



TWEET AND TALK: STANCE OF TWITTER DISCUSSANTS ON THE CANDIDACY OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES THAT DECLARED FOR THE 2023 ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

Tweets on political issues continue to generate interest due to consistent change in political dispensations and leadership. This study investigates stance-taking in the evaluation of presidential candidates for the 2023 election. It adopts Appraisal/Stance, Pragmatic Acts and Jeffries' Critical Stylistics as theories to analyse forty-five tweets on the candidacy of the presidential candidates, purposively selected and copied from Twitter handles. Five bidirectional identities of presidential candidates are identified, using conceptual-textual functions, evaluation of attitude and Pragmatic Acts. These are, the presidential candidate as 'messiah', 'mobiliser', 'popular/unpopular candidate', 'contender' and 'public-self welfarist'. Findings also reveal affect strategies like 'assessment of personality traits', 'assessment of positive and negative attribute', 'evaluation, and (or) verbalisation of emotions'. For judgement the strategies found include 'declaration of faction; contradiction; social expectations'; 'assessment of competence or ability'; 'assessment and verbalisation of attributes, behaviour, national quality' and 'candidacy endorsement, precedent (political) performances and projects.' The study concludes that the social media is the electorates' platform for engaging, assessing, and critiquing the candidacy of presidential candidates to affect enthusiasts' eventual choice of whom to vote for during the election.

Keywords: Stance, Social interaction, Tweets, election, Critical Stylistics, political discourse

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Twitter, and, indeed, all the social media platforms, plays host to a vast range of communicative encounters which are built around discourses. One of the dominant areas, which has attracted attention in this study is political discourse, which also encapsulates topics like campaigns, and bidirectionally gives room for people's responses or evaluation of the candidacy of the politicians. This is suggested by Aljarallah, (2017), who notes that the social media are equitable grounds for 'advocacies and social campaigns.' In other words, they are not only efficient and quick media for disseminating information (one could be sure that information on social media spread around the globe in quick succession), but also a means where people make their comments about political issues for the purpose of advocacy or simply responding to the messages - information that are being spread.

The social media gives people not just a platform, but also the opportunity to share their opinions, criticism, and comments about issues of public concern; things that are imminent or exigent, things that could affect the nation in a significant manner. Among these issues is the presentation of candidates vying for presidency. This constitutes the context that underpins such political discourses on these platforms. What is already known is that the context of interaction plays an indelible role in online interactions. According to canonical context's scholars like Mey 2001; Odebunmi 2006; 2016, the context provides the affordances for communicators; in this case, it conditions any form of interaction that goes on in the social media space. What makes up the situational contexts in the political tweets and retweets on the Twitter platform is a significant question addressed in this study. However, in a broad perspective, going by the description of Halliday' (1994) macro description of the term context, it can be deduced that that the tenor of social media interaction is informal; but in this case, engaging issues of politics, particularly commenting on the tweets publicising political candidates implies cross mapping of the informal-interpersonal to the formal context. How evident this is averred in Twitter-political discourses is a gap explored in this study. For instance, it is possible to transfer such features as ethnicity, relationship, and likeness to people's political affiliation (Morozov, 2013; van Dijk, 2013).

Boyd, Golder and Lotan (2011) say that the social media gives readers and followers the opportunity to engage in a 'conversational ecology' of trending issues of concern. The implication of this is that communication, in the social media, exists in a thread. In Twitter for instance, one person tweets, and others continue the thread, liking, commenting, or retweeting to generate other threads. This means that the social media often create a bidirectional avenue for public involvement and the 'interplay of voices that give rise to an emotional sense of shared conversational context' (Boyd, Golder and Lotan, 2011). Manovich (2003) calls this cyberculture, distinguishing it from the more general term, 'new media'. This is an attempt to reinforce the peculiarity of Twitter and its counterpart like Facebook that follow a thread in establishing online identity, sociology, and ethnography. The aim of this study therefore is to uncover, among other, the issues, and identities presented, while projecting presidential candidates as the right choice and the bidirectional stance taking as responses by their supporters/opponents. These have not been sufficiently explored in previous studies.

Domingo and Martos (2015) studied the engagement of issues about the educational sector in Spain on Twitter, especially by political officers. They note that the platform is used 'a weapon to justify party's policies and discredit those of others' as a matter of ideology. It is true that political comments on social media platforms are either crediting or discrediting, legitimating or delegitimizing political actions. However, the study does not focus on the comments of supporters or the electorates in general, which this present study does. The theory used by Domingo and Martos (2015) is also different from this study. Asente's (2021) study captured the American context, analysing Donald Trump's twitter exchanges, and the ensuing comments of Americans using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Asente identifies tweeter and other social media as an environment for polarisation. The American context is clearly different from the Nigerian context, in the same way that the issue of concern is different from this study, which is on presenting and responding to comments on presidential candidacy. The more recent studies on Twitter discourse like Şakiroğlu (2020), Wicke and Bolognesi (2021), and Luo, He and Yu (2022), among others, have focused on tweets of political actors on the COVID-19 pandemic, neglecting the voice of the people who access the tweets. What their reactions are to these political tweets remain a mirage in research.

Literature Review: Twitter as Platform for social discourse

Each of the social media platforms has its own peculiarity and diversity. One of the most frequently assessed and used forum is *Tweeter*; it is vastly exploited for various parlance and forms of social interactions. Hodson, (2013) identifies Twitter as 'a microblog, or a blog' that places a limit on useable characters, with which the blogger or poster is expected to frame his or her thought, opinion, comment, or response. It exists as a chain of connection or information sharing service. Tweeting is a short, but 'highly impulsive' medium of communication; something that could form part of one's leisure (Ott, 2017). This is partly because it has limited range of resources for communication. For instance, one is limited to a maximum of 140 characters per tweet. It is also limited in the social space, that is, the post placed or tweeted are in one's personal profile, such that whoever is not following that profile has no business seeing it.

One of the most pervert conditions of tweeter is the enabling of anonymous or pseudonymous posting. Anybody can adopt or adapt to agents' identity to circulate messages. Java et al. (2007) submit that Twitter posting include updates, links to pictures or videos, trends or stories that are reported in news websites and other blogs or web pages, which are easily found upon Twitter search (Aljarallah, 2017). Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) refer to tweets as "push-push-pull communication". In describing what this means, they opine when a user contends a tweet from another person, or finds it appealing or interesting, they can simply become a 'follower' of that person'. The essence of this followership is to have the opportunity to have all tweets of that person pushed to them automatically. This continues in a thread, until newer issues emanate and there is no reason to revisit earlier tweets. However, it should be noted that tweets are not,

particularly, directed to an individual user, but for the audience of everyone in the world who cares to read, like, retweet or comment.

Murthy (2013) posits that Twitter does not necessarily show what is in the tweeter's heart, even if people believe it is. This applies to all other social media interactions; it is playful at times, meddling, subtle, ironic, and sometimes as a reinforcement of comments made in a thread, or simply as a way of 'facilitating support for communities.' Twitter is a web-based communication system. In the words of Murthy (2013), it allows individuals to 'maintain a public web-based asynchronous conversation,' using 'mobile phones, mobile Internet devices, or through various websites.' The goal is to contribute to an ongoing conversation, still staying above the 140 characters limit or less. Tweets posted automatically become transposed into the public domain, consequently, it is publicly accessible, first on the tweeter's profile on the host website, Twitter. However, tweets shared are not limited in range to only one's circle of friends, but to all other Twitter subscribers and users who follow the tweet or the tweeter.

Murthy (2013) identifies two key notations, signs or tags that Twitter interactions run through. The first is at-sign (@). The @ is used with the profile name of a user to send a message or dialogue, directly, with the user bearing the sign. In other words, Murthy (2013) says that 'prefixing a post with an at-sign before the target user's name' makes it possible for users to 'instantly see a tweet and respond to it', without even knowing the persona or asking their permission to see the tweet or respond to their comments following the same at-sign prefix and the name. This fulfils the objective of Twitter in Niedzwiecki (2009:129), which is establishing 'connection with very low expectation.' While low expectation is relative to the restricted characters, the role of connection is attached, largely to the carriage of themes by users (in this case political agents) to certain individuals or groups. Tweets are thematically categorised, using the second notation or sign, that is 'hashtag' (#). The hashtag is followed by the subject line of the tweet, which is the theme that draws attention and comments from users (Murthy, 2013:4). Summarily, for easy linkage or access to posts or 'tweets', tweeters use the hashtag (#) and 'at' (@) sign to mark messages for anyone who wishes to respond or react to, while the responders are expected to refer to the hashtag or @ sign as quick links. In the words of Konnelly (2015:2), the hashtag is the most powerful feature of reference in Twitter discourse.

Theoretical framework

This study adopts a theoretical triangulation approach, co-opting tools from three theories, that is, Attitude from Stance and Appraisal, the textual part of Pragmatic Acts, and the conceptual-Textual Functions in Critical Stylistics. The interface between and among these theories are clearly seen in their deployment to political texts – speeches, campaigns, and general comments about political leaders. They are bidirectionally connected in form and functions in the analysis of text, as explained in the latter part of this section, and the model developed for this study. Before these, a brief but explicit overview of these theories is presented, starting with the theory of Appraisal. Appraisal theory is underpinned and grounded in the systemic functional linguistics (SFL) framework of Halliday (1994), Matthiessen (1995), and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004). In literal terms, it practically evolved from SFL, accounting for the use of language as a medium for evaluating situations, conditions, statements, among instantiations. It has close relationship with stance, which started to evolve in the early 2000s as both an analytical and a theoretical tool in academic discourses in the works of Hunston and Thompson (2000); Gardner (2001), Mushin (2001), Kärkkäinen (2003), to mention a few. White (2011) describes the theory as a technical and systematic way of conducting an analysis that is based on evaluation and stance taking, including the ways they occur and operate in texts or a group of texts. Stance taking is a social phenomenon and is peculiar to individuals or a group of speakers or writers, while expressing their feelings or perspective about something. In another perspective, appraisal also implies engagement. This is the way that people engage 'socially determined value positions, by aligning or dis-aligning themselves with propositions, or making their own propositions. In Halliday's

framework, stance interfaces between and among the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. In other words, it is a way of (re)constructing one's experience, solidifying, or dislocating social roles and relationships, using textual representations of the mind's content. It is the way and manner that language users, through speeches or writings (re)construct their identities.

Englebretson (2007) posits that stance taking is what people 'actively' and consistently use in discourse; to put it more directly, Englebretson says that it is a 'natural habitat', and it is underpinned by context. This means that the appraisal system does not only run through language, but also the context of use. Language devoid of context will barely have communicative meaning. On the one hand, Hyland (2005) refers to this as meta-discursive, also aligning with Halliday's metafunctions. On the other hand, Mushin (2001) opines that the scope of appraisal and stance is not limited to opinion and position taking; it extends to evidential and epistemic claims, which deal with 'expressing the status of one's knowledge' of situations, the contexts the underpins the interaction process. There are three levels or modalities for appraisal, 'attitude', 'engagement' and 'graduation'. But the most correspondent to stance staking, according to White (2011), is attitude. This is achieved in texts using three strategies, affect, judgement and appreciation. Affect applies to 'attitudinal meanings, which are associated with emotional involvements that align with positive or negative opinions, such as admire, respect, among others. White (2011) says that judgement applies attitudes aimed at gaining social acceptability with certain forms of behaviours, norms, or morality, such as ability, talent, respect, among others. Lastly, appreciation is the assessments of value and 'aesthetic qualities (White, 2011).

Modern stylistics is proliferating into a multidisciplinary field of study, focusing on culture, society (Simpson, 2004), and functional situations. It is nourished with theories from systemic functional linguistics, pragmatics, literature, psychology, and social theory, among other disciplines where language is a meeting point. This is the position of Jeffries (2007), the pioneer of Critical Stylistics (CS). The theory applies, not only as a means for linguistic investigation, but also offers an interesting contemporary insight to the use of language in the socio-political stage, where there is interplay of power and hegemony, (Jeffries, 2010). CS imitates the procedures of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), especially in terms of its analytical approach, which involves coagulating theories. CS is "not a homogenous model, nor a school or a paradigm, but a shared perspective on ways of doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis (van Dijk 1993). In a broader sense, both CS and CDA are involved in the same chase, they are involved in doing the same thing under different nomenclature, which is to understudy how ideologies are represented in texts. Hence, both CS and CDA could be merged, at some point, as Critical Discourse Stylistics (CDS). Jeffries (2010) agrees that it is the fusion of 'critical discourse analysis (CDA) and stylistics.'

Dogar (2013) argues that CS is informed by critical linguistic. It is hinged on the actual social interaction and meaning and influenced by the social and cultural contexts. CS focuses on reoccurring conventions foregrounding identity and ideology in texts, which makes it a form of radical approach that can be applied to discourses surrounding politics, administration, leadership, management, journalism, and advertising, among others. El-Falaky (2015) posits that 'language gains its power through its deployment within the agendas of powerful people'. His notion of 'power' is rank and status, that is, the hierarchical arrangement of social, professional, political, and economic life. Jeffries (2007) prescribes a set of analytical tools she terms as 'conceptual - textual functions' which can be identified in the body of texts. These are: naming and describing, representing actions/events/states, equating and contrasting, exemplifying, and enumerating, prioritising, implying, and assuming, negating, hypothesising, presenting the speech and thoughts of other participants, and representing time, space, and society. These conceptual-textual functions are micro acts in their own rights, which strongly justifies their liaising with pragmatic acts theory, which provides the affordances for their deployment in texts.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study are Hashtag and at-sign (@) related tweets publicising political candidates for the 2023 presidential election. These were copied from various Twitter handles. The purposive random sampling technique is used to select seventy samples, out of which few are analysed in respective sections in this study. The data are analysed qualitatively, using the top-down analytical approach. The analysis is conducted in three sections, which are focused on the three levels of attitudes in stance-taking, which are affect, judgement and attitude. In each of these appraisal models, there are identities conducted. These are identified and discussed together with the conceptual-textual functions and the (con)textual affordances underscoring them. In evaluating political/presidential candidates, five identity representations are engendered. These are also represented as the attributes of politicians contesting for the position of president of the nation. These identities are, the presidential candidate as a 'messiah', 'mobiliser', 'popular/unpopular candidate', 'contender' and 'public-self welfarist'.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section is devoted to analysing the data sampled for analysis. The first section is titled 'affect in the evaluation of presidential candidates in tweeter discourse; the second section is judgement of presidential candidates on tweeter, and the use of appreciation in the evaluation of presidential candidates on tweeter.

Affects strategies in evaluating presidential candidates

The topical issues built around 'affect' in the tweets understudied include 'ideational response to personality traits, negative or positive attribute evaluation, ideational representation of condition, and verbalisation of emotional response to candidacy. These evaluation strategies are used to project the identities stated above.

Excerpts (i)



Ada Agina-Ude @Ada_Agina · 4h
Replying to @thebardogbamola @OfficialPDPNig and 2 others
Much as I admire **Wike** for his projects, I know he will not make a good **President**.
He's rather too brash and quarrelsome.

Prince @princefaith85 · 4h
Replying to @OselokaHObaze and @PeterObi
People's love for PETER OBI is unlimited..his simplicity is beyond measure..Nigerians cannot walk to **wike**, Tambawa or Bala & take selfie with them..pride won't let them..peter Obi is going to be an accessible **President** if given the tickets he will be like Gadafi African Best

The tweets above evaluate the candidacy of two presidential aspirants which are generically indexed in the tweets as part of the strategy to categorically state their preferred or unpreferred candidates. The first tweet shows instances of positive and negative evaluation of attributes. The first is seen through inference in the use of the verb, 'admire'. The conceptual functions of representing opinion and describing are used to foreground the quality of admiration. The tweeter

makes an epistemic stance of her admiration, relating to the 'projects' that the presidential candidate has accomplished as a sitting governor. This marks the aspirant, as a governor, with the identity of public welfarist. But the second clause the represents a contrary attribute, in this case, relating to the main concern, which is evaluating his candidacy. The negative attribute of not being 'good', that is, fit for president is directly represent. Focus graduation and the conceptual function of emphasising clearly signifies the tweeter's direct inference that the candidate is not fit to lead at the presidential level, just because the tweeter is not his supporter. The second excerpt also has positive evaluation of attribute of the candidate, using 'love'. This is synonymous to 'admire' used in the previous excerpt. The conceptual functions of naming and emphasising, which sequences to graduation (focus) provide the index, which is the aspirant. There are other qualities evaluated in the place. These include 'simplicity' and 'accessible'. For every attribute created to support candidates' preference for the job, there is a contradictory attribute. The stronger implicature in the excerpt is that the other presidential candidates do not possess those qualities, therefore, do not deserve to be voted for. There is representation of emotion which the speaker puts in 'simile'.

Excerpts (ii)



The tweets above are contrasting evaluation of the presidential candidate who is indexed, using the conceptual function of naming. The formal avers to the mobiliser identity of the candidate, using positive attribute marker, modified by the adjective, 'great'. The conceptual function of naming and describing is used to attribute give his proficiency in 'campaign', being able to mobilise voters. The tweet, using directness, refers to him as the unpopular candidate, giving him suggestion of another role, as a 'campaign chairman'. Another positive attribute is represented using implicature. He is considered as a brave politician, as metaphorised by 'balls.' The implicature here is that he will make better opposition, rather than president. This also strengthens the point that he is the unpopular candidate. The latter tweet expresses a contradictory notion. It presents the same candidate as a 'public welfarist', using the positive attribute, 'good' to mark his era as a governor. Reference and the conceptual function of representing place is used to point signify the candidate. The mention of 'Rivers State,' is indexical, that is, a cataphoric reference, to the presidential candidate mentioned focused – embolden at the latter part of the tweet for emphasis.

Excerpts (iii)



The two excerpts above evaluate the candidacy of only one presidential candidate, which is indexed in the tweets, using the conceptual functions of naming, and describing. The person index, the name of the candidate is focused, using the conceptual function of emphasising. In the first tweet, the speaker datively represents his emotion, using the verb, 'felt', and two of the candidate's supposed emotional state when he declared for the presidency, and the follow up acts to give himself a fair identity in the race as a contender. His initial emotional state, in the perspective of the tweet, is represented by 'bants', which entails joking, as observe by some politicians who drop out eventually. The second emotional state, which is represented by 'serious', is apparently what represents the sustaining emotional state, validating the ambition of the candidate, as he has refused to drop out. The tweeter subsequently uses reference, in this case, showing a synonym between 'joke' and 'bants'. There is metapragmatic joker in the first excerpt, using code-mixing, with the piginised utterances '*na so*' and '*sef*'

In the second tweet above, the tweeter represents the identity of the 'popular candidate'. The tweeter here assumes that there is confidence in the candidate named in the tweet that he is the party's preferred candidate, using the adjective 'sure', and using the conceptual functions of enumerating as graduation. The cardinal-numerical percentage (adjective) is used as quantifier to measure the level of surety. As the preferred candidate, the attribute of a winner is represented using verb, 'win'. The conceptual functions of representing time and implying are used in the excerpt to reinforce the supposed believe that the candidate will not only win the primary, but also the presidency. This is implied by the temporal, '29th May', which is the date of swearing in of the president, after the election has been won.

Judgement of presidential candidates on tweeter

In instantiations of judgement in the evaluation of political candidates on twitter, the tweeters employ various strategies. The dominant ones replicated in most of the data used for this study include nominalisation and verbalisation of faction, verbalisation of contradiction, assessment of social expectations, assessment of competence, and assessment and verbalisation of behavioural traits. A few of these are exemplified and discussed below.

Excerpts (iv)



The first part of the '@Nnaemeka1's tweet marks the identity of unpopular candidate, in this case the party. The strategy of verbalisation and nominalisation of contradiction, using the conceptual function of prioritising, in the superlative adjective 'biggest', and the adverb, 'eventually'. The nominal 'casualty', constructs the opinion or represents the inference that the party, which is named, 'PDP', is the unpopular candidate, because the tweeter's preferred candidate, which he feels is the popular candidate of the electorates, is not the popular candidate of the party. From this, there is representation/verbalisation of faction. The tweeter belongs to 'Peter Obi's' faction, which makes him to take a further contradictory position in assessing the candidate's, 'Wike's competence and ability to win the election. The conceptual function of negating is seen in, 'not', while 'material' is used as a conceptual metaphor, showing ability or competence to be the 'president', which is focussed. The second tweet is contradictory to the former. In this case, the speaker uses the strategy of assessing social expectation. The tweeter, through this, represents the presidential candidate as a 'messiah'. The tweeter weighs his judgement, using the conceptual function of enumerating, mentioning critical social issues, and promising solutions, if the candidate, 'Wike' becomes the preferred choice of candidate. The social expectations of any candidate will be to 'tackle insecurity', 'stop killing', ensure 'peace and harmony' and restore the economy'. These are the assessment of the attributes a coming president muse have. The deontic modality of obligation and responsibility, rather than certainty, is implied in the use of 'will'.

Excerpts (v)





Shola Omo @SholaOmo3 · 16h

Yayaha Bello has the prerequisites to transform Nigeria for the best. Enough of the old recycled Leaders, Support Gov. **Yahaya Bello For President.**

The excerpts above evaluate the candidacy of another presidential aspirant, who is mentioned, using the conceptual-textual functions of naming, emphasising, and prioritising. The name is emphasised using graduation, that is, bold fonts, to show focus. Judgement is achieved using assessment of competence and social expectations. The nominal, 'transparency', and 'accountability', which are also emphasised in title case, not only assess the candidate's competence, but also implicates the attributes – 'qualities' that are expected of every presidential aspirant. These qualities are used to label the candidate as a public welfarist; one who is accountable to the electorates. The latter part of the clause introduces the identity of a mobiliser, reference to the attributes of being 'modern' and 'digital', show his identification with the youthful people, whose campaign base is largely the social media, one of which is twitter. In the latter tweet, the 'messiah' identity is reflected. There is also verbalisation of competence, in marking the above identity, using the verb 'transform'. This candidate is prioritised, using the comparative-superlative attribute, 'best' to indicate the form of 'change' that Nigeria is due for. There are conceptual functions of implying and representing opinion in the mapping the kind of 'transformation that Nigeria needs. The tweet gives judgement, using the implicature that Nigeria's problems are caused by leaders, and it takes a good and 'dedicated leader to change things. Both tweets are equated on the basis of representing the perspective of moving power from the 'aged' to the 'youth'.

Excerpts (vi)



The tweets above are indefinite judgements of the notable figures, among whom have declared interest to contest the presidency to label them with the identity of 'unpopular candidate'. In both cases, there is verbalisation of behaviour, and contradiction which the tweets represent in quizzical manners, with specific implicatures. For instance, the second tweet uses direct exophoric reference to a social function, '**#ENDSARS protest**' to pass judgement on the behaviour(s) of the presidential candidates, giving the implicature that they are not concerned about the people's plight. The tweet uses the conceptual function of equating to associate the political class; it puts them one clique, implying that none took the side of the suffering masses during the most suffocating period of their life, but put up a contrary behaviour, which implied

direct or indirect support of government's decision, no matter how terrible and consequential it is to the people. The contrary act of not 'saying' implied not negating, in other words, supporting, as implicated by the tweet. In the former tweet too, the speaker engages the interest of the contestants, who are named in the plate, with the goal of assessing their social behaviour, social expectations, and indirectly, competence, running for president. The puzzle 'why', implicates engaging the candidates, with the expectation of presenting their intentions clearly to the Nigerian populace, as to what they intend to do in power. By not showing this, the tweet, indirectly equates them with their predecessor, who is also indexed in the tweet, using the conceptual functions of naming, and representing opinion, implying also that there was no specific commitment in the mind of the political elites to change the course of things in the country. This is the basis for the contradiction (judgement) verbalised in the embedded adjectival at the latter part of the tweet.

Appreciation in the evaluation of presidential candidates on tweeter

The most occurring pro-campaign evaluation (appraisal/stance) strategy used on tweeter is appreciation. In most cases, the comments and subsequent tweets are built on antecedents of appreciation maxims that are declared about the presidential aspirants. The appreciation strategies found in the data include, evaluation of aesthetic and political impact, natural quality, endorsement of candidacy and the only significant instance of bidirectional appreciation appraisal, which is evaluation of precedent performance/project. The appreciation appraisal systems are represented in hashtags, and comments to tweets and retweets. Some of these are presented and discussed in the tweets below.

Excerpts (vii)



Michael Victoria @Michael16605844 · May 19
Replying to @DEJIBOSS10
The unifier
The Chosen
The future
I stand with **Yahaya Bello** for president 2023
[#Hope23](#)
[#YahayaBello](#)

Orizu Promise @promiseorizu1 · May 13
[#YahayaBello](#)
It's pathetic when people post this two pictures with pride. So for 7yrs+ this what Gov Bello has done yet some fanatics still thinks he deserved to be president.

In the first tweet in excerpt (vii), the appreciation strategy employed clearly shows endorsement of candidacy, using short catch phrases, using anaphora as a repetitive strategy to emphasise claim to endorsement. Among these, phrases, only one, which is the first, is indexed to social responsibility endorsement, which is unity. There is the representation of opinion, indirectly, that the nation is divided along so many factors, religious, interpersonal, regional, and ethnic, giving the inference that the nation needs a candidate who is not only willing, but able to unite the divides. The other phrases, including the hashtag, '[#hope23](#)' are used to metaphorise his labelling as the 'messiah'. The second tweet in excerpts (vii) represents a contrary notion in the endorsement of the same presidential candidate. In this case, the appreciation strategy used is, 'evaluation of

precedent project', labelling him as an 'unpopular candidate'. The tweet also critiques the endorsement of the same candidate in the hashtag, **#yahayaBello**, as a façade, hinged on basis of religion, which is emphasising only one side of the divide. The tweeter poses the inference that the candidate, rather than unite the country, as suggested by the former tweet, will divide it on the basis of religion.

Excerpts (viii)



The first tweet in excerpts (viii) is a pro and anti-endorsement campaign at the same time, using the conceptual function of contrasting. It is used to label one of the candidates as the popular and the other as the unpopular candidate. The conceptual function of naming is used to index the two candidates, while the conceptual function of emphasising is used for the latter, indicating his first, middle, and last name. Both candidates are evaluated, based on judgement of their precedent performance. Both were in the same political dispensation and (or) administration, but in different capacities, the former as Vice President of the country, while the latter served as the Governor of Lagos State. There is exophoric reference to the events that discredited the former and credited the latter. The second politician is labelled with the identity of a social welfarist, who was able to carter for the needs of the state without 'allocation' from the government. This is referenced as 'revenue' in the tweet which endorses the latter and discredits the former. The second tweet adopts endorsement of candidacy as strategy for judgement, using the conceptual-textual functions of enumerating, naming, and describing. The endorsers, 'artisans', 'market women', and the endorsed are named. The endorsed is emphasised using bold font and the full name. he is also described as a 'national leader', which implicates his representation as a mobiliser. He is also associated with the common people of the society for the purpose of presenting him as a social welfarist, who is able to connect with the low-class voters, who form the majority of the electorates. There is reference to the candidate's immediate position, which is named and described, as the national leader of the party. One of the functions of the national leader is to unify the members of the party, which labels him as a 'mobiliser'.

Excerpts (ix)



Kelvin Obambon @KObambon · May 13

...

Prof. Yemi Osinbajo is a man of peace - Nigeria will witness peace when he becomes **president** in 2023.

He is a forward thinking man - Nigeria will see unprecedented development and progress under his reign.

Support Prof Yemi **Osinbajo for President...**



20-10-2020 @KMuftahu · 17h

...

WE MUST NOT MISS THIS GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY!

Good morning Nigerians. Let's support **Osinbajo for President**. He has proven himself to be the best among the rest. Only **Osinbajo** is the hope we have come 2023.

LIKE AND RETWEET FOR NIGERIANS TO SEE IF YOU ARE [#PYO2023](#)
[#NaijaForPYO](#)

The excerpts above are evaluation of judgement on one of the presidential candidates, who is indexed, using the conceptual function of naming. There is also the conceptual-textual function of describing, the title used as a form of identification or endorsement of his academic quality. The abbreviation, 'Prof' refers to professor, labelling him as the preferred and 'popular' candidate. The tweeter also employs evaluation of natural attribute strategy, referring to the candidate, directly, as 'a man of peace'. This is the representation of opinion, the inference that the most significant challenge in the country is the absence of 'peace'. This is further lexicalised, using the conceptual function of naming and reference, pointing to indexes like the nation, 'Nigeria' and the personal pronoun 'he', which points to the candidate. Other endorsing attributes mentioned in the tweet include 'forward thinking' and developer, which is achieved by implicature. The tweeter uses the conclusive imperative sentence to emphasise both their support for the candidate, and to show endorsement of his candidacy. In the second excerpt, the tweet begins with graduation, focus, using capital letters. The imperative statement is also used to canvas for election of the candidate. There is evaluation of competence in the conceptual function of prioritising, which is referenced to, using the nominal 'opportunity'. The candidate's ambition to be president is equated with the desperate need of the country to get a good 'leader'. In other words, the tweet poses the inference that it is the nation that is opportune to have a contestant like him in the race, and not the candidate for his ambition. This is referenced by the collective pronoun, 'we'. The candidate is strongly endorsed by verbalising and evaluating his performance as the Vice President, using epistemic verb, 'proven', the superlative adjective, 'best', assonated reference in 'best' and 'rest', and the nominal, 'hope'. Once again, the imperative statement, embolden as graduation strategy.

Excerpts (x)



Finest Soul in Ibadan 🇳🇮 🍷 @iCONicTrader1 · 5h

...

Oh how sweet it will be to flag **Osinbajo** against Peter Obi. For the first time in history of Nigeria, we will have two great candidates to choose from as **president**.

[#1MillionMarch4PeterObi](#) minna Simon Ekpa Liberian girl



KAROUNWI, Sikiru Akanni - KSA @AkanniKarounwi · May 13

If you can still support PDP you can support APC, if you support Osinbajo or Peter Obi, you can support Buhari or Abacha. Shame on You!

Sowore For President [#2023Elections](#)



The first sample of excerpts (x) endorses two candidates, without taking a particular side between them. Hence, in this case, there is mutual endorsement of candidacy, using the conceptual function of equating. The tweeter here probes into two dominant political parties to select/endorse the favoured participant, labelling him with the 'popular' identity. But between the two candidates, the 'contender' identity is marked. There is verbalisation of the act of contention in the use of 'against', and the metaphor and metapragmatic joker, 'flag'. Both candidates are endorsed based on the evaluation of aesthetic impact, using the adjective 'great' to qualify the identity of 'contender'. The two candidates are presented to the populace as alternatives to 'choose from', going forward in the election process. However, the hashtag, [#1MillionMatch4PeterObi](#), which the tweet is connected to, betrays the endorsement of one of the two candidates presented in the tweet. The second tweet is used to discredit certain presidential candidates, who are named, as well as the political parties they are indexed to for the purpose of endorsing a different aspirant, who is also named at the latter part of the excerpt. The tweeter attacks the supporters of the aspirants, using the reference pronoun, 'you', and uses the conceptual-textual functions of enumerating and contrasting to juxtapose his disapproval of the candidates, thus, labelling them as 'unpopular' candidates, while asserting his preferred as the popular candidate. The other aspirants are marked with the 'contender' identity.

Conclusion

The analyses have shown, among other things, the social, political, and situational contexts that condition the hashtag and at-sign tweets used to evaluate candidates vying for the presidential election in 2023. Among these are ethnicity, security challenges, social-economic conditions, and interpersonal relationship these contextual issues are used to assess, evaluate, and analyse the chances of the political candidates in the election. It is also found that tweeters refer to these situational contexts when standing in favour of or against the candidacy of each presidential aspirant. The study finds five identity representations in the tweets evaluating political – presidential candidates. These identities are the presidential candidate as 'mobiliser', 'messiah', 'contender', 'public-self welfarist' and popular/unpopular candidate. These identities are evaluated using affect, judgement, and appreciation, these are the variables of 'attitude' in the appraisal/stance framework.

The strategies of affect in the data used for this study are ideational response to personality traits, positive and negative attribute assessment, and evaluation, and ideational representation and (or) verbalisation of emotions. The strategies used to assert judgement include verbalisation of faction, which means showing the camp that the tweeters belong; verbalisation of contradiction; assessment of social expectations; assessment of competence or ability; assessment and verbalisation of attributes and epithet; and assessment of behaviour. For appreciation, four strategies are observed. They are evaluation of aesthetic and political impact; evaluation of national quality and attribute; endorsement of candidacy, and evaluation of precedent performances and projects. Findings show that the little things that politicians do are used as punchlines to lure support from electorates. The people that support them, and tweet to endorse them also point to these things, but the realities befall them when the politicians get to power, and renege on the promises they made to the people.



Another significant finding in the study is that every instance of appreciation in political tweet is bidirectional with judgement because, one way or another, they show the faction – side that the tweeter is, whether they approve or disapprove, legitimate or delegitimate the political actor’s ambition. The dominant conceptual-textual functions found in the data are naming, describing, enumerating, representing time that is statement of the period of election, prioritising, and contrasting. These are used along with other features like graduation, that is focusing of themes, hashtags, capitalisation and emboldening of fonts. These are used to show sides and support of or opposition to the presidential candidates. The textual features of contexts evident are metaphors, references, which are in form of indexical, implicature, metapragmatic jokers, and inferences.

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