

Negative Image Formation: A Multimodal Critical Discourse
Analysis of Political Campaign Songs in Nigerian Electoral
Discourse

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts in English

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

The thesis is conducted in accordance with all ethical guidelines. These guidelines are covered in greater detail in the methodology section

Abstract

Politicians strategically use language to degrade their opponents and persuade the electorate to think, behave, and vote in certain ways. The 2023 Nigerian General Elections witnessed an interesting use of various communicative modes for meaning-making. This study employs a qualitative research method, using a case-study design, to examine negative image formation in Nigerian political settings. While past studies have examined different political discourses in Nigeria, the present study focuses on how politicians use language to misrepresent their opponents and manipulate the electorate in the 2023 Nigerian General Elections' campaign songs. To deconstruct the language and imagery used in these songs, I employ Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the main theoretical framework and Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar framework of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as a supportive framework. The findings reveal how politicians craft their messages by exploiting socio-political situations and using various discursive strategies, linguistic features, and modes to construct negative images of their opponents and manipulate the electorate through different means. I argue that such strategies are problematic to a democratic system, as they create negative images of others and manipulate voting behaviours, resulting in poor electoral outcomes.

Keywords: Negative Image Formation, Political Campaign Songs, 2023 Nigerian General Elections, Political Discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis

Dedication

With deepest gratitude, I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents and dearest siblings, whose love, support, and shared joy made this journey a collective effort.

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First and foremost, all praise and thanks are due to Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, for His infinite grace and blessings that have guided me throughout this journey. As the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

“مَنْ لَا يَشْكُرُ النَّاسَ لَا يَشْكُرُ اللَّهَ”

“He who does not thank the people, is not thankful to Allah”

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the thesis by first outlining the background of the study, which sets the stage for understanding the context and significance of the research. Following this, I present the study's aims and objectives, detailing the research's specific goals and intentions. In addition, the chapter includes the hypothesis that states the prediction about what this study will find and provides a foundation for the analysis and discussion that follows.

1.2. Background of the Study

Every four years, Nigerians reaffirm their commitment to democracy by participating in elections to elect their leaders. This process allows them to assess and determine whom they wish to reelect or terminate from office using their permanent voter's card (PVC). As usual, Nigerians again exercised this democratic right as they elected their preferred president, vice president, governors, senators, and representatives on Saturday, 25th of February, 2023. This drew the curtain on the administration of the outgoing President, Muhammadu Buhari, who had served for two consecutive terms and was therefore ineligible to seek another term. Buhari was elected president in 2015 with promises to address the issues surrounding the economy, corruption, and insecurity (Adetayo et al., 2023). However, his regime has been widely criticised for falling short of expectations. The country's economy experienced two recessions in the last five years and alarmed levels of insecurity marked by frequent killings and kidnappings. Mindful of these issues and the desire for change, the

recently concluded general elections campaigns centred on these issues, with candidates and parties criticising each other for the country's current state.

In the 2023 Nigerian General Elections, Nigeria's politics witnessed significant changes, with eighteen prominent political figures vying to succeed Buhari. Three contestants were considered top contenders: Bola Tinubu, Atiku Abubakar, and Peter Obi. During the time of the election, three words were coined in the political discourse of Nigeria, which are all connected to the three candidates each. These are *BATified*, *Atikulatated* and *Obi-dient*. While the words cannot be found in any dictionary, they all have different contextual meanings, with 'BAT' being the acronym for Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and one can risk concluding that the other part 'ified', is from the word 'satisfied,' leading to the formation of the new word 'BATified' (Lasisi, 2022). On the other hand, Lasisi notes that 'Atikulatated' was coined from the candidate's name 'Atiku' and 'articulated', while 'Obi-dient' is from 'Obi' and the word 'obidient.' This is another evidence that the collection of political registers keeps evolving. Before and during the election period, supporters of these candidates use hashtags like #IamBATified, #IamAtikulatated, and #IamObidient to connect and be identified with their respective supported candidates.

Notably, Nigeria is almost evenly split between Christians and Muslims. There has been a long-standing agreement between the main political parties to share power between the North and South and Christians and Muslims (Adetayo et al., 2023). While Atiku, a northern Muslim, selected Ifeanyi Okowa, the former governor of Delta State in the south and a Christian, as his running mate in the 2023 Nigerian General Elections, Orjinmo (2023) notes that Tinubu's choice of running mate, Kashim Shettima, the former governor of Borno, has drawn controversy. Both Tinubu and Shettima are Muslims, respectively, hailing from Nigeria's southwest and northeast regions. While some have expressed concerns about a Muslim-Muslim ticket's viability, Tinubu and others argued that competency should trump

religious considerations (Orjinmo, 2023). Tinubu and Shettima eventually emerged as the 2023 Nigerian General Elections winners, defying initial expectations. On the other hand, Obi, a Christian and a wealthy businessman known for his frugality and oversight of infrastructure projects during his time as governor, selected Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed, a Muslim and former senator from the northwestern state of Kaduna, as his running mate (Adetayo et al., 2023). Interestingly, multiple polls on social media platforms like Twitter have predicted a victory for Obi, but many political parties dismissed his supporters as “social media voters” advocating for a “social media president.”

1.3. Aims and Objectives

This study aims to analyse and deconstruct the language and imagery used in Nigerian political campaign songs to understand their role in the formation of negative images of opposing candidates and parties. Therefore, I investigate how Nigerian politicians use multimodal elements - both lyrical and visual - to construct negative images of others and influence voters' perceptions and behaviours.

The specific objectives of the research are to:

- Investigate and analyse the discursive strategies and tactics employed in Nigerian political campaign songs to construct negative images of opponents.
- Examine the linguistic features and modes found in political campaign songs, including lexical items, phrases, sentence constructions, texts, and symbols.
- Explore the socio-political factors that motivate negative image formation in political campaign discourse in Nigeria and assess how these factors impact Nigeria's political process and society.

1.4. Hypothesis

Political campaign songs in Nigeria utilise various linguistic and rhetorical strategies and tactics to construct negative images of opponents and influence the electorate's perceptions and attitudes. Thus, the impact of such campaign songs is likely to manifest in altered voting behaviours, heightened political polarisation, eroded trust in democratic institutions, and societal divisions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine various studies on the creative use of language in political contexts to understand existing research and integrate these findings with my current research to advance the field of political discourse. The chapter begins by discussing the concept of political discourse and reviewing the connection between language and politics, focusing on discussion on the main objective of the study. Moreover, this chapter contextualises this study by reviewing past studies on political campaigns in Nigeria and negative image formation in politics, guiding the analysis chapter.

2.2. Defining Political Discourse

The importance of language in human connection can not be overemphasised, as it acts as a conventional medium for propagating a speech community's ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings (Abdulmir, 2023). Therefore, language is perceived as a discourse, either written or spoken communication, through which humans can identify and interpret each other's thoughts in the specific contexts it is used (McCarthy & Clancy, 2019). For every discourse, there is a unique language associated with it, and the same applies to political discourse. According to Sun and Liu (2023), political discourse is a type of discourse by which speakers use language to negotiate and influence others' thoughts by aligning the audience to accept their political views and/or legitimise their actions. Thus, Van Dijk (1997) perceives political discourse as a type of discourse that can be identified by its actors, mainly the politicians and parties interacting with the public in a political process. That being the case, Moody and Eslami (2020) state that political discourse is a domain of struggle for

different power groups that engage in a competitive race to gain public support, often by discrediting their opponents.

Van Dijk (1997) further defines political discourse analysis (PDA) as the study of text and talk of authors within the field of politics; its nature, functions, and impacts on the creation, preservation, exploitation, and opposition of power dynamics in modern society. However, Chilton (2004) mentions that the study is not limited to the analysis of structural features of text or talk only. Instead, he asserts that it encompasses an in-depth analysis, considering the discourse's context and its connections to discursive structures. Political discourse, like other domains, is identified by its participants who are either elected or self-assigned and get paid for their political activities (Van Dijk, 1997), which involves utilising various discourse strategies and rhetorical techniques to promote their ideologies and differentiate themselves from their opponents (McCarthy & Clancy, 2019). In light of this, Chilton (2004) states that as political discourse is identified by not only the politicians but also their audience, there is a need to focus on the audience when analysing a political text.

2.3. Interconnection of Language and Politics

Language and Politics are interwoven, two entities that cannot be separated from each other, with language directly shaping politics and politics impacting language use (Chen & Madiyeva, 2022). Thus, both entities are directly associated with each other, and there is no politics without language. This is supported by the view that language is undisputedly what creates politics (Abdulmir, 2023), and there would be no political activities without the deliberate use of language to craft and advance a particular political agenda (Chilton, 2004). Given that language and politics are interrelated, Chen and Madiyeva (2022) assert that politicians use language to demonstrate their concerns toward their people so that the people can feel a sense of unity with shared interests. In this regard, Velasco (2021) concludes that

political discourse cannot exist without the practice of language; it acts as a primary tool in any given political domain and is the key to people's hearts. Agreeing with Velasco, Opeibi (2008, as cited in Adukpo et al., 2020) posits that regardless of the excellence of a candidate's manifesto or the strength of their political party, if he is not good with words, such a manifesto cannot be influential or be fully realised.

Accordingly, Chilton (2004) views language as an everyday instrument for politicians that they use to persuade the electorate to identify and agree with their ideology, hence achieving their personal set of goals. Speaking about the importance of language in a multilingual, political context, Opeibi (2008, as cited in Ikeh et al., 2021) argues that language takes the central role in political mobilisation in such a context. Moreover, in such a society as the Nigerian multilingual speech community, political actors deploy code-switching to communicate their message during political campaigns effectively (Tanimu & Suleiman, 2023). The prevalence of this phenomenon is on the rise globally. Moody and Eslami (2020) also conclude, after examining a quote from a United States senator, Tim Kaine, that bi- and multilingual politicians use code-switching to highlight the key points of their speech and political goals. This research suggests the importance of language in politics - a factor politicians use to create intimacy with their people, validate themselves as the right options, and/or discredit their opponents. Therefore, Velasco (2021) stresses that politics is all about action, and language and action are intricately linked as words themselves are actions; thus, the interconnection between language and politics becomes evident.

2.4. Political Campaigns in Nigeria

According to Ademilokun and Olateju (2023), political campaigns are inevitable in a political domain, with their primary goal being to present political plans and build a relationship between politicians and the masses. They further assert that it can be argued that

political campaigns are as old as democratic politics, given that they provide the electorate with information necessary for making choices. A study conducted by Daniel (2019) reveals that politicians in Nigeria, much like their counterparts in other regions, employ a distinctive thug-like language style during political campaign periods, often to intimidate and instil fear in others. The reason behind this is to give extra effect and force their message to discredit their opponents, get more significant support from the electorate, and win more votes when it is time for elections (Hassan, 2023). While tracing the origin of political campaigns in Nigeria, Garba et al. (2022) state that political campaigns reached their climax in the domain of electoral processes since the country gained its independence in 1960, with the primary purpose of language usage not being to communicate effectively, but rather to deceive.

Among the features that helped political campaigns reach their climax since this period is that the politicians use different forms of rhetoric techniques, such as making good promises and referencing the words of God and the past, among others (Omozuwa & Ezejideaku, 2008). Since then, political campaign language in Nigeria has been rhetorically persuasive, with politicians using different rhetoric techniques, linguistic propaganda, and other devices in their campaigns (Ikeke, 2021). He further mentions that many politicians often make fake promises, quote religious texts, refer to the past, and portray themselves in messianic terms, suggesting they are the sole qualified candidates capable of helping the people. In Nigeria, political campaigns often disregard the genuine freedoms of speech and association for opponents, with parties and their candidates speaking that allegiance to a single party is mandatory, branding dissenters as enemies to be destroyed (Ikeke, 2021). Supporting this claim, Inegbe (2024) concludes that modern Nigerian politicians indulge in linguistic violence or violent use of language to harm their opponents during electoral campaigns and secure more votes.

2.5. Negative Image Formation in Politics

In his article, Van Dijk (2006) perceives political discourse as manipulative in which politicians give negative other-representation. The consequence on the recipients (i.e., the electorate) is that they would not be able to decode the hidden meaning of their utterances or understand the real intentions behind their actions and the consequences these later have on them. According to Garzia and Da Silva (2022), the type of language used by political candidates during a political campaign or the parties they belong to not only affects voters' decision-making but also impacts their level of commitment to a particular party and its candidate. Reiter and Matthes (2021) take this argument further, stating that their findings show that political trust is the legitimate foundation of a democratic political system, and campaigns that use negative language can be detrimental to the system in such a way that it reduces political effectiveness and decreases people's trust in government. While political actors use language to build their own reputation via positive campaigning and damage their opponents' reputation via negative campaigning (Bernhardt & Ghosh, 2020), Haas et al. (2020), in a later study, raise the question of whether it is fair to highlight the flaws of an opponent or not and most importantly if negative election campaigns are problematic.

To answer this question, Reiter and Matthes (2021), Garzia and Da Silva (2022), and Klinger et al. (2022) suggest that no candidate can speak honestly about his manifesto without comparing himself with his opponent in the form of negative campaigning, highlighting noticeable differences between them and why he is a better choice for the masses. A recent study by Haselmayer (2019) further argues that voters can be informed about the failures and misdoings of candidates when they attack each other. However, Klinger et al. (2022) point out that this strategy can also deform political discourse, lead the way to political separation and differences, and demotivate the electorate to exercise their right. In

addition, Haselmayer (2019) views negative image formation as when candidates choose to attack and criticise their opponents in a political discourse rather than focusing more on their own policy proposals, which in turn affects the electorate and how they perceive democracy. Similarly, Klinger et al. (2022) and Nai et al. (2022) perceive negative image formation as a result of the use of negative campaigning strategies, which include all forms of disapproval, criticism, and attack messages to portray the opponents' characters or positions on issues as undesirable and challenge their competence to govern.

2.6. Theoretical Frameworks

Here, I review the two conceptual frameworks that I employed for the data analysis of this study, including CDA and MDA, to understand the role of discursive strategies in political campaign songs in constructing a negative image and shaping the nation's political discourse.

2.6.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Norman Fairclough is widely recognised and regarded as one of the outstanding figures and the father of CDA, with many publications on language, discourse, and society attached to his name. Blommaert (2005, as cited in Xia, 2021) confirms this by stating, "Fairclough's *Language and Power* (1989) is commonly considered to be the landmark publication for the start of CDA." In his book, Fairclough (1989) views "language as social practice" - a form of discourse with a strong connection with their production processes and social conditions, and presents how to analyse what may be hidden from people - the connection between language, power, and ideology. Therefore, he proposes the CDA theoretical framework to study and uncover a text's hidden agenda or meaning. This sentiment is shared by Xia (2021), who states that CDA is interested more in the connection between language and power. To ensure the effectiveness of CDA, Fairclough (1993) further

proposes that the analysis must pass through three stages, namely, (i) textual, (ii) discursive practice, and (iii) social practice.

As Fairclough (1993) puts it, the first stage involves textual analysis, which focuses on the language analysis of texts - the linguistic properties of a text. Secondly, Fairclough asserts that discursive practice (interpretation) analysis deals with the nature of the process of text, how it is produced and interpreted, putting the roles of the author or speaker, participants, audiences, and the intended purpose of the text in mind. Lastly, social practice (explanation) analysis “attends to issues of concern in social analysis... of the discursive event and how that shapes the nature of the discursive practice” (Fairclough, 1993) - these are the sociohistorical conditions that influence how a text is produced and received. This stage analyses how a text influences society and how society influences a text. Hence, to make sense of and critically analyse a whole text, establishing a connection between “text” and the outside “world” of the language is necessary, using the three stages of Fairclough’s CDA to disclose the hidden ideological factors in a discourse (Xia, 2021).

2.6.2. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

MDA emerged in the early 1990s and has since experienced substantial growth and development (Bi, 2019). According to Mansouri and Pariña (2023), the digital era we live in amplifies the impacts, and thus, text analysis should include various modes of discourses, modes, and communication modalities. Similarly, Kyriakidis and Koikas (2022) state that there is no doubt that features like images, videos, sounds, gestures, looks, and spatial concepts have their merit, and many potentially modify the interpretation of a text. Kyriakidis and Koikas further assert that text analysis is incomplete without the analysis of visual and gestural components, and this is why and how multimodal analysis stems from CDA. Thus, Bi (2019) conceptualises MDA as analysing different symbolic modes in a text. MDA is an

analysing method based on Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar, rooted in Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (Bi, 2019; Mansouri & Pariña, 2023).

According to Bi (2019), given their belief that image is also a kind of social symbol, Kress and Leeuwen create the visual grammar of the analytical image based on Halliday's three metafunctions. Therefore, Mansouri and Pariña (2023) mention that visual grammar's trigonal classifications, namely, the representational meaning, the interactive meaning and the composition meaning, help to understand how visual elements create social impacts or disseminate ideological views, working alongside Fairclough's CDA model. Machin (2013, as cited in Mansouri and Pariña, 2023) posits that both CDA and MDA could be brought together into a supple body of approach called multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA). Bi (2019) adds that MCDA helps to understand how visual elements and other modalities, whether in conjunction with texts or as stand-alone entities, convey messages influenced by ideology and power. Thus, Mansouri and Pariña (2023) conclude that MCDA is an extension of CDA - a qualitative approach used to describe, construe, and interpret how verbal and/or visual modes interact to manifest discourses.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological approach of the study. This chapter is divided mainly into research design, research questions, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The study uses qualitative research facilitated by applying CDA and MDA, as illustrated below.

3.2. Research Design

In this study, I present a discourse analytic study that analyses some political campaign songs of the 2023 Nigerian General Elections. This study is qualitative in nature. As Aspers and Corte (2019) put it, qualitative research is a type of research that explores and addresses scientific and practical problems in society. Tenny et al. (2020) note that qualitative research is a research design that enhances researchers' understanding of what is going on by answering the hows and whys instead of how many or how much. In quantitative research, Barroga and Matanguihan (2022) postulate that researchers develop hypotheses based on research questions that are constructed after establishing the background of their study. Given this sequence, they further mention that a researcher must construct excellent research questions to develop superior hypotheses.

This nature of qualitative research, including the focus on a controlled environment for data collection, data transcriptions, coding process, and interpretation of the data, determines the research objectives and the design of the study (Tenny et al., 2020; Barroga & Matanguihan, 2022). This leads me to adopt a critical discourse analysis (CDA) and multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) as the research design, which allows for examining

language and discourse in political contexts, focusing on power relations and ideology. These approaches are suitable for this study given that discourse analysis is a qualitative research method that enables an in-depth analysis of the discursive strategies employed in shaping negative images in political campaign songs in Nigeria and how they contribute to negative image formation.

3.3. Research Questions

1. What discursive strategies and tactics are employed in political campaign songs to construct negative images of opponents in Nigeria?
2. What are the linguistic features and modes found in political campaign songs?
3. What socio-political factors motivate negative image formation in political campaign discourse in Nigeria and how do these factors impact Nigeria's political process and society?

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process for this study mainly involves short campaign video recordings of various political parties' campaign songs, which are publicly available on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Given the atmosphere of the 2023 Nigerian General Elections, three candidates, along with the parties they represent, exceptionally stood out among eighteen registered contestants for the presidential seat; thus, I concentrated on the songs used to campaign for those candidates, i.e., Bola Tinubu, Atiku Abubakar, and Peter Obi. Information about these contenders is part of the context and would enable an in-depth critical analysis. Thus, in this section, I give short information about them and their parties.

Atiku Abubakar, a veteran politician and former vice president, has emerged as a prominent figure within the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Nigeria's key opposition party to the All Progressives Congress (APC). Atiku has made six unsuccessful attempts to become president, hoping to reclaim power for the PDP, which held the reins of government from 1999 to 2015 (Adetayo et al., 2023). Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the flag bearer of the APC for the 2023 Nigerian General Elections, is a former two-term governor of Lagos State, Nigeria's economic hub. Tinubu is credited with significantly raising and boosting the state's revenue during his tenure as governor, and his supporters believe that he can replicate this success on the national stage (Adetayo et al., 2023). Interestingly, Tinubu and Atiku, once political and business associates and among the founding fathers of the APC, now find themselves on opposite sides in the 2023 Nigerian General Elections, each vying to outdo the other.

On the other hand, Peter Gregory Obi is a former governor of Anambra State in southeastern Nigeria, having served from 2006 to 2014. In the 2019 elections, he ran as Atiku's running mate on the PDP ticket. Obi's emergence as the youngest candidate disrupted the traditional two-party race between the APC and PDP, as Nigerian youths increasingly supported him as a competent candidate and the flag bearer of the Labour Party (LP) for the General Elections (Adetayo et al., 2023). As Nigeria is a very diverse nation with over 500 native languages, the data were collected from different political campaign songs that used the three main spoken native languages, including Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, and Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE), to ensure a diverse range of political campaign songs is included in the analysis. I searched campaign songs that, according to my judgement, contributed to the formation of negative images of opponents. Therefore, the results should be viewed as proof supporting the hypothesised effects rather than being generalised to the larger body of Nigerian political campaign songs.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected were subjected to rigorous qualitative analysis using the principles of CDA and MDA to determine how and why such political campaign songs are used and whether they are used to (mis)represent and manipulate the Nigerian electoral discourse. However, it should be noted that CDA is the main framework for the purpose of analysis in this research, while MDA is a supportive framework. I used the Fairclough three-dimensional model of CDA, which involves analysing the discourse's text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 1993), and MDA, which involves the analysis of how visual elements and other modalities convey messages influenced by ideology and power (Bi, 2019). Ten political campaign songs were analysed and divided equally among the political parties each candidate represented. The songs given in native languages or NPE were translated to English by native speakers of the languages, transcribed verbatim to make the analysis easy, and analysed thematically.

Given that those political campaign songs are all-encompassing and intertwined with both textual and visual texts, I analysed the songs at both textual and visual levels. Thus, I categorised the analysis into two parts based on the theoretical frameworks employed for the analysis: Fairclough's 3D model of CDA and Kress and van Leeuwen's theory of visual grammar. The first part analysed the linguistic data at the textual level of Fairclough's 3D model, while the latter focused on analysing the visual elements and symbols employed in the collected videos within the same level of analysis. This allows for a critical examination of how texts are constructed and operate in Nigerian political discourse and helps to understand how meanings are produced. Hence, I analysed the texts of the political campaign songs to identify the discursive strategies, linguistic features, and modes employed for constructing negative images of rival political parties or candidates. In addition, I analysed the discursive

and social practices surrounding the songs to identify the consequences and impacts of negative image formation on Nigerian electoral discourse.

3.6. Ethical Consideration

Though the study involves analysing existing publicly available videos rather than directly involving human participants, I gave the ethical considerations the utmost importance to ensure that the analysis is accurately and objectively conducted without any bias or manipulation, with respect for the rights and dignity of the candidates and their political parties involved.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse the selected data - the campaign songs used during the 2023 Nigerian General Elections. I employ Fairclough's 3D model of CDA to analyse the data, which includes textual analysis, discursive practice analysis, and social practice analysis. Given that the data set has different modes, I use Fairclough's 3D model to analyse linguistic data and Kress and van Leeuwen's model to analyse visual data within the textual analysis. Moreover, this chapter presents a discussion on how the findings connect with existing studies. It aims to interpret the findings from the lyrical and visual analyses and explain how the songs contribute to constructing negative images of opposing candidates and parties.

4.2. Textual analysis

Given the nature of the study, the data are from the 2023 Nigerian General Elections campaign songs published on different streaming and social media platforms. The songs cover a wide range of topics, most of which revolve around the country's challenges. To make the songs more acceptable and politicians more relatable to the electorate, politicians used informal language to compose the songs, closing the distance between both parties.

4.2.1. Repetition

Throughout the selected songs, the speakers repeated words, phrases and sentences; this feature is known as repetition. In the data chosen for this study, an instance of repetition is observed in lines 6-7, "**Atiku becomes a shoemaker. The whole world has heard about it. He is shining Tinubu's shoes (R).**" While the speakers portray Atiku as reduced to a menial, low-status job - shoemaker and further mock him by claiming that he is polishing

Tinubu's shoes, repeating the exact lyrics belittles Atiku and aims to convince the electorate that what they hear is true, even when it is not. The assertion that Atiku has become a shoemaker is a linguistic feature known as name-calling, and it portrays him as someone who cannot fit into political office, creating negative attention towards his capability. Similarly, the phrase "**do not rely on them**" in lines 14 -18 was repeated four times, and "**they are betrayers**" and "**they are unreliable**" were repeated twice. Given that 'betrayal' and 'unreliable' are interrelated concepts, the repetition of the lyrics emphasises betrayal as a fundamental characteristic of the opposition. This paints the opposition as fundamentally unreliable and deceitful and can instil distrust in the electorate's minds, solidifying their negative image.

Moreover, in line 45, the repetition of "**Quickly lift...**" in God's response to Tinubu, "**Quickly lift your burden, O child. Quickly lift it**", reinforces the urgency and personal responsibility. The lyrics imply that Tinubu's prayer for help is unnecessary, ingenuine, or not significant enough to warrant divine intervention and suggests to 'quickly lift' his burdens by himself. Similarly, a campaign song (lines 87-93) by the LP uses repetition to emphasise and strengthen the impact of the message on the electorate's minds.

"I swear, it's been a long time since they said they would build our schools... Let's change that narrative... Because **it's all lies. It's all lies.** (...) they haven't even tried. They killed many youths. And they **still denied it.** They came and **still denied it. It's all lies.** (...) they haven't even tried."

Here, the LP portray the ruling party, APC, as liars and killers while referencing the promises made to them before being elected. A detailed analysis of the event that the LP referred to when they said, "They killed many youths. And they still denied it." will be done when doing the visual materials analysis. Looking closely at the lyrics, repeatedly stating "**it's all lies**"

and “**still denied it**” reinforces the perception that the opposition is deceitful and untrustworthy. This repetition contributes to the negative image already conveyed in the lyrics.

4.2.2. Allusion

Now more than ever, it is well-known that politicians manipulate the electorate by making references to historical, literary, or religious figures, texts, places, or events in their discourse. They do this not only to align with people of the same faith and present themselves as the “Messiahs” they have been looking for but also to denigrate their opponents. Similarly, it is observed that political campaign songs used in the 2023 Nigerian General Elections referenced lexis associated with religion to create a negative image of their opponents. Looking closely at lines 9 - 10 in Text D, “**Allah has turned back to the APC. No one supports them anymore,**” the PDP alludes to the word “Allah,” which is, according to Islamic belief, the Arabic word for God. By asserting that ‘Allah’ has turned back to them, the lyrics imply that the APC has lost divine approval and frame them as morally or spiritually deficient. Given that the song was translated from the Hausa language, whose speakers are mainly Muslims, this religious allusion carries substantial weight because it appeals to the electorate’s religious sentiments.

Similarly, a top PDP official makes a biblical reference to a popular Christian religious prayer. In lines 42 - 47, the lyrics go as follows:

“Tinubu went to church and prayed ‘**Oh Father, help me lift my burden...** Do not leave me on my own. **Jesus, the King of life...**’ (***) As he prayed, God answered his prayer, ‘Quickly lift your burden, O child, quickly lift it. I will leave you to your own devices; **Jesus doesn’t lift unnecessary loads.**’”

These lyrics create two impressions; firstly, the text mentions that Tinubu, a Muslim, went to a church and prayed to God using the exact words, “**Oh Father... Jesus, the King of Life...**” a Christian would have used. Given Tinubu’s faith, it can be argued that such a reference was used to ridicule him and suggest that he is insincere in his religious beliefs. As it is believed among the Muslim electorate that Muslims do not call God a ‘father,’ and ‘Jesus’ is a messenger of God, not a King of life, the lyrics question his faith, mocking him and creating a negative image of him among the Muslim electorate. In a second view, the lyrics reference a popular Christian belief that “Christ carried the burden of ‘their’ sins.” By closely looking at where it was said that Tinubu said, “**Oh Father, help me lift my burden...**” and God answered his prayer, saying, “**Quickly lift your burden, O child, quickly lift it. I will leave you to your own devices, Jesus doesn’t lift unnecessary loads,**” it implies that Tinubu’s prayer for help is unnecessary, ingenuine, or not significant enough to warrant divine intervention, suggesting that his problems are trivial or self-inflicted, thus casting him in a negative light as someone who does not have God’s support.

4.2.3. Inclusive and Exclusive Pronouns

It is not unpopular to see politicians employing person deixis like “we,” “us,” “our,” “they,” and “them” in their discourse to strategically align themselves with people’s concerns and portray the opposing parties or candidates as out-group, labelling them with different names. In the given data, exclusive pronouns such as “they” and “them” are strategically used to alienate and demonise political opponents. The following examples illustrate the strategic use of such pronouns:

“**Those** whose lives have been ruined (*) will not pull us down to **their** level. Do not fight **them** (***)...” (Line 3 - 4, Text A)

“Akanbi (***) , do not rely on **them**, **they** are betrayers (R). Do not rely on **them**. **They** are unreliable (R). It has become **their** way... It has become **their** habit. Treason has become **their** thing. Akanbi, do not trust **them**. **They** are traitors. Do not rely on **them**. **They** are not good.” (Line 14 - 18, Text C)

“**They** don’t care because **their** families are all abroad, But every four years, **they** come with the same story. The same people, the same story...(**) All **they** know how to do is to steal our money.” (Line 54 - 56, Text G)

In these lyrics, each party employs exclusive pronouns, including “those,” “their,” “them,” and “they,” to segregate the opposition and associate them with negative traits, without explicitly stating their names. Looking closely at the first quoted example, “**those whose lives have been ruined...**”, it uses ‘those,’ ‘their,’ and ‘them’ to create an out-group and avoid the mentioning of names while painting a picture of the opponents’ lives - “ruined” - as a consequence of their own failings, implying weakness and a lack of moral standing. Similarly, the second lyrics (Text C) employ such person deixis 11 times within a thug-like language to indirectly discredit some unspecified opposing parties. Notably, the last lyrics cited above assert that “**they** don’t care because **their** families are all abroad,” using ‘they’ and ‘their’ to criticise the ruling class’s perceived detachment and indifference, painting them as selfish and disconnected from the struggles of ordinary citizens.

Conversely, politicians utilised inclusive pronouns such as “we,” “us,” and “our” in their political campaign songs to create a sense of unity, align with their supporters and demonstrate commitment. Examples of these usages include:

“**We** are tired of suffering! PDP is here, the experienced party. **We** don’t want an experiment. Get it right, safe choice. This is **our** lives...” (Line 37 - 40, Text E)

“**We** have suffered a great deal. While other countries are growing, **we** keep falling...
(*). Because **we** have bad leaders at the top... All they know how to do is to steal **our**
money. Just when **we** thought all hope was lost, God sent **us** Peter Obi...” (Line 51 -
57, Text G)

“**We** are Obi-dient! # Peter Obi, you are my choice for president, because **we** want a
better tomorrow (R). **We** do not want a dullard, no no.” (58 - 61, Text H)

The above excerpts are just some inclusive pronouns used in the selected Nigerian political campaign songs. Evidently, the lyrics repeat the pronouns “we,” “us,” and “our.” While they are used to express commitment, they are also used, to a large extent, to draw the electorate into a shared narrative of hardship and resilience, misrepresenting opponents to the masses. For instance, such pronouns in phrases like “**We are tired of suffering!**” (Text E), “**We have suffered a great deal... All they know how to do is to steal our money**” (Text G), and “**We do not want a dullard, no no**” (Text H) align the politicians with the electorate and give the impression that they share in the people’s sufferings and worries, fostering a communal identity that binds the speaker and listeners together in a common cause. Considering the strategic use of person deixis in these political campaign songs, it is a powerful rhetorical tool that politicians use to shape and connect with their supporters and effectively discredit the opposition.

4.2.4. Personification

Like other rhetorical devices, personification is another potent rhetorical device that politicians employed in the selected political campaign songs to imbue abstract concepts with human-like qualities, making their messages more relatable and impactful. For instance, in line 19, the lyric “**God has turned back to them**” personifies God as having agency in political matters and actively withdrawing support from the APC. By suggesting that God has

“**turned back**” to the APC, it invokes a powerful image of divine disapproval - suggesting that they are so flawed that even a higher power rejects them, thereby enhancing the negative portrayal of the party. Likewise, personification was employed to depict the country itself as suffering under poor leadership, as seen in lines 51 - 53 “**While other countries are growing, we keep falling...** Because we have bad leaders at the top.” In these lyrics, Nigeria is personified as an entity capable of falling due to the actions of its leaders, highlighting the negative impact of current leadership as the country continues to suffer and decline under their rule.

4.2.5. Hyperbole, Metaphor, and Simile

In the selected data, it is observed that each party employed hyperbole, metaphors, and similes to craft compelling narratives and influence public perception. For instance, in lines 6 - 7, “**Atiku becomes a shoemaker... He is shining Tinubu’s shoes,**” the APC supporters employed metaphor, in the form of demeaning language, to diminish Atiku’s status and dignity by comparing him to a lowly or subservient role, possibly implying his incompetence. Similarly, in lines 12 - 13, “**All members of the PDP are bedwetters,**” they called members of the PDP ‘bedwetters.’ This is a metaphorical insult that infantilises and shames them, implying they are immature, weak, or shameful. The above comparisons - to shoemakers and bedwetters - are not just simple comparisons but are loaded with connotations of incompetence, humiliation, and subservience

Furthermore, hyperbole was employed to amplify the negative portrayals by exaggerating certain aspects of the songs to an extreme degree. For instance, in lines 6 - 8, the twice-repeated lyrics “**the whole world has heard about it**” regarding Atiku’s supposed fall to shoemaking use hyperbole to exaggerate the extent of his humiliation. The use of ‘the whole world’ in the lyrics creates a more dramatic and memorable narrative and exaggerates

the supposed Atiku situation by making it seem universally recognised and disgraceful. In the same way, simile was strategically employed to discredit opponents. In the collected political songs for this study, this is observed in lines 10 - 12, “If you continue boasting about power, **we will tie you down like a ram for a sacrifice.**” In these lyrics, the APC supporters used vivid and dehumanising comparisons to evoke strong visual and emotional responses. This particular simile not only threatens the PDP with severe consequences but also likens them to animals by stating that they will be tied “down like a ram for a sacrifice.” This dehumanises them and suggests that they are worthy of sacrificial punishment.

4.2.6. Speech Acts

In the selected political campaign songs, it is observed that politicians employed various speech acts, including assertive, directive, commissive and expressive, to construct and reinforce negative images of their opponents. For instance, lines 12 - 13, “**All members of the PDP are bedwetters,**” is an assertive sentence that makes a strong, derogatory claim about the opposition party. Similarly, in lines 33 - 34, “**When the change people come, no work, no food,**” this assertion presents a bleak picture of the opposition’s governance by blaming them for economic hardship and food insecurity. In Text F, lines 42 - 47, the claim that “**Tinubu went to church and prayed ‘Oh Father,...’**” employed the assertive speech act, despite being fictional, to present the narrative as a fact to the audience. The subsequent lines in the lyrics, “As he prayed, God answered his prayer, ‘Quickly lift your burden, O child. Quickly lift it. I will leave you to your own devices, Jesus doesn’t lift unnecessary loads,’” are all assertions that further contribute to the negative portrayal. These are a few where assertive speech acts were used - embedding damaging and often exaggerated information into the public discourse - in the selected data to present the opposition negatively, painting them as immature and incapable.

Furthermore, the songs employed directive speech acts with the aim of getting the listener or the addressee to do something. For instance, in Text D, lines 4 - 5, “**Do not fight them instead, let your vote speaks for you.**” Here, the lyrics direct the electorate to act in a specific way that undermines the opposition, framing them as not worth engaging directly. Also, in lines 10 - 12, “**If you continue boasting about power, we will tie you down like a ram for a sacrifice,**” is a statement that highlights the opposition’s arrogance and, on the other hand, is another directive speech act that clearly tells the addressee what the speakers want them to do - to stop boasting about power. Moreover, politicians employed commissive speech acts in the campaign songs to contrast the opposition’s failures with promises of better leadership, committing themselves to future action. In lines 1 - 2, “**Whoever votes for the APC will do business and make a profit. You will bring home the fruits of your labour**” uses ‘will do’ and ‘will bring home’ to commit to positive outcomes: ‘make a profit’ and ‘bring home the fruits’ as a consequence of an action voting for APC. Also, lines 76 - 77, “**Our students no go strike again ooo... If you vote for better Obi,**” is a commissive speech act that commits to ending student strikes if the electorate vote for Peter Obi. Here, the speakers indirectly hint that students are facing strikes under the current government and ‘no go strike again’ functions as a promise to resolve educational disruptions.

Lastly, and most importantly, politicians utilised expressive speech acts, which convey speakers’ emotions and attitudes, to form negative images of their opponents. In lines 37 - 38, the statement “**We are tired of suffering!**” is an expressive speech act that conveys frustration and impatience with the current state of affairs. This expressive act attributes these negative feelings to the opposition’s governance, suggesting that the continued hardships are a result of their incompetence or neglect. In addition, in lines 50 - 51, “**Nigeria has suffered immensely. We have suffered a great deal**” expresses a collective sense of suffering under the current rule, evoking empathy and dissatisfaction among the electorate. In a similar way,

lines 60 - 61 in Text H, “**We do not want a dullard, no no,**” express a clear disdain for an opponent the speakers think is intellectually inadequate. It uses ‘dullard’ to express contempt and rejection, and the repetition of ‘no no’ reinforces the strong aversion and dismissive attitude toward the opponent. These expressions highlight the extent of hardship experienced under the current administration and frame them as unworthy and incapable of leading effectively.

4.2.7. Visual Materials Analysis

Having analysed the linguistic data using the Fairclough 3D model, I now analyse the visual materials incorporated into the 2023 Nigerian political campaign songs. A quick reminder that this study utilises both CDA and MDA to examine the collected data. Often, politicians employ various linguistic means to construct negative images of their opponents and attract the electorate. Thus, the analysis integrates these approaches, CDA and MDA, to explore their interplay in contributing to the understanding of misrepresentation and negative image formation in Nigerian political campaign songs. For analytical purposes, I adopt Kress and van Leeuwen’s theory of visual grammar to analyse the multimodality in the collected data.

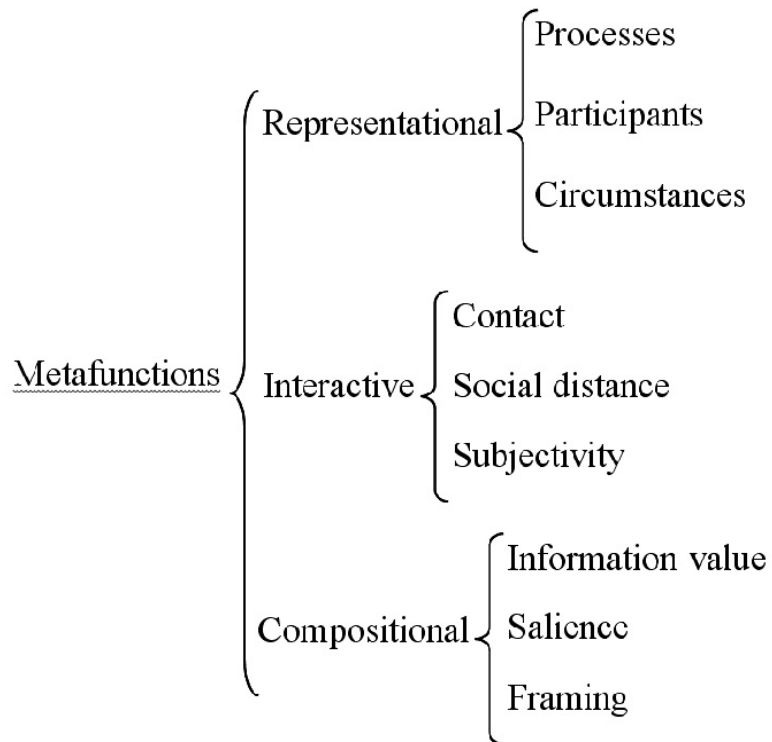


Figure 1: Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, based on Halliday's three metafunctions

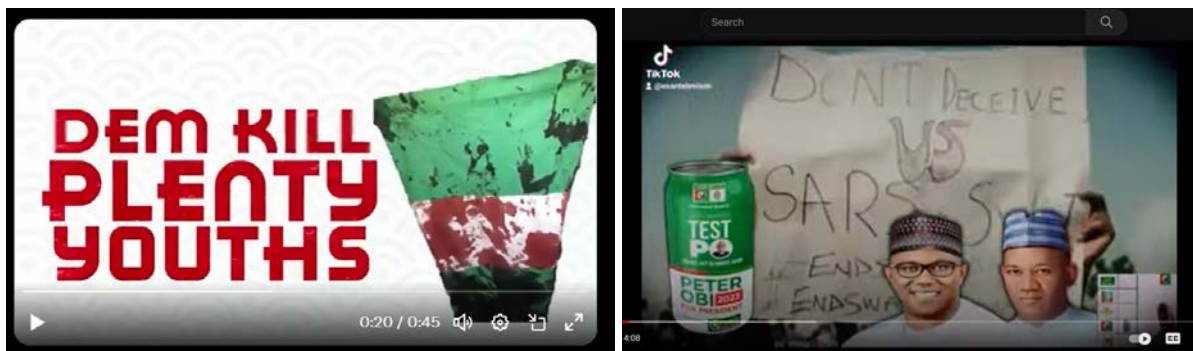




Figure 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: Highlighting Government's Inability to Address Insecurity and Criticising its Economic and Education Mismanagement

4.2.7.1. Representational System

As shown in Figure 2, the blood-stained Nigerian flag signifies violence and unrest, particularly associated with the EndSARS protest. This EndSARS, a decentralised social movement and series of mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria, tells more about what the LP referred to when they said, “They killed many youths. And they still denied it.” (line 91, Text J). The phrase “**Dem kill plenty youths**” in bold red font further reinforces the idea of loss of life and brutality, painting a negative image of the ruling party. Similarly, in Figure 3, the caption “**Don’t deceive us SARS SWAT #EndSARS, #EndSWAT**” written on white cardboard suggests distrust and disillusionment with the government’s handling of security issues, particularly regarding the SARS and SWAT units. In Figure 4, the headline “**Banditry in Nigeria: Insights from Situational Action and Situational Crime**

Prevention Theories” highlights the issue of banditry and insecurity in the country, framing it as a significant concern. Also, the image of a woman holding a plain cardboard with the caption “**Nigerians, let the innocent children go**” reinforces the idea of innocent children and aggrieved mothers being caught in the crossfire of violence.

Moreover, the cartoon of a student holding a placard with the caption “**ASUU STRIKE**” in Figure 5 highlights the issue of educational mismanagement under the current government, particularly referencing the ongoing ASUU strikes and disruptions in academic activities. In Figure 6, the headline “**Group says PDP handled Nigeria’s economy better than APC**” directly criticises the present regime for being poor in economic management and positions the PDP as the superior alternative. Lastly, the poster held by the Nigerian youth with the caption “**62 Years of Drama - Change-The-Actors**” in Figure 7 suggests dissatisfaction with the government’s performance over the years, especially in managing the country’s economy and education system.

4.2.7.2. Interactive System

In the interactional layer, the blood-stained flag in Figure 2 creates indirect visual contact with the electorate, evoking a sense of urgency and empathy without depicting direct human interaction. While the elements in the image do not have a human gaze, they force the electorate to focus on the elements and create an impersonal and generalised appeal. The high contrast and vivid colours - red and white - increase the realism and emotional impact and make the representation more credible and striking to the audience. In Figure 3, the handwritten sign establishes a direct connection with the electorate, taking them back to some kind of shared experience about police brutality. Looking closely at the image, the presence of LP candidates, Obi and Yusuf Datti, at the bottom right side creates a close social distance; this presents as approachable and relatable alternatives to the current leadership. In addition,

the inclusion of the ballot paper with a thumbprint in front of the LP logo is a persuading strategy that informs people what to do and implies that voting for the LP candidates is the right choice, reinforcing them as the solution to the issues raised in the caption. The handwritten style of the text conveys sincerity and appeals to emotion, and the simplicity of the soft drink can, with “TEST PO,” communicates authenticity and further increases Peter’s credibility with the electorate.

While the cardboard message and the accompanying headline in Figure 4 create an indirect emotional connection, it is powerful because it draws the electorate into the narrative of urgency and victimhood. There is a direct human gaze in the image, with the woman holding the cardboard being an eye-level shot that connects the electorate to her emotion, just as aggrieved mothers of the Chibok girls, so whichever emotions they are feeling, hopefully, the electorate will feel the same. However, the plain and straightforward depiction with the headline above the woman’s image maintains a neutral social distance, making the issue seem widely relevant rather than personalised. In Figure 5, the cartoon of a student holding a placard in the image creates an indirect but relatable connection with the electorate, especially with the student demographic. The centre of the image lacks human gaze; directing the electorate’s attention to the placard and making the message - “ASUU STRIKE” - on it the focal point. It is also important to mention that the inclusion of the LP candidates at the bottom right side is symbolic, as it reduces the social distance, presenting both as empathetic and supportive figures who understand and can address the students’ issues and improve Nigerian education.

In Figure 6, the headline “**Group says PDP handled Nigeria’s economy better than APC**” creates an indirect form of contact by presenting factual information in a straightforward manner, inviting each party’s supporters and electorate to consider the comparison objectively. While the comparison can still be made subjectively, the uncluttered

and clean layout and formal presentation of the image maintain a neutral social distance, which can make the message appear as if it is truth rather than a personal appeal. Given the absence of human figures and gaze, it allows the electorate to focus their attention on the textual content, reinforcing the message's objectivity and credibility. The image is attractive because of the high modality of its presentation - the use of natural types of colours and its resemblance to a news format, adding to the credibility and persuasive power of the message. Lastly, the poster held by the youth in Figure 7 creates a direct visual engagement with the viewers, especially the younger audience, and appeals to their sense of dissatisfaction and desire for change. With regard to social distance, the whole image is moderate as it employs the medium-close-up shot, which puts the electorate at just the right distance from the message. The gaze of the person holding the poster and the text on it is directed towards the electorate to engage them directly and compel them to consider the message. The combination of the Nigerian flag colours and the LP logo on the poster enhances the realism and emotional appeal of the message, thereby presenting it as a patriotic call to action.

4.2.7.3. Compositional System

Concerning the compositional system in Figure 2, the verbal part, given information, “**Dem kill plenty youths**”, is placed on the left side, while the new, visual part - the blood-stained Nigerian flag is placed on the right side of the image. The symmetrical arrangement of the phrase and flag in different frames, with no other message on the screen, creates a strong visual connection between the text and the image and ensures that both elements are the image's focal point to the electorate. Looking closely at the stark contrast between the white background, the phrase in red colour, and the blood-stained Nigerian flag, it creates a visually striking image that immediately grabs attention, given that both the phrase and the flag are highly salient in the background. In Figure 3, looking at the visual composition, the cardboard with the caption is prominently displayed in the centre, with the

LP candidates and ballot paper suggesting voting for LP positioned at the bottom right and other elements used to promote their candidacy at the bottom left. This suggests a hierarchy where the issue in the caption is the main focus, and the candidates are the proposed solution. The elements within the image are in four frames; the clear separation between the caption and the promoting elements, yet their strategic placement within the same visual space, links the problem with the proposed political solution. The simplicity and clarity of the handwritten caption on white cardboard make it stand out sharply, and it can draw the electorate's eye first to the message and then to the candidates.

Furthermore, the news format headline in Figure 4 is partially superimposed on the image of the woman holding the cardboard, and it is the new information - placed on the right side - that gives context to the message on the cardboard - the given information. So, there are three frames here: the uncluttered white background, the headline, and the woman holding the cardboard image. By partially superimposing one frame over the other, it closely connects textual and visual elements together. The simplicity of the image, with the headline and the cardboard message displayed against the plain white background, enhances the salience of both frames and makes the issue of banditry and its impact on innocent children immediately noticeable. In Figure 5, the cartoon of the student with the placard was placed at the centre, making it the crucial element and focal point. The subordinating elements promoting the LP candidates' candidacy, positioned at the bottom right and left, indicate a connection between the educational issue and what the candidates can do. Moreover, the cartoon of the student with the placard and the subordinate elements are placed in separate frames, with the former in a larger frame. To enhance the salience of the elements within this particular frame, the phrase "ASUU STRIKE" is written in bold and clear font, and the entire cartoon and placard are placed against a white background, drawing the electorate's attention to the problem and the candidates as the solution.

In Figure 6, the information value of the centre and margin is employed, as the headline is placed in the central position, occupying the majority of space and becoming the visible heart of the image. Moreover, the image appears simple, with a clean and uncluttered layout resembling a news format, which separates the headline from other elements and makes it more attractive to the electorate. The large, bold black text against a white background creates a high contrast, making the headline more noticeable and drawing the electorate's attention to its significance. Lastly, the poster held by the youth in Figure 7 is the central element, with the LP logo and the Nigerian flag positioned strategically at the top right corner and bottom, respectively. The main text, "62 Years of Drama - Change-The-Actors", is in one frame, while the LP logo, the call to action "Vote Peter Obi 4 President," and the blended flag are each positioned in different frames. This combination creates a cohesive message, as it links dissatisfaction with the current government to the proposed solution for the perceived mismanagement. The bold text and gradient green background make the poster the most salient element in the image, with the Nigerian flag subtly reinforcing the patriotic appeal and the LP logo adding legitimacy to those sponsoring the poster.

4.3. Discursive Practice Analysis

As Fairclough (1993) asserts, discursive practice analysis deals with the nature of the process of text - how it is produced and interpreted, putting the roles of the author or speaker, participants, audiences, and the intended purpose of the text in mind. As for the data for this study, the texts are produced within the context of the 2023 Nigerian General Elections and reflect various political parties' ideologies and their campaign strategies. Each Text emphasises different themes. While Texts A, E, and G highlight the current administration's failure in terms of the economy and promise economic benefits and stability, Texts B, C, and

F mock and insult personalities and portray certain political figures as habitual traitors. Texts D, H, I, and J are centred around ineffective leadership and anti-corruption, calling for unity and action against such leadership.

While the songs belong to three main parties, including APC, PDP, and LP, it is observed that each party commissioned the songs to experienced singers, and some supporters also willingly came up with their own songs to promote their candidates and discredit opponents. The aim is to influence the electorate by addressing their concerns, invoking emotions, and making promises. Thus, this study includes the speakers - parties, politicians and their supporters, and the addressees - the electorate, the citizens of Nigeria, with specific appeals to Muslim and Christian voters, who have different political and social interests that need to be fulfilled.

To elaborate, findings from the textual analysis show that the audience primarily consists of the Nigerian electorate, especially frustrated citizens with Nigeria's current political and economic situation. It is revealed that the songs emotionally target them through repeated emphasis on themes like betrayal, unreliability, economic failure, and suffering. These are evident in texts such as "Whoever votes for the APC will do business and make a profit. You will bring home the fruits of your labour" (Lines 1 - 2), "...do not rely on them... they are betrayers... they are unreliable..." (Lines 14 -18), and "We are tired of suffering! PDP is here, the experienced party" (Line 37 - 38). Moreover, some texts target specific religious groups, such as Muslims and Christians, by exploiting religious language and sentiments. For instance, "Allah has turned back to the APC. No one supports them anymore," (Lines 19 - 20) targets Hausa, whose majority are Muslims, while references to Jesus and biblical prayers in lines 42 - 47 appeal to Christian voters.

As mentioned before, the political parties, including APC, PDP, and LP, and their supporters produce these texts. For instance, the repetition of lyrics like “We are Obi-dient! Peter Obi, you are my choice for president” (Lines 58 - 61) and the placement of parties’ logos and ballot paper in the visuals (check Figure 2, 3, and 6) clearly tie the production to the LP. The relationship between the producers and the audience is built on shared concerns, values, and emotional appeals. The use of collective identity markers, including APC, PDP, LP, “we,” “us,” and “our,” reveals a shared dissatisfaction and hope for change, creating a sense of unity. For example, the textual analysis of lyrics like “Whoever votes for the APC will do business and make a profit.” (Lines 1 -2), “We are tired of suffering! PDP is here...” (Lines 37 - 38), and “Nigeria has suffered immensely. We have suffered a great deal” (Lines 50 - 51) reveals how politicians create relationship with their audience.

These campaign songs are distributed through various channels, including television, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and rallies. This ensures that the songs are accessible to as many as possible, including those with limited access to formal media, maximising reach and engagement. The audience, consisting of the Nigerian electorate, consumes and interprets these texts differently based on their socio-political context, beliefs, and personal experiences, either through their dissatisfaction, hope for change, or loyalty to a party or candidate.

4.4. Social Practice Analysis

The assumption here is that any discourse, especially political discourse, is influenced by institutional and societal power relations sustained by ideologies. This is even more true in electoral campaigns, as political parties and candidates strive to shape public perception and voting behaviour. The 2023 Nigerian General Elections offer a valuable context for analysing how these power relations and ideologies are expressed and maintained through campaign

songs, revealing the sociocultural conditions that influence the production and reception of these songs and how they, in turn, influence the electorate's perspectives. From the textual analysis, it is observed that the selected data were influenced by various sociocultural factors, including economic challenges, security concerns, and social movements such as EndSARS, which protested police brutality and governance issues. For instance, lyrics such as **“If you are tired of this killing...”** (line 74) and **“They killed many youths, and they still denied it. They came and still denied it. It's all lies.”** (lines 91 - 92) reflect societal concerns about security and justice.

As mentioned above, other influencing factors include the economic downturn, inflation, unemployment, and widespread dissatisfaction with the current political leadership. This is evident in the following lyrics:

When PDP was ruling, our country was safe, Naira was strong. The economy was growing, the petrol price was 87 Naira, and a bag of rice was 8,000 Naira (*). When the change people come, no work, no food. The economy falls, and Naija becomes a borrowing country... (lines 30 - 35).

In these lyrics, the economic decline under the current administration forms the basis for the critique, comparing the past and present economic conditions. Such lyrics have the potential to tap into the collective memory of better times during certain party rulings, just as PDP supporters used economic metrics to advocate for their return to power here, thereby shaping electorate nostalgia and desire for economic stability. Moreover, the Hausa politicians, given their traditional way of life and Islamic social values, utilised religious imagery to frame the opponents and promote the candidacy of the person of their choice. Just as observed in Text F, where it was said that “Tinubu went to church and prayed “Oh Father, help me lift my burden... God answered his prayer, “Quickly lift your burden... I will leave

you to your own devices, Jesus doesn't lift unnecessary loads." (lines 42 - 47); they appeal to the religious sentiments of the Hausa electorate, thereby delegitimising Tinubu's candidacy and indirectly legitimising the candidate.

Looking closely at the texts generally, they reflect widespread disappointment with the current leadership and the urgent need for effective leadership. Lyrics such as "**We have suffered a great deal. While other countries are growing, we keep falling... (*) Because we have bad leaders at the top.**" (lines 51 - 53), "**See the situation as it is. If you want a better tomorrow, do not vote for a dullard!**" (lines 61 - 62) and "**Aren't you tired of suffering? (*) Aren't you tired of hunger? (*)**" (line 94 - 95) reflect the disillusionment with unfulfilled promises and governmental failures. The texts tap into the general frustration of the citizens and, most importantly, the electorate and encourage collective action and a shift from old narratives of false promises to new, hopeful leadership, influencing the electorate to seek genuine change.

Thus, it is evident that the campaign songs are rooted in the sociocultural context of Nigeria's politics and economy and influence electorate views and voting behaviours. This reveals the reciprocal relationship between the selected texts and society, where societal issues shape discourse, and discourse, in turn, aims to reshape society. Based on the analysis, the producers - politicians - create and produce these texts to influence the target audience. Such production helps them to connect with the electorate and influence them by aligning the content of the songs with their specific concerns and expectations.

4.5. Exploiting National Economic and Security Concerns

For the past several years, the economy and security issues have become top priorities for the Nigerian government. This focus has been driven by inter-ethnic insurgencies, current inflation, and recent incidents of armed robbery and kidnappings in the nation. Consequently,

it is observed that political actors often distinguish themselves as the right choice by referencing the country's positive situation when they were in power and portraying the current ruling party as the spoiler - the cause of problems. Just as Garzia and Da Silva (2022) and Haselmayer (2019) mentioned, by associating opponents with these failures, political actors sought to undermine their credibility and competence in the eyes of the electorate. The analysis shows that PDP supporters did a similar thing, incorporating visual material that criticises the present regime for being poor in economic management and positions the PDP as the superior alternative. By incorporating such texts into a campaign video, PDP not only discredits its opposing party but also strategically uses it to influence public opinion by positioning itself as the best party through comparison. This aligns with the view that political candidates, instead of focusing on their manifestos, often focus on comparing themselves with their opponents by highlighting noticeable differences between them and why their party is a better choice for the masses (Reiter & Matthes, 2021; Garzia & Da Silva, 2022; and Klinger et al., 2022).

Similarly, the analysis shows how the LP recognised the country's disturbing economic and security concerns and based most of their campaigns on these issues. While other parties emphasise insecurity in their campaign songs, the APC failed to mention any word or phrase related to insecurity, given that they are the ruling party and it would not look good to attack oneself. Instead, their campaign songs mock their opponents because they believe the talks surrounding insecurity are nothing but exaggerations of the issues of insecurity in Nigeria. Realising this major weakness in the APC's campaigning strategy, other parties, including the PDP and LP, took advantage of the situation and promised Nigerians a secure society in an attempt to receive maximum support. As observed in the analysis, the LP portrayed the ruling party, APC, as liars and killers while referencing the promises made to the people before being elected and the events surrounding the EndSARS movement.

Therefore, all the narratives blame and suggest that the ruling party is responsible for the country's current state, creating a negative image of the party. While questioning the national economy and security is of prime importance, the language used to address the issues forms a negative image of the current government and influences the electorate's voting behaviours. This supports Inegbe's (2024) claim that modern Nigerian politicians often engage in linguistic violence to harm their opponents during electoral campaigns to secure more votes. As a consequence, at a time when the nation is facing severe security challenges, Nigerians are more likely to support a politician who talks more about insecurity and promises to ensure their security.

4.6. The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria's Politics

More than ever, it is no longer news that politicians manipulate the electorate through religion in their campaign songs. They frequently use language referencing God and the Holy Books. They do this not only to align with people of the same faith and present themselves as the 'Messiahs' the electorate has been looking for but also to denigrate their opponents. Similarly, this study's findings show that political campaign songs used in the 2023 Nigerian General Elections referenced lexis associated with religion to create a negative image of opponents. The use of words such as 'Allah,' 'God,' and 'Jesus' in the selected data signals an appeal to religious authority. Such words are used to frame others as morally or spiritually deficient. Thus, it can be argued that the lyrics employing these words aim to connect with Muslim audiences who may see divine will as a significant factor in political legitimacy.

In addition, politicians also used such lyrics to position themselves as the more popular and divinely endorsed choice, just as the PDP did in the selected data, attempting to sway undecided voters and reinforce the loyalty of their base. Ikeke (2021) observes this as manipulation of the mind, where politicians quote religious texts and present themselves as

the sole qualified candidates capable of solving people's problems. While creating a negative image of each other, such instances in political discourse are, to some extent, manipulative because the language can evoke strong emotions among the electorate, using religious sentiments to foster a sense of unity and righteousness within their support base while alienating others. This aligns well with Omozuwa and Ezejideaku's (2008) findings that politicians often reference religious expressions in political campaigns to help them achieve their aims.

4.7. Persuading with Emotional Appeals

Emotional appeal is a widely used campaign communication technique in any political context, through which politicians try to evoke the electorate's emotions when delivering their message. From the analysis of the data, it is shown that politicians, while creating a negative image for their opponents through campaign songs, appeal to the electorate's emotions deliberately and strategically. Evidently, the songs contain words that can evoke strong emotional responses. For instance, positioning government officials as violators of fundamental values and using 'slaves and children' - who are typically seen as defenceless and deserving of protection - as examples, seeks to persuade the electorate and alienate them from their opponents. The use of these words evokes empathy and shared frustration, reinforcing the narrative of government failure. This has the potential to misinform the electorate, and when they are misinformed, Reiter and Matthes (2021) mention that political trust is at risk in such a way that negative language reduces political effectiveness and decreases people's trust in government.

While it is true that political campaigns do provide the electorate with information necessary for making choices (Ademilokun & Olateju, 2023), this study contributed to our understanding by revealing that the language employed in political campaigns is often full of

negative opinions about opposing parties, which can result to emotional responses and making wrong choices. It is not unpopular to see politicians othering with ‘us vs. them’ narratives, trying to align themselves with people’s concerns while labelling their opponents with different names through various linguistic features. They have always been synonymous with their tactical use of lexical choices - specific words used to emotionally appeal to and manipulate the electorate. Instances of such manipulative lexical structures were identified in the analysis, where pronouns were tactically employed alongside words like ‘betrayers,’ ‘treason,’ and ‘traitors’ to indirectly criticise and discredit opponents. This aligns with findings from Daniel (2019) and Hassan (2023), which reveal that Nigerian politicians employ a distinct thug-like language style to intimidate and instil fear in others while aiming to garner significant support and win more votes from the electorate.

Furthermore, politicians use inclusive pronouns in political campaign songs to align with the people, demonstrate commitment, and create the impression that they share in their sufferings and worries, which is far from the truth. Clearly, the use of these inclusive pronouns is ambiguous since the speakers do not speak for all the electorate, and support for a candidate is subjective to each Nigerian. Thus, it can be argued that the use of these pronouns is manipulative, aiming to convince the electorate to reason as they do. This aligns with Chilton’s (2004) view that language is an everyday instrument that politicians use to persuade the electorate to identify and agree with their ideology. This implies that political parties identify public concerns and exploit them to construct negative images of opponents and portray themselves as the right choice. Most importantly, these linguistic and rhetorical strategies are crafted to tap into public emotion, evoke empathy, and undermine confidence in opposing parties, validating Chen and Madiyeva’s (2022) assertion that politicians use various rhetorics to demonstrate concern toward the electorate so that they can feel a sense of unity with shared interests.

4.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined and analysed how politicians used political campaign songs to misrepresent their opposing parties and manipulate the electorate. The analysis shows that several discursive strategies and lexical choices were employed to achieve their political aims. Those songs construct and contribute to a negative image of their opponents through various linguistic features, including repetition, allusion, strategic use of personal deictic expressions, personification, hyperbole, metaphor, simile, and speech acts. The visual analysis also reveals a strategic use of representational, interactional, and compositional elements to convey powerful messages that contribute to constructing negative images of opposing candidates and parties. Moreover, both the textual and visual analysis show how politicians exploit socio-political issues to highlight the government's inability to address insecurity and criticise their economic and educational mismanagement, thereby constructing negative images of opposing candidates and parties, influencing the electorate, and shaping electoral outcomes.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1. Summary

This chapter concludes the end of this research, summarising the entirety of the study. In chapter one, I provided an introductory overview and a general background to this study, while chapter two presents a review of relevant literature on political discourse, negative image formation within the Nigerian political domain, and a discussion on the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, followed by the research methodology in chapter three. In chapter four, I presented the data analysis of the selected campaign songs used in the 2023 Nigerian General Elections, while chapter five focuses on the interpretation of the findings and presents a discussion on how the findings connect with existing studies. This chapter summarises the overall results of this work, presenting key findings, limitations and recommendations.

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Examine the discursive strategies and tactics employed in political campaign songs to construct negative images of opponents in Nigeria.
2. Investigate and analyse the linguistic features and modes found in political campaign songs.
3. Examine the socio-political factors motivating negative image formation in Nigeria's political campaign discourse and their impacts on the country's political process and society.

To achieve this, I analysed the data selected for the study using the Faircloughian approach of CDA and Kress and van Leeuwen's model of MDA. Although additional findings might exist from the analysis, I have constrained my summarisation in this section to highlight the most significant ones. The analysis addressed the research questions by identifying particular linguistic, rhetorical, and semiotic features, modes, and socio-political factors that contribute to creating negative images in political campaign discourse. While the analysis revealed that political actors in Nigeria, with political campaign songs, exploit national economic, education mismanagement and security concerns, blame the ruling party for current hardships, manipulate religion to question opponents' faith and sincerity and persuade with emotional appeals, they do not work on their own to create or contribute to negative image formation; instead, there are linguistic and rhetorical features employed that aid the process, including the use of repetition, allusion, personal deictic expressions, personification, hyperbole, metaphor, simile, to the use of speech acts.

In addition, the visual analysis revealed how the strategic use of representational, interactional, and compositional elements in the selected data contributed to constructing negative images of opposing candidates and parties. Moreover, the findings showed how political actors employ pronouns and collective identity markers to delineate between 'us, we, and our' (supporters) and 'them, they, and those' (opponents), thereby facilitating ingroup cohesion while demonising outgroup members. Such a dichotomous framing polarises political discourse and exacerbates social divisions. Collectively, the results clearly demonstrate the intricacies of negative image creation within Nigerian electoral discourse and highlight the strategic use of language and visuals to create a wrong impression of rival politicians, mobilise the electorate, manipulate their perceptions, and influence their voting behaviours. As hypothesised, the impact of political campaign songs, which deliberately use linguistic and rhetorical strategies and tactics, manifests in altered voting behaviours,

heightened political polarisation, eroded trust in democratic institutions, and increased societal divisions.

5.2. Implications

The findings in this study have contributed to the understanding of how political discourse, particularly campaign songs, constructs or contributes to the negative image formation of political opponents and influence voting behaviours. Based on the findings, this study has several implications for policymakers, political analysts, and other stakeholders involved in the electoral process. Policymakers and those in charge of political campaigns for political parties can benefit from this study by understanding how linguistic, rhetorical, and semiotic features are employed to discredit others and manipulate voters' behaviour. With the insights from it, they can develop more ethical and constructive campaign strategies that prioritise informative and positive discourse over negative campaigning. Lastly, this study's findings show the ethical implications of using emotionally charged and manipulative language in political discourse. Therefore, political analysts and campaign advisors in charge of the electoral process can be informed through this study about the role of language use in campaigns and, thereby, advocate for higher ethical standards in campaign practices to promote integrity and respect in political communication in a democratic environment.

5.3. Limitations and Recommendations

This study has limitations because it only focuses on political campaign songs, neglecting other forms of political discourse, such as speeches and debates. This may not be extensive enough to capture the full spectrum of negative image formation in Nigerian electoral discourse. Thus, future research could incorporate other forms of discourse, such as speeches, debates, and social media posts, for a comprehensive analysis. Moreover, this study

is year-specific and centred on the 2023 Nigerian General Elections; further research could examine historical trends in negative image construction across multiple election cycles to identify patterns and changes over time. In addition, the data selected for this study is limited to the most widely spoken local languages, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, and NPE; thus, it is recommended that future studies employ a comparative analysis to examine political campaign materials from different regions, cultures, languages, and time periods. This could provide insights into regional variations, evolving discursive strategies, and their effectiveness.

Furthermore, investigating the role of social media platforms in disseminating those negative campaign messages and their influence on public opinion could also be a valuable area for future research. While I employed CDA and MDA as analytical frameworks, it would also be interesting to discover whether other linguistic theories could yield similar or different findings. Finally, the role of social media in politics cannot be overemphasised as it acts as a powerful tool for political campaign songs to reach a large electorate and spread their messages quickly. Hence, to build on the findings of this study, it is recommended that future studies further explore the impact of social media on political discourse by examining the dissemination of political campaign songs, calling for greater awareness and monitoring of the language used in political campaign songs to promote more responsible and ethical forms of political communication.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A: List of Abbreviations

APC	All Progressives Congress
BAT	Bola Ahmed Tinubu
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
LP	Labour Party
MDA	Multimodal Discourse Analysis
MCDA	Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party

Appendix B: Transcription Notation Conventions

	Notation	Meaning
1	*	Indecipherable words/phrases
2	(*)	Short pause
3	(***)	Very long pause
4	(...)	Words omitted
5	(R)	Repetitions
6	...	Speech trails off

7	#	One person talks over the other
8	.	Completion of a line

Appendix C: Data Transcription

TEXT A

1. Whoever votes for the APC (*) will do business and make a
2. profit. You will bring home the fruits of your labour.
3. Those whose lives have been ruined (*) will not pull us
4. down to their level. Do not fight them (***) instead, let
5. your vote speaks for you..

TEXT B

6. Atiku becomes a shoemaker. The whole world has heard about
7. it. He is shining Tinubu's shoes (R). Atiku becomes a
8. Shoemaker (*) The whole world has heard about it.
9. Thoughtless hardworking men, fathers of cowards. We will no
10. longer tolerate you boasting about power (*) If you
11. continue boasting about power, we will tie you down like a
12. ram for a sacrifice #. All members of the PDP are
13. bedwetters..

TEXT C

14. Akanbi (***), do not rely on them, they are betrayers (R).
15. Do not rely on them. They are unreliable (R). It has
16. become their way.. It has become their habit. Treason has
17. become their thing. Akanbi, do not trust them. They are

18. traitors. Do not rely on them. They are not good.

TEXT D

19. Nigeria is our land (R). Allah has turned back to the APC.
20. No one supports them anymore. We will all burn their party
21. and dampen the ashes (*). Here is the answer to the
22. matter. Malam Atiku is the one who can repair the land. Oh
23. Allah, make the journey successful for us (R). The
24. government officials are corrupt. They feel no shame in
25. the country. They inflict pain on both slaves and children
26. (*). Right now, there is no better choice than Atiku and
27. Okowa... The common people are seeking solutions. Give them
28. Atiku to change the country. Abubakar's son, come and move
29. The country forward..

TEXT E

30. My people, reason this thing! When PDP was ruling, our
31. country was safe, Naira was strong. The economy was
32. growing, the petrol price was 87 Naira, and a bag of rice
33. was 8,000 Naira (*). When the change people come, no work,
34. no food. The economy falls, and Naija becomes a borrowing
35. country... There is a rise in banditry, and JAPA becomes
36. people's choice. Sapa up and down (*). There is no need to
37. gamble. PDP is here, the safe choice. We are tired of
38. suffering! PDP is here, the experienced party. We don't
39. want an experiment. Get it right, safe choice. This is our
40. lives. All over Nigeria, Atiku is the right man. Atiku and

41. Okowa are the only choice for Nigeria...

TEXT F

42. Tinubu went to church and prayed "Oh Father, help me lift
43. my burden... Do not leave me on my own. Jesus, the King of
44. Life..." (***) As he prayed, God answered his prayer,
45. "Quickly lift your burden, O child. Quickly lift it. I
46. will leave you to your own devices, Jesus doesn't lift
47. unnecessary loads."

TEXT G

48. Anywhere you go nah Peter Obi... All over you go nah Peter
49. Obi (R). Mama and Papa dey shout Peter Obi... Brothers and
50. sisters dey want Peter Obi... Nigeria has suffered
51. immensely. We have suffered a great deal. While other
52. countries are growing, we keep falling... (*) Because we
53. have bad leaders at the top. They don't care because their
54. families are all abroad, But every four years, they come
55. with the same story. The same people, the same story..(***)
56. All they know how to do is to steal our money. Just when
57. we thought all hope was lost, God sent us Peter Obi...

TEXT H

58. Are you Obi-dient? I am Obi-dient! # Are you Obi-dient? We
59. are Obi-dient! # Peter Obi, you are my choice for
60. president, because we want a better tomorrow (R). We do
61. not want a dullard, no no. See the situation as it is. If

62. you want a better tomorrow, do not vote for a dullard! *
63. My Brother, sister, get your PVC. Make we unite vote Obi.#
64. (...) Peter Obi, nah my president you be, because I want a
65. better tomorrow (R). I do not want a dullard, no no. Obi
66. is the leader, we need for a better tomorrow. Do not
67. settle for a leader who lacks know-how, no no...

TEXT I

68. Peter Obi dey come ooo... Yusuf Datti dey come ooo... Peter
69. Obi dey come ooo... vote for Labour Party with your PVC ooo...
70. (R). Labour Party nah the party. And Peter Obi nah the
71. man ooo... Yusuf Datti nah the vice ooo... See better
72. Combination. (*) Go get your PVC. Your PVC nah your power.
73. Your PVC nah your voice. (***) If you are tired of this
74. suffering... If you are tired of this killing... If you are
75. tired of this darkness oo for Naija. Nah Peter Obi be the
76. Answer. (*) Youth employment go *. Our students no go
77. strike again ooo... If you vote for Peter Obi. Make you no
78. go sell your vote. If you sell your vote, you sell
79. Nigeria. You sell your vote, you sell your future. Make
80. you vote for Peter Obi. (*) God don answer our prayers.
81. And better life dey come o... Make we not sit down for house
82. o... Make we vote for Peter Obi. Peter Obi dey come ooo...
83. Better life dey come. Yusuf Datti dey come ooo... (...) Peter
84. Obi dey come ooo... Nah God sent am, vote for Labour Party
85. with your PVC ooo...

TEXT J

86. It's not a new thing. They have been telling us for a long
87. time that (*) there will be electricity. I swear, it's
88. been a long time since (*) they said they would build our
89. Schools... (***) Let's change that narrative... Because it's
90. all lies. It's all lies. # (...) they haven't even tried.
91. They killed many youths. And they still denied it. They
92. came and still denied it. # It's all lies. (...)they haven't
93. even tried. Let's come together to change the story for
94. Nigeria... Aren't you tired of suffering? (*) Aren't you
95. tired of hunger? (*) So let's vote for the man who will
96. make Nigeria a better place. Use your common sense.