

PRESIDENT POHAMBAMBA'S INDEPENDENCE ADDRESS

By Paul T. Shipale

Generic studies of texts consider the structure and content of messages and place them into distinct classes. Each of these classes exerts a constraint on both the speaker/writer and the audience. In each case, the genre has a specific structure and content that defines it, like Journalism with its genres of news, features, and editorials and more genres within these three classes, for example, an op-ed that fits in the editorial class. From these premises, we may infer that similar situations, with similar demands, may lead to similar texts, even if the contents differ. To study genre is to study the form and content of a message as appropriate to a rhetorical situation. The patterns of a genre may reveal social and political truths. Political speeches are no different. It is in this perspective that I would like to look at President Pohamba's address. The Presidential address is important as a piece of language – although not always in the way that one might expect. It belongs to *ritual* language and is, therefore, subject to heavy constraints conditioned by the ceremonial occasion. This piece is based on a paper about 'Presidential address as a genre' by Jean-Pierre Van Noppen from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2002.

On the face of it, Van Noppen says, one might say that the speeches of Presidents are largely similar; and it is true that they belong to a same *genre* and convey a number of similar devices. This is because these speakers are involved in the same sort of *speech act* – basically, epideictic rhetoric in which they do not only « convey information », but also seek to strengthen links within and with the audience. In a way, they must give the audience a **core message** – a sense of pride and patriotism, a sense of involvement in what is going on,

and a sense of commitment to a common cause. In this respect, the speech must qualify as a kind of a rhetorical exercise of the epideictic genre, i.e. more or less spectacular oratory seeking to propagate a worldview, in other words, to convey value judgments. This effect is achieved by increasing adherence to the values it lauds, to provoke the action wished for, or, at least, to awaken a disposition so to act. In order to obtain such action, the speaker tries to establish a sense of communion centered on particular values recognised by the audience.

The differences between the Presidential addresses are to be sought on a subtler level – in what is highlighted vs. what is played down; in how words like « democracy » or « freedom » are placed in different collocations and invested with different values. It is at this level that the linguist can give insight – that awareness of the rhetorical devices may help the citizen avoid being swayed too easily by pretty words and phrases – whether in politics or in advertising. Too often, the linguist is seen as a *nit-picker* who judges people on whether they spell « potato » with an *o* or with *oe* (an error by means of which ex-Vice-President Quayle made a fool of himself in front of a class he visited); but once we realize that spelling, structure, rhetoric and rhyme are all put to the service of *meaning*, and that *meaning things* is part of our total social and human behaviour, linguistics becomes a way of approaching the world critically...». On these occasion, the President stands at a turning-point between the past (his predecessors), the present (the present state of the country) and the future (his own term of presidency and his hopes and prospects for the nation). This triple temporal perspective is another characteristic of the genre. The medium (i.e. the



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channel of communication) here is a complex one: the speech has been written to be delivered orally over a public address system, where it is recorded, broadcast, and televised. The text itself will be circulated to the news agencies and papers. The use of the speech prompter and recourse to a very large public address system condition the speed and intonation of delivery both put to the service of comprehensibility as well as to the affective, « ceremonial » nature of the occasion.

Major Themes: The constraints of the genre also involve adherence to what have been recognized as the « fundamental themes of a country's dream », i.e. a set of ideas which recur throughout the various Presidents' addresses, with differences only in order and in emphasis. Among these themes, the concept of time and history holds an important place. As pointed out above, some of these celebrations are viewed as a turning-point between the past and the future, but also as a renewal, a renaissance of the nation's ideals. The problems are many: Landlessness, unemployment, drugs, crime, HIV/AIDS, and corruption. Nevertheless, the President qualifies the present day as a time in which the country is called upon « *with proper planning, hard work and dedication...* » « *to be able to overcome its challenges* » by drawing on its strong moral anchor, to effectively combat crime and corruption which

«negate what we fought for». Freedom constitutes another major theme in the speech. Whereas under his predecessor's presidency, « freedom » was associated with « the idea of a new democratic dispensation and a country that is able to govern itself », in Pohamba's discourse it is more closely related with human rights. In this regard, he posed a rhetorical question to find out whether those suffering under the vices of corruption and crime are truly free? At a time when the world and Africa's foreign politics appears politically tumultuous and in an economically uncomfortable situation, the president invokes strength to « *the spirit of nationhood* », and feels that « *We must ensure that we stand united: strong, at peace, and free from crime and corruption* ». But « strength » in such an address also appears as an inner, moral quality, in collocation with « hope ». The president appeals to the moral strength, the sense of sacrifice and solidarity of the people, and appeal to the young and their idealism, while also modestly using the « no crime, no corruption » gambit – but his avowed aim is to make government more democratic, to

hope for unity-in-diversity, in which people interact and « live freely ».

Initial Greeting; Departing from his prepared speech for the occasion, the president first made a Presidential statement by informing the nation on Libya under attack from forces across the Mediterranean sea and foreign invading troops interfering in the internal affairs of a fellow African country. The President then reiterated the country and the government's stance deploring and regretting the latest invasion of Libya and went on to « condemn and reject in the strongest terms any foreign invasion in the internal affairs of any African country ».

Thanks to Predecessor; The allusion to the predecessor is a « must », since it strengthens the idea of the link with the nation's history and timeless « mission ». Here again we can note, the President seeks to underscore the idea of continuity and unity. The initial terms and the thanks addressed to the predecessor are also typical of the situation-conditioned genre when the President acknowledged, on this occasion, the presence of the Founding President and Father of the Nation, H.E. Dr Sam Nujoma, because « on this day, twenty-one years

ago, we hoisted the flag of nationhood, freedom and sovereignty...and started in earnest with the task of nation building, reconstruction and National Reconciliation ». Through the unwavering determination of the Namibian people acting in unity of purpose, the nation has made great strides in socio-economic development and succeeded in building a strong constitutional foundation for democratic governance as « the necessary institutions and legal framework that serve as the bedrock for the rule of law as well as transparent and accountable governance. » For this reason, Namibia is one of the beacons of constitutional and democratic governance on the African Continent and thanks to the SWAPO Party led post-independence Government (led by H.E. Dr Nujoma), « today all Namibians enjoy constitutionally guaranteed fundamental human rights and freedoms that they were denied for many decades. **Reference to forefathers;** the President also paid tribute to our forebearers for their selfless sacrifices during their resistance against foreign occupation and oppression and asked the nation to honour their

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Expression of Interest

Title: POWERED CARDIOVASCULAR EXERCISING/GYM EQUIPMENT
Description: The Emergency Management hereby invites capable and competent service providers to submit proposals for supply, delivery, installation, training and maintenance of powered cardiovascular exercising/gym equipment. Presentations will be requested.
 Based on the proposals received, the City will invite selected bidders to make further presentations/submissions to the City. Submissions should include detailed specs on the product as well as product specification number. Presentations shall be given to the Divisions representative(s), at the Emergency Management Head Quarters, C/o Independence Avenue and Sheffield Street Northern Industrial Area.

Scope:

- Supply, delivery, Installation, training and maintenance of powered cardiovascular gym equipment. Equipment to include Treadmills, Upright bikes, Recline Bikes and Rowing machines
- Comprehensive proposal on the management thereof.
- Comprehensive technical proposal on equipment.
- Operational requirements (management / maintenance)
- Detailed financial proposal.
- Company Profile

Closing Date:
Briefing Documents: N/A
Briefing: COMPULSORY PRE-TENDER BRIEFING
Levy:
Enquiries Technical: Mr. D.P Cloete / Mr. Nambinga
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 Fax: (+264-61) 290 2801/2711
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TENDER INVITATION

TENDER NO. M 35/2011

Description: SUPPLY AND DELIVER OF BLUE ROAD STUD MARKER PLUS EPOXY ADHESIVE

Closing Date: Friday, 15 April 2011, 11:00

Tender Documents: Available as from Monday 28 March 2011 from 14h00 at the Customer Care Centre, Rev. Michael Scott Street, Windhoek.

Levy: N\$100.00 (Non-refundable)

Enquiries Technical: Mr. TM Uusiku - Tel: +264-(0)61 290 2816/ 261 251

Enquiries Procurement: Ms A. S. David - Tel: +264-(0) 61-290 2270 -
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