

## The Essence of Al-Balāghah (Rhetoric) To Arabic and Yoruba Languages

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**ABSTRACT:** It is obvious that there is language contact among many people and nation. The growth of a language depends on the development of the people that use the language. Therefore, it is observed that the secret behind the care of the language of a nation and its development, is how it spreads. Among the cornerstones of science of Arabic Language is Arabic Rhetoric (Al-Balāghah). It is used to describe an oratory power in a speaker or an author. It also shows the places of art beauty in literature. Rhetoric is as important as semantics, as it touches many aspects of semantics such as language and beyond. This study highlights the importance of Arabic Rhetoric as one of the cornerstones of Arabic Language and its reflection on other languages.

**Keywords:** Arabic Language, Arabic Rhetoric, Essence of Al-Balāghah, Semantics, Yoruba Language.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Merriam (2017) defines Rhetoric (*Al-Balāghah*) as the art of speaking or writing effectively as a means of communication or persuasion<sup>1</sup>. Wikipedia (2017) defines it as the art of discovering all available means of persuasion<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it is regarded as the most important single work on persuasion.

Hornby (2015) also states that it is a body of rules to be observed by a speaker or writer in order that he may express himself with eloquence<sup>3</sup>. The Arabs in the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic eras have not lagged behind in this aspect in using Rhetoric in language study. Abubakre (1984:4), explains that the critical consciousness of the attentive audience demonstrated by some notable Arabic is worth mentioning<sup>4</sup>. Also the audition of poems by Arabs at their annual fairs of *Ukāz*, *DhulMajāz* and *Dhatu'Irq* and selection of the classic odes as *Mu'allaqāt* (selected poems hanged on the door of the Ka'abah during the pre-Islamic era), are also noteworthy. Hussein (2006:1), observes that Arabic Rhetoric explores the history, disciplines, order and pragmatic functions of Arabic speech acts<sup>5</sup>.

The importance of Arabic Rhetoric is also perceived in many areas in the Qur'ān. For instance, when the Qur'ān (Q. 24:39), says "... As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man perched with thirst mistakes for water..."<sup>6</sup>. It indicates how the Qur'ān uses palpable things to describe the abstract concepts so as to facilitate understanding. This aspect is one of the Arabic Rhetoric called *At-Tashbīh* (simile). Today, many scholars in the field are trying to show the effectiveness of Rhetoric in standard Arabic Language and in local variants (*Lahjāt*).

### II. DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC RHETORIC (AL-BALĀGHĀH)

Rhetoric, as a separate study was not known to the Arabs during the pre-Islamic era, but always manifested in their literature which showed them to be fluent and eloquent. Rhetoric is called *badī'* (wonderful) which is synonymous to *Balaghāh*. That is why Ibn-Mu'tazz (d.1296 A. H.) called his book *al-Badī'* that contains all aspects of *al-Balaghāh* (Rhetoric). It was also named *al-Bayān* (the Explanation), but all contains all aspects of *al-Balaghāh* as well until when it was separated later-on by other scholars in this field. (Abbas 2015:11)<sup>7</sup>.

In Nigeria, among the erudite scholars who wrote extensively on the development of Arabic Rhetoric is Abubakre in his book: *Bayān in Arabic Rhetoric (An Analysis of the Components of the Core Balaghāh)*. In this book, he sheds more light on the development of Arabic Rhetoric. According to him, Arabic Rhetoricians are fond of referring to an episode during which Abu 'Ubaydah (d. 207 A. H.) was asked by one Ibrahim b. Isma'il al-Kātib to comment on the Qur'ānic verse (Q. 37:65)<sup>8</sup>. On this day, Abu 'Ubaydah decided to write a book on all similar literary expressions contained in the Qur'ān and called his book, *Majāzul-Qur'ān*. Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 A. H.) also wrote a book called *Ta'wīluMushkili-l-Qur'ān*.

Among the greatest contributions of Qur'ānic Studies to Arabic Rhetoric was the work of az-Zamakhshari known as *al-Khashshaf* which is mainly on the exegesis of the Qur'ān and partly *Balāghah* (Rhetoric). He and others like him in this field tried to make the Arabs understand the eloquent compositions both in the Qur'ān and in literary works generally. The high standard of this study as it is now, were not achieved in a day.

Abubakre (1989:4-8), notes that the literary assessment in those early work of Rhetoric is not analytical. They focused on general literature than real Rhetoric on its modern sense. The edge which al-Jurjāni (d. 1077AD) has laid in this two works, *Dalāilu-l-ijāz* and *Asrārul Balāghah*, which are probably near the zenith of any individual's endeavour in the study of Arabic Rhetoric of his time. He explained that al-Jurjāni devoted a good deal of each of the books to *al-Bayān* and *al-Ma'āni* (two of the the three major branches of Arabic Rhetoric)<sup>9</sup>. He has been recognized by many Arab Rhetoricians as one who systematised these two branches of Arabic Rhetoric.

The development of the traditional Arabic Rhetoric appears to have reached its apogee with the work of as-Sakkaki (d. 1229AD)<sup>10</sup>. The task of final systemisation of the branches of Arabic Rhetoric nearly in the form we have today is by this author. He was believed to have introduced and codified the third branch of *Balāghah* i.e. *al-Badī'* which he referred to as *Muhassinatu-l-lafz* (the beautifiers of the utterance). Abubakre concluded that "All works which followed it were further elucidations and comments written by other scholars"<sup>11</sup>.

Now that Arabic Rhetoric has reached its peak, as-Sakkaki (1983:65) asserts that traditional Arabic Rhetoricians have divided *Balāghah* into three categories:

- (i) **Al-Bayān**: It refers to a body of knowledge which enables the user(s) of a language to express one and some meaning and nuances in different structures which vary as to clarity in expressing the intended meaning. It consists of *tashbīh* (simile), *majāz* (figure of speech), *kināyah* (metonymy) and *isti'ārah*(metaphor).
- (ii) **Al-Ma'ān**: It is an act of successfully conveying intended ideas by skilful combination of precise words at relevant or suitable context of situation.
- (iii) **Al-Badī'**: The other name for this is *Muhassinatu-l-lafz* (the beautifiers of the utterance). It is a way of beautifying the utterances and meanings with kind of beautifiers among the prettiness of pronunciation. (Abubakre 1989:9)<sup>12</sup>.

### III. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BALĀGHAH AND SEMANTICS

There are many areas in which Arabic Rhetoric are related to semantics. Abdus-Salām (2008:368-371)<sup>13</sup> mentions seven areas in which the duo relate to each other. It is preferable to use Abubakre's illustration to explain these areas.

1. **Conceptual Meaning**: He said that it is logical, cognitive and with denotative content because it can be tested and marked like other branch of linguistics e.g. *wamā min dābatin fi lard, walātāirinyatīru bi janāhaylibillaumamun am thālukum....* (There is not an animal that live on earth, or being that flies with its wings without communities like yours... Q. 6:38).
2. **Reflected Meaning**: This is what is communicated through association with another sense of the same expression e.g.
  - (i) *Inna balawna hum, kamabalawnaas 'habaljannah...* (We have tried them as we have tried the people of the garden..., Q. 68:17).
  - (ii) *As 'habuljannati hum fihakhālidūn...* (The people of paradise will abide there forever..., Q. 10:26).

The use of the word *Jannah* in the first verse refers to specific garden, the owners of which were tried by Allah. Since the meaning normally comes to mind at the mention of the word *al-Jannah* is paradise, the *as 'hab*(the people) of which are supposed to have passed the stage of *balā* (trial). The use needs some historical explanation of the specific people intended as *as 'hab*.

The second example is the word which communicates what can be associated with lexical item. It refers to the people who have succeeded to dwell in the paradise in hereafter. If a homonym is given as in the second verse, it is natural to first associate the notion in the second verse to such an entry.

3. **Collocation Meaning**: This is what is communicated through association with words tend to occur in the environment of another words. This becomes clear when the differences in collocation meaning are contrasted. For instance, the anomalous collocation in the line of poetry from *al-Balāghah* by al-Busari (d. 1295AD) is identified: *'jā,atlida'watihil'ashjārusājīdatan; tamshūlayhi'lāsāqin bi lāqadamin'* (the trees come, in response to his call, bowing down; they walked to him on a stem without a leg).

This type of poetry requires some stylistic and theological explanation to make some to an uninitiated receptor. Abubakre (1989:95), describes it as the area of style just like the use of double mixture by Shakespeare in one of his plays that trees will move on their stems. The result is *majāz* (figure of speech) in Arabic Rhetoric<sup>14</sup>.

4. **Connotative Meaning:** It is what is communicated by virtue of what language refers to. For instance, *rajul* in Arabic can be marked in conceptual meaning as a human, an adult, a male and a prophet, excluding female. Connotative meaning is what is communicated by reference in language. The word *rajul* manifests its connotative meaning in the following verse: '*ataqtulūnarajulananyaqulārabbīya Allah...* (Will you kill a man simply because he says: My Lord is Allah, Q. 40:28)<sup>15</sup>.
5. **Affective Meaning:** This is what is communicated of the feelings and attitudes of the producer of language. A statement may communicate anger, affection, sympathy, disgust, care or concern. An example on affection is: *innakalā'ālākhuluqin'azīm* (you are indeed of lofty moral conduct, Q.68:4)<sup>16</sup>. Prophet Muhammad was commended by Allah for his good conduct as being indeed.
6. **Stylistic Meaning:** This is what is communicated of social or other circumstances of language use. It is the way to express an opinion by employing imagery, simile, metaphor or metonymy. This may even be expressed in unacceptable manner to another social group e.g. *Ī'sābn'Umar*, a Bedouin says: *Mālakumtaka'ka'tun'alayyakataka'ka'kum'alādhijinnatin? Ifranqī'u'anni* (Why did you assemble over me as you assemble over one possessed by Jinn? Disperse from me). This statement is considered an anomalous because *gharābah* (not clear enough) of the collocation lexemes. For instance, in another way to make it clearer, the same statement can simply put as follows: *Limādhaijatama'tum'alayyakajitimā'ikumalamajnūn? Inṣarīfū'anni* (This one has the same meaning as the one above).
7. **Thematic Meaning:** This is what is communicated by the way in which the message is organised in terms of order and emphasis. It involves the choice in the arrangement of or re-arrangement of a synonymous sentence. For instance:
  - (i) *Nāma-l-Walad* (the boy slept).
  - (ii) *Al-Waladunāimun* (the boy is asleep).

The first statement is a verbal sentence that is useful for occurrence and something to be renewed in Arabic Rhetoric. The second statement is a nominal sentence that is useful for continuance and something that is well fixed in Arabic Rhetoric. The aforesaid seven points have shown direct link between semantics and Arabic Rhetoric (*Balāghah*).

#### IV. USE OF BALĀGHAH IN YORUBA LANGUAGE

Every nation has its own vernacular(s) spoken by their natives. In Nigeria, among the famous vernaculars is Yoruba Language. There are many areas in Arabic Rhetoric that can also be found in Yoruba Language.

For instance, among the components of *Balāghah* is *al-Bayān* (Explanation/Elocution). Its definition, according to Abubakre (1989:3)<sup>17</sup> refers to a body of knowledge which enables the user of literary language to express himself with meanings and nuances in different structures which vary as to clarity in expressing and the intended meaning. According to Adeyemi (2006:28-34), it consists of *tashbīh* (simile), *isti'ārah* (metaphor), *majāz* (figure of speech) and *kināyah* (metonymy)<sup>18</sup>. All these areas can be found in Yoruba vernacular. To mention but a few, the following examples can be shown in many areas of *Balāghah* in Yoruba Language:

**(a) Tashbīh (Simile):**

- (i) *Ojuorundudu bi aro* (the sky is as black as dye).
- (ii) *Oburu bi esu* (he is wicked like the devil).

In the last two examples, the *mushabbah* (resemblance) are *Ojuorun* and *O* (for "he"). *Mushabbahbihi* (resemblance with it) are *aro* and *esu*. *Waj'ush-shabah* (face of similarity) are *dudu* and *buru* while *Ādātutashbīh* (particle used for similarity) are *bi* in the sentences.

Also, these two sentences can be viewed from other side under the classes of *tashbīh* based on its two sides. The first sentence is on *Tashbīhu' Mahsus bilmahsūs* (to compare non-palpable thing with palpable thing) because both *Mushabbah* (resemblance) and *Mushabbahbihi* (resemblance with it) are perceivable through at least one of the senses and the *Mushabbahbihi* is only perceivable through mind.

**(b) Ist'ārah (Metaphor):**

- (i) *Ojonluilu* (the rain is beating a drum): It is impossible for the rain to beat any drum. Hence, it is used metaphorically to show how the rain falls down heavily.
- (ii) *Akoeniyān* (a man palm tree branch): The literal meaning of this should not be intended because a man is different from tree or part of it. Rather it is used to express the meaning of a person whose power is like that of a branch of palm tree. Therefore, *inist'ārah*, indicates that all the components of *tashbīh* (simile) have disappeared at verbal level, but the additional requirement of a *qarīnah* (marker) is satisfied in the

metaphoric expression by the phrase meaning. The type of this *ist'ārah*(metaphor) is regular in Arabic Rhetoric as direct or explicit since it is a first degree metaphor.

**(c) Majāz(Figure of Speech):**

- (i) *Ye Oba wo* (to check the king).
- (ii) *Yi owopada* (to turn the hand).
- (iii) *Fi orileonaile* (heading towards home).

The first example shows one of the parts of *maāz'ulmursal* (free figure) in Arabic Rhetoric, the semantic connection of which is based on *mujawarah* (intimacy). *Yewo* which properly means check is not intended but to ask divination on a certain matter for the king. The second example is based on *al-Āliyyah* (being tool of) this use of a word whose literary meaning denotes on instrument to connote the work performed by that instrument.

The third example is based on *al-Juz'iyah* (being a part of). This means that a word *ori*(head) literarily indicates a part of a certain whole is figuratively used to refer to that whole because a head alone cannot walk unless with the other parts of the body.

**(d) Kināyah (Metonymy):**

- (i) *Ta terunipa* (kicking off thick the cloth): This is a metonymy to express the death of a person. It means that such person has abandoned the thick cloth used for sleep owing to his/her death.
- (ii) *Fi aakekooi* (to hang an axe on the head): It is a metonymy that express a strong refusal to accept something. Therefore, the two examples show the possibility of having an utterance of *Kināyah* which cannot, for consideration, be given its, literal meaning.
- (iii) *Nina Ojalojuopon* (to trade on bowl): This refers to a person traded with sooth-sayer called *Ifa* Priest. The *Kināyah* (metonymy) here is based on *nisbah* (imputation).
- (iv) *Ju'baehoro* (to salute the rabbit): The obvious meaning is not what is intended here. What is intended is to express a person who runs fast as if he is a rabbit because among the best runners in the animal kingdom is rabbit.

## V. CONCLUSION

Having discussed Arabic Rhetoric (*Balāghah*) and its importance, it is apparent that traditional Arabic Rhetoricians have divided *Balāghah* into three parts. They are *al-Bayān*, *al-Ma'āni* and *al-Badi'*. The attention of the scholars had been called by the Qur'ān particularly to the value of *al-Bayān* while other parts of it are indirectly stated. The entire *Suratur-Rahman* (Q. 55) is a striking examples for the effectiveness of *al-Bayān*. It is the only chapter in the Qur'ān where a verse is employed as a refrain in a successive but harmonious and euphonious manner with tremendous added value to the semantic and stylistic effectiveness in its context of occurrence. This beautiful knowledge is not restricted to Arabic alone, it has a strong link to other linguistic values such as semantics and Yoruba Language which have been taken as examples in its stylistic effectiveness in this paper.

Lastly, Ab Rahman et-al (2013:524) shed more light on the importance of Arabic Rhetoric that the teaching aspects of the *Balāghah* is to avoid defects that occur mostly in Arabic Language as a result of the mixing of Arabs and their interaction with other people. Its importance also reflects on the critical aspects of the development of literary criticism based on Arabic as it is spoken of, Rhetoric is also regarded as a benchmark in determining the deficiency and excess of a text in a language<sup>19</sup>.

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