



PRAGMATIC FRAMING IN SELECTED ONLINE NEWS REPORTS ON NIGERIA'S 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Yuguda Amina¹

Affiliations:

¹ Media Trust Group
20, P.O.W Mafemi Crescent
Utako, Abuja

¹ aminaygd@gmail.com

Corresponding Author(s) Email:

¹ aminaygd@gmail.com

Copyright:

Author/s

License:



Abstract

This research analyses framing of news reports about Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections. With textual evidence, it examines the pragmatic implications of language selections by some Nigerian journalists in the context of national elections. It contributes to the understanding of linguistic techniques used by journalists in the global South as a resource guide for the use of English as a second language. The study employed Mey's (2016) and Searle's (1969) theories for analysis. The corpus of the study consists of excerpts from six online news publications. Textual analysis established characteristic use of language by the selected journalists, grounded on the premise that journalists are guided by principles such as truth, accuracy, and fairness in their practice. However, being embedded in the Nigerian society where ethnic and religious divisions are rife, these factors may influence their practice. As such, their reportage may be framed by preconceived notions of cultural, ethnic and religious loyalties. Specifically, texts were examined for unattributed point of views, opinions, and utterances outside the territory of information of the journalist. With salient language selections and choice of sources, the reporters frame news towards a particular stance on socio-political issues. Findings revealed journalistic use of language in the study to be reflective of pragmatic strategies such as formal terms of address signifying cultural deference, the use of honorifics such as traditional titles, reflects Nigerian traditional values, politeness, and courtesy, while metaphorical expressions represent elections as a competitive sport or warfare where victors emerge and losers are vanquished.

Keywords: Framing, Pragmatic Techniques, Nigeria, Journalist, Elections.

Introduction

Human language is embedded with symbolic and conventional means, through which people transfer and exchange meaning and experiences. However, from the conception of an idea by a writer to the delivery of the text to a reader and eventual actualization of meaning, an intricate interplay of illocutory intentions, assumptions, presuppositions, and inferences often take place. A theory of framing provides the means to describe the power of a communicating text (Entman, 1993). It demonstrates the ways in which text influences human consciousness. In the case of news reports, with words, journalists convey information with the intended perlocutory effect of readers decoding meaning. However, the point of view, and worldviews of both the journalist and the reader may not always be mutually harmonized. This is especially significant because journalists may inadvertently perpetuate a dominant point of view, worldview or frame despite adhering to principles intended to safeguard against bias. Hence, messages communicated via media texts cannot be said to be completely neutral, without bias or covert intentions to influence readers or otherwise shape meaning.

With textual evidence, this article aims to demonstrate the means through which journalists frame or



orient readers, to promote certain points of view or worldviews in the context of the Nigerian 2023 presidential elections. Truth, accuracy, fairness and transparency are often touted as principles which guide the conduct of journalists in reporting the news (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021; Khalid & Shahid, 2024; Shahid, 2024). Ethics and codes notwithstanding, it is possible that the meanings conveyed by journalists are intentionally or inadvertently subverted by representations which colour the truth. According to Lakoff (2005) frames are made up of ideas evoked by language. Words evoke frames or ideas in the human mind. These frames are representations of worldviews and points of view. Framing is therefore the use of language to promote a particular worldview. As such, this article seeks to establish the means through which journalists frame news in an election in the context of the global South.

Nigeria with a population of over 200 million is Africa's most populous nation (World Bank, 2023). The country's youthful demographic with the median age pegged at 18.9 presents a huge human resource which could be as much an advantage as it could be a disadvantage in global geo-political relations. Nigeria's history, as a former British colony, also bears great significance for the study of English as a second language. The British colonial policy of cultural assimilation led to the imposition of the English language as a national language for a country of over 525 indigenous languages and over 300 ethnicities (World Atlas, 2023). The legacy of British colonial rule is evident in the lingering cultural imperialism in a post-colonial, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious country. The English language still serves as a national language in the country. Hence a huge number of the citizens speak English as a second language while many more speak pidgin English as a means of communication. A linguistic study of the unique use of the English language in Nigeria offers valuable insights into contemporary use of language and the ideological ramifications in a post-colonial, global-south context. Ajayi and Ajayi (2014) investigated political texts and jingles of the 2015 governorship elections in Oyo state, Nigeria. Their study found that the language of politicians in the state is characterised by practs such as accusation, challenge, abuse, warning, persuasion, commendation and condemnation. While Aremu (2017) focused on a pragmatic analysis of the use of metaphors in presidential speeches. Using Mey's framework of pragmemes, he identified the metaphorical characterization of elections as battles, sports or journeys.

Building on their extensive findings, this article adds to the body of knowledge about what pragmatic tools journalists use in framing news about elections in Nigeria and the implications for peaceful co-existence.

Research Questions

1. What are the pragmatic framing techniques used in selected online news reports on Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections?
2. How are pragmatic techniques used to frame reportage in the selected online news reports?
3. What is the contextual relevance of framing techniques in the selected online news reports?

Nigeria's Socio-political Context

The 2023 elections in Nigeria were expected to usher in a new democratic tenure at the expiration of Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari's eight-year run. The ruling All Progress Congress political party had elected Mr. Bola Ahmed Tinubu as its presidential flag bearer while the major opposition party, the People's Democratic Party, presented former Vice President Atiku Abubakar as its candidate. A third force gaining ground was the Labour Party which had adopted Mr. Peter Obi as its candidate for the elections. Mr. Obi had defected from the PDP after initial meetings suggested he would not secure the party's ticket. Apparently, the Labour Party was gaining a lot of support from the youth; who had become weary of the ruling political class. Mr. Obi, the former governor of Anambra state (2007-2014), was considered by some to be representative of the youth at 61 years of age compared to 70-year-old Mr. Tinubu and 76-year-old Mr. Abubakar. In the run up to the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria, the country had experienced rising inflation, insecurity, and scarcity of Nigeria's legal tender; the Naira. A few months to the elections, the Central bank of Nigeria announced a redesign of the Naira. Speculations were rife that the new monetary policy would deter vote buying and financial inducement for election malpractice. However, citizens were also left without money for basic needs such as



food. The socio-political context of Nigeria's 2023 elections was thus influenced by economic strife.

Theoretical Framework

Mey's (2016) pragmatics acts theory propounds that utterances consist of both socio-cultural activity and their textual realization. It explains how linguistic features of text can be analyzed based on textual markers such as inference (INF), reference (REF), metaphor (MPH), relevance (REL), voice (VCE), shared situational knowledge (SSK) and metapragmatic elements (M). The analysis of these features highlights what the journalist pragmatically communicates in writing an online news report. This study therefore combines the analysis of news reportage against the backdrop of the socio-cultural context of elections in Nigeria. Pragmatic acts (practs) contained in online news reports of Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections were examined for characteristic features. The emphasis is on characterizing a typical, pragmatic act as it is realized in a given situation, not on prescriptive rules for use of individual speech acts. The interactional situation in which interlocutors realize their aims is not restricted to spoken utterances but includes written text and all manner of nonverbal communication (pragmemes). It follows that the identification of pragmatic acts in online news reports on Nigeria's 2023 elections will be an exercise in analysing how journalists make use of language.

The political and cultural conventions in Nigeria at the time of the 2023 elections will only apply to that particular era. Hence the pragmeme of online news reports on the 2023 elections is made up of practs unique to that period with the effect of cataloguing information.

Searle (1969) proposed a systematic explanation of how language functions not just as a means for description, but as a tool for performing various actions. He posits that all meaning is relative to unintentional background. A sentence only has truth-conditions relative to some assumed background. This background can never be made fully explicit, because it is determined by inadvertent traditions and actions. Searle favours meaning being dependent on communicative intentions. Searle (1969) therefore categorized performances in language as performatives. Performative are further divided into five classes:

1. Expressive which show the speakers emotional or psychological state
2. Directives which include commands, orders, and requests
3. Commissives which include promises or commitment,
4. Assertive which show the speakers' alignment with the truth condition of the proposition
5. Declaratives which exert a change in the world such as pronouncements

Research Methodology

This qualitative study analysed the textual content of news reports from selected news websites. The study was designed as a corpus-based analysis of the online news reports based on availability and accessibility of media texts as sources of language data. The corpus of the study consists of news reports from six online newspapers and news websites. Google Trends was used to find out which newspapers ranked highest in search queries for online news reports on the day Nigeria's presidential elections were announced. A search query for news reports on the day the Nigeria elections results were announced (March 1st 2023), returned Daily Trust, Punch, Premium Times, and Leadership Newspaper articles online. The researcher also purposively selected the BBC and CNN news reports to account for foreign news coverage of the elections. The sample size of six news websites based on their readership and coverage of Nigeria were chosen to achieve a researchable limit within the ambit of the researcher's manual ability and time constraints. Data analysis was done manually without the aid of software word mapping. This analysis made use of Mey's (2016) model for pragmatic analysis and Searle's (1969) classification of performatives. Qualitative categories of pragmatic features of journalistic reporting emerged from the text analysed. Analysis progressed from textual analysis to an interpretation of the meaning of text within particular contexts and then to the final stage of analysis of social practices concerning the wider society. The analysis covered three focal points. First the linguistic structure of the news reports was examined to establish framing through the journalists' use of pragmatic acts (practs). The second outlines pragmatic acts within linguistic expressions guided by Searle's (1969) performatives theory. The third focal



point explores how these utterances connect to the context of Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections.

Data Presentation & Analysis

Punch Newspaper

Excerpts 1 to 5 were all extracted from the *Punch* newspaper (March 2023, <https://punchng.com/inec-declares-tinubu-winner-of-presidential-election/>).

The excerpts are from March 1st 2023, the day the Nigeria 2023 presidential elections were announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Excerpt 1 Punch Newspaper (March 2023, <https://punchng.com/inec-declares-tinubu-winner-of-presidential-election/>)

The Independent National Electoral Commission has declared the All Progressives Congress presidential candidate, Bola Tinubu, as the president-elect. Tinubu, a former Lagos State governor, was declared the president-elect after the 70-year-old polled 8,794,726 votes to win the 2023 presidential election.

Pragmatic Analysis

The reference (REF) to Tinubu's political affiliation in "All Progressives Congress presidential candidate, Bola Tinubu". Is a pract which calls attention to party loyalty. Against the context of the political landscape in Nigeria, the group dynamics of the All Progressives Congress versus the People's Democratic Party and the Labour Party is foregrounded here. This appeals to feelings of identity politics. The frame positions supporters of the APC as victorious while supporters of other parties are left defeated. The metaphor (M) of identity is highlighted. The reference (REF) to APC evokes values and beliefs associated with the party. For opponents this may arouse feelings of ethnic and religious marginalization especially as the candidates for the APC represent the Northern and South-western regions of Nigeria. The presidential candidate of the APC and his vice-presidential candidate are both Muslims. In the run up to the elections, this religious divide was a contested issue. The situational knowledge (SSK) of the religious and ethnic context of Nigeria's politics is also implicated here. The practs of the excerpt can be said to be group identification and a call to political loyalty. The referencing (REF) of Tinubu as the APC's candidate evokes emotions of "us" versus "them" group dynamics. Readers may draw from the shared situational knowledge (SSK) of Nigeria's ethnic and religious divisions to interpret the pragmatic import and framing of the excerpt as divisive.

Excerpt 2 Punch Newspaper (March 2023, <https://punchng.com/inec-declares-tinubu-winner-of-presidential-election/>)

The three leading presidential candidates won in 12 states each while Kwankwaso claimed only Kano State. Tinubu edged Atiku, a former vice president and his closest challenger, with no fewer than 1.8 million votes. The PUNCH reports that the 2023 presidential election is the first time that Tinubu contested for the nation's top job.

The former senator left office as a two-term governor of Lagos State in 2007 and is credited with leading the coalition that ousted the PDP from power in 2015 and has extended his influence beyond the South-West region in recent years.

Pragmatic Analysis

Excerpt 2 characterises the elections as a competitive race. The phrase "The three leading candidates won while kwankwaso only claimed Kano state" again evokes the metaphorical frame (MPH) of identity politics and party loyalty. The journalist could have just written "the three candidates" and identified them by name. However, the pract of choosing to use the adjective "leading" to modify the noun candidates, frames the candidates as superior to Kwankwaso. The use of the adverb "only" is also a pract which modifies Kwankwaso's achievement limiting him as inferior in comparison to the other candidates. The lexical choice of the verbs "edged", "ousted", and the noun "challenger" furthers the framing of elections as a fierce competitive race. The phrase "The Punch reports" is a metapragmatic element (M) which serves to distance the assertion from the reporter as his sole opinion. It attributes the information as being that of the newspaper's editorial board.



The relevance (REL) of presenting the information that Tinubu won the elections at his first attempt, portrays Tinubu as a strategic and successful leader, and influential candidate. This evokes the metaphorical frame (MPH) of leadership being associated with Tinubu. This is furthered by the use of phrases such as “*leading the coalition*”, and “*extended his influence*”. The narrative structure of presenting a chronological progression of Tinubu’s political career from senator to governor and now president, presents a storyline of logical progression and growth. This positive framing of Tinubu as a strategic and influential leader, may lead readers to the inference (INF) that he is a credible leader and his victory may be perceived as well-earned.

Excerpt 3 Punch Newspaper (March 2023, <https://punchng.com/inec-declares-tinubu-winner-of-presidential-election/>)

Aside from Tinubu; Obi; Atiku, and Kwankwaso, other candidates that gunned for the nation’s oval office include Dumebi Kachikwu of the African Democratic Congress; Kola Abiola, People’s Redemption Party; Omoyele Sowore, Africa Action Congress; Adewole Adebayo, Social Democratic Party; Malik Ado-Ibrahim, Young Progressive Party; Prof Christopher Imumulen, Accord Party; Prof Peter Umeadi, All Progressives Grand Alliance; and Yusuf Mamman Dan Talle, Allied Peoples Movement.

Pragmatic Analysis

Excerpt 3, frames the election as a competitive race against major candidates and minor ones. The use of the prepositional phrase, “*aside from*” is a textual marker which ranks the three major candidates as higher than the others. Listing the other candidates and their political parties without further information, re-enforces that they are less important and not worthy of further description. The use of the adverbial “*gunned*” is a metaphor (MPH) which invokes the frame of the elections as a competitive warfare. This is starkly contrasted from the expected democratic process of elections being a fair process where the electorate chooses a leader.

Excerpt 4 Punch Newspaper (March 2023, <https://punchng.com/inec-declares-tinubu-winner-of-presidential-election/>)

A tally of the votes announced by electoral officials from the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Tinubu, in Borno, polled 252,282 votes across the 27 local government areas and was declared the winner by the state Collation Officer, Prof. Jude Rabo. Atiku and Obi could only garner 190,921 votes and 7,205, respectively while Kwankwaso amassed 4,626 votes. In Rivers State, Tinubu raked in 231,591 votes from 23 LGAs while the LP scored 175, 071 votes and the PDP polled 88, 468 votes. The Federal Capital Territory, however, proved to be a game changer for the Labour Party, which floored both Tinubu and his PDP counterpart. Obi’s popularity in Abuja fetched him 281,717 votes while the former Lagos governor and the former VP shared the remaining slots of 90,902 votes and 74,149 respectively. Kwankwaso also polled 4,517 votes.

Pragmatic Analysis

Excerpt 4 establishes the credibility of the polls and Tinubu’s emergence as president with factual data. The attribution of voting figures announced by an electoral officer establishes the information as factual. The phrase “*declared winner by*” is a metapragmatic act (M) which serves the purpose of hedging the journalist from accusation of presenting his own opinion about who won. In Nigeria, it is against the law and a treasonable offense for anyone other than an electoral officer or body to declare candidates as winners of elections.

Thus, by clearly attributing the source of the election results, the journalist protects himself from the offense. The use of the phrase “*game changer*” reinforces the frame of elections as a competitive sport. This is again furthered by the lexical choice of “*floored*, and “*counterpart*”. The use of the adjectival noun “*popularity*” to characterise Obi, is a pract which shows bias on the part of the journalist. An alternative lexical choice could have been to simply say Obi scored more votes in Abuja. That would have been a simple statement of fact without necessarily opining that his popularity effortlessly “*fetched*” him votes. When contrasted with Tinubu being characterised as “*raking*” votes and the other candidates “*sharing the remaining*” votes. The reader may infer (INF) that Obi was the only preferred, popular candidate while Tinubu was imposed.



Excerpt 5 Punch Newspaper (March 2023, <https://punchng.com/inec-declares-tinubu-winner-of-presidential-election/>)

“in some northern and middle belt states which included Zamfara, Kwara, Kogi, Benue and Kogi States. In Benue, the APC amassed 310,468 votes to relegate LP (308,372), PDP (130,081) and NNPP (4,740) to second, third and fourth places. As expected, Obi soared above other candidates in Plateau where he won by 466,272 votes compared to APC’s 307,195; PDP’s 243,808 while NNPP settled for 8,869 votes.”

Pragmatic Analysis

Excerpt 5 continues the frame of elections as competitive sport. The APC is negatively characterised as amassing votes. This lexical choice implies or connotes that the APC did not earn the votes but amassed them. Especially when compared to the lexical choice of Obi “soaring” “as expected” and winning. The metaphorical (MPH) characterization of Obi soaring again is starkly contrasted with the NNPP “settling” for less votes. The verb “soar” is a positive terminology which evokes imagery of a triumphant bird, flying high. The use of the passive voice (VCE) “as expected” without nominalization of who has the expectation of Obi winning is textual evidence of the journalist’s bias. Without attribution, the reader is left to infer (INF) that this is the popular belief of the electorate. The excerpt is framed to portray Obi as a triumphant, soaring candidate, while the APC is characterized as greedy by amassing votes and the NNPP has no agency, only settling for whatever is left.

Leadership Newspaper

Excerpts 6 to 12 were all extracted from the Leadership newspaper (Leadership Newspaper (March 2023, <https://leadership.ng/king-at-last-tinubus-long-journey-to-president/>) on March 1st 2023 the day the Nigeria 2023 presidential elections were announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC).

Excerpt 6 Leadership Newspaper (March 2023, <https://leadership.ng/king-at-last-tinubus-long-journey-to-president/>)

KING AT LAST!: Tinubu’s Long Journey To President

** Lawyers squabble over state status of FCT APC candidate wins 25% in 30 states, scores 8.8m votes Mahama, Jonathan, others call for calm as PDP, LP kick*

Pragmatic Analysis

Excerpt 6 is the headline of the news report. Journalistic writing is hinged on maximising informational content for the reader based on relevance.

As such, the journalists and editors have made this specific linguistic choice of headline as a title which is foregrounded to capture reader’s attention. In terms of performative function, this headline is an assertive. Assertives according to Searle’s (1969) theory, are utterances which commit the speaker to the truth value of the proposition.

In this case, the journalist in making this choice of lexical selection asserts that Tinubu is indeed “King”. The headline uses “King” as a metaphor which evokes a sense of monarchy. Just as Lakoff (2014) explained that media framing techniques include the use of metaphors to propagate a particular point of view. The metaphor “king” is starkly contrasted with Nigeria’s democratic, federal republic system of government. The journalist’s choice of headline potentially elicits inferences that Tinubu’s emergence as president is more of a royal ascension than a popular vote election by the Nigerian people. It also conveys a sense of victory over the vanquished, thus positioning Tinubu as a dominant figure. The prepositional phrase “at last” also infers that it has been a long-term plan for Tinubu to be president. The use of the exclamation mark signals the pragmatic act of assertion, a sweeping emphatic statement. For the fact that the headline is not attributed to anyone else, the inference is that this is the voice of the reporter or the opinion of the Leadership editorial board. According to The Missouri Group (2014), editors are the gatekeepers who decide the newspaper’s standpoint on key issues. Due to the gravity of election results, it is expected that this particular headline will not be published without proper vetting.

The use of the lexical item “journey” is a metaphor (MPH) which elicits the inference (INF) that Tinubu’s emergence has been a long and perhaps painstaking process. A “long journey” in which readers may be oriented



to sympathize with Tinubu's personal struggle culminating in a hard-won success. The relevance (REL) of the possessive apostrophe "s" in "Tinubu's Long Journey" is a pragmatic act (pract) which points to Tinubu's personal ambitions being framed as more important than the political event. This personalization also frames the informational content in such a way that Tinubu is foregrounded as being the focal point of the news story. The subheading offers more context by showing that there are contestations by lawyers over Tinubu's emergence as president. The lexical choice of the verb "squabble" is a pract which draws the inference (INF) of a quarrel between the lawyers involved. This lexical choice pragmatically suggests a conflict among the lawyers which potentially delegitimizes Tinubu's emergence as president. Also, the call for calm by the former president of Ghana, John Mahama and Nigeria's former president, Goodluck Jonathan shows the gravity of the import of elections and that neighboring countries and international election observers are also vested in the conduct of elections in Nigeria. Former president Jonathan and Mahama are considered as important figures in African politics. As such the inclusion of their names in the headline may lead readers to the inference (INF) that heightened tensions may be imminent which necessitate their "call for calm".

The use of the lexical item "kick" is a pragmatic act which characterises the PDP and Labour Party as potentially hostile. The verb kick is an active form which can be interpreted as the opposition being belligerent and confrontational.

Excerpt 7 Leadership Newspaper (March 2023, <https://leadership.ng/king-at-last-tinubus-long-journey-to-president/>)

Presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu has been declared winner of last Saturday's presidential election.

Pragmatic Analysis

Jonasson (2001) defines focalization as a voice identification technique which answers the questions: who speaks? and who sees? This defines the narrative perspective or the point of view in a story. In this case the focal point of view (VCE), belongs to the journalist, Babafemi Badejo as indicated by the byline underneath the headline. The underlined statement is in the passive voice, deflecting agency away from the reporter. However, the lexical choice of not mentioning the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) as declaring Tinubu as winner of the election could be a specific omission in continuation of the King metaphor and the questioning of the legitimacy of Tinubu's presidency.

The use of the honorific term Asiwaju, a Yoruba traditional title in addressing the presidential candidate is a cultural convention of politeness especially amongst the Yoruba ethnic group to which Badejo belongs. This accounts for Shared Situational Knowledge (SSK) as posited by Mey (2016). Just as Irvine (1998) posits honorifics are a means of expressing respect, manifest in specially conventionalized forms. Honorifics signal deference in a way that requires a set of shared situational knowledge about the expression's significance and pragmatic potential. This indicates Badejo the journalist is pragmatically deferring to the personality of the APC candidate based on his shared cultural knowledge. In this excerpt the pragmatic act of honorific is established under the pragmeme of deference.

Excerpt 8 Leadership Newspaper (March 2023, <https://leadership.ng/king-at-last-tinubus-long-journey-to-president/>)

This development brought Tinubu into the limelight as he became a major arrowhead of the struggle to realise MKO's mandate. With MKO in jail, he fled into exile in 1994, becoming a leader cum financier of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), against General Sanni Abacha (GSA).

Pragmatic Analysis

The phrase "this development brought Tinubu into the limelight" is in the passive (VCE) which could be a choice by the journalist to obscure agency of Tinubu pushing for his own political ambition. The inference (INF) also frames his emergence in the political space as being the result of providence, fate or even divine destiny without expressly linking his emergence in the political sphere as being the result of Tinubu's own



ambitions. The metaphor (MPH) of an arrowhead conjures an imagery of a warrior fighting for democracy. The (SSK) of MKO Abiola who is widely revered as sacrificing his life for Nigeria's democracy further places Tinubu on a pedestal as being a defender of Nigeria's hard-won democracy. In the transitivity analysis, the lexical choice of fled instead of travel, depart or left, conveys a sense of Tinubu cowering or running away from Nigeria. This is another marker for bias as the utterance's performative is expressive which means this is the journalist's attitude or feeling towards Tinubu's action of leaving the country. The verb fled also conjures a (MPH) of cowardice on the path of Tinubu.

Excerpt 9 Leadership Newspaper (March 2023, <https://leadership.ng/king-at-last-tinubus-long-journey-to-president/>)

GSA had pushed IBB aside, later dismissing after 84 days in office, the interim government of Ernest Shonekan that Babangida had put in place. Tinubu only returned to Nigeria in 1998 after the death of GSA. General Abdulsalami A. Abubakar (AAA) who took over wanted to quickly leave office and Tinubu was one of the beneficiaries of the General's call for Nigerians to canvass for offices.

Pragmatic Analysis

To fully understand the pragmatic acts in excerpt 9, readers have to draw inferences (INF) from Nigeria's political and historical context. Insights from the situational knowledge (SSK) of Nigeria's military regime relay the journalistic pragmatic intents. This period was characterised by political instability during the takeover of power by General Sani Abacha. References (REF) to key political figures such as General Sani Abacha, Ibrahim Babangida and Ernest Shonekan relay the turbulence of the period and the import of the news report. The relevance (REL) of specifying the '84 days in office', is a pract alluding to the transient nature and instability of power at the time. This excerpt further expresses the (MPH) of cowardice associated with Tinubu's leaving Nigeria during the military regime. The prepositional phrase "only returned" is an expressive performative, another textual marker of the journalist's biased opinion. The journalist's lexical choices suggests a critique of the unstable transition of political power and Tinubu seemingly benefiting from the chaotic period. By stating that "Tinubu was one of the beneficiaries", the journalist implicates Tinubu as exploiting the political terrain for his personal gains. The (VCE) in the second underlined phrase is in the passive, characterising Tinubu as lacking agency for his own political ambition.

Describing Tinubu as a beneficiary of the largess of General Abdusalam Abubakar is a pract which characterizes Tinubu as subservient. The journalist relies on the (SSK) of the Nigeria audience privy to the knowledge of the era of military dictatorship to make (INF) that Tinubu was no match for the military ruler, which is why he fled and only returned to Nigeria when the military called for civilian actors.

Excerpt 10 Leadership Newspaper (March 2023, <https://leadership.ng/king-at-last-tinubus-long-journey-to-president/>)

He was involved in a struggle with the Federal government over Lagos State's right to create new Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs) to meet its large population's needs. The controversy led to the federal government seizing funds meant for local councils in the state in spite of the decision of the Supreme Court against Obasanjo, the President.

Pragmatic analysis

The personification of the federal government as an entity with Tinubu struggling against it, is a continuation of the (MPH) of the warrior metaphor. Here Tinubu (REF) is characterized as one man struggling against the entire federal government for the benefit of his state with a large population. This frames Tinubu as an underdog fighting the cause of a large population. Readers are led to infer (INF) that Tinubu is a hero of democracy. The use of the passive (VCE) in the utterance "he was involved in a struggle" is a pract which frames Tinubu as being the victim not an instigator of the struggle. The use of the verb "involved" also obscures his level of complicity in the struggle. This utterance is an assertive which relays the journalist's commitment to the truth of the proposition. It means the journalist is presenting the information as factual. The presentation of



(REL) information regarding the federal government's seizure of funds meant for Lagos state further leads readers to infer (INF) that Tinubu is a hero of democracy. This is information that can be (INF) from the (SSK) of Nigeria's context of the administration of justice. Readers may draw from the (REL) information that the Supreme Court is Nigeria's highest court of justice and for Tinubu to win in that court, he is the protagonist while Obasanjo is characterized as the villain who flouts a Supreme Court order. For the Federal Government to have lost a Supreme Court case and still continue to punish Tinubu's state, portrays Obasanjo and the Federal Government as the villains (MPH).

Excerpt 11 Leadership Newspaper (March 2023, <https://leadership.ng/king-at-last-tinubus-long-journey-to-president/>)

Many people suggested that PMB did not want Tinubu as his successor in spite of the role the former Lagos governor played in ensuring that he became President of Nigeria in 2015.

Pragmatic Analysis

Without an attribution to the source of the utterance, the voice (VCE) of the text can be alluded to as the opinion of the journalist. The use of the phrase "inspite of the role of the former Lagos governor..." Is a sentence adverbial which relays the (REL) of Tinubu's contributions to President Buhari's emergence. Nigerian readers may draw on the (SSK) to infer (INF) that Tinubu indeed believes that it is his turn to rule Nigeria. Again, this utterance evokes the imagery of the King (MPH) whereby people are installed in positions based on selection of the elite class and not necessarily because they are the choice of the people

Excerpt 12 Leadership Newspaper (March 2023, <https://leadership.ng/king-at-last-tinubus-long-journey-to-president/>)

This message was read as meant for Tinubu, who was the frontrunner for his party's nomination. The body language of PMB, as he foisted a chairman on the party who in turn tried to foist Ahmed Lawan as the APC presidential candidate gave the impression that all was sealed against Tinubu. Against all odds, with the support of nine APC Governors from Northern Nigeria, the use of his war-chest, etc., Tinubu emerged as APC's presidential candidate.

Pragmatic Analysis

The first underlined utterance is in the passive (VCE). This pract obscures agency of who exactly interpreted the message as directed from president Buhari to his party's candidate, Tinubu. Poulson (2023) posits that the use of passive constructions by news reporters is devised to insert unattributed information into a news story. With this pract not attributing the source of information, it suggests a bias or injection of the journalist's own views and opinion on the subject matter. The utterance frontrunner is an (MPH) pract which elicits the comparison of an election to a race wherein the frontrunner is the winner of the competition. Hence the election is not thought of as a democratic process whereby the electorate choose their leader, rather it is described as a party race in which the fastest runner with the skills to beat competitors wins. In this scenario, Tinubu is also characterized as the candidate facing opposition from even within his own party. The (SSK) of Tinubu's wealth is inferenced (INF) to further depict Tinubu as the warrior who won because he had the most financial resources in his war-chest. The utterances make use of expressives as evidenced by the use of sentence adverbials frontrunner and foisted which relay the journalist's attitude towards the truth condition of the proposition according to Searle (1969).

Premium Times Online News Website

Excerpt 13 was extracted from the from Premium Times news website (March 2023, (<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/2023-elections-presidential/>).

Mr Yakubu said a Certificate of Return for the President and Vice President will be presented by 3 p.m. on Wednesday at the National Collation Centre. Only the top four candidates won the presidential election in at least one state. Each of Messrs Tinubu, Atiku and Obi won in 12 states while Mr Kwankwaso won only in Kano. However, winning a majority of states is not a requirement for a candidate to be declared the winner of



the election.

Pragmatic Analysis

The journalist makes use of the formal markers in referring (REF) to the candidates and not calling them by name. This is a practice of respect to portray the journalist's sense of professionalism and non-bias. However, it is a practice which highlights the clause and contrastive elements between winning states and the declaration by INEC. It serves as a metapragmatic element (M) in the utterance as a caveat to show that the number of states won is not the only requirement for winning elections in Nigeria. The journalist makes use of attributions as a practice to distance the journalist from opinions that may be unfavourable, unpopular, sensitive, and to avoid culpability. Verbs of utterance, and identifiers such as he said, demarcate the voice of sources of information. These attributions are metapragmatic elements (M) intended to give the news report credibility and to mark the news as objectively forming public opinion. The focus of narration is marked by the various political candidates who provide diverse points of views in line with the journalistic principle of balance and fairness. Expert sources and empirical data from the INEC lend credence to the report. The (VCE) narrative is in the present tense to convey a sense of urgency, timeliness and immediacy.

Daily Trust Online News Website

Excerpts 14 and 15 were extracted sequentially from the Daily Trust news website (March 2023, <https://dailytrust.com/breaking-inec-declares-tinubu-president-elect/>).

INEC Declares Tinubu President-Elect

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has declared Asiwaju Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) President-elect. Prof Mahmood Yakubu, Chairman of the commission,

Pragmatic Analysis

The headline is short and straight to the point. This style of writing according to Pulson (2023) grabs reader's attention and improves clarity especially in online news reports due to the short attention span of readers in the digital age. The performative value is an assertive which is a pragmatic act that represents a state of affairs according to Searle (1969). Here the journalist tells the reader information that is deemed factual because the source of the information is the INEC which has the constitutional power in Nigeria (SSK) to declare a candidate president-elect. The (VCE) is in the active with the agency assigned to INEC and Tinubu the recipient of the action of declaration. The use of the honorific term (REF) Asiwaju is a practice of formality which relays the neutrality and professionalism of the journalist. The (REF) serves to distance the journalist from the subject matter to show that the relationship is one of formality and as such the journalist is assumed to be not biased towards the subject.

Excerpt 15 Daily Trust news website (March 2023, <https://dailytrust.com/breaking-inec-declares-tinubu-president-elect/>).

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has declared Asiwaju Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) President-elect. Prof Mahmood Yakubu, Chairman of the commission, pronounced Tinubu President-elect at exactly 4:10am on Wednesday He said Tinubu polled a total of 8,794,726 votes to defeat his Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) rival, Atiku Abubakar, who polled 6,984,520 votes while Peter Obi of Labour Party, secured 6,101,533, and Rabiu Kwankwaso of New Nigerian Peoples Party trailed with 1,496,687. He said valid votes were 24,025,940 and rejected votes were 939,278, while the total votes cast were 24,966,218. Declaring the final result, the INEC Chairman said Tinubu and the APC also satisfied the constitutional requirement. Yakubu said the certificate of return (CoR) would be issued to Tinubu and his running mate, Senator Kashim Shettima by 3pm on Wednesday.

Pragmatic Analysis

The utterance at exactly 4:10 am is a practice which calls on the (SSK) of the socio-political context in Nigeria to highlight and lead readers to (INF) about the legitimacy of the declaration. The (REL) of including the exact time is that the announcement was made in the early hours of the morning when most Nigerians were



asleep. Depending on which candidate the reader supports, the utterance may be interpreted as questioning the legitimacy of the announcement if it had to be made at night when most people were asleep to suppress violent reactions and protests or that it was announced at that time merely as a matter of it being a long meticulous process which took hours to complete. Verbs of utterance: He said, The INEC Chairman said, Yakubu said, are (REF) practs of credibility. The journalist's use of *verbum descendi* according to Mey (2016) serves to attribute the proper source of information. This gives the journalist credibility and relays the information as a transparent and factual account not just the journalist's personal opinions. The use of the formal title senator is a pract of formality and neutrality which relays that the journalist is setting a professional boundary between himself and the subject matter. If he were to call the vice president-elect by his first name, that may be interpreted as establishing a close informal relationship with the subject matter which could also be a marker for favouritism and bias in the news report. The performative of the utterances are assertive, depicting the journalist's commitment to the truth value of the propositions.

BBC Online News Website

Excerpts 16 to 20 were extracted from the BBC news website (March 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64760226>) from the online news report on March 1st 2023, the day the Nigeria 2023 presidential elections were announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC).

Excerpt 16 BBC news website (March 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64760226>).

Bola Tinubu wins Nigeria's presidential election against Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi Ruling party candidate Bola Tinubu has been declared the winner of Nigeria's disputed presidential election.

Pragmatic Analysis

The excerpt is the headline of the story. The performative classification is the assertive which show the journalist's commitment to the truth value of the proposition. This presents the utterance as factual. The sub-heading gives more information about the story. The (REF) ruling party candidate is a nominalization which relies on the (SSK) of readers being aware that the ruling party in Nigeria is the APC in order to (INF) that Tinubu has an advantage of the incumbent government especially as it relates to power transitions in Nigeria. Incumbent governments often have state resources and influence at their disposal which may give them an edge in elections. The use of the passive (VCE) has been declared, obscures agency of the INEC as the actor. This is perhaps an attempt to focalize the information as Tinubu's declaration not necessarily who made the declaration.

Based on the BBC's international outlook, the editorial decision might not necessarily be interested in the electoral umpire. The practice of electoral coverage in America is different from that of Nigeria. American news organizations are at liberty to announce the winner of elections based on their independent polling and voting data predictions. As such to an American audience the official electoral umpire might not be regarded as having a sacrosanct authority. In Nigeria however, only INEC has the constitutional power to declare a winner. Anything contrary to that will be against the law. The adjectival disputed is a pract which signifies the bias of the journalist. Without attributing the information to a source or using quotation marks, the reader is led to an (INF) that this is the opinion of the journalist. In analysing the (VCE), the journalist is the only identifiable voice because no other source has been attributed to the proposition. The (REL) of placing this pract at the top of the story also alludes to a framing or an attempt to orient the reader towards the worldview that the election is indeed popularly disputed.

Excerpt 17 BBC news website (March 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64760226>).

The 70-year-old veteran politician got 37% of the vote, official results show. His main rival Atiku Abubakar polled 29%, and Labour's Peter Obi 25%. He was nevertheless defeated in the city by Mr Obi, a relative newcomer who mobilised the support of many young people, especially in urban areas, shaking up the country's two-party system. Mr. Tinubu won most other states in his home region of the south-west, where he is known as a "political godfather" - for helping to put others into office. He campaigned for the presidency under the slogan: "Emi lo kan", which means "It's my turn" in Yoruba.



Pragmatic Analysis

The (REF) of the adjectival, 70 -year-old politician is a pract which reflects the journalist's bias in qualifying Tinubu's age. Moreso as the age of the other contenders are not mentioned. In subsequent sentences, the Labour Party's Mr. Obi is framed as popular with young people. This elicits the (INF) that he is younger and more energetic. As such being a newcomer able to shake up the country's two-party system are all metaphors (MPH) for his vibrance and fresh appeal to young Nigerians unlike the 70-year-old political godfather. The (REL) of foregrounding the information of Tinubu's defeat in his home state is another pract of bias. It shows the journalist's attempt to delegitimize Tinubu's win. After giving background information of Tinubu's campaign based on his track record of rebuilding Lagos when he was governor, presenting the information of his loss in the next sentence is cohesively linked to lead readers to the (INF) that Tinubu was unable to win his home state.

The (REL) of foregrounding this information is a pract to evoke the question of how Tinubu won the presidential election? In the instance that similar analysis of the other candidates' performances in their home states were not mentioned, the pract is a marker for bias. The Labour party's Peter Obi won mostly in the South-East and did not win core Northern states.

The PDP's Atiku Abubakar also won in majorly Northern states and did not win as many votes in the South-West. By omitting this key analysis, the journalist has pragmatically selected the opinions suitable to his narrative. The (REL) of including the slogan Emi lokan further frames Tinubu as a selfish politician who is focused on pursuing his own interests. The journalist also misrepresents the circumstances surrounding the emergence of the catch phrase E mi lo kan. The phrase emerged during a speech on the 3rd of June 2023 in Ogun state, while Mr. Tinubu was addressing members of his own party. In his speech to APC delegates ahead of the party's primaries, The Guardian newspaper quoted Tinubu as saying "It is my time, I am educated, I am experienced, I have been serving pe Bring me the presidency, it is my turn". Hence the BBC journalist's out of context quote is a pract which misrepresents the circumstances surrounding the pract Emi lokan.ople for a long time.

Excerpt 18 BBC news website (March 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64760226>).

Scenes of celebration have been reported in Mr Tinubu's strongholds in the south-western states. Traditional drummers lined the streets, beating their drums for excited dancers in Osun, while supporters marched to a live band in Ekiti. Some partied into the early hours in Lagos, even though he was defeated by Mr Obi in the city. The normally bustling streets of Lagos are relatively quiet on Wednesday, the usual rush-hour traffic has not been seen and some shops, businesses and banks have not opened.

Pragmatic Analysis

The (INF) from the underlined phrases is that the celebrations were limited to candidate Tinubu's strongholds alone. The first sentence is in the passive voice obscuring agency of who reported the scenes of celebration. This also shows the journalist's non-commitment to the truth of the proposition. This is achieved by distancing the source of the information from the journalist. The (REL) of the information that "Some partied into the early hours in Lagos, even though he was defeated by Mr Obi in the city. The normally bustling streets of Lagos are relatively quiet on Wednesday" Is to foreground the information that Tinubu lost his home state. Again, the journalist use of the adjectival, the normally bustling street of Lagos is another pract to portray the uncertainty that followed the announcement of Tinubu's victory in the presidential election.

Excerpt 19 BBC news website (March 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64760226>).

Life has returned to normal in places that did not support Mr Tinubu, like the capital, Abuja, and Kano in the north. In north-eastern Adamawa state, home to Mr Abubakar, there is an air of disappointment in the main city Yola, but grudging acceptance that after several attempts for the presidency, it is time for the former vice-president to move on. Mr Obi's stronghold in south-eastern Anambra state, where he once served as governor, is quiet but there is an underlying sense of bitter anger. Many feel frustrated at what they see as a



fraudulent electoral process.

Pragmatic Analysis

The (INF) of the first underlined utterance is that life has become abnormal for the places that supported Tinubu during the elections. While in places that supported Tinubu, people have gone about their normal life. The journalist's (VCE) is apparent with the expressive performative: there is an air of disappointment. The underlined phrases are expressive performatives which relay the journalist's opinions especially as the utterances are not attributed to any other source. These are practs of the journalists' personal opinions because the opinions (VCE) are not attributed to any source and there are no textual markers like quotation marks or verbs of utterance to show whose voice it is other than the journalist's. Expressive performatives relay the writer's attitudes and belief about the propositional content of utterances.

Excerpt 20 BBC news website (March 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64760226>).

He will now have to prove that he can hit the ground running and that he is still the same formidable force who built modern Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub. Mr Tinubu, known as "Jagaban" by supporters, will now be looking at unifying a country that is retreating into regional lines and religious blocs, as the election results show. While he met the 25% requirement in two-thirds of Nigeria's 36 states to show he was nationally accepted, the nature of the win indicates the absence of a truly national party. Mr Obi won in Christian-dominated states and former strongholds of the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party in the south, while the PDP support shrank back into its northern heartlands.

Pragmatic Analysis

The underlined utterance is the (VCE) of the journalist as it is not ascribed to anyone else. The journalist further ascribes judgement to the nature of Tinubu's win. This analysis is outside the journalistic intention of just relaying factual information. The journalist is not a political analyst nor is an expert on Nigeria's national values for him to express his opinion on these matters another pract of bias. The INEC only released the election results while the journalist has gone ahead to interpret the results based on his preconceived notion of regional lines and religious blocs. With the final paragraph of the news report ending on this note, the reader is left with the inference (INF) that Tinubu's presidency is not accepted by the majority of Nigerians. This is another attempt by the journalist to influence the reader with his own bias.

CNN

Excerpts 21 and 22 were extracted from the CNN news website (March 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/28/africa/nigeria-presidential-election-result-intl-hnk/index.html>). on March 1st 2023, the day the Nigeria 2023 presidential elections were announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC).

Excerpt 21 CNN news website (March 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/28/africa/nigeria-presidential-election-result-intl-hnk/index.html>)

A Nigerian opposition party has said it will launch a legal challenge after Bola Ahmed Tinubu was on Wednesday declared the winner of Nigeria's controversial presidential elections. Tinubu, 70, represents the ruling All Progressives Congress party, which received close to 8.8 million votes – about 36.6% of the total, according to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) chairman Mahmood Yakubu.. "We won this election as Labour Party, we are going to claim our mandate as Labour Party," said Datti-Baba Ahmad, the party's Vice Presidential candidate.

Pragmatic Analysis

The information about the opposition's rejection and legal challenge is foregrounded over Tinubu's emergence as winner of the elections. The relevance (REL) of this information hierarchy is that the reader is oriented towards a negative disposition on Tinubu's emergence as president. The journalist furthers this line of thought with the nominalization of the election as being controversial. The use of (REF) to categorize the candidates have metaphorical evocations (MPH) Peter Obi is portrayed as being the better candidate because he



was popular among young people. Atiku Abubakar is portrayed as being part of the political establishment by referring to him as vice president and only Tinubu's age is mentioned as being a 70-year-old. The mentioning of his age is a pract to draw attention to his weakness starkly contrasted with the candidate popular among young people.

The (REL) of foregrounding the information about the Labour party's reaction to the election result is another pract of bias. Choosing to present the quotation of the lesser-known Labour party, further presents the party in favourable light. With the journalistic convention of presenting the most important information first, the Labour party's views are thus presented as being the most important.

Excerpt 22 CNN news website (March 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/28/africa/nigeria-presidential-election-result-intl-hnk/index.html>)

Kingmaker turned king, after decades spent behind the scenes, Tinubu launched his campaign for the presidency with the motto: "It's my turn." He will become Nigeria's fifth elected president since 1999, winning the race for the country's top job on his first attempt. Vote counting since Saturday's polls has been vehemently challenged by many who allege the process has been marred by corruption and technical failures. On Tuesday, the country's main opposition parties described the results of the election as "heavily doctored and manipulated" in a joint news conference.

Pragmatic Analysis

In excerpt 22, the subheading is textually foregrounded. The reference (REF) of Tinubu as king and kingmaker implies that Tinubu's candidacy and impending presidency are monarchical in negation to Nigeria's democratic system of government. The allusion to a past role as a kingmaker and his transition to becoming a king relays the information that Tinubu has not followed the free and fair route to the presidency. The pract ascribed to Tinubu "It's my turn" can be seen as a directive performative, where he is expressing his intention to run for president and uses the assertive performative to convey his sense of entitlement. Tinubu's use of the phrase "It's my turn" carries the pragmatic meaning of entitlement or expectation, suggesting that he believes it is his time to hold the presidency. Buhari's congratulatory statement can be seen as an expressive performative, where he is expressing his feelings of approval and support for Tinubu. This carries the pragmatic meaning of endorsement and approval, indicating his support for Tinubu as his successor. The Labour Party's statement describing the election results as "heavily doctored and manipulated" is an expressive performative, whereby they claim the election process was flawed. The opposition's statement carries the pragmatic meaning of protest and accusation, suggesting that they believe the election results were not fair or accurate.

Discussion of Findings

The foregoing pragmatic analysis established textual evidence of framing techniques used by the journalists in reporting the results of Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections. The following is a discussion of key findings guided by the article's delineated research questions.

In answering research question 1, what are the pragmatic framing techniques used in selected online news reports on Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections? The study found that the journalists in this study, made specific lexical selections and choice of utterances out of the vast array of choices in their lexicon to evoke frames which characterize elections as a competitive sport and warfare where winners emerge and losers are vanquished. Textual evidence arises from the use of metaphors which carry connotations quite different from literal meaning. Just as Arseneault (2016) defines metaphors as a figurative embellishment of language in which the utterance's literal meaning is different from the conveyed proposition, metaphors function to ascribe the features of one thing on another. Essentially two concepts juxtaposed and compared.

One example of the use of metaphors to characterise elections as a competitive sport, arises in Excerpt 12, the lexical selection of the adjectival "frontrunner" is a metaphorical pract (MPH) which evokes the mental construct and comparison of an election to a race wherein the frontrunner is the winner of the competition.

Hence the election is not thought of as a democratic process whereby the electorate chooses their leader,



rather it is described as a party race in which the fastest runner with the skills to beat competitors wins. In this scenario, Tinubu is also characterized as the candidate facing opposition from even within his own party. In this case, the journalist also draws on contextual knowledge, inferring the assumed shared situational knowledge (SSK) of Tinubu's wealth. This is inferred (INF) to further depict Tinubu as a warrior who won because he had the most financial resources in his "war-chest". The performative function of the utterance is an expressive. This is because sentence adverbials frontrunner and foisted relay the journalist's attitude towards the truth condition of the proposition according to Searle (1969).

Excerpt 2 from the Punch newspaper, also furthers the narrative of metaphorical use of language to represent elections as a competitive race. Here elections are characterised as a competitive race. The phrase "The three leading candidates won while kwankwaso only claimed Kano state" evokes the metaphorical frame (MPH) of identity politics and party loyalty. The journalist could have just written "the three candidates" and identified them by name. However, the practice of choosing to use the adjective "leading" to modify the noun candidates, frames the candidates as superior to Kwankwaso. The use of the adverb "only" is also a practice which modifies Kwankwaso's achievement limiting him as inferior in comparison to the other candidates. The lexical choice of the verbs "edged", "ousted", and the noun "challenger" furthers the framing of elections as a fierce competitive race. The relevance (REL) of presenting the information that Tinubu won the elections at his first attempt, portrays Tinubu as a strategic and successful leader, and influential candidate. This evokes the metaphorical frame (MPH) of leadership being associated with Tinubu. This is furthered by the use of phrases such as "leading the coalition", and "extended his influence". The narrative structure of presenting a chronological progression of Tinubu's political career from senator to governor, and now president, presents a storyline of logical progression and growth. This positive framing of Tinubu as a strategic and influential leader, may lead readers to the inference (INF) that he is a credible leader and his victory may be perceived as well-earned.

Excerpt 3 which reads: (Aside from Tinubu; Obi; Atiku, and Kwankwaso, other candidates that gunned for the nation's oval office...) continues the warfare metaphor. Another example can be found in Excerpt 1. The journalist's lexical choice of the phrase "INEC Declares Tinubu winner" is a frame which connotes a competition where a winner emerges and others lose out. In this case "winner" is a metaphorical frame which evokes the mental construct of a competitive sport.

An alternative choice of words could have been INEC declares Tinubu President. However, making the lexical selection of the noun "winner", an expressive, over the choice of a seemingly neutral noun: president, is a pragmatic act (pract) which frames elections as a competition among candidates. Excerpt 12 also presents textual evidence of the use of metaphors (MPH) to characterize elections as competitive warfare. Excerpt 12 reads thus "This message was read as meant for Tinubu, who was the frontrunner for his party's nomination. Against all odds, with the support of nine APC Governors from Northern Nigeria, the use of his war-chest, etc., Tinubu emerged as APC's presidential candidate. The underlined serve to reference and characterise Tinubu as a winner. This begs the question; how should other candidates be characterised? If one person is singled out as winner, the logical assumption follows that the others have lost out. Evidenced by the foregoing examples, the use of metaphors by journalists in this study connotes a frame wherein Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections was presented as a competitive sport, race or warfare. The pragmatic description of metaphors highlights the fact that the metaphors used elicit and convey a different meaning from what is actually said. The journalists' use of language evokes meaning and inferences, different from literal meaning. Metaphors are essentially nonstandard and deviate pragmatically from ordinary literal language. The use of metaphors here transfers the qualities of warfare, competitive sports and racing to the democratic conduct of elections, in which case this comparison does not necessarily meet the felicity conditions for the description.

In answering research question 2, how are pragmatic techniques used to frame reportage in the selected online news reports? Evidence can be found in the foregrounding of informational content. For example, the use of headlines pragmatically frames the informational content of the headline as more important than other parts



of the news report. The inverted pyramid style of news writing also frames informational content in a hierarchical scale whereby the most important information is presented before the least in a descending order. Textual evidence can be found in Excerpt 6: KING AT LAST!: Tinubu's Long Journey To President. The excerpt is the headline of the news report. With journalistic writing being hinged on maximising informational content for the reader based on relevance, the journalists and editors have made this specific linguistic choice of headline as a title which is foregrounded to capture reader's attention. The headline uses "King" as a metaphor which evokes a sense of monarchy. The journalist's choice of headline potentially elicits inferences that Tinubu's emergence as president is more of a royal ascension than a popular vote election by the Nigerian people. It also conveys a sense of victory over the vanquished, thus positioning Tinubu as a dominant figure.

The prepositional phrase at last also infers that it has been a long-term plan for Tinubu to be president. The use of the exclamation mark signals the pragmatic act of assertion, a sweeping emphatic statement. In terms of performative function, this head line is an assertive. Assertives according to Searle's (1969) theory, are utterances which commit the speaker to the truth value of the proposition. In this case, the journalist in making this choice of lexical selection asserts that Tinubu is indeed a "King". For the fact that the headline is not attributed to anyone else, the inference is that this is the voice of the reporter or the opinion of the Leadership editorial board. According to The Missouri Group (2014), editors are the gatekeepers who decide the newspaper's standpoint on key issues. Due to the gravity of election results, it is expected that this particular headline will not be published without proper vetting. The use of the lexical item "journey" is also a metaphor (MPH) which elicits the inference (INF) that Tinubu's emergence has been a long and perhaps painstaking process. A "long journey" in which readers may be oriented to sympathize with Tinubu's personal struggle culminating in a hard-won success. The relevance (REL) of the possessive apostrophe "s" in "Tinubu's Long Journey" is a pragmatic act (pract) which points to Tinubu's personal ambitions being framed as more important than the political event. This personalization also frames the informational content in such a way that Tinubu is foregrounded as being the focal point of the news story.

In excerpt 4, the narrative structure of presenting a chronological progression of Tinubu's political career from senator to governor and now president, presents a storyline of logical progression and growth. This positive framing of Tinubu as a strategic and influential leader, may lead readers to the inference (INF) that he is a credible leader and his victory may be perceived as well-earned. In addition to conspicuously positioning information, the associations of words with familiar cultural symbols for the reader is another means through which frames are evoked. An example of this frame can be found in Excerpt 18. The excerpt associates the cultural symbol of traditional drummers to evoke a frame of celebration. This draws on the shared situational knowledge (SSK) and infers (INF) that the celebrations were limited to candidate Tinubu's strongholds alone. The (REL) of the information that "Some partied into the early hours in Lagos, even though he was defeated by Mr Obi in the city. The normally bustling streets of Lagos are relatively quiet on Wednesday", is to foreground the information that Tinubu lost his home state.

Again, the journalist's use of the adjectival, "the normally bustling street of Lagos" is another pract to portray the uncertainty that followed the announcement of Tinubu's victory in the presidential election. The above-mentioned examples are textual evidence of how the foregrounding of informational content, the use of headlines, and the inverted pyramid style of news writing and association of cultural symbols are used as framing techniques to orient readers towards a particular worldview. This answers research question 2: how are pragmatic techniques used to frame reportage in the selected online news reports? Evidence was found in the use of headlines to pragmatically frame the informational content of the headline as more important than other parts of the news report and the inverted pyramid style of news writing which also frames informational content in a hierarchical scale whereby the most important information is presented before the least in a descending order.

In answering research question 3, what is the contextual relevance of framing techniques in the selected online news reports? The study found that certain frames call attention to ideas embedded in culture. Hence



framing techniques were used to link cultural symbols and artefacts to certain point of views or worldviews, thereby orienting readers towards a particular stance on socio-political issues. This was achieved by linking metaphors to culturally relevant concepts and symbols. These associations highlight memorable artefacts of culture, ideology and history. The connotations then evoke ethnic sentiments already embedded in the Nigerian society. This potentially colours the perception of readers about particular issues. By acknowledging the ethnic affiliations and religious inclinations of candidates, the frames establish links between culture and political outlook. As such, cultural references can be used to influence readers to identify either positively or negatively with certain candidates. This can further in-group and out-group dynamics. One consequence of group segregation is the alignment with certain values, political perspectives and the reinforcement of stereotypes and biases. If the news report aligns with a particular group, it then frames that group positively over an out-group. For example, the BBC news report characterised Tinubu using his ethnic identity as quoted. "He campaigned for the presidency under the slogan: "Emi lo kan", which means "It's my turn" in Yoruba." The relevance (REL) of including the slogan Emi lokan further frames Tinubu as a self-centered politician who is focused on pursuing his own interests. The journalist also misrepresents the circumstances surrounding the emergence of the catch phrase E mi lo kan. The phrase was not an official campaign slogan. Rather, it emerged during a speech on the 3rd of June 2023 in Ogun state, while Mr. Tinubu was addressing members of his own party.

In his speech to APC delegates ahead of the party's primaries, the Guardian newspaper quoted Tinubu as saying "It is my time, I am educated, I am experienced, I have been serving people for a long time. Bring me the presidency it is my turn". Hence the BBC journalist's out of context quote is a pract which misrepresents the circumstances surrounding the pract "Emi lokan". The use of framing techniques by journalists has weighty implications for peaceful coexistence. In a multi-ethnic, and multi-religious country like Nigeria, journalist can either promote peace or incense the public with their reportage.

Conclusion

This research demonstrated how some journalist's choice of words frame news and potentially orient readers towards certain points of views or worldviews. Elections are an important governance process in democratic societies as such a linguistic study of the implications of information dissemination in the global South is a veritable academic pursuit. It highlights the potentials to shape the public's understanding of information for peaceful co-existence or otherwise. This is evidenced by the important role of the media and journalists in fostering peace. The process of news reporting is a constructed form in which journalists shape the context and mode of information presentation. Consequently, the news shapes the viewpoints of the audience and bears great impact in the social construction of reality and ideology. In national elections, the imperative for credible information dissemination is vital for peaceful existence. Especially in a multi-religious and ethnically diverse country like Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the huge population of over two hundred million according to the World Bank (2024), makes elections a complex process. In the North-east region, the threat of the Boko Haram insurgency, kidnappings and economic downturn highlight the urgency of the situation and need for continuous peacebuilding and development. This research's findings prove that the media's framing of the news can be a tool for combating insecurity and promoting peace and development. Nigeria's huge population and economic potential makes the country a significant factor in global discourse and power relations. In the digital world of online news, misinformation and disinformation loom large. They bear dangerous implications for peaceful coexistence for the citizenry. Selective reporting of information can have incendiary repercussions for society. By shaping the reader's understanding of the world, the interpretation of important events such as elections, can either spark crisis or temper emotions and inspire peaceful co-existence. Since this study focused on the journalistic point of view, opportunities for further research lie in the exploration of audience perceptions regarding the content of news.



References

- Adeoti, O. (2023). A pragmatic analysis of selected newspapers' coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 5(1), 93–113. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v5i1.1206>
- Ajayi, T. M., & Ajayi, D. O. (2014). Language and politicking: A pragmatic analysis of political texts in political posters and jingles in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Advances in Linguistics*, 3(3).
- Akindele, F., & Adegbite, W. (2005). *The sociology and politics of English in Nigeria*. Ife: O.A.U Press.
- Al-Hindawi, F., & Al-Aadili, N. (2020). News pragmatics. *Pragmatics*, 8(2), 147-183.
- Aremu, M. (2017). Pragmatic analysis of conceptual mappings in inaugural speeches of Nigerian presidents. *Covenant Journal of Language Studies*, 5(2), 32-47. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:54753855>
- Ariel, M. (2010). *Defining pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Arseneault, M. (2016). *Metaphor: Philosophical theories*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Barber, E. (2014). Voice – beyond the passive. *Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.3765/bls.v1i0.2356>
- BBC. (2023, March 1). Bola Tinubu wins Nigeria's presidential election against Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi. <https://www.bbc.com>
- Bell, A. (1995). Language and the media. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 15(3), 23–41.
- Blench, R. (2019). *An atlas of Nigerian languages* (4th ed.). Cambridge: Kay Williamson Educational Foundation.
- Chomsky, N. (1980). *Rules and representations*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- CNN. (2023, March 1). Opposition vows challenge as Tinubu wins Nigerian presidency. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/28/africa/nigeria-presidential-election-result-intl-hnk/index.html>
- Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2017). *The mediated construction of reality*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Daily Trust. (2023, March 1). INEC declares Tinubu president-elect. <https://dailytrust.com/breaking-inec-declares-tinubu-president-elect/>
- Daily Trust. (n.d.). <https://dailytrust.com/about-us/>
- De Vreese, C. H. (2005). *News framing: Theory and typology*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Entman, R. M. (1989). *Democracy without citizens: Media and the decay of American politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.
- European Union. (2023). *Nigeria 2023 general elections report*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-nigeria-2023/european-union-election-observation-mission-nigeria-2023-final-report_en
- Fairclough, N. (2016). *Meta-pragmatics, hidden assumptions, and moral economy*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
- Falola, T. (1998). *Violence in Nigeria: The crisis of religious politics and secular ideologies*. University of Rochester.
- Falola, T., & Heaton, M. M. (2008). *A history of Nigeria*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Federal Ministry of Information and Culture. (n.d.). <https://fmic.gov.ng/about-us/>
- Google Trends. (2021). *Daily Trust among most searched newspapers on Google*. <https://dailytrust.com/daily-trust-among-most-searched-newspapers-on-google/>
- Grice, H. P. (1989). *Studies in the way of words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Griffiths, P. (2006). *An introduction to English semantics and pragmatics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd.



- Guldemann, T., & Roncador, M. (Eds.). (2002). *Reported discourse: A meeting ground for different linguistic domains*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Kayode, J. (2011). *Journalism ethics in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited.
- Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2014). *The elements of journalism*. New York: Crown Publishing.
- Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2021). *The elements of journalism, revised and updated 4th edition: What news people should know and the public should expect*. Crown.
- Kurzon, D. (2016). Tongue-tied: Pragmemes and practices of silence in literary texts. In K. Allan, A. Capone, & I. Kecskes (Eds.), *Pragmemes and theories of language use* (pp.265-286). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43491-9_15
- Lakoff, G. (2005). *Don't think of an elephant! Know your values and frame the debate*. Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Lakoff, G. (2014). *Don't think of an elephant: Know your values and frame the debate*. Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Leadership. (2023, March 1). King at last!: Tinubu's long journey to president. <https://leadership.ng/king-at-last-tinubus-long-journey-to-president/>
- Leadership. (n.d.). *About us*. <https://leadership.ng/?s=About+us>
- Mey, J. L. (2001). *Pragmatics: An introduction* (2nd rev. and enlarged edn.). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Mey, J. L. (2007). *Pragmatics: An introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- Mey, J. L. (2011). Pragmatics and literature. In W. Bublitz & N. Norrick (Eds.), *Foundations of pragmatics* (pp. 511-536).Göttingen: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Mey, J. L. (2016). Practs and facts. In K. Allan, A. Capone, & I. Kecskes (Eds.), *Pragmemes and theories of language use* (pp. 239-248). Cham: Springer.
- Ojala, M. (2021). Is the age of impartial journalism over? The neutrality principle and audience (dis)trust in mainstream news. *Journalism Studies*, 22(15), 2042-2060.
- Peirce, C. S. (1980). *Writings of Charles S. Peirce. Vol. 1: 1857–1866*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Premium Times. (2023, March 1). *INEC declares APC's Bola Tinubu winner of Nigeria's presidential election*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/585443-breaking-inec-declares-apcs-bola-tinubu-winner-of-nigerias-presidential-election.html>
- Premium Times. (n.d.). *About us*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/>
- Punch. (2023). *INEC declares Tinubu winner of presidential election*. <https://punchng.com/inec-declares-tinubu-winner-of-presidential-election/>
- Punch. (n.d.). *About us*. <https://punchng.com/about-us/>
- Reuters Institute. (2024). *Digital news report 2024*. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024/dnr-executive-summary>
- Khalid, R., & Shahid, A. (2024). Exploring the Dynamics of Paid Academic Writings in Pakistani and Foreign Universities. *Apex Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(2), 1-31.
- Searle, J. (1969). *Speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Senft, G. (2014). *Understanding pragmatics*. New York: Routledge.
- Shahid, A. (2024). Youth Political Engagement via Facebook: A Netnographic Exploration of Political Activism in Pakistan. *United Frontiers Conference Proceedings (UFCP)*, 2(1), 8. <https://doi.org/10.56868/ufcp.v2i1.33>
- The Guardian. (2023). Tinubu's glorious return to Gateway State, the state of Emilokan, Olule. <https://guardian.ng/politics/tinubus-glorious-return-to-gateway-state-the-state-of-emilokan-olule/>
- The Missouri Group. (2014). *News reporting and writing*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- The World Bank Group. Population data - Nigeria. Retrieved May 25, 2022, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=NG>



- Thogmartin, C. (1991). The pragmatics of French newspaper headlines: Levels of linguistic adaptation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 249-266. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.6.2.16tho>
- We Are Social & Meltwater. (2024). *Digital2024: Nigeria*. Retrieved July 15, 2024, from <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-nigeria?rq=Nigeria%202023>
- Wodak, R., & Fairclough, N. (1997). *Discourse as social interaction*. London: Sage.
- Wolf, J. T. (2018). Trending in the right direction: Using Google Trends data as a measure of public opinion during a presidential election (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Tech).
- World Atlas. (2023). What languages are spoken in Nigeria? <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-languages-are-spoken-in-nigeria.html>
- World Bank. (2023). *Nigeria: Population*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=NG>
- Yule, G. (2006). *The study of language* (3rd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

