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A Cognitive Syntactic Analysis of Abraham Lincoln's Cooper Union's Address of 1860

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Abstract

This study is a cognitive syntactic study of Abraham Lincoln's *Cooper Union's Address* of February 27, 1860. This speech stands out as one of the greatest speeches that shaped both America's political and constitutional landscape. It is on this basis that a cognitive syntactic analysis on the speech is carried out. Cognitive syntax is simply defined as the structural grammar that organizes thought, not the everyday language that an individual speaks, but the deeper combinatorial system that allows an individual to build any concept or idea from simpler to complex parts. Cognitive syntax sits beneath conscious awareness, that shapes how a person or an individual reasons, remembers, and solves problems. Consequently, the study is anchored on Jerry Fodor's Language of Thought Hypothesis of 1975, otherwise called Mentalese. The theory states that mental language is like spoken language that can combine into sentences, since words and sentences are meaningful linguistic units. In line with this fact, the linguistic tools of Phrase Structure, Deep and Surface Structure, Felicitous Act, Anaphoric and Cataphoric References, Collocation, Polysemy and Literary Applications were used to analyze the Address; these syntactic tools revealed the cognitive impact of the Address on the 1,500 New Yorkers present at the Cooper Institute in Manhattan in particular and the American population at large.

Keywords: Cognitive-Syntax, Cooper-Union-Address, Lincoln, Metaphor, Speech.

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Introduction

Lincoln's careful arrangement of words, simplicity of language, his repetitive device, his use of anaphora, historical allusions, his arrangement of thought and direct explicit address to the conscience of the 1,500 New Yorkers present on that day are factors that make this speech (Cooper Union Address) not just a rhetorical sublime, but at the same time, the most important speech in America political and constitutional history. "The speech electrified Lincoln's listeners and gained him important political support in Seward's home territory. Said a New York writer, no man ever before made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience" (Cooper Union Address, 1860).

These reasons explain why this study is carrying out a cognitive syntactic analysis of the speech. Cognitive syntax is simply defined as the structural grammar that organizes thought, not the everyday language that an individual speaks, but the deeper combinatorial system that allows an individual to build any concept or idea from simpler parts. Cognitive syntax sits beneath conscious awareness, that shapes how a person or an individual reasons, remembers and solves problems. Furthermore, it is a phenomenon of structural rules that explain how mental representations add into complex thoughts. It could be adjudged as the inner words or concepts, not the grammar of an English or a French teacher would make up, but deeper, more abstract organizational logic that applies to any discipline, be it Physics, Psychology, History, Performing-Arts and even Arithmetic. To even planning a person's day, or imagining having a romantic affair with a partner that has not yet taken place. The concept sits at the center of cognitive science, which is a process "in a real-world, real-time case of doing-thinking ... "(Atkinson et al., 2007).

How the mind works, not just what we think, but the shape of the machinery doing the thinking, is an important aspect of cognitive syntax. In carrying out this responsibility, the mind depends on "... the structured mental representation of a sentence that syntax provides. ... and the interpretations of the primitive parts of the sentence, which are provided by their lexical entries. ... the compositional interpretation procedure: A recursive procedure that assigns an interpretation to any sub-structure of the syntactic representation on the basis of the interpretations of the immediate parts of this sub-structure. Recursive application of the interpretation function then successively builds up the interpretation of larger and larger sub-structures, until the interpretation of the entire sentence (Sauerland & Stateva, 2007). This explains why cognition works beneath the surface without some account of how thoughts are structured and how they compose. In the words of Rao, "cognition includes all conscious and unconscious processes by which knowledge is accumulated, such as perceiving, recognizing, conceiving, and reasoning" (2021).

At this point, it is important to demarcate the difference between syntax; (linguistic syntax), from mental syntax (cognitive syntax). Syntax is the rules of language that describe how to put words together to form sentences. And there is the syntax of English, Hausa, Swahili, German etc. At this level, the syntax of these languages can be viewed as being on the surface. On the other hand, mental syntax (cognitive syntax) runs deeper, this is the organizational thought process, that ensures that every human thought is logical, possible and processable and allows for human communication to be assembled in a logical manner; and this is regardless of any language. In whichever language, the thought process of an individual must be cohesive and logical for it to make meaning. In other words, the mind has the capacity to orchestrate and undertake every thought process; "brains able to do so much are complex multitasking organs, difficult to observe in vivo" (Winkelman, 2013).

The research supporting cognitive science often involves neuroscience, psychology, linguistics and ethnography. ... Embodied experience generates iconic MODELS such as 'container', 'source-path-goal', 'force', 'link', 'cycle', 'part-whole', 'up-down', 'hot-cold', and so forth. These provide the basic conceptual templates or 'image schemas' underling thought (Nellhaus, 2004). These facts become the flagship of this study, an account for cognitivism in relationship with linguistic syntactic structures, and how they could help an individual to harmonize meanings.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Cognitive Science

Studies have begun to reveal the relationship between how human societies are beginning to connect the brain, mind, and culture with human universals. Linguists and philosophers are beginning to question how human universals express themselves in individuals' minds and lives; about reasons, consciousness, and the emotion;

about where culture gets their values from and how those values fit our underlying predispositions. Cognitive approach to language research is grounded in cognitive science. Apart from linguistics, this approach has also been applied to psychology and philosophy. In recent times, cognitive linguists have been harnessing research from different subject areas to provide new tools to many branches of linguistic enquiry. It is an interdisciplinary branch of linguistics, that deals with the study of language as a mental phenomenon. In this approach, the human mind is said to accumulate cultural wisdom and understanding and apply them to concrete circumstances of life (Taiwo, 2025).

If cognitive science helps an individual to relate his cultural experiences to life situations, the question of this study, therefore, is how the cultural environment of Lincoln's days, affects his drafting of the **Cooper Union's Address**, and how did the address impact on the New Yorkers, and the entire American society at large? Considering the culture of slavery at this time, in the United States, and the fact that America was just beginning to learn the ropes of democracy; a factor that could make her to be adjudged as a new state, during this period in time. What could be the consequence of the address? In his words:

The stuff of Thought: Language as a Window in Human Nature, provides prehistoric background: "Human intelligence, with its capacity to think an unlimited number of abstract thoughts, evolved out of primate circuitry for coping with the physical and social world, augmented by a capacity to extend these circuits to new domains by metaphorical abstractions" (Pinker, 2007).

Pinker, sums up the argument thus far. Every man's thought process is influenced by his background, which he uses to shape his worldview. The strength of this study is hinged on how to determine how the American society of Lincoln's era had influenced him in composing the *address*, but most importantly, the impact of the address on the people.

Syntax

Syntax is the rules of language of how to combine words to construct sentences. It involves the ordering of linguistic components of words, phrases and clauses. The word 'syntax' came originally from Greek and literally meant 'a setting out together' or 'arrangement' (Yule, 1996). When words, phrases and clauses are combined, they make up sentences. Sentences are usually grammatical tools that make meaning. According to Kearns:

The meaning of a complex expression such as a sentence is composed of lexical meaning, which is the meaning of the individual words, and structural meaning, which is the meaning of the way the words are combined. Structural meaning mainly comprises the meaning derived from the syntactic structure of an expression ... (2011).

The above statement, therefore, questions how Lincoln has structured his sentences in the *address* to make the kind of impact that the *address* continue to make, from one generation to the other. The study should be able to demonstrate the effectiveness, appropriateness and the strength of his sentence choice at each giving point of the *address*.

Empirical Review

The empirical review of this study is viewed from the angle of conceptual metaphor. This is because of the relationship between conceptual metaphor, culture and cognitive science. Metaphors are closely related to culture, so it becomes the issue of why metaphors and culture cannot be separated, they are interconnected. Culture affects our thinking, then our thoughts influence how we see the metaphor itself (Pratiwi et al., 2020).

In considering our discussion so far, one is tempted to review how the cultural background of President Lincoln, during his lifetime, must have influenced the framing of the *Cooper Union's Address*. This was a period when the American society was divided on the issue of the ownership of slaves. While the Southern States, were agitating for the continuous control of slaves, some other states were against it. And this issue was almost threatening the unity of the nation and questioning the authority of the constitution.

This is why Lakoff and Johnson (2008), are of the view that conceptual metaphors are the result of mental construction used as analogous principles involving the conceptualization of two elements. Then those are cognitive mechanisms in which the experience (source domain) is mapped to other realms of experience (target domain) so that the second realm is understood from the initial realm. Besides, the source domain is understood as the abstract domain while the target domain is the destination.

The characteristics of conceptual metaphors are equating two concept domains, the domain where the metaphor is used, is the target domain, in this case, the equalization between domains is according to the mapping. In this instance, the source domain is Lincoln's *address*, that was agitating for the emancipation of American slaves, the target domain are the American people, who were divided, some states, like the Southern States; were in support of slave trade.

In Lincoln's words, "some of you are for reviving the foreign slave trade; some for a Congressional Slave-Code for the Territories; some for Congress forbidding the Territories to prohibit Slavery within their limits; some for maintaining Slavery in the Territories through the judiciary; some for the "greatest principle" that "if one man would enslave another, no third man should object," fantastically called "popular sovereignty;" This fact, clearly shows that the Southern States were still in support of Slavery, and the Slave-Trade during this period. This is why mapping, clarifies between the target and the conceptual domain.

In this matter, the target are the American people, and the conceptual domain is whether Slavery should continue to be, or be abolished. In the words of Zhang and Gao (2009), "metaphor is all mapping in the conceptual domain and the mapping function is set of ontological correspondence that remain between entities in the source domain and target domain." It is important to state at this point that conceptual metaphors are three by nature; structural, ontological and orientational metaphors.

Structural Metaphor

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2008), structural metaphors play important roles because; structural and conceptual metaphors are culturally based. The culture is sourced from our experiences that is material, then based on our personal experiences, we have systemic correlations. It must be stated that structural metaphor functions are more than just orienting concepts, it is also a tool for referring and an instrument for measuring experiences.

In the argument of Pratiwi et al (2020), "structural metaphors are the relationship of systemic correlations in everyday experience based on two domains, which are the target and source domains." Consequently, the source in the *Cooper Union's Address*, is Lincoln and his message; the abolition of slavery, and the target domain are the American people and their rigidity to continuously hold on to Slaves. This is why structural metaphor, can also be used as logical metaphor, because it clearly illustrates and structured to catch up with people's reasoning.

Oriental Metaphor

In this type of metaphor, the major attribute is that of correlation, it serves the basic human spatial orientation. This metaphor relates to the orientation of human experiences, like Up – Down, In – Out, Front – Back, etc. (Kovecses, 2010). There is one main example of this device in the *address*; no line dividing *local* from federal *authority*. The justification of using this phrase,ss all through the *address*, is that Lincoln was trying to draw the audience attention to the fact that, there is no clear evidence in the constitution to show who has the final control over the slaves, is it the states, what was referred to as the territories, at this time, or the federal authority? This explains why Kovecses (2010), believes that one concept is another type of metaphorical concept in another case and one type does not arrange concepts in other respect but regulates the system to respect each other.

Ontological Metaphor

According to Evans & Green (2006), an ontological metaphor is a conceptual type of metaphor that functions to conceptualize something in the form of a person's thoughts or experiences that are from the abstract to something that has a physical or clear nature. In other words, the ontological metaphor makes abstract things to the concrete such as efforts to portray event, emotional activities, ideas as non-physical into concrete phenomenon.

Lincoln used this technique a lot in the speech to question the legitimacy of the Southern States to continuously hold on to slaves and slavery; "Nor can we justifiably withhold this, on any ground save our conviction that slavery is wrong. If slavery is right, all words, acts, laws, and constitutions against it, are themselves wrong, and should be silenced, and swept away." Through this technique, Lincoln, makes an abstract thing very vivid and concrete in the minds of his audience. Thereby, appealing to the reasoning and conscience of the American people, especially the Southern States, why they most stop the ownership of slaves.

Image Schema

Image schema is the most important aspect of cognitive linguistics because it is a conceptual structure that is derived from the experience of how the body interacts with the world. Image schemas permeate cognition in large part by being extended metaphorically to abstractions at various levels. Such activities occur almost entirely unconsciously, and so we are normally unaware that phrases such as ‘person A is in a relationship with person B’ or even ‘Polaris is in Ursa Minor’ involve a metaphor of containment (‘in’).

Image schemas provide the means by which we are able to conceptualize objects of investigation that we cannot perceive directly, particularly relationships among things (Nellhaus, 2004). In relating this concept to the *address*, one realizes that the issue of *Slavery* was both a political and a constitutional discourse during this period, in this context, the subject of *Slavery*, becomes an *image schema* to both the source and target domains.

Theoretical Frame Work

This study is anchored on Fodor’s Language of Thought Hypothesis (LOTH). The theory proposes that thinking occurs in a mental language, which he refers to ‘Mentalese’. According to him, the mental language resembles spoken language in several key respects; it contains words that can combine into sentences; the words and sentences are meaningful; and each sentence’s meaning depends in a systematic way upon the meanings of its component words and the way those words are combined. It further states that, to have thoughts, is to be related to internal formulae having both syntactic and semantic properties; which makes processes like reasoning to have computational operations that help these formulae to operate.

Methodology

This study applies the purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique is applied to the study, because the technique allows the researchers to select the needed data for the study from the sample population that is, *The Cooper Union Address*. This is because, this technique ensures that the research achieves its desired goal.

Discussion

Using the Phrase Structure Rule to Capture the Effectiveness of Lincoln’s Sentences

The rule simply states: $S \rightarrow NP + VP$ (Sentence: Noun Phrase + Verb Phrase)

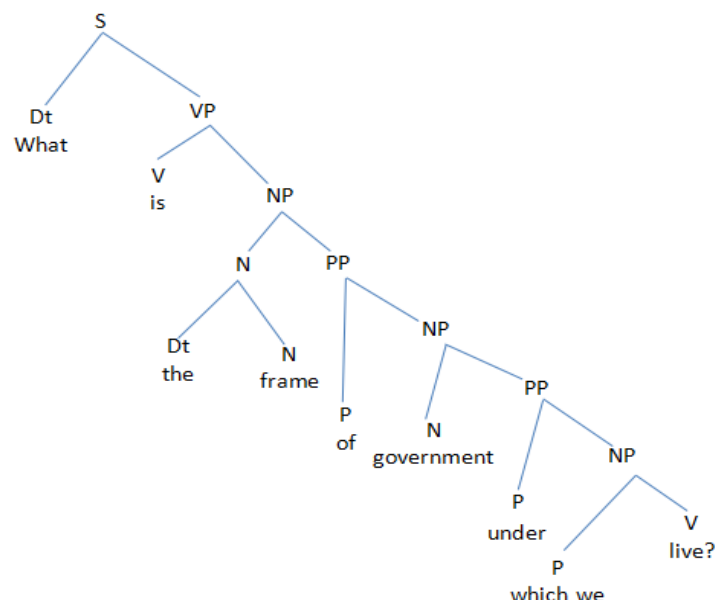
$NP \rightarrow \{ \text{Art (Adj) N} \}$
 $\{ \text{PN} \}$

$VP \rightarrow V + NP (PP) (Adv)$

$PP \rightarrow \text{Prep NP}$

The implication of this rule, is that, for every sentence in English, a tree diagram using the above rule, can be used to determine whether the sentence is correct or not. One important thing to note, is that this rule can be used to generate many sentences. Consequently, this rule is now used to interpret some of the sentences in the speech; to determine both their syntactic and cognitive impact on the audience.

The sentence; What is the frame of government under which we live? Pp2. Is now captured in a tree diagram:



In examining this sentence, the study applies two important characteristics of speech acts: *interactivity* and *context-dependency*. *Interactivity* simply means the speaker is involved in a coordinated activity with other language users. In this case, President Lincoln was not speaking to himself, but was actually speaking to 1500 New Yorkers at Brooklyn. This technique, sets up an interactive response from the audience. The effect of *interactivity* is that it engages the thought process of the respondents, listeners or audience. Because the failure of a respondent or audience to respond to a question like the structure of the tree diagram above, could amount to any of the following;

- a. The audience may repeat the question
- b. The audience may fail to respond to the question, say by silence
- c. The audience may seek to evade the perceived rejection, or others may try to repair the lapses

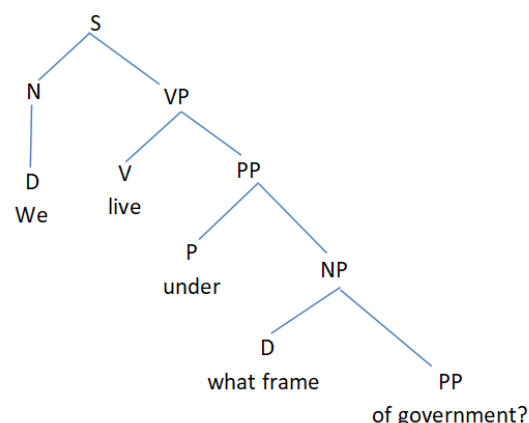
These processes allow the audience to digest, comprehend, grasp, and process the issues that were raised by Lincoln in his *address*. Consequently, through this technique, Lincoln uses the tool of language and social behavior. How? He uses the power of language to challenge the America's acceptance of Slavery; as a societal norm. But most importantly, through this technique he puts the reasoning of his audience into motion, by allowing them to judge their actions, whether they are right or wrong. In the words of Wells: "All humans engage in symbolic thought and reasoning and their lives are suffused with meaning, but the systemic use and understanding of external symbols distinguishes *how these meanings apply to context*" (emphasis mine, 2013).

The *context dependency* has two aspects. The first type is that many societies rely on social conventions to support them. According to Searle (1969), calls it *institutional facts*. These are judges' pronouncements, a priest in a marriage ceremony and a presidential order or announcement. These speech acts of sentencing prisoners, pronouncing couples married and presidential orders; can only be performed by the relevant people in the right situations, where both are sanctioned by social laws and conventions. The second aspect of context dependency is the *local context* of a speech act, which the *address* falls under. An utterance may signal one speech act in one situation and another elsewhere. Questions in English are known to be flexible. In the words of Saeed (2003), "if the asker already knows the answer, then an utterance with the form of a question can be, for ... a request." The sentence, *what is the frame of government under which we live?* This sentence is not a mere question used by Lincoln, but a persuasive tool, that perpetual keeps the thought of his audience, on the subject of discussion (slavery).

According to Aristotle, "rhetorical discourse is the art of 'discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given case' ... it is the means and devices that an orator uses in order to achieve the intellectual and emotional effects on an audience that will persuade them to accede to the orators' point of view." Through this device, Lincoln challenges his audience to see reasons why the continuous ownership of slaves is not only wrong, but defeats the essence of the American constitution, that upholds the sanctity of every human being. In Lincoln's words, "nor can we justifiably withhold this on any ground save our conviction that slavery is wrong."

The Deep and Surface Structure

The sentence, 'what is the frame of government under which we live?' While this sentence can be referred to as active, the sentence; 'we live under what form of government?' This reversal of the same sentence, is passive. It is captured in a tree diagram below:



The distinction between the sentences is only in their *surface structure*, that is, the syntactic form they take as actual English sentences. However, it should be noted that this difference is a superficial form that disguises the fact that the two sentences are very closely related, and identical, at some less ‘superficial’ level. This other ‘underlying’ level, where the basic components shared by the two sentences are represented, is called their *deep structure*. The deep structure is an abstract level of structural organization, in which all the elements determining structural interpretation are represented. And it is this deep structure of the sentences used by Lincoln, that he in turn uses to address the issue in question (slavery), which keeps his audience thinking; on why the slave trade should be abolished. Through this mechanic, there is a deep functional relation of the abstract; which is ‘freedom’, in relation to the complement, which is ‘slavery’. Because the deep, which is a combinatorial process, aligns with the context to help the audience to internalize the message through linguistic filters; that could result in the presupposition of truth.

A presupposition that Lincoln’s audience is left with, to ponder about; a motivation of doing right against wrong. Sperber summarizes this fact, when he argues that “humans can mentally represent not just environmental and somatic facts, but also some of their own mental states, representations and processes. The human internal representation system – the language of thought, ... can serve as its own meta-language. ... meta-representation abilities allow humans to process information which they do not fully understand, information for which they are not able to provide well-formed representation (2006).

The Felicitous Act of the Pronoun *Our*

This study examines the impactful role of the pronoun *Our*, in the speech. This is simply because, in cognitive study, there are different ways of conceptualizing ideas and meanings, and one way of doing this, is to ensure that words that occupy center stage are conceived as discursive routines because of their functional role in the subject of discourse. And the pronoun *our*, does this;

“Our fathers, when they framed the Government under which we live, “pp. 2
Who were father, that framed the constitution? Pp. 2
... eminently our fathers who framed that part of “the Government under which we live” pp. 6
... “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live” pp. 6
... not only “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live, “pp.6
... to follow implicitly in whatever our fathers did. Pp. 6
.... believe that “our fathers, who framed the Government under which we live, pp. 7
... to a discussion of the right or wrong of our principle. If our principle, put in practice, pp. 7
.... “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live”, pp. 7

Scholars like Cooper (1979) and Marti (2003) had argued that the interpretation of natural language variables (overt or covert) can depend on a quantifier. The standard analysis of this phenomenon is to assume a hidden structure inside the variable, part of which is semantically bound by the quantifier. In this example, the pronoun *our* in this speech has this variable. The pronoun *our* is a crucial property of this speech because of its overt domain. The pronoun *our*, intuitively makes reference to a collective bargain, that triggers inference to a period in time. But most importantly, the technique, serves as a starting point for the discussion at hand.

The appropriateness of the technique is hinged on historical truth that is based on time. Through the technique, Lincoln awakens the memory of his audience by reminding them that there is no section in the constitution that supports *slavery* and when the founding fathers of America were enacting the constitution, they did not make provisions for slaves or slavery. In Lincoln’s argument; in relation to slaves, was:

First. That no slave should be imported into the territory from foreign parts.

Second. That no slave should be carried into it who had been imported into the United States since the first day of May, 1798.

Third. That no slave should be carried into it, except by the owner, and for his own use as a settler; the penalty in all the cases being a fine upon the violator of the law, and freedom to the slave.

Through this device, Lincoln, puts the issue of slavery in context, by challenging the thinking of his audience and the entire America population by reminding them that the policy of slavery is wrong and not entrenched in the constitution of America. This fact comes from the appropriateness imposed by the pronoun *our*, in the entire speech. This appropriateness, makes the issue of slavery contextual, notational and specific.

These truths become the hypothesis that stimulates the audience into deep thinking that makes for rational reasoning. This is why “language ... is a social-interactional resource for co-constructing meaning (Brouwer & Wagner 2004).

The Use of Anaphoric and Cataphoric References

Anaphoric and cataphoric prepositions are very important to any discourse. This is because of the cohesive structure they give to a discourse. They act as guide, by organizing the information given in sentences into a unified whole. They are mostly used in texts to maintain reference. Most times the connection between a referent and an anaphor could be direct. For example:

- a. Let us now inquire whether the “*thirty-nine*,” or *any* of *them*, ever acted upon *this question*; ... pp.2
- b. “*Our fathers*, when *they* framed the Government under which *we* live, “pp. 2
- c. To enumerate the persons who thus acted, as being *four* in 1784, *two* in 1787, *seventeen* in 1789, *two* in 1804, and in 1819-20 – there would be *thirty* of *them*. Pp. 4
- d. believe that “*our fathers*, *who* framed the Government under which we live, pp. 7
- e. Yet *those constitutions* declare *the wrong* of slavery, with more solemn emphasis, ... pp. 12
- f. *All they* ask, *we* could readily grant, if *we* thought slavery right; all *we* ask, *they* could as readily grant, if *they* thought it wrong. Pp.12

When speakers use expressions to refer back to something previously mentioned in speech or discourse, the referring expression is known as anaphor. In sentence a, *them* refers back to “*thirty-nine*.” While in sentence c, *four* refers to 1784, *two* refers to 1787, *seventeen* refers to 1789, and *two* refers to 1804, and 1819-20. All these are examples of cataphoric reference, they point forward. The effective use of anaphoric and cataphoric references help in cohesive ties of sentences. For any good speaker to communicate effectively, he needs to masterly use these linguistic tools appropriately and perfectly. And in the *Cooper Union Address*, this is a device that Lincoln’s applies superbly, to effectively sell his message of equality.

In an explicit extension of Grice’s (1975) maxim of relation, Clark and Haviland (1977) suggest that readers and listeners expect authors to use given information to refer to information the readers or listeners already know or can identify and to use new information to refer to concepts with which they are not already familiar. In this example, the American society are aware of the **ownership of slavery** in the United States during this era, but not familiar with slaves’ freedom. Through the effective use of this technique, **anaphoric and cataphoric references**, Lincoln, works on the psychology of Americans, to stop slavery.

The style employed by Lincoln, is what Clark and Haviland (1977) refer to **given/new strategy**. The strategy, states that the process of understanding a sentence in discourse context consist of three subprocesses or stages: (1) identifying the given and new information in the current sentence, (2) finding an antecedent in memory for the given information, and (3) attaching the new information to this spot in memory. Let the study use this strategy to analyze sentence (b):

“*Our fathers*, when *they* framed the Government under which *we* live, “pp. 2

Rule (1) *our fathers* (the founding fathers of US, who the wrote or enacted the Constitution, did not include slavery.

Rule (2) the antecedent in the structure or sentence is **our**, at this point, Lincoln, uses the technique to appeal to the audience to think, if there is any section in the constitution where the founding fathers of US, included slavery as a right.

Rule (3) this new information that slavery is not in the constitution, gives legality to Lincoln’s campaign for the abolishment of slavery.

The effective use of this technique, allows Lincoln to place his argument in the fore of his audience minds. Basically because, the effective use of the style, which Lincoln employs perfectly, ensures that the American people’s *thought-process* were judiciously engaged during and after the speech, because of the cohesive structure of the address. This device therefore, (anaphor and cataphor), assist readers or listeners of a text, to comprehend messages with ease when the device is properly applied.

Collocation

Collocation is a linguistic style that describes how certain words commonly associate with one another in a semantic way, over and above syntactic ordering. For examples, bright day, shabby clothes, warm water, etc. One of the major relevance of this linguistic device, is that orators and writers use it, to create meanings and ideas towards the direction of their message. Consequently, if applied correctly, it influences contextual effects that pull word meanings to its logical conclusion. And Lincoln uses this linguistic tool in the *Cooper Union Address*:

- a. **Local** from **federal** authority, pp. 2
- b. That **Congress**, and **voted** on that question. Pp. 3
- c. “who afterward **signed** the **constitution**, pp. 3
- d. An **act** was **passed** to **enforce** the **ordinance** of '87 pp.3
- e. Ought to **vote** **against** a measure which he deems pp. 5
- f. Two of the twenty-three **voted** **against** **Congressional** prohibition of slavery pp.5
- g. Which provides that no **person** shall be deprived of “**life, liberty** or **property** without due **process** of **law**,” pp. 5
- h. – to a discussion of the **right** or **wrong** of our principle. Pp. 7
- i. Peaceful channel of the **ballot-box** pp. 10
- j. An assumed **Constitutional** **rights** pp. 10
- k. Cease to call slavery **wrong**, and join them in calling it **right**. Pp. 11
- l. If **slavery** is right, all **words, acts, laws, and constitution** against it, are themselves wrong. Pp. 12

The highlighted words above, are some of the collocated words that have been employed by Lincoln in the address. A careful examination of the words, show that the words are mostly legal jargons. Two factors can be attributed to this; first, is that, Lincoln was a lawyer and secondly, the issue of discussion, was a constitutional matter; and all constitutional matters are seen or handled from a legal perspective. Through this mechanic, Lincoln captures the specific (the abolishment of slavery), which helps him to question the legitimacy of slavery, which the American Constitution does not provide for. Thereby, building a preposition of slaves' abolishment, in the thought-process, of the American people. Another sub type of collocation which is used in this speech is; **phonological collocation**;

The Supreme Court has **decided** the **disputed** Constitutional question in your favor. Pp. 10

But waiving the lawyer's **distinction** between **dictum** and **decision**, pp. 10

This must be **done** thoroughly – **done** in acts as well as in words pp. 11

Whether made in **politics**, in **presses**, in **pulpits**, or in **private**. Pp. 11

Holding, as they do, that **slavery** is morally right, and **socially** elevating, pp. 12

Their **thinking** it right, and our **thinking** it wrong, pp. 12

Can we cast our **votes** with their **view**, and against our own? In **view** of our moral, pp. 12

Phonological collocations are sound patterns that arise from an orator's or a writer's choice of words, by the repetition of similar sounds. This style is mostly sourced from literary devices like alliteration, assonance or rhyme. A careful examination of the extracts above, show that, all the highlighted words have resemblance of the same consonants at the beginning of each word; thereby making the device; alliteration. In the last two examples, we have **thinking** and **thinking**, **view** and **view**; bearing the same vowel sounds.

This phenomenon is what Clark (2007), refers to as **iconicity**. It allows orators, poets and writers to explore the relationship between meaning and sound. A critical examination of the address, shows that Lincoln employs this tool for phonological cohesion and textual harmony. Through this skill, Lincoln, creates a poetic musical effect, that makes his message to continue to tingle in the memory of his audience in particular, and the American population at large. Poetic musical effects, if effectively handled, have the capacity to create lasting unforgettable image schemas in the minds of listeners. Through this tool, Lincoln, creates a reverberating effect in the memory of the American people.

Polysemy

Polysemous words are words that have more than one meaning. Cognitively, linguists use polysemous words to relate real world situations that captures metaphorical concepts. This is another linguistic device that Lincoln employs in this speech;

“thirty-nine” who **framed** the constitution, pp. 2 -3

“who **framed** the government under which we live,” pp. 4

But, so far, I have been considering the understanding of the **question** manifested by the **Framers** of the original Constitution. Pp. 5

“our fathers, who **framed** the Government under which we live, understood this **question** just as Well, and even better, than we do now,” pp. 7

The highlighted words; **framed** and **question** are the concern of this study, at this point. All through the address, Lincoln, uses the word *frame*, and *question* instead of write or written and *question*, instead of issue or matter. This is a deliberate style by Lincoln, because he uses these words to capture the schema of containment in the memory of his audience. Most times, to accurately describe the polysemous nature of words linguists use topographic approach:

Framed

- a. Supporting Structure
- b. Picture
- c. Ideas
- d. Frame of mind (think about)

Question

- a. To ask
- b. Matter or topic
- c. What is being discussed

The topographic analysis of the words *framed* and *question* above, have shown the different interpretations that can be derived from the words. Through this containment schema therefore, Lincoln, perpetually triggers the thinking faculty of his audience and the American population, through an unconscious systemic correlation of the senses of his audience and ensures that the central message is captured, relayed and interpreted cognitively, because it allows for an end point focus on the subject matter (the abolishment of slavery).

Literary Applications

These are literary devices that have been deployed by Lincoln to attract the attention of his audience or the reader of the address. This study is basically concerned with two major literary devices that is common all through the speech; **repetition** and **allusion**.

Repetition

This a literary tool in which words, phrases or ideas are expressed more than once in a piece of writing, poetry or a passage for the purpose of emphasis or musicality. And there is a familiar phrase all through the address that Lincoln employs;

“Our fathers, when they framed the Government under which we live,” pp. 2

This phrase runs through the entire address. The use of this phrase, all through the address, is quite significant, because through the phrase, Lincoln reminds his audience, that the founding fathers of the US, never intended to include slavery as a system in the American society. The device not only emphasizes the wrong of slavery on the American society, but also through the device, the message of ‘the wrong’ of slavery, is kept on the burner of the people’s conscience.

Allusion

This is a literary device that makes reference to historical events, persons, place or to even other literary work or passage. This literary tool is quite evident in the address. Lincoln draws the attention of his audience through historical and biblical facts;

- a. Who were our fathers that framed the Constitution? I suppose the “thirty-nine” who signed the original instrument may be fairly called our fathers who framed that part of the present Government. It is almost exactly true to say they framed it, pp. 2 (Historical allusion).
- b. You charge that we stir up insurrections among your slaves. We deny it; and what is your proof?

Happer’s Ferry! John Brown!! John Brown was no Republican; pp. 8 (Historical allusion).

- c. What induced the Southampton insurrection, twenty-eight years ago, pp. 9 (Historical Allusion).
- d. ... reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance pp. 12 (Biblical allusion).

The extract a to c, are examples of historical allusions. Naturally, historical allusion helps an orator to create schemas that connect the subject matter to significant familiar events that help to enrich the subject matter. Through this device, Lincoln relies on what the audience already know to create deeper thought in their minds, by so doing, he sustains his campaign against slavery.

Similarly, the last example is a Biblical allusion, he reverses the scripture in Luke 5: 32, where Christ calls “sinners to repentance.” This device is sarcastic but metaphorical, by using the technique, Lincoln, metaphorically, question the Southern States continuous support of slavery, but at the same time, the device is used as a warning bell, that signifies that time is up, for slave masters. Metaphors are cognitive tools that orators and writers use continually to spin human experiences into an epistemic state.

Conclusion

Every good speech is like a rondo, with several complex parts that make up its musical whole. The *Cooper Union Address* fits into this analogy; with its unique structuring that is embellished with facts, delivered with simplicity of language and unity of thought, makes the speech a generational epic. Epics are known for their narratives on serious subjects, told in formal and elevated style that centers on national discourse. These facts motivated a cognitive syntactic analysis of the speech. In doing this, the linguistic tools of phrase-structure, deep and surface structure, felicitous act, anaphora and cataphora reference, collocation, polysemy and literary applications were used in parsing the speech. These tools helped to ascertain the effectiveness of the speech on the thought-process of the American people and how it consequently helped to shape the American people’s conscience that resulted in the abolishment of slavery.

End Notes

Please, for aspects on the Language of Thought and Jerry Fodor’s Mentalese, please refer to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy online; plato.stanford.edu. For mental syntax, please refer to Neurolaunch.com. For deep and surface structure, pp. 102, for Phrase structure rules, pp. 106 of George, Yule’s: *The Study of Language* (1996). 2nd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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