



ENGAGING IDEOLOGY AND THE PERFORMANCE OF ACTORS IN THE POLITICAL MEMES OF NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA

¹Fredrick Friday. JOHN

*¹Department of English, Chrisland University, Abeokuta
proffysong@gmail.com, fjohn@chrislanduniversity.edu.ng*

²Dubamo TOMERE

*Dominican University, Ibadan.
dubamotomere0@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

Meme is a platform where socio-political issues and ideologies are engaged. This has not been sufficiently explored in previous linguistic studies, which have focused more on the multimodal, discourse and stylistic features of memes in achieving satire. This study examines the ideologies in Nigerian and South African memes, juxtaposing the political situations of both nations, which have been on headlines for various controversies. The socio-cognitive contextual approach is adopted, using Peirce's 'sign,' Lesley Jeffries' Critical Stylistics and Jacob Mey's pragmatic acts as theories. Thirteen memes, out of thirty, downloaded from Facebook and Tweeter, were randomly selected, and analysed using the qualitative top-down approach. The results reveal that memes in Nigeria and South Africa condemn corruption among political agents. Consumerism, materialism, dislogism, and renegism are portrayed as the driving ideologies of political leaders in Nigeria and South Africa. The study concludes that the memes represent the political situations of both milieus.

Keywords: *Politics, corruption, Identity and Ideology, Critical Semiotics, Meme*

INTRODUCTION

Politics is a notorious and revolving concept in nations like Nigeria and South Africa. Among other things, the political structure of these two nations is mutual, but with slight divergencies in the organisations (SAYB, 2021). Both nations practice the Presidential System, patterned after first world nations like America. The practice of democracy in these two nations, especially in relation to resource allocation, election mandate, economic and socio-political institutions, among others has, in recent times, been on top of the agenda in various print, visual and social media, which also has been the cause of attraction for meme generators or replicators, necessitating a study of this nature.

Gbadamosi and Ajogbeje (2018) opine that politics, especially in Africa, is a readaptation of the definition 'who gets what, when and how' (Lasswell, 1936). This has been conceptualized as the desperation to get the 'national cake', a metaphor for the resources of the state, which are meant for appropriate sharing. For Gbadamosi and Ajogbeje (2018), the resources are meant to be 'baked by the various ethnic groups', and races that constitute the milieu of Nigerian and South Africa, which make up the milieu of this study. But in actual sense, current trends have shown that the political scene of the two nations have been overtaken by 'kleptomaniac individuals who are obsessed' with looting public funds (Gbadamosi and Ajogbeje, 2018). These submissions are not made lightly; they are backed up by public opinion, and judicial proceedings. Among other things, corruption is a violation of set down standard or rule(s) of behaviour, especially when holding public offices. More definitely, a corrupt system is obvious and become the subject of public opinion. According to Gbadamosi and Ajogbeje (2018), corruption a violation of the public interest, 'an abuse of public resources, or the use of illegitimate forms of political power and influence'. These are significant acts in the milieu understudied.

Indeed, African politics, not only Nigeria and South Africa, has not received any favourable description in even in the face of the world, due to criminal tendencies (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999), chaotic circumstances (Ayittey 2000), and other deteriorating conditions that breed anarchy, collapse of authority and feeling of statelessness. The leadership environment is tense and hostile (Zartman 1995), while the political institutions are laden with so many dysfunctions. It



is sad that some critics or pundits have termed these inconsistencies as 'normal' in African politics or states (Chabal and Daloz 1999). However, these inconsistencies form a major part of memes that are circulated on the social media. Mainly, they are connected to political office holders. For reiteration, these issues range from endemic corruption to political capitalism, social and economic nihilism, among others.

Mustapha (2010) views that the responsibility of government is to govern the state, and not to, on the contrary, manipulate it to achieve personal gains or enrichment. Osaghae (2008) describes the condition of African political leaders as 'corruption-soaked elites and governments.' In other words, political problem of Africa is endemic and resident among its politicians, much as it is in the domestication of corruption. Mustapha (2010) says that things like this make 'domestic politics problematic' and narrow, which amounts to 'spoilization of the system'. This applies to both formal, that is, institutionalised forms of corruption like bribery, state looting illicit trading, bureaucratic (organised) theft, and salary fraud, among others, and informal, more like, community corruption like financial scam (419), extortion, immorality, bunkering, nepotism, among other things that are illegal. The most significant questions that establish the gap of this research is, how are these issues projected in memes, particularly, in the Nigerian and South African contexts; what identities and ideologies of the political actors and actions are represented in the process?

Previous researchers, from the field of linguistics, have studied memes mainly from the position of humour, culture, and features, applying humour, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Pragmatics, multimodal and Socio-stylistics theories. While some of these studies have close relationship with this study, there are significant differences. Three of these are the most noteworthy. Tella (2018) worked the use of humorous implicatures and explicatures by meme producers to frame political candidates through the entextualisation of verbal and visual texts. Tella opines that political meme generators are in favour of candidates, and that they use it favourably to favour the candidate they support, and negatively, to disfavour the candidate they oppose. However, there are two limitations of the study. First, meme generators can operate from a neutral perspective, as represented in this study. Second, the study only focused on the Nigerian context, while this present study is inter-contextual, focusing on Nigeria and South Africa. Third, the theoretical triangulation approach used is completely different from this study.

Kostadinovska-Stojchevska and Shalevska (2018) were more attracted by the features of internet meme. To them, memes contain interesting linguistic features like vernacular 'English, phrases, dialects, puns and punning riddles, jargon, slang, and neologisms, among others. The point of departure from this present study is in the approach. These features are somehow classified under the Socio Cognitive-Conceptual meme model adopted for this study. Anurudu and Obi's (2017) work focused on interpreting the metaphoric representations of memes that are used to capture the economic/commercial ritual of Black Friday, which is being popularized not only in the Nigerian society, but most parts of the African continent where online trading is fast gaining ground. The study revealed rhetoric for ideological manipulations these memes are used to project. However, these ideologies are not political, which makes it completely different from the present study. The theoretical approach is also streamlined to metaphor, which is not all encompassing of all the linguistic resources memes have. However, a detailed approach, as opted for this study provides a deeper understanding about the linguistic features and resources that are used by meme generators to project identities and ideologies. Having said these, it is important to proceed to the literature review, which focuses on the concepts of meme, identity, and ideology, which are the strongholds for this study, in the following sections.

Mememes as a means of political expression

Meme is a form of culture that express multidisciplinary concerns about societies. Dawkins (1976) views it as a cultural analogue of 'gene'. This is alluded to the shades of representations that a meme is capable of. Referring to it as a gene is also allusive to the fact that it can be replicated.



Lynch (1996) view is in a more elaborate sense as a science, that is, 'memetics'. It is a science that define/reflect or is used do satirise or criticise social, cultural, political, and economic ideas, beliefs, values, rules, principles, symbols and concepts among other elements, behaviours and traits, which are common ideational cultural systems operating in the real Blackmore (1999) says that memes are controversial entity, which does not 'really have eyes or points of view', the same features shared by gene. Memes are replicated in the social media. A meme 'looks at the world in terms of opportunities for replication' (Blackmore, 1999:55). A meme can recreate itself and be populated for different reasons based on the contexts. What it recreates is the real world, involving human beings, nature, and other animals. It reflects people's actions or experiences, technology, films, and pictures, among others. Looking at it from Dennett (1995:34), memes are 'the smallest elements that replicate themselves with reliability and fecundity.'

Aunger (2002) opines that every meme generated, more like the gene, 'resembles its predecessor', because of the culture that is replicated in them. Memes are used to express conceptual and ideational realities. John (2018) posits that they transcend ethnographic boundaries, and influence people's political behaviour epigenetically (Durham and Weingart, 1997). In other words, memes have culture systems or significations that are socially transmitted from one media outlet to another. For Aunger (2002), memes replicators transmit information which are stored and processed in the human mind or brain. Thus, meme replication is the representation of a particular lifestyle that is conceptualised, and then reproduced about people, conditions, culture, among others. The success of a meme depends, not only on its replication or representation of social behaviour, but also in the ways these communication forms are socially transmitted.

The voice of social media enthusiast about politics and leaders are consistently engaged, using the social media platform, especially when they are far from the ruling class, as it is in most African countries. Wiggins (2019) posits that the online platform, is an uncontrolled and pervasive platform for engaging political issues quickly, in most cases with little or no fear of censorship. However, this is limited in some countries like Russia and China, where the government is instituting some form of censorship on freedom of expression in the social media. They screen social media contents to remove any form of criticism against the government. But this does not negate the fact that the most convincing reason why memes are populated on the social media is because, whether the political or elite class like it or not, it is the most vibrant place political issues, policies and reviews of political actors are engaged.

The use of memes to engage political issues is enhanced by technological affordances, which the government itself make available due to contemporary realities. The world is a global village; every nation, state or even society, whether urban or rural is connected to the world through the worldwide web (www). Wiggins (2019) opines that the world today is 'beset by political change(s)', leading to such exigencies as internet, mobile telephony, among others. Other factors attached to the changing realities of Information Communication Technology (ICT) are 'the preponderance of apps that allow users to take photos, augment both image and video, quickly edit and upload, stream live videos' (Wiggins, 2019), among others. With the youth population now involved in the social media craze, most of the average population are now technologically inclined not only to operate computers or the internet, but also to design contents like political meme to publicise their thoughts or arguments or ear their own views or opinion. In effect, political memes could be used to circulate even conspiracy theories or ideological issues or policies for public engagement.

Theoretical orientation: Socio-Conceptual (Con)Textual Approach

The Socio-Conceptual (Con)Textual (SCT) approach is adopted for this study. This approach co-opts three theories, Peirce's triadic model of 'sign,' Lesley Jeffries' Critical Stylistics (CS) and Jacob Mey's Pragmatic Acts. These theories establish or demonstrate the connection between the meme (sign/signifier), and the contextual affordances that aid the conceptual-textual meaning

of the meme (signified). Garfinkel (1994) says that interactants encode their communication with “lexical expressions and grammatical constructions in a methodical way”. This also applies in advertisements, the means of communication are coded, and the linguistic choices employed to code meaning are used and understood in relation to contexts. Gumperz (1992) introduced the principle of ‘contextualisation cue’, which he situated in interactional sociolinguistics to advance the argument that communication in a social context is coded with certain markers which the interactants can identify with certain indicators. Co(n)textualisation cues are accomplished by a gamut of principles ‘with reference to lexical and grammatical knowledge, structural position within a clause or sequential location within a stretch of discourse’ (Gumperz, 1992). Contextualisation cues are foregrounded, they are lexical markers which contribute to organising of texts and participants’ common – background knowledge. According to Fetzer and Fischer (2007), a lexical marker is the “connectedness between particular information communicated by a particular piece of discourse with the discourse common ground and with other types of common ground”. Common ground forms the basis of lexical choice and what Traugott (1995) terms as the lexicalisation and grammaticalisation of new meaning. When backgrounds and common grounds are recurrent and expressed through lexical choices or means, they form the basis for lexical markers.

The relationship between sign and the society is mutual. Sign plays a vital role in the production, reproduction, and transformation of social practices in the same way that the society determines or affects the (re)production/use of sign (Caldas-Coulthard and Leeuwen, 2003). The same can be said of memes. Their significations are not, in any way, far from the medium of expression of the society. Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2006) opine that the effectiveness of sign is in the ‘analysis, design, production and consumption’, by the society that either make it or is bequeathed with it. Thus, the socio-cognitive paradigm or approach to conceptual meaning is hinged on the overall notion that “language is part of a cognitive system which comprises perception, emotions, categorisation, abstraction processes, and reasoning” (Dirven and Verspoor, 2004). In other words, the cognitive abilities humans to communicate sign is mediated by verbal and non-verbal channels of a language system. What this also implies is that meme generators make use signs cognitively, conceptually, and contextually.

At the micro level, sign is categorised into five according to Sebeok (2001), which are name, symptom, index, icon, and symbol. The latter three, which are relevant to this study, are stressed as Peirce triadic sign framework. Index was coined from the Latin word *index*, which implies ‘pointing finger’ (Short, 2007). It is pointing to something in the immediate context. Indexical signs are restricted to (persons), place and time, otherwise ‘here’ and ‘now’ (Dirven and Verspoor, 2004), otherwise Spatial, temporal, and axiomatic indexes (Chilton, 2004; Cap, 2005). Indexical signs are more frequent in human communication. Icon, which was co-opted from the Greek word ‘*eikon*’, signifies a ‘replica’ (Short, 2007) This is a visual, auditory or any other perceptual image used to represent (as a replica) of the thing it stands for (Dirven and Verspoor 2004). In other words, an iconic sign is like what it represents. Icons can be in form of pictures, notices, shapes, and figures. Iconicity, the signification of iconic signs. Dirven and Verspoor (2004) suggest three sub-principles of iconic signs, which are sequential order, distance, and quantity. Sequential order is associated to both spacio-temporal events and the linear arrangement of the linguistic elements in texts. An example of sequential order can be picked from advertisement, slogans, and ideology, for instance, ‘live it, love it’, ‘Eye it, try it, buy it’ (John, 2020). It can also be accomplished by temporal conjunction such as ‘before or after. Distance brings conceptual elements closer or distant from one another, with hedges like plurality, repetition, and positive or negative politeness (face). Symbolic signs, from the Greek word ‘*symbolon*’ (Sebeok, 2001), means ‘a token of recognition’. They may be vague, ambiguous, or superficial. In some cases, they may have no natural, significant, or direct link to what they are used to express. Dirven and Verspoor (2004) put it that the link between the form and meaning of symbols are conventional. Symbolic signs

may be socio-culturally grounded, which makes them sometimes conventional in terms of use, and mutually understood by users in a society. Being socio-culturally underpinned also means that they can mean different things when used in a different socio-cultural milieu.

Jeffries (2010) prescribes a set of analytical tools she terms: ‘conceptual - textual functions’ which textual and graphical signs can conduce into, and subsequently be used 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, hypothesizing, presenting the speech and thoughts of other participants, and representing time, space, and society. These functions are micro acts in their own rights. On the other hand, Jefferies lists linguistic strategies that are used to realise the conceptual-textual functions. These linguistic tools are drawn from systemic functional grammar, semantics, and pragmatics; the table below shows this:

Table. 2.2. Conceptual-textual functions, realisation, and suggestive informing theory (Source: Mine)

Conceptual-textual Functions	Formal realisations	Theory Informing Tools
Naming and describing	Choice of nominal to denote referents; nominalisation, construction of phrases with modifiers...	SFL
Equating and contrasting	Noun phrase apposition, parallel structures indicating synonymous relationships, relational transitivity...	Semantics and SFL
Contrasting	Lexical or structurally constructed opposition (antonymous sense relations or syntactic triggers), negation	Lexical Semantics
Enumerating and exemplifying	Two-three-four-part lists indicating hyponymous and meronymous sense relation	Semantics
Assuming and implying	Presupposition and implicature	Pragmatics
Prioritising	Transformation of grammatical construction (e.g., active to passive) clefting	Transformational Generative grammar
Constructing time and space	Choice of tense, adverbials, of time, deixis, metaphor	Pragmatics
Representing actions, events or states	Transitivity	SFL
Presenting opinions	Modality choices, speech, and thought presentation	SFL

The above theories have been synchronised into a model in fig. 2.1 below,

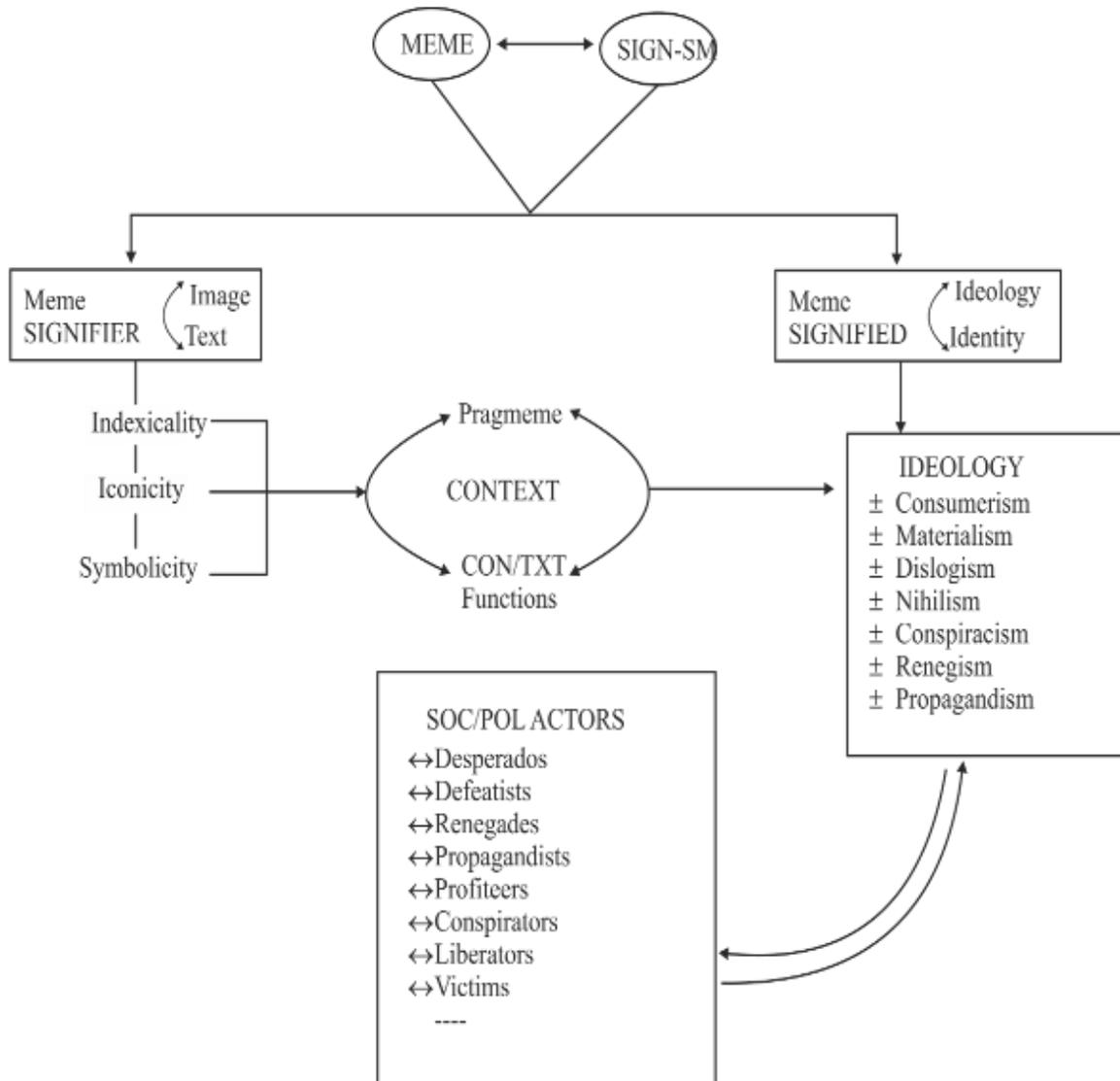


Fig. 2.1 Socio-cognitive (con)textual approach to meme replication and analysis (Source: Mine)

The analytical model above, first, avers to the fact that memes are signs and semiotic machines (SM) in their own rights. They can have both textual and image forms, as indicated in the box on the right side, and they are, as adoption in this study, modes of signifiers, used to portray signified entities, which are ideological and identity standpoints. The features of the signifier – meme, broken down, may further contain indexical, iconic, and symbolic signs. All these are tied to specific macro and micro contextual variables, which are marked out, concomitantly by conceptual-textual functions and the principles of pragmatic acts. These mutually work to produce the pragmeme, which are considered in this study as the ideological and identity standpoints.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study entails replicated political memes in the sociological spaces of Nigeria and south Africa. Thirty (30) of these, fifteen (15) from both milieus, were purposively selected and downloaded from Facebook and twitter, which are popular mediated channels for the replication

of memes to reach millions of followers. The ideological variables of political dislogism, materialism, renegeism, and were set as parameters or description for the sampled data for analysis. The memes in the South African contexts had mostly the political leaders as referents, while their counterparts in the Nigerian contexts are bidirectionally positioned to show both political leaders and other actors who interplay to map out the ideological and identity standpoints; these includes the masses. The memes sampled for analysis are grouped in frames but labelled individually for the purpose of indexing or reference in the analysis. The top-down analytical method is adopted, following a consistent procedure, which has been represented in the model below.

Data analysis

The data sets discussed are grouped and discussed, in this section, according to the ideological underpinnings that propel their replication in the social media space. Two of the ideologies identified are coined as renegeism from the verb renege, which implies going back on one's promise, and dislogism from the verb dislodge, meaning to displace. Others are materialism and consumerism. The macro, geographical milieus are abbreviated as SA (South Africa) and Nig (Nigeria).

Political materialism in the memes of SA and Nig

Politics, in Africa has been highly commodified or materialised. Other terms that could be used to describe this include commercialism and capitalism. In other words, the resources of the nation have become the main source of attraction and ambition for anyone who is entrusted with the leadership of the country. This is significantly reflective in both South Africa and Nigeria, among other African nations, and are broadly replicated by the memes of both milieus.

Excerpt 1



Plate 1

Plate 2

Plate 3

The plates above aver to the exploitation or looting of the economy, and subsequently, funds of the respective nations. These nations are represented using indexical, and the conceptual functions of representing place. *South Africa* is indexed in plate (2), and *Nigeria* in plate (3). The index, *Goodluck Johnathan*, is also used to foreground the social agent in the Nigerian context, for stylistic reasons, such that even a novice can associate the image and know that he is the president of the country at that time. The images of both presidents are icons used to represent and also reference the places that they were presidents as at when they were in power. In all

instances, the profiteer identity is framed. These presidents are supposedly accused of profiteering from the booming economy of the nations. For instance, in plate (3), President Jonathan is seating on the drum, which has the indexical, *oil*, and having a bumptious and sumptuous feast, in this case, symbolising or metaphorising the 'national cake,' (resources) that is, the wealth of the nation. The drum of *oil* is also an indexical, a metaphorical symbol of the proceeds, money from oil in the state. This also is used to emphasis the fact that the main source of income in Nigeria is *oil*. Plate (3), using the indexical of a man lying under the weight of the President Johnathan, represents the opinion that the exploitation of the resources of the nation impoverishes the masses, and causes untold suffering.

In plate (1), the stigma that corruption and looting of funds brings, owing to the incessant litigations, is represented in the icon closing the left eye and using his right hand to close the right eye. It is also textually represented, using the conceptual functions of naming, and describing. For instance, litigation is named as *constitutional court*. While the other judgement of the court is described, using the material process. Here, the pronoun reference or index, *I*, shows that he is guilty as charged, and looted the money. Subsequently, there is intentional word shuffling, to account for the funds looted. The implication here is that there is no adequate estimate of what President Zuma looted in power. The metapragmatic joke, *Eish*, climaxed with the ellipsis (...) are inferences to the fact that he has lost count of the amount of loot. This also represents the opinion of his economic incompetence as a president. The texts are cast against black colour to signify the dappling future – prospects of both countries.

In the second plates, the camera angle, that is, the bird-eye view, otherwise, the eye-of-God view, and shot, that is, extended shot, are used as symbolic signs to represent the agents of litigation (court) and retribution, which are the only indices that could check his corrupt tendencies. His shadow also is both iconic and indexical to his secret exploitative tendency in power. The textual part of plate (2) has the spatial, temporal and index, *when*, *South Africa* and the personal pronoun, *me*. The latter two are used to represent the place and the occasion – condition that attracts the event of corruption. There is a one-to-one co-indexation of the *economy* and the persona (Zuma's, as represented by the pronoun, *me*), to signify the main channel for looting the nations treasury, an act which is metaphorised euphemistically as *job*. The second temporal, *now*, is an inference, representing two equating opinions or notions; first, that President Zuma's administration witnessed a booming *economy* which gave him the avenue to loot massively, and second being that what he did exploit was the proceeds from the *economy*, which makes it symbolic of currency – money, as referenced in astronomical sum in plate (1).

Excerpt 2



Plate 4

Plate 5

It is often inferred that one of the channels that public officers exploit to loot funds is institutional or ministerial projects, as represented in the two plates above, or contracts in a general sense. The idea is to use the opportunity to release billions, which are the normative sums for such contracts. This is clearly represented, using the conceptual functions of enumerating and contrasting, in the two extracts. For instance, in plate (4), *250 million* is enumerated as the sum, while in plate (5), *1.5billion*, in the case of President Jonathan, and *5.8billion*, in the case of President Buhari are enumerated and contrasted to foreground who the highest profiteer is. The metapragmatic principle in *ESCOM*, is a function of naming, used to ironically name the supposed beneficiary of the fund. However, the function of enumerating and the pragmatic function of reference, that is, the pronoun indexical, *me*, referring to President Cyril Ramaphosa, are used to identify the real beneficiaries of the loot, the political agent, and his relatives. Thus, the inference – opinion of consumerism is entailed, signalling that contemporary politics has become an enterprise for enrich oneself and his entire relatives. Iconicity of quality is used for *ESCOM*, which an acronym for the electric service Company of South Africa. The ellipsis before the verbal – cognitive process, *imagine*, create a puzzle, in form of a rhetorical question, which the meme creator implicitly provides an answer to, as discussed above.

The contextual functions of equating and contrasting are explicitly used in plate (5) to compare the corrupt tendencies of two political regimes, the immediate past and the present. While both are equated based on the same project, which is named as, *presidential jet*, and the fact that both expenditures are measured in terms of *billion Naira*, using the iconicity of quality, that is, the abbreviation, *bn*; both are different in the iconicity of quantity and distance. The latter is measured by the figure spent; President Jonathan spends *1.52bn*, while his successor, President Buhari, spends *5.8bn*. Distance is represented by the temporal, *12 months*, and *6 months* respectively. These are used to create the inference of alleged supremacy of the notion of corruption of the two representatives of the two dominant political parties in the Nigerian political space, since Nigerians often attribute every form of corruption to the party system and not the agents at the presidential level. Thus, the images of both leaders serve as icons to them and the political party they represent. Another icon of quality, in both plates, is evaluated by the facial look marking the identity of the political agents. There is the look of desperation in plate (4), and a contrast of in-accomplishment, in respect to Johnathan, and dissatisfaction, in respect to Buhari. The latter cases show the quest for more loot.

Political dislogism in the memes of SA and Nig.

The intention or ambition of political agents or aspirants is to dislodge their rivals from power when they are not in control. However, it becomes a collective goal or determination for the people to agitate for the removal or displacement of certain political leaders who are not serving their interest. Thus, it is often treated as a corporate outcry for meme replicators in both sociological milieus as exemplified and discussed below.

Excerpt 3

Plate 6

Plate 7

The excerpt above foregrounds the intended displacement of one politician by another. Beginning with plate (7), showing the SA context. The images on the meme are direct iconic indexes to Presidents Ramaphosa, on the right, and Jacob Zuma, on the left. The former, apparently displaced or rather succeeded the latter in power. In plate (6), the symbolic indexes are implied in the two icons. On the right, we have Babatunde Fashola, the then Governor of Lagos, and on the left, we have President Goodluck Jonathan. The meme represents the opinion that displacement in the Nigerian politics goes beyond individuals. Thus, the intention here is to also symbolise credibility and performance. Governor Fashola, symbolic of All-Progressive Party (APC), is assumed to be one of the governors who had performed excellently from the coffers of the APC. This is to further represent the inference that the APC government is expected to perform better than Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which the president is from.

Another symbolic icon used to construe the conceptual function of contrasting is colour signification. Fashola (the APC) is dressed in white, which symbolises integrity, sincerity, and surety of performance, while President Jonathan (the PDP) is wearing black, which symbolises all forms of clandestine relations and alleged corruption. In plate (7), indirectness is inferred in the colour, especially worn by President Zuma. He is dressed in the SA colour, which ordinarily symbolises a one-to-one reference to patriotism. But the negative is the case, as juxtaposed with the public outcry for his displacement. On the other hand, Ramaphosa is dressed in neutral-Black, which seems to symbolise the antithesis of trust. There is suspicion, if he will be as exploitative as his predecessor, President Zuma.

At the textual level, the mood used to mark displacement is imperative, that is giving the directive for the political actor to go out. This is used by the displacer agent. In plate (7), the pronoun index is used as the spatial – place location of the exit. This is also demonstrated by the icon of a pointing finger. The nominal, *door*, is used to metaphorise political journey as entry and exit, and, in this case, the latter shows displacement. The metapragmatic joker, *VOETSEK*, co-opted from the South African - Dutch language, meaning 'out of here,' or simply, 'get out' is mostly used for animals. Thus, using this in this context represents the opinion of a command, a radical call to displacement, rather than a subtle request. In plate (6) has the sequence of a parataxis clause relations, beginning with two (2) imperative statements, then followed by a declarative mood.

The conceptual function of contrasting is evinced in the antithetical relation between *straight* and *turn*. Of course, going straight requires no turning. This is directly used as a conceptual function of describing to show his lack of prospect in politics, after being displaced. The presidency is considered as the highest seat of political office; thus, when a president has been displaced from office, whether he completes his tenure or not, he is not expected to jostle for other political positions. In a politeness term, he joins the group of elder-statement. The iconicity of quality in the ellipsis of 'way' in the precedent clauses, which leaves the reference pronoun, *it*, dangling. It is a way that leads to a location. In this case, President Jonathan is being displaced to his hometown, 'Otuoke,' as other presidents before him. The response, *YES SIR*, is a feature of politeness used to mark the parataxis statement before it as a command, in this case a forceful and unwilful displacement from power. More is also entailed in the use of block letters. This marks iconicity of quantity and the conceptual-textual function of emphasising. The imperative to displace the political agent, at that time, is thus signified.

Excerpt 4



Plate 8

Plate 9

Politics is time bound. It could be fixed or unfixed, depending on the political office and system. For instance, SA runs a parliamentary representative system, where the president emerges from national assembly and must sustain their confidence to remain in power (which marks his time); on the other hand, Nigeria runs a presidential system, where the president has a fixed term of four (4) years for maximum of two (2) consecutive terms. In this case, the president needs the confidence of the entire electorate to win a second term. Plates (8) and (9), using nominals, which are also the conceptual functions of naming and describing, foreground the notion of time frame, as discussed above. These nominals, *THE END*, and *NEXT EXIT*, are conceptual metaphors co-opted from the genre of theatre, showing that politics is about entry and exit, beginning and the end. However, in both cases, the conditions for exit are contrasting. The iconic smile on the political actor's face in plate (8) shows that he is being outstared with lots of benefits, the loots, as discussed above, and which is the very reason for his loss of confidence and public outcry for displacement. In contrast, the political agent in plate (9) is going through certain trouble with the tires of the country, which symbolises his problem ruling the country, and this is largely the conditions for pressing for his displacement.

Once again, in plate (8), we have the backgrounding of the flag of South Africa indexing the irony of the personality of the political actor. Corruption makes the public officer less or unpatriotic, as standing in front of the national flag, as the number one citizen is supposed to imply. The flag, in this context, is also serving the conceptual function of representing place, showing the location of the meme, the political actor and his milieu. In plate (9) colour is used to foreground the nation,

Nigeria, which has been metaphorised as a bus, having punctured or worn tires. Inside the bus, we have the icon of people in different attires, which are direct person indexes to the citizens of the country. The bus is directly labelled, using the conceptual functions of naming, enumerating, and describing. The principles of metaphor and inference are resultant in the naming feature, *goods*. This is the resources of the country, while the other naming feature is in the direct act. As at the time Jonathan was in power, the estimate population was *150million people*. Hence, the president is expected to be driving both the resources and the nation in his presidency. However, the driving of the nation, as inferred from the removal of the tire, is presently stalled. There is a one-to-one mapping of the tire to the moving of the bus. Without the tire, the bus cannot go anywhere. The temporal index, *THREE YEARS AHEAD*, is used to signify the length of years that it may be impossible to move the economy (resources) and the people forward. The vehicle is facing the iconic sign signifying the number of years he has left in his administration, before he will be displaced. Null conversation or silence is employed to represent an opinion that it is seemingly impossible to lead the country to the required height. Another inference can be seen in the icon, the bus, which is been jacked to a height almost seeming as if the political agents want to up-turn the van. This alludes to the fact earlier expressed that some political actors, rather than drive the nation to greater height, up-turn it, due to widespread corruption and looting of funds. Thus, corruption, looting and inability to lead well form the reasons for the desire to outstare a leader from office.

Renegism in the Political memes of SA and Nig.

During election campaigns, prospective political leaders make several promises of proposed policies and innovations or developments. This is done to legitimise their candidacy and win the heart of the electorate to get their endorsement. The true test of a political office holder is the ability to stick to these promises and work to fulfil them in the interest of development or advancement of the country. However, the popular sight in the African political terrain is most politicians turning renegades, that is abandoning their promises or expected programmes, and begin to pursue other personal or corporate interests or not do anything at all. These notions are replicated in memes in both sociological milieus covered in this study.

Excerpt 8



Plate 10

Plate 11

The direct act is used in plate 10 to represent the act of renegade from *campaign* promises. The existential process represents the action that the *promises* were, indeed, made to the people during the *campaigns*. The function of naming is used to foreground the promiser agent, referenced by the collective pronoun, 'we,' the promised agent, that is, *Nigerians*, which also represents the spatial location of their leadership, and the temporal index, *during campaign*, which

is also the conceptual function of representing time and space. Promises like these, according to the meme replicator, are made during electoral *campaign* periods. The commissive act marks all forms of promises and electoral propaganda. In the first place, the icon of quantity, as seen in the blurring of *campaign*, is the first sight of renegism observed in the plate. This seems to posit the forgetting of activities during this period, including promises that won them the seat or office. The collective pronoun, *we*, and the contrasting possessive reference, '*my*,' gives another inference, which is chieftaincy and party agenda in the *Nigerian*.

In most cases, political officers come into power with a long list of party agenda, appointments, and policies, some of which may not be pleasing to the leadership and the people. This form of renegism is justified in the interest of the people. However, in this case, it is the *list of promises made to Nigerians* by either the party and the emerged president. The foregrounding of *promises* represents the opinion that they won the mandate based on the promises made to the electorate. Denial of the *list of promises*, on the basis of *handwriting*, represents the opinion that whoever wrote it has reneged from them. The use of the negator, '*not*,' further represents the action that his administration is on another course, which negates what was initially promised, which is also against the interest of the people.

Plate (11) has the political context of SA. From the background, it can be said that President Cyril Ramaphosa, which is implied by the icon of his image on the plate, came to power in South Africa with the promise that he would restore the economy, particularly the power sector, which had been in shambles in the previous dispensation. Periods after his appointment as president, it is obvious that nothing is being done. The meme represents and describes two actions/events, which are indexed to both the people and serving political leaders. The emotional act of patience is elicited from the people. This is evinced by the icon of begging, as demonstrated by the metapragmatic sign of joining both palms. It is also represented in texts, using the behavioural process in the expressive act. The meme alludes to the condescension of the masses or entire citizens or their trust that things will get better one day. However, on the part of the government, there is consistency in the attempt to drift away from promises and expectations. In the context of the meme, we see the use of the collective naming index, '*we*,' to aver to the conspiracy theory of serving the interest of a particular political class, instead of '*I*,' as evident in his campaigns. The act of renegism is thus marked by the function of naming, prioritising, and contrasting, all indexed in, '*better fuckup*.' Contrasting and prioritising are achieved by the comparative term, '*better*,' to compare it with the period of the past president. The inability to change the situation and the expectation of a worse performance is named using a pragmatic joker, *fuckup*, which is often used to describe failure in a system, programme or venture.

Electoral Consumerism in the memes Nig

The high commodification of political office in Africa has bred several corresponding factors like godfatherism, aristocratism and consumerism, among others. Politicians are looking for what to get from the system, in equating fashion as the electorates looking to exploit every election opportunity to get their so-called 'share' from the politicians before electing them to offices. In other cases, when they have secured power, they tend to be worshipped for the purpose of getting little kickbacks from their loot. For this reason, you find people looking agitated and desperate, when their acquaintances are aspiring to contest an election.

Except 9



Plate 12

Plate 13

In plate (12) consumerism in the Nigerian political – electoral system is averred by the malady of vote-buying. The conceptual functions of representing time, describing and the pragmatic force of metaphor are used to tag the event as, '*the new face of voting.*' Politics here is described with the inference that power belongs to the highest bidder, the political party or candidate that pays the highest. The time situated is contemporary elections. However, this is not to show that vote-buying is new in the system, it has been a part of the politics, but two inferences are surmised. The first, vote-buying in the past dispensation was not as publicly displayed as it is today, because of consciousness in the sanctity of the system. Thus, this political dispensation is accused of not being conscious of the credibility of the electoral system. The second inference is the fact that there has not been in any other election period as the one represented in the meme that vote-buying was clearly contested by the two dominant political parties, that is, PDP and APC, right at the polling centres.

The concept of highest bidder winning the polls is represented by the symbolical icon of the voter stretching his hand toward the political agent offering the highest value of currency. The fact that the voter is condescending is iconised by the look in the electorate's face. His eyes are still fixated on the other political party agent, showing that his is forced by the economic reality to sell his vote to the opposing party. This symbolises the reason for impoverishment of the electorate. If they have enough and the standard of living is not bastardised, they will not condescend to vote-buying. The long queue of indigent voters is indexical to the above assertion. The icon of contrast is used to show the party agent that power is tilting to because of the value of money paid. This is also achieved by relevance; the ballot box is filled up with ballot papers. The politician's bag is still full of money to show that he still has more to spend for electoral malfeasances.

Plate (13) is indexical ethnicity in Nigerian politics, and the agitation in regions about power coming to them. The most significant iconic inference in the plate is the feeling of alienation of a sect, the *Igbo*, from the presidency. Ethnic endorsement thus becomes one of the shades of strategies to curry the electorate to secure their mandate. the conceptual function of naming is



used to aver to regionality or ethnicity in the Nigerian politics. The indexical, *Obi*, is referenced to the *Igbo* ethnic group, while *Atiku*, is indexed to the northern – Hausa group. Two presuppositions are constructed into the meme. First, the ethnic or communal benefits that people get when their ‘son’ is in power makes them to do anything, sometimes resorting to violence, just to put him in power. This beating of the man in the plate is iconic of violence for the sake of ensuring their candidate win. The second presupposition is mapped into the general context of co-opted violence for the sake of corporate interest that is not of the nation. The endorsement of candidates for election becomes a strategy for inning election through desperate means, which include violence.

Conclusion

The study has shown that, among other things, memes are used to represent or point to nations like Nigeria and South Africa. The most dominant signs used to achieve this are indexical, and the conceptual-contextual function, representing place. Thus, in most of the memes, there is direct indexes to *South Africa* and *Nigeria*. Also observed is the use of the images of presidents in the two nations, as icons of direct reference to these places. Some of these icons are past leaders. They are mentioned to equate – reinforce political/presidential concerns. Most of these concerns tilt towards profiteering from the booming economy of these nations. In some cases, they are captured in the memes as metaphor, for instance, the ‘national cake,’ (resources), being represented by the metaphorical act of consuming food items. These act of consuming and the icons of the object consumed are often conducted as stigmas, which is the product of corruption and looting of funds. In some cases, the icons are cross-sectional acts like using the right hand to cover the left eye. The implication of this is that there are many instances of scandals and direct and indirect accusations of fraud, corruption and looting in the two countries. Take for instance, the conceptual functions of naming and describing is used to foreground figures that governments in the two nations have been accused of profiteering.

There are instances of intentional word shuffling to further reiterate the amounts or funds looted. Based on the contexts, one of the channels for clear looting or exploitation is ministerial projects. Reference is made to billions most of which do not find their way to the contractors. The conceptual function of enumerating and contrasting is also used to account for *250 million*, *1.5billion*, and *5.8billion*, claimed to be project sums, but suspected to have been embezzled. Pronouns are used as indexical to point to political agents. The contextual function of equating and contrasting compares the corrupt tendencies of political regimes, the past and present. Also used to reinforce their points of argument include iconicity of quality, quantity, and distance. For instance, the most significant iconicity of distance. Example from the memes show the use of temporals, *12 months*, and *6 months*. Colour significations are used in the memes to mark, among other things, political affiliation. It is also used to profile political actors. For instance, white, which symbolises integrity, sincerity, and surety of performance is placed against black, which symbolises all forms of corrupt and negative vices. The conclusion of this study is that memes are used to portray the Nigerian and South African political terrains as heated grounds for serious battles, schemes, and devices to unseat incumbent political agents. But that does not mean that they are (would be) better than the government they are trying to unseat. The argument of meme generators is that all political agents, past or present, use every election opportunity to partake in the sharing of the resources. This is what makes power, in most cases, to be bequeathed to the highest bidder, that is, the political party and (or) candidate that pays the highest. Price. There is the representation of time to show that the memes are addressing contemporary elections.

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