him as governor but due to unwavering trust and support he enjoys from the citizens, he will surmount the challenges and rekindle the dashed hopes of the masses. This is possible because the newly minted APC led government at national and state levels represent 'Renewed Hope' of the masses.

Hyacinth Alia then lists the various problems confronting Benue State development to include insecurity, non-payment of salaries, pensions and gratuities, dilapidated infrastructure, broken economy and civil service, massive unemployment and underemployment, endemic corruption, and malaise etc. Through representative acts of assertion, he problematises the above socio-economic anomalies in Benue State as 'a crisis' and 'a broken state' that needs 'a reset'. These are examples of indirect acts where Hyacinth Alia without making direct reference to the past administrations in Benue State still accuses them of gross misdeeds that are responsible for the appalling socio-economic situations problematised above. Accordingly, the speaker through war rhetoric, declares a state of emergency on the problems by stating that, "The moment is here".

"The time is now". "WE WILL ACT"! "Bold and swift". This communication strategy is very convenient because war frames evoke fear and anxiety and sense of urgency in the masses. Hartmann-Mahmud (2016, p.428) states that declaring war on social problems like the above and

identifying political opponents as enemies who perpetrate those problems make members of the in-group political party to fight the said enemies with all might. The general belief is that if the enemy is not defeated, the problems will continue and the masses will be at the receiving end. Such a state of emergency also justifies government's action to reallocate its resources and tackle the identified problems with all might. The implication is that, if the enemy is fought and defeated, "A New Benue is Possible". The rendition: "WE WILL ACT"! "Bold and swift" is a commissive act of inclusion where the masses are given ownership of the war since wars of this magnitude are not fought and won alone. The narrative legitimatises the war as well as broadens its scope of recruitment to cover all Benue citizens that allegedly suffered from the administrative drawbacks of past governors of the state.

### **Part Two: Economic and Social Reforms through Implementation of 7-Point Agenda**

Hyacinth Alia in this section of the address majorly uses commissive acts to present focal points of his administration which he metaphorically refers to as 'Seven Pillars' to the citizens and further uses assertive, declarative and a few directive acts to present the procedure for implementing the promises. Below is a summary of 'A Strategic Development Plan for a Greater Benue' of Hyacinth Alia:

- i. Security of life and property: by ending farmer/herder crisis, rehabilitation of Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs;
- ii. Industrialisation of the state through agriculture and massive rural development;
- iii. Promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives through commerce and industry;
- iv. Capacity development through human capital and social development;
- v. Build infrastructure to contain adverse effects of climate change;
- vi. Digital transformation through investment in Information Communication Technology ICT;
- vii. Reformation of civil service, Local Government, pension scheme, education sector, and legislative reforms that are investor friendly.

Alia then declares that the seven pillars of development represent 'a social contract between his government on one hand and the good people of the state on the other hand:

My fellow Benue citizens, these seven pillars represent a social contract between our government and your good selves. On these promises, we shall be held to account. You hired us with your votes to deliver on these promises. We will do everything in our power to fulfil our side of the contract'.

This is the Achilles heels of Hyacinth Alia's inaugural address. The discourse representation supposedly makes the speaker accountable to the Benue voters. The World Bank (2019) defines social contract as 'the implicit, mutual bargaining over what citizens expect from the state, and what the state can legitimately demand of citizens in return'. In other words, a social contract is a political covenant freely entered into by government and the governed or the ruler and the ruled during electioneering. It is a blueprint of a party's future engagement with the state. The practice

has always been that most politicians in Nigeria and the world over as rightly observed by Mike (2019, p.97) simply ambush the voters with such narratives only to legitimise party campaigns up to the eve of an election but quickly renege on the promises shortly after winning the election. Considering the above position, it is safe to make interim assumption that only the womb of time would judge the speaker's public avowal to take full responsibility of his government and the consequences that would follow whether positive or negative. Furthermore, the commissive act indirectly helps the speaker to keep an open invitation to the Benue citizens whom he would request in the later part of his address to serve as co-builders to drive the state to the trajectory of development.

Thereafter, Hyacinth Alia presents a procedural implementation of the seven-point agenda. He identifies insecurity as the greatest threat to the development of Benue State and promises that his administration will work with security agencies and Federal Government in this regard. More so, the speaker promises to end the root causes of insecurity which he identifies as poverty, unemployment and social exclusion among others.

He submits further with the use of declarative act that the present state of Benue economy requires 'intensive care'. Alia, also states that basic infrastructure such as water, healthcare, education, sports, electricity, roads, public housing, telecommunications, and commerce infrastructure were in the state of 'comatose'. This narrative is a good example of epidemic or disease rhetoric where the entire infrastructure of the state is problematised to have been plagued with critical ailment in such a manner that only medical experts with knowledgeable credentials can savage such predicament. The representation is another instance in the inaugural speech where the speaker deploys indirect acts to accused the past government for negligence that led to the decay of the aforementioned basic amenities. The accusation climaxes when the speaker announces to the audience that the new government will start from zero level. This kind of discourse representation makes the audience to have a sympathetic feeling towards the new government and resentment towards the past regime.

Thus, through declarative and commissive acts, the speaker submits that solution to the ailing economy would be to create job opportunities and economic empowerment, industrialisation, agricultural reforms, support to the private sector, and enactment of investor protection laws. He further promises to resuscitate the comatose infrastructure by first of all creating drainage canals to end the perennial problem of flooding in Makurdi metropolis, the headquarters of Benue State. This will be complemented by the evacuation of waste from the city to create an enterprising opportunity: 'Waste to Wealth Programme' that would provide jobs for the youths. He also, promises to collaborate with federal authorities for the rhetoric drainage of River Benue to further address the problem of incessant flooding in the state. Alia further promises to engage the unemployed graduates in infrastructure development and self-employed programmes. There would also be soft credit facilities to the very poor women. The speaker also promises to revamp the moribund Benue Microfinance Bank.

Alia further identifies education as the bedrock of the future. He then promises the training and development of teachers as well as providing tools and resources to them. This would be done to provide quality education to all Benue children. He then addresses Benue workers by directly seeking their audience: 'To all Benue workers, please listen to me'. As he gets the attention of the audience, he addresses one of the major rhetoric in Benue polity: arrears of salaries, pensions and

gratuities. In fact, some analysts claimed that Samuel Ortom, Alia's predecessor, failed Senate election largely because of his inability to pay salaries and pensions when he was governor. Hyacinth Alia promises to urgently clear all payment arrears of the affected staff because, 'A labourer deserves his wage, says the Holy Bible'. The speaker is quite aware of the level of religious awareness of his audience. Benue State is predominantly a Christian state. This biblical allusion indirectly indicts the past government in two ways: one, that the past regime did not have an in-depth knowledge of the Bible even though members of the regime claimed to be Christians. Two, the regime, actually knew the right thing but chose to be wicked and unyielding to the plight of the Benue workers. Whichever analytical viewpoint that one takes, this liturgical narrative presents a strong suggestion that the speaker - a man of God is now in the helm of affairs and all shall be well with the Benue workers.

Hyacinth Alia sums up this part of his address by acknowledging that Benue State cannot execute the huge project of revamping her economic fortunes alone. He therefore, appreciates the Donor Community and Development Partners of the state. He assures that his government will be accountable and transparent in managing the resources invested or donated to the state.

### **Part Three: Politics, Leadership and Governance of Inclusion**

Here, Hyacinth Alia uses majorly assertive, declarative, and commissive acts to define his leadership style and inclusive political engagements with the Federal Government, Benue citizens, Investor Community and co-contestants that lost out in the governorship election. Alia decries that Benue State has been disconnected from Federal Government due to bad politics. Even, though he does not overtly accuse the past government, it is obvious that speaker refers to former governor Samuel Ortom's incessant altercations with former President Muhammadu Buhari due to party differences, the controversial Anti-open Grazing Law, farmer/herder crisis and general insecurity leading to massive killings of unarmed civilians in Benue State. The above made Samuel Ortom to project Buhari and his APC led government negatively before the media and international community. This disaffection led to a gradual fall out between Benue State Government and Federal Government with the attendant socio-political and economic implications on Benue State. Thus, Alia expresses dissatisfaction with the stifled relationship and promises a reunion with the Federal Government so as 'to harvest the benefits derivable therefrom'.

Furthermore, the speaker deploys commissive and assertive acts to proclaim regime change and ideological shift in Benue polity. He asserts that under his watch, political god-father veneration would be phased out. Also, corruption, nepotism and other bureaucratic bottle-necks that hinder socio-economic transformation would be eliminated. He will provide new leadership style to Benue politics to end the perennial practice of money sharing politics. Of course, there would be difficulties and even attacks from groups that have vested interests in the state's resources and feel that the status quo remains unchanged. He acknowledges these foreseen challenges by quoting Niccolo Machiavelli famous speech and promises Benue citizens that he is willing to offer the needed leadership that would bring prosperity to the state and he would not fail in this regard. He also promises a review of the Anti-open Grazing Law and its controversial implementation to suit the current realities and demands of Benue State.

Alia further extends an olive leaf to his fellow contestants that lost out in the governorship election and assures them through a declarative act that: 'I am not Governor for APC. I am

Governor for Benue State'. He informs them that the time for campaigns is over. Now is the time to join hands together to build a better Benue.

He then addresses the investor community and once again indirectly accuses the past government of bad policies that drove away most investors from the state. The Governor states that the new administration already sets enabling motions in place such as investor friendly laws, security, as well as good and attractive projects. He also pronounces the freezing of all Government Bank Accounts till further notice. This probably, could be Alia's major step to block revenue leakages to ensure accountability and prudence in government expenditures.

Another significant component of Part Three of the inaugural address is the speaker's submission that he has no 'magic wand' to deliver on the Seven Pillars of development that he promises Benue citizens. He is neither 'a lone-ranger governor' nor 'all-knowing and all-powerful governor'. He would need the cooperation of all stakeholders to make things happen. He sustains this help-seeking and governance of inclusion discourse in nine consecutive paragraphs of the speech thereby making this theme or subject matter the one which receives most attention of the speaker. He uses different communication strategies to actuate this discourse but the most profound figure of style he deploys is the metaphor of 'building and construction'. Taiwo (2013, p.200) remarks that politicians in their communication "present themselves as builders and as those who restructure and strengthen" democratic doctrines and developmental policies. In this light, various metaphorical fields are deployed to exemplify these mappings and permit politicians to present messages of hope for good governance and economic advancement.

Through the metaphorical source domain of building and construction, politicians reach out to the electorates as those that lay democratic foundations (providing robust policies and structural reforms) and build good governance (implementation of the policies and entrenchment of democracy). Thus, through this process, "political leaders deliver their messages of hope with a promise of good governance and an increase in the standard of living" Kamalu and Iniworikabo (2016, p.74). Thus, the speaker, perhaps, righteously presents himself as a builder and Benue citizens as co-builders. He deploys rhetoric of eulogy to praise Benue citizens as being imaginative, talented, bright stars, history makers and a people whose life is characterised with excellence anywhere they go. They have done it before in Benue State, at the national and international levels with a high degree of excellence and their names have been engraved in the annals of history. These great builders of Benue descent will do it again! So, the speaker "Calls on every one of us to commit to building a new Benue – a Benue all of us can feel proud to call home". He closes his speech by acknowledging that the journey which lies ahead is "steep and hard, but we trust in the living God who strengthens us in our weaknesses". This is followed by a prayer in form of benediction: "May he (God) guide and protect us at each step of the way. God bless you".

This is the second instance the speaker resorts to biblical allusion in the address. It is reminiscent of liturgical discourse, a special reserve of priests who commandeer some kind of spiritual powers over the audience and can invoke such powers in form of blessings to rest upon the audience. This liturgical narrative must have been influenced by the speaker's prior calling as 'a priest' before he turned a politician. Thus, he utilises the residue of his priestly investitures to assure the masses of God's continuous presence in their midst. He makes it clear that humanly speaking, the gigantic project of offering new leadership style to Benue State would be fruitless if the protective hand of God is not rested upon him. Man is frail and gullible but God is strong and

infallible. He protects and strengthens the one He has chosen. Thus, Hyacinth Alia prays that this should be the case with him and Benue citizens so that together, they can surmount all challenges and take Benue State to the path of development.

### Conclusion

Persuasive language is central to political discourse. It helps politicians to sell their candidature and administrative policies to the electorate in order to gain their support and organise them to take part in the process of securing and controlling power. The ideological standpoints of politicians are conceptualised and inculcated into the masses through the instrumentality of language. It is therefore, very difficult to imagine the existence of political activities without speeches like the one under review. Hyacinth Alia's Inaugural Speech is full of assertive, expressive, declarative, commissive and directive acts. Some utterances in his speech are direct acts while some are indirect acts with various communication intents. While the speaker used specific direct acts at different stages of his address to either inform, affirm, warn, convince, or direct his audience on particular issues, the indirect acts are majorly used whenever the speaker wanted to covertly instigate blame narratives against certain policies of past administrations of the state. Furthermore, it may be safe to suggest that given the priestly background of the speaker, there are instances in the address where he used liturgical narratives, making reference to biblical canons to pass across important messages to the Christian dominated audience of the state. Both the direct acts and indirect acts are geared towards persuasive mobilisation of Benue citizens and critical stakeholders to build a prosperous state.

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