

Ideological Constructions and Pragmatic Strategies in Selected Nigerian Political Newspaper Headlines

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>Political headlines serve as concise, nevertheless foremost communicative tools that mediate communal discourse, legitimise power, and imitate ideological descriptions. In the Nigerian situation, where political evolutions, regional undercurrents, and governance encounters traverse, headlines play a fundamental role in making discernments of democracy, power, and national identity. Extant studies have investigated media framing and favoritism with limited attention paid to how headlines, through linguistic and pragmatic strategies, encode and disseminate ideological meanings. This study addresses this scholarly gap by critically examining selected Nigerian political newspaper headlines using the frameworks of Critical Discourse Analysis and Grice's Cooperative Principle. The aim is to interrogate the dominant ideological themes and discursive patterns within these headlines, uncover the pragmatic mechanisms used to frame political actors and events, and explore how such discursive constructions shape social identities and public perception of governance. Findings reveal that Nigerian political headlines strategically reproduce ideologies such as elite power consolidation, democratic legitimacy and erosion, technocratic governance, regional marginalisation, and the dichotomy of unity versus dissent. Through metaphorical language, nominalisation, and selective lexical choices, these headlines consistently frame political crises as constitutional or historical inevitabilities, thereby legitimising elite narratives while marginalising alternative voices. Pragmatic analysis shows a frequent flouting of Grice's maxims particularly Quantity and Manner through ambiguity, omission, and evaluative framing, which enhances the persuasive power of headlines while maintaining a façade of objectivity. The headlines not merely replicate but keenly figure Nigeria's political realities by normalising conflict, strengthening dominant ideologies, and concurrently presenting emergencies as possible catalysts for democratic regeneration.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Nigerian Media Landscape, Political Newspaper Headlines, Ideology and Pragmatics Intersection, Critical Discourse Analysis. Conversational maxims.</p>
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Background to the Study

The media, especially newspapers, play a crucial role in shaping how people perceive the world and in influencing power dynamics within society. In Nigeria, newspaper headlines are not just brief summaries of news; they actively help form dominant beliefs, colour public opinion, and direct political discussions (Bossan, 2020). Headlines, being the most noticeable part of any news report, are carefully designed to catch readers' attention, sum up complex stories, and highlight specific viewpoints usually those of influential groups (Taiwo, 2007; Bossan, 2020).

Many researchers have used Critical Discourse Analysis

(CDA), particularly Fairclough's model, to unpack how language in the media carries hidden ideological meanings and exerts control. For instance, studies by Taiwo (2007) and Bossan (2020) show that Nigerian headlines use certain language patterns loaded with ideology to represent politicians, shape narratives, and steer how readers interpret events. Bossan (2020) points out that tools like verb choices, added explanations, idioms, and cautious wording are deliberately used in headlines to push particular views and guide readers' understanding. Similarly, Agho's (2025) recent work on political speeches in Nigeria finds that

language is employed cleverly to build leader images and influence voters through both grammar and rhetoric (Agho, 2025). Despite the insights from CDA, much research has focused on the surface features of headlines or general news content, leaving the underlying communicative strategies less examined. Pragmatics—how language is used in context—especially Grice’s conversational maxims, offers a helpful lens to understand how headlines control what information is given, hint at meanings, and influence how readers interpret texts through rules of being informative, truthful, relevant, and clear (El-Sakran, 2023). Still, few studies in Nigeria have combined CDA with pragmatic theory to reveal how headlines operate on both ideological and communicative levels. Some recent work, like El-Sakran’s (2023) on maxim breaches in headlines, begins to look at this, but it does not fully connect these rhetoric moves with the way power and ideology are built or challenged through headlines.

Nigeria’s political and social complexity with its diverse ethnic, regional, and religious groups and ongoing political challenges—makes studying headlines all the more important. Media narratives shape not just opinions but cultural and political identities, with elites often controlling these stories to serve their interests (Bossan, 2020; Agho, 2025). Studies have also shown how headlines portray violence (ASSR, 2023), election contests (Agho, 2025), and contribute to shared ideas about national memory and identity (Bossan, 2020).

This background makes it clear there is a strong need to go beyond just analysing what headlines say on the surface. Combining CDA with pragmatic theory, particularly Grice’s maxims, will help unpack how Nigerian newspaper headlines manage meanings and construct ideologies at the same time. Such an approach offers a richer understanding of headlines as not only informative prompts but as subtle tools of persuasion and power in Nigeria’s complex media landscape.

Newspaper headlines hold great power in shaping public views and framing political debates. Taiwo (2007) analysed 300 Nigerian headlines and showed they often use emotional triggers that reflect the interests of dominant groups while sidelining others. However, Taiwo mainly focused on surface-level language features and did not bring in pragmatic theories, like Grice’s maxims, to explain how headlines strategically communicate (Taiwo, 2007).

Later research expanded headline studies beyond Nigeria. For example, Mohamed (2016) looked at Egyptian newspaper headlines and found they work not just to inform but also to control and promote particular ideologies of the media outlets (Mohamed, 2016). Like Taiwo, Mohamed’s work did not detail how pragmatics like implicature or maxim flouting contribute to headline impact. Other

scholars such as Blom and Hansen (2015) and Reis et al. (2015) emphasised how headlines capture attention especially in online news, reflecting media bias and agenda-setting. Yet, these studies mostly discuss narrative and sensational techniques, not how specific linguistic choices relate to pragmatic principles or interlink with ideology (Blom & Hansen, 2015; Reis et al., 2015 cited in DiVA portal, 2021).

More recent work by Ecker et al. (2014) and El-Sakran (2023) explores headline pragmatics, showing how breaking Grice’s maxims shapes headline effects. Still, they often look at pragmatics apart from critical discourse analysis, not fully examining how pragmatic strategies serve larger ideological goals. In Nigeria, Adekunle (2024) applied Van Dijk’s model to editorials on insecurity, showing how nationalist and humanist beliefs inform discourse and how media polarises groups through positive and negative portrayals (Adekunle, 2024). However, this focused on editorials, not headlines, and did not combine pragmatic analysis. Similarly, Demir (2025) studied political speeches by Trump and Zelenskyy using combined pragmatic and relevance theory frameworks, showing how listeners draw meaning in high stakes talk, but this has not been applied to Nigerian headlines (Demir, 2025). Despite these studies, there remains a clear gap: little work systematically integrates CDA with Gricean pragmatics to analyse how Nigerian newspaper headlines shape ideology while managing pragmatic meaning through conversational maxims. Most research treats discourse and pragmatics separately or focuses on editorials or other countries. The interplay of ideology and pragmatics in Nigerian political headlines remains underexplored. This study aims to fill that gap by closely analysing Nigerian newspaper headlines through the dual lenses of critical discourse and Gricean pragmatics. It will show how headlines blend ideological messaging with pragmatic devices like maxim violations and implicatures to maximise their persuasive power in shaping public opinion.

Aim of the Study

To examine how Nigerian newspaper headlines construct and negotiate political ideologies, power relations, and democratic discourses through linguistic and pragmatic strategies.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify and analyse the dominant ideological themes and discursive patterns present in selected Nigerian political newspaper headlines.
2. To discuss the linguistic and pragmatic strategies employed in headlines to frame political actors, events, and controversies.

3. To explore how these headlines contribute to the construction of social identities in Nigeria.

Literature review and theoretical framework

The Intersection of Ideology and Pragmatics in Political Communication

Political communication is a complex interplay of language, power, and intention, where ideology and pragmatics converge to shape meaning and influence public perception. Ideology, understood as a system of beliefs, values, and principles guiding political behaviour and discourse, provides the foundational framework through which political actors construct and contest social realities (Katz, 2024). Pragmatics, the study of language use in context and the interpretation of speaker intentions, offers tools to analyse how meaning is negotiated beyond literal expressions, especially through mechanisms such as conversational implicature and the cooperative principle (Grice, 1975, as discussed in El-Sakran, 2023). Early foundational work on political communication, such as that by Lasswell (1948), emphasised the importance of understanding “who says what to whom, through which channel, and with what effect,” highlighting the communicative process as central to political influence and control (Lasswell, 1948; Almond, 1987). This model foregrounded the effect of political messages but did not explicitly integrate pragmatic mechanisms. Subsequent research has sought to bridge this gap by applying pragmatic theories to political discourse, demonstrating how politicians use language strategically to achieve persuasive goals, manage face, and negotiate power relations (Al-Khatib & Al-Momani, 2021). Pragmatic concepts such as the Cooperative Principle and its four maxims—Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner—have proven particularly useful in analysing political communication. These maxims govern expectations about informativeness, truthfulness, relevance, and clarity in discourse (Grice, 1975). Political actors often flout these maxims deliberately to create implicatures, manage ambiguity, or evade direct answers, thereby shaping public interpretation and ideological alignment (El-Sakran, 2023). For example, the use of metaphor, euphemism, or strategic vagueness can reinforce ideological positions while maintaining plausible deniability or appealing to diverse audiences (Al-Khatib & Al-Momani, 2021).

The tension between ideological commitment and pragmatic flexibility is a recurring theme in political communication scholarship. Katz (2024) highlights the ongoing debate between ideological purity and practical politics, where political actors must balance abstract principles with the pragmatic necessities of governance, negotiation, and compromise. This dynamic interplay reflects how ideology provides coherence and identity,

while pragmatics enables adaptability and strategic communication in complex political environments. Moreover, ideological cognition and communication are deeply intertwined with social network dynamics and polarization. Research by Flache et al. (2021) and related computational models demonstrate that ideological commitment filters interpretation, reinforcing polarized discourse and echo chambers through selective communication and social homophily. This suggests that pragmatic strategies are not only linguistic but also social, influencing how political messages are disseminated, received, and amplified within communities. In sum, the intersection of ideology and pragmatics in political communication reveals a sophisticated linguistic and social process whereby political actors construct meaning, manage impressions, and negotiate power. Integrating critical discourse analysis with pragmatic theory offers a comprehensive framework to uncover how political language functions both ideologically and communicatively, shaping democratic discourse and public opinion.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and H. P. Grice’s Conversational Maxims. These two complementary approaches provide a robust lens through which to examine how Nigerian newspaper headlines construct ideological meanings and manage pragmatic communication strategies. Fairclough’s CDA is a seminal interdisciplinary approach that investigates the intricate relationship between language, power, and ideology within social contexts (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough, 2001). Central to Fairclough’s model is the view of language as a form of social practice, where discourse both shapes and is shaped by societal power relations and ideological struggles (Fairclough, 1995; Janks, 2010). His three-dimensional framework, comprising analysis of the text (micro-level), discursive practice (meso-level), and social practice (macro-level), enables a comprehensive examination of how linguistic features, production and consumption processes, and broader social structures interact (Fairclough, 1992; Study Smarter, 2024). At the textual level, Fairclough emphasises detailed linguistic analysis, including vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and rhetorical devices, to uncover how language choices encode power and ideology (Fairclough, 1995). The discursive practice dimension explores how texts are produced, distributed, and interpreted within institutional and cultural contexts, while the social practice dimension situates discourse within wider socio-political and economic structures, revealing how discourse contributes to the maintenance or transformation of social inequalities (Fairclough, 2001; Discourse Analyzer, 2024).

Fairclough's CDA is particularly suited for analysing political media discourse because it foregrounds the role of language in reproducing or contesting power relations and ideological dominance (Janks, 2010). It allows researchers to interrogate whose interests are served or marginalised in discourse, making it an ideal tool to explore Nigerian newspaper headlines that reflect elite power, regional tensions, and democratic struggles (Bossan, 2020; Taiwo, 2007).

Grice's Conversational Maxims

Complementing CDA, Grice's theory of Conversational Maxims, formulated as part of his Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975), provides a pragmatic framework to analyse how meaning is negotiated in communication. The maxims: **Quantity** (provide the right amount of information), **Quality** (be truthful), **Relation** (be relevant), and **Manner** (be clear and orderly)—describe the expectations interlocutors have for cooperative communication (Grice, 1975; El-Sakran, 2023).

In political communication, speakers often deliberately flout these maxims to create implicatures, manage ambiguity, avoid direct answers, or manipulate public perception (Al-Khatib & Al-Momani, 2021; El-Sakran, 2023). For example, headlines may withhold information (Quantity), use metaphor or euphemism (Manner), or imply meanings beyond literal content, thereby shaping ideological interpretations and emotional responses (El-Sakran, 2023). Pragmatic analysis thus reveals the subtle linguistic strategies that enhance the persuasive and ideological impact of political discourse. Justification for the Choice of Theories The integration of Fairclough's CDA and Grice's Conversational Maxims is justified by the complementary strengths of these approaches in addressing both the ideological content and the pragmatic function of language. While CDA provides a critical lens to uncover power relations and ideological positioning embedded in discourse, it does not explicitly account for the pragmatic mechanisms through which meaning is negotiated in interaction (Fairclough, 1995; Janks, 2010). Conversely, Grice's maxims offer a detailed account of how communicative intentions and implicatures are managed but lack the socio-political critique central to CDA (Grice, 1975; El-Sakran, 2023). By combining these frameworks, this study achieves a more holistic analysis of Nigerian newspaper headlines, revealing not only what ideologies are constructed but also how linguistic and pragmatic strategies are employed to influence reader interpretation and sustain power structures. This dual approach enables an in-depth understanding of the headlines as both ideological artefacts and pragmatic communicative acts within Nigeria's complex political media landscape.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, drawing heavily on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and pragmatic theory to explore the language of political newspaper headlines. The analysis is grounded in Norman Fairclough's CDA framework, which highlights the interaction between the text itself, the processes of producing and consuming discourse, and the broader social and cultural contexts. Alongside this, H. P. Grice's Cooperative Principle guides the examination of how conversational maxims—Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner—shape both the production and interpretation of meaning in the headlines. Together, these perspectives enable a thorough investigation of the ideological messages and pragmatic tactics embedded in the headlines, revealing how meaning is constructed explicitly and implicitly, and how readers are positioned.

The data for this research were carefully chosen from two major Nigerian newspapers: *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*. These outlets were selected because of their wide national readership, credible reputation, and influential role in framing political discussions and public opinion. *The Guardian* is known for its in-depth political analysis, while *Daily Trust* provides substantial coverage of Northern Nigerian issues, offering an important regional voice. This combination ensures a more balanced view of Nigeria's complex political environment.

A total of eight political headlines were selected for detailed scrutiny four from each newspaper. This relatively small, focused sample was intentionally chosen to allow for a close and nuanced reading, in line with qualitative research norms that value depth over volume, especially in discourse and pragmatic studies where careful attention to detail is paramount. The headlines cover significant political events from January to December 2024, ensuring the findings remain timely and relevant.

The analysis proceeded in two phases. First, a thematic examination identified repeated ideological themes and key discursive patterns across the headlines. Second, a pragmatic analysis focused on how the headlines flout or observe Grice's maxims, illustrating the strategic communicative moves that go beyond straightforward information delivery. This combined methodology provides a solid foundation for understanding how headlines serve not only as carriers of ideology but also as carefully crafted communicative acts that influence political debate and democratic engagement within Nigeria.

Presentation of data and analysis

This section presents an analysis of selected political newspaper headlines from *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*, employing Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis alongside Grice's conversational maxims. The analysis

aims to uncover the ideological constructions and pragmatic strategies embedded within the headlines, revealing how language functions both as a tool of power and as a means of managing communicative meaning. By

integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study elucidates the complex interplay between discourse, ideology, and pragmatics in shaping political narratives and influencing public perception in Nigeria.

Datum 1: The Guardian Newspaper

“Fresh hurdle for funeral as Assembly, Wike, Party insist on Impeachment”



Headline	Fresh hurdle for funeral as Assembly, Wike, Party insist on Impeachment	
Discourse Patterns	Metaphorical framing, nominalization patterns.	Passive voice, intertextuality, and conflict narrative patterns.
Ideology	Elite power dominance, legitimacy contestation ideologies	conflict normalisation, public voice exclusion ideologies
Discursive Issues	Political legitimacy vs illegitimacy issues	identity construction, silencing, conflict normalization issues
Linguistic Strategies	Metaphor, moral appeals, narrative framing,	passive/nominalised constructions
Grice's Conversational Maxims	Quantity (minimal info), Quality (metaphorical ambiguity),	Relation (linking events), Manner (conciseness with ambiguity)

The headline, “Fresh hurdle for funeral as Assembly, Wike, Party insist on Impeachment,” demonstrates a sophisticated use of language and ideology to shape a particular political narrative. At a textual level, the metaphor “fresh hurdle” transforms the funeral from a simple social occasion into a symbolic obstacle within a political struggle. This metaphor evokes a sense of difficulty and conflict, setting a tone that predisposes the reader to interpret the situation as one of ongoing contention. The use of nominalisation with terms like “Assembly,” “Wike,” and “Party” removes the focus from individuals, instead portraying these actors as faceless institutions. This grammatical choice conceals personal accountability and spotlights the power of political bodies, reinforcing the narrative dominance of the political elite.

The headline further employs passive constructions and references wider debates on impeachment and governance crises, embedding itself within familiar discourses of constitutional dispute and political power struggles. Ideologically, this headline supports a perspective that centres elite political actors while minimising the role or voice of the general public. The exclusive focus on political institutions suggests governance is controlled by a powerful few. Describing the impeachment as a “fresh hurdle” subtly questions its validity, framing it more as an obstacle than a legitimate democratic process. This portrayal normalises political instability and cast it as an everyday feature of Nigeria’s political scene.

Several discursive tensions emerge from this headline, most notably the struggle between legitimacy and illegitimacy regarding political action. The impeachment is depicted as contested and problematic. Meanwhile, political actors are constructed as persistent and authoritative figures, implicitly relegating others to passive roles. This construction plays into Fairclough's CDA concern with how discourse reflects and reinforces social power disparities by excluding non-elite voices. Linguistically, the headline uses strategic devices to uphold its ideological aims. The metaphor "fresh hurdle" symbolises ongoing difficulties and appeals to readers' sense of morality by framing disruption to a funeral as especially significant. This moral undertone intensifies emotional engagement, swaying readers to view the political manoeuvring negatively. The narrative also creates a dramatic scene, casting politicians as protagonists or antagonists within a broader power conflict. At the same time, passive and nominalised phrasing obscures who is truly responsible, introducing ambiguity and complicity into the political scenario.

When viewed through the lens of Grice's conversational maxims, the headline displays intentional pragmatic tactics.

The maxim of quantity is deliberately flouted; the headline provides limited information enough to spark interest but not enough to fully inform thus encouraging readers to read the full article. The maxim of quality is nuanced by the metaphorical language which introduces openness in interpretation rather than straightforward fact. The maxim of relation is respected by linking two seemingly unrelated events the funeral and impeachment to create a coherent, tension-filled storyline. Lastly, the maxim of manner is flouted through the headline's ambiguity and brevity; this trade-off between clarity and intrigue serves to heighten persuasive impact. In essence, this headline operates as a complex intersection of language, ideology, and power. Through metaphor, nominalisation, and selective framing, it advances a narrative prioritising elite political actors, normalises political conflict, and sidelines alternative views. The calculated flouting of Gricean maxims engages the reader and guides interpretation towards dominant ideological positions. This analysis illustrates the benefits of combining Fairclough's CDA with pragmatic theory to uncover the subtle ways media discourse constructs social realities and sustains power relations.

Datum 2: Daily Trust newspaper
'Ganduje under fire over one-party state comment'



Headline	Ganduje under fire over one-party state comment	
Discourse Patterns	Metaphorical framing ("under fire"),	nominalisation, evaluative and modal language, conflict narrative
Ideology	democratic erosion ideology	populist justification ideology
Discursive Issues	legitimation of authoritarianism and the imbalance of agency issues	Ganduje is constructed as an agent whose voice is both powerful and contested,
Linguistic Strategies	modality shaping and metaphorical legitimation	It frames Ganduje's remarks as controversial and politically significant
Grice's conversational Maxims	Maxim of quantity flouted, Maxim of quality is maintained.	Maxim of relation is upheld and maxim of manner is flouted

The headline from *Daily Trust*, “*Ganduje under fire over one-party state comment*,” encapsulates a rich site for critical discourse analysis, revealing underlying ideological tensions and discursive strategies that shape public understanding of political power and democracy in Nigeria. At the textual level, the headline utilises lexical choices that foreground conflict and controversy, with the phrase “*under fire*” metaphorically signalling intense criticism and opposition. This metaphor not only dramatizes the political situation but also positions Ganduje as a contested figure, thereby framing the discourse within a conflict narrative. The nominalisation of “*one-party state comment*” abstracts the specific content of Ganduje’s remarks into a generalised political issue, allowing the headline to evoke broader debates about governance, democracy, and authoritarianism without detailing the nuances of the original statement. Modal and evaluative language, although implicit in the headline, is central to the wider discourse, as it shapes the evaluative stance towards Ganduje’s position, signalling disapproval and contestation.

Ideologically, the headline reflects a discourse of democratic erosion and populist justification, where Ganduje’s comments are interpreted as symptomatic of a broader trend towards power consolidation and the silencing of dissent. The invocation of a “one-party state” evokes historical anxieties about authoritarianism and the undermining of political plurality, thus engaging with a dominant ideological struggle between democratic ideals and centralised control. The headline implicitly aligns with a critical stance that questions the legitimacy of Ganduje’s position, highlighting concerns about clientelism and the erosion of democratic norms. This ideological framing normalises distrust towards political plurality and legitimises resistance to attempts at centralising power, positioning Ganduje’s remarks as part of a technocratic discourse that seeks to justify authoritarian tendencies under the guise of effective governance. The discursive issues emerging from the headline centre on the *legitimation of authoritarianism and the imbalance of*

agency and voice in political discourse. Ganduje is constructed as an agent whose voice is both powerful and contested, while opposition and civil society voices are implicitly mobilised to challenge his position. This dynamic reflects the ideological normalisation of centralisation, where the discourse recontextualises China’s one-party system as a model, thereby attempting to naturalise and legitimise similar political trajectories in Nigeria. The headline also highlights the silencing of dissenting voices and the delegitimisation of opposition, raising critical questions about the democratic health of the polity and the role of media in mediating these tensions. Linguistically, the headline employs modality shaping and metaphorical legitimation to construct its ideological effects. The metaphor “under fire” encapsulates both literal and figurative meanings of attack and scrutiny, enhancing the emotive impact and foregrounding conflict. Contrast and counter-framing are evident in the way Ganduje’s comments are positioned against the backdrop of democratic ideals, creating a tension between competing narratives of governance. Modal expressions, while not explicit in the headline, permeate the broader discourse, shaping perceptions of possibility, necessity, and obligation regarding political developments. These linguistic strategies work synergistically to frame Ganduje’s remarks as controversial and politically significant, inviting readers to engage critically with the unfolding political drama. Analysing the headline through Grice’s conversational maxims reveals pragmatic manoeuvres that shape reader interpretation. The maxim of quantity is flouted by providing minimal detail about the nature of the “comment,” thus generating curiosity and encouraging further reading. The maxim of quality is maintained insofar as the headline presents a truthful report of controversy, but the metaphorical language introduces interpretative ambiguity. The maxim of relation is upheld by ensuring relevance to current political debates on governance and democracy. The maxim of manner is strategically flouted through the use of metaphor and nominalisation, which, while concise, obscures explicit clarity to enhance dramatic effect and engagement.

Datum 3: Daily Trust

Atiku: Nigeria on Verge of losing democracy”



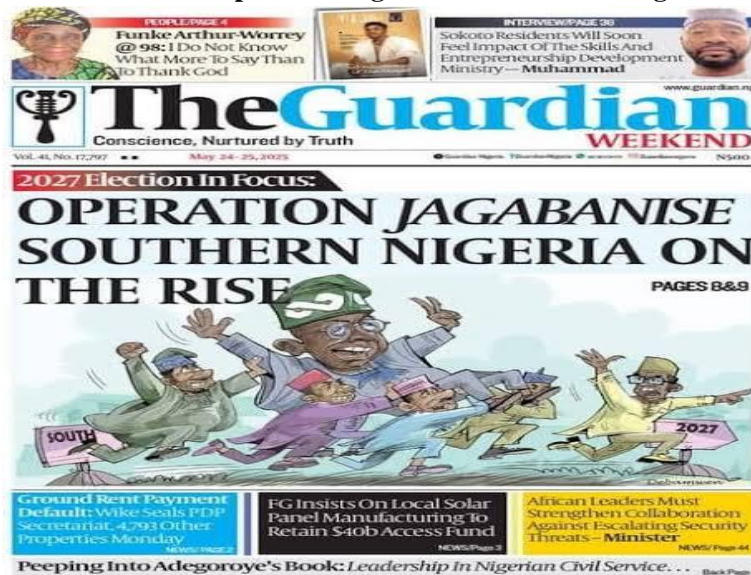
Headline	Atiku: Nigeria on the Verge of losing democracy	
Discourse Patterns	Crisis narrative pattern, metaphorical framing (“on the verge of losing democracy”),	personalisation, the us vs them dichotomy.
Ideology	Institutional betrayal, elite-led democratic ideologies	heroisation of opposition, marginalisation of public agency ideologies
Discursive Issues	Delegitimisation of state institutions, democratic betrayal issues	judicial and electoral compromise, opposition legitimisation, and political polarization issues
Linguistic Strategies	Material, relational, and existential processes.	metaphor; personalisation; brevity and urgency
Grice’s conversational Maxims	Quantity (minimal detail), Quality (truthful but metaphorical), Relation (relevant), Manner (concise but elliptical)	

This headline 3 “*Atiku: Nigeria On Verge of losing democracy*” encapsulates a powerful crisis discourse that foregrounds institutional failure and positions the opposition leader Atiku as a heroic figure advocating for democratic preservation. At the textual level, the headline employs a direct and urgent declarative structure that emphasises immediacy and gravity. The phrase “*on the verge of losing democracy*” metaphorically constructs Nigeria’s political situation as precarious and fragile, evoking a sense of impending disaster. This metaphor serves to dramatise the political crisis, framing it as an existential threat to the nation’s democratic fabric. The use of Atiku’s name at the outset personalises the message, attributing agency and moral responsibility to the opposition leader, which aligns with the ideological construction of him as a credible and morally responsible actor. The headline thus establishes a clear us-versus-them dichotomy, implicitly contrasting the opposition’s purported democratic defence with the alleged failures of the ruling institutions.

Ideologically, the headline reflects a narrative of institutional betrayal and crisis, where state institutions are delegitimised and portrayed as complicit in undermining democracy. This aligns with a broader elite-led democratic ideology that valorises opposition figures as rescuers while marginalising public agency. The discourse constructs the state as failing, particularly the judiciary and electoral bodies thereby justifying the opposition’s moral high ground and urgent call to action. The ideological framing also draws on media intertextuality and echo chambers that amplify anti-government solidarity, reinforcing a collective opposition identity. This framing serves to mobilise public sentiment against the government while legitimising elite intervention as necessary to restore democratic order. The discursive issues evident in the headline revolve around the delegitimisation of state institutions and the heroisation of the opposition. The discourse problematises the integrity of judicial and electoral processes, suggesting institutional compromise and democratic betrayal. This delegitimisation functions to erode

trust in governance structures, heightening perceptions of crisis. Concurrently, the opposition, embodied by Atiku, is presented as credible and morally responsible, positioning him as the legitimate alternative capable of rescuing democracy. The headline also reflects the ideological polarisation of Nigerian politics through the construction of an “us versus them” framework, which simplifies complex political realities into binary oppositions and marginalises broader public voices. Linguistically, the headline employs material, relational, and existential processes to construct its ideological effects. Material processes are evident in the implied actions of “losing democracy,” which, although metaphorical, suggest active processes of decline or sabotage. Relational processes appear in the attribution of agency and responsibility to Atiku, establishing identity and moral positioning. Existential processes underscore the precarious existence of democracy itself, emphasising its threatened status. These grammatical choices work in tandem to dramatise the political situation and foreground the opposition’s role. The headline’s brevity and directness enhance its urgency, while metaphorical language amplifies emotional resonance. Analysing the headline through Grice’s conversational maxims reveals strategic pragmatic manoeuvres. The maxim of quantity is flouted by providing minimal context about how democracy is being lost, thereby provoking reader curiosity and encouraging engagement with the full article. The maxim of quality is observed insofar as the headline reflects a genuine political concern, though the metaphorical framing introduces interpretative latitude. The maxim of relation is maintained by ensuring topical relevance to ongoing political debates about democracy and governance. The maxim of manner is flouted through the use of metaphor and elliptical phrasing, which, while concise, require readers to infer the full implications, thus enhancing engagement and interpretative involvement.

2027 Election in Focus: Operation Jagabanise in southern Nigeria on the rise



Headline	2027 Election in Focus: Operation Jagabanise in southern Nigeria on the rise	
Discourse Patterns	Thematic framing, conflict narrative	cohesion, theme-theme progression, repetition, intertextuality,
Ideology	Jagaban-aligned ideology,	centralisation of power, regional dominance, political mobilisation, legacy of Tinubu
Discursive Issues	North-South power tension, regional identity construction issues	defensive and offensive political strategies, contestation of zoning norms issues
Linguistic Strategies	Thematic framing, neologism ("Operation Jagabanise"), militarised metaphor.	Spatialisation, modality, and certainty, implicit argumentation.
Grice's conversational Maxims	Quantity (adequate but concise), Quality (truthful within political context).	Relation (relevant), Manner (ambiguous but engaging).

The headline "2027 Election in Focus: Operation Jagabanise southern Nigeria on the rise" encapsulates a complex ideological and discursive construction centred on regional power dynamics and political mobilisation ahead of a critical electoral event. At the textual level, the headline employs cohesive devices and thematic framing to foreground southern Nigeria as both an active agent and beneficiary of political momentum. The phrase "*on the rise*" functions as an appraisal mechanism, positively evaluating the ascendancy of "Operation Jagabanise," a coined term or neologism that symbolises a political movement aligned with Tinubu's legacy. This neologism carries militarised metaphorical weight, evoking notions of strategic mobilisation and organised power, which intensifies the symbolic construction of southern Nigeria as a region both empowered and embattled. The headline's

structure, with its theme-theme progression, strategically links the 2027 election to regional identity, embedding the southern cause within a broader narrative of political contestation and moral action.

Ideologically, the headline reflects a Jagaban-aligned discourse that promotes the centralisation of power within southern Nigeria, positioning this region as the dominant and ascending force in national politics. This discourse draws upon historical and contemporary tensions between the North and South, invoking intertextual references to prior debates on June 12, power rotation, and zoning norms. Through repetition and framing, the headline reinforces a narrative of regional rivalry, where the South is simultaneously constructed as "*risen*" and under threat, necessitating both defensive and offensive political strategies. This ideological stance serves to legitimise the

consolidation of southern political machinery while mobilising support through appeals to regional identity and collective agency. The framing of the South as both subject and beneficiary of moral action elevates the region's political significance and justifies its assertive posture in the forthcoming election. The discursive issues embedded in the headline centre on the mounting North-South power tension and the dual framing of “*Operation Jagabanise*” as a strategic response to this tension. The discourse problematises the potential for regional conflict by emphasising the stakes involved in the 2027 election, while simultaneously normalising political mobilisation through militarised metaphor and spatialisation. This framing constructs a narrative where political power is territorially coded, intensifying symbolic regional identities and raising the urgency of political engagement. The headline also engages with the ideological contestation over power rotation and zoning, key issues in Nigerian politics, thereby situating the discourse within ongoing debates about fairness, representation, and political legitimacy.

Linguistically, the headline employs a range of strategies to achieve its ideological and discursive effects. Thematic framing and cohesion create a coherent narrative that links the election, regional identity, and political mobilisation. The use of coinage or neologism in “*Operation Jagabanise*” introduces a novel term that encapsulates complex political meanings and allegiances, enhancing memorability and symbolic power. Militarised metaphor imbues the political process with connotations of conflict

and strategy, heightening emotional engagement. Spatialisation through the explicit reference to “*southern Nigeria*” grounds the discourse in territorial identity, while modality and certainty in phrases like “*on the rise*” convey a positive and confident appraisal of the movement's trajectory. Argumentation is implicit in the framing, suggesting the inevitability and righteousness of southern political ascendancy. From the perspective of Grice's conversational maxims, the headline exhibits deliberate pragmatic manoeuvres. The maxim of quantity is observed through the provision of sufficient information to signal political significance without overwhelming detail, encouraging readers to seek further context. The maxim of quality is maintained, as the headline's claims are grounded in observable political trends, albeit presented through metaphorical and evaluative language. The maxim of relation is upheld by ensuring topical relevance to the 2027 election and regional political dynamics. The maxim of manner is strategically flouted; the use of neologism and militarised metaphor introduces ambiguity and complexity, which, while potentially obscuring immediate clarity, serve to engage readers and provoke interpretation. This analysis reveals how the headline functions as a strategic ideological tool that constructs southern Nigeria as an empowered political actor preparing for a critical electoral contest. Through linguistic creativity and pragmatic subtlety, it mobilises regional identity and frames political mobilisation as both necessary and inevitable, reflecting broader power struggles within Nigerian politics.

Datum 5: Daily Trust Newspaper

2027: Pushback as Northern East APC endorses Tinubu, Shettima,



Headline	2027: Pushback as Northern East APC endorses Tinubu, Shettima.	
Discourse Patterns	Experiential patterns, unity vs dissent narrative.	Juxtaposition of official endorsement and pushback discourses.

Ideology	Unity, continuity, and centralised authority ideology.	Regional marginalisation counter-discourse
Discursive Issues	Institutional unity vs factional divide, regional equity vs centralised control.	Legality vs political pragmatism, symbolic vs substantive endorsement.
Linguistic Strategies	Nomination, predication, modality, intertextuality.	thematic framing, evaluative language, metaphor (implied), material processes
Grice's conversational Maxims	Quantity (minimal detail), Quality (truthful but nuanced)	Relation (relevant), Manner (concise but implicit contrast)

The headline from *Daily Trust*, “2027: Pushback as Northern East APC endorses Tinubu, Shettima,” offers a rich site for critical discourse analysis, revealing competing ideological positions and discursive tensions within Nigeria’s ruling party ahead of the 2027 elections. At the textual level, the headline juxtaposes the official endorsement of the Tinubu-Shettima ticket by the North East APC with the notion of “pushback,” signalling internal dissent and contestation. This contrast establishes a discursive pattern of unity versus division, where the official discourse emphasises party cohesion and continuity, while the “pushback” discourse highlights regional grievances and factional resistance. The headline’s structure foregrounds experiential patterns of political endorsement and dissent management, reflecting the complex dynamics of intra-party politics. Modal language and evaluative lexical choices, though implicit, contribute to framing the endorsement as authoritative and the pushback as problematic or disruptive.

Ideologically, the headline embodies a unity ideology that stresses continuity, stability, and centralised authority, represented by the official endorsement of Tinubu and Shettima. Simultaneously, it acknowledges a counter-discourse of regional marginalisation, where the “pushback” reflects perceived exclusion or dissatisfaction within the North East faction of the APC. This ideological tension mirrors broader struggles over regional equity and political representation in Nigeria, where centralised control is both asserted and contested. The headline thus realises competing ideological positions: one that legitimises the party’s leadership and electoral strategy as unified and stable, and another that problematises this unity by exposing fault lines and dissent within the party’s regional structures. The discursive issues emerging from the headline revolve around the institutional unity versus factional divide within the APC, the tension between regional equity and centralised control, and the conflict between legality and political pragmatism. The official endorsement discourse symbolically affirms party unity and the legitimacy of Tinubu and Shettima’s candidacy, while the pushback discourse reveals underlying fractures and challenges to this unity. This duality raises questions

about the substantive benefits of the endorsement for different regions and actors, highlighting symbolic endorsement versus material political gain. The headline also engages with discursive practices of dissent management, where internal opposition is acknowledged but framed as secondary or problematic relative to the official narrative. Linguistically, the headline employs a range of strategies to articulate these ideological and discursive tensions. Nomination and predication foreground key political actors and actions, while modality shapes the degree of certainty or obligation implied in the endorsement and pushback. Intertextuality is evident in the headline’s resonance with ongoing political debates and media coverage of APC’s internal dynamics. Thematic framing organises the discourse around competing narratives of unity and dissent. Evaluative language subtly positions the endorsement positively and the pushback as a challenge to be managed. Metaphorical language, though less explicit, may be inferred in the notion of “*pushback*” as resistance or opposition. Material processes highlight the actions of endorsing and resisting, while evaluative language guides reader interpretation of these actions’ legitimacy. Applying Grice’s conversational maxims to the headline reveals deliberate pragmatic strategies. The maxim of quantity is flouted by providing minimal detail about the nature or scale of the pushback, thereby stimulating reader curiosity and encouraging further engagement. The maxim of quality is maintained, as the headline truthfully reports both endorsement and dissent, but the framing invites interpretative nuance. The maxim of relation is observed by ensuring topical relevance to the 2027 election and intra-party politics. The maxim of manner is strategically flouted through the use of juxtaposition and implicit contrast, which, while concise, require readers to infer the complexities behind the headline’s brief phrasing. This analysis illustrates how the headline functions as a microcosm of broader political struggles within the APC, deploying linguistic and pragmatic strategies to construct competing ideological narratives of unity and dissent. The headline’s framing serves both to legitimise the ruling party’s electoral strategy and to acknowledge internal contestation, reflecting the

complex realities of Nigerian party politics ahead of the 2027 elections.

Datum 6: Daily Trust

“No automatic tickets for National Assembly Member - APC”



Headline	No automatic tickets for National Assembly Member – APC	
Discourse Patterns	Denial and reframing, assertion of party unity pattern	meritocracy rhetoric, internal process assurance, attack on media/opposition narratives pattern
Ideology	Meritocratic democracy ideology	stability through continuity, electoral fairness, strategic loyalty.
Discursive Issues	Elite control vs internal democracy, continuity vs democratic fairness issues	central authority vs regional actors, labeling dissent vs public engagement, legality vs party pragmatism issues
Linguistic Strategies	Negation, denial and delegitimation, meritocracy and transparency framing.	unity and stability construction, crisis management through reframing.
Grice's conversational Maxims	Quantity (succinct but sufficient), Quality (truthful but framed),	Relation (relevant), Manner (concise and authoritative)

This headline “*No automatic tickets for National Assembly Member - APC*” encapsulates a discourse of internal party regulation and control, foregrounding themes of meritocracy, continuity, and political stability within the ruling party. At the textual level, the headline employs a clear and assertive negation “*No automatic tickets*” which functions as a denial and reframing strategy. This linguistic choice signals a break from previous practices or expectations, emphasising that incumbency does not guarantee candidacy, thereby foregrounding principles of internal democracy and electoral fairness. The headline’s structure is concise and declarative, projecting authority and finality. The phrase “*National Assembly Member*” specifies the target group, situating the discourse within the elite political class, while the appended party label “*APC*” asserts institutional ownership and control over this policy decision. Ideologically, the headline reflects a meritocratic

democracy ideology that valorises internal party processes based on fairness, transparency, and rule of law. This ideology is intertwined with a discourse of stability through continuity, where controlled renewal is framed as essential for party unity and electoral success. The headline also embodies a strategic assertion of elite control over political narratives, positioning the party leadership as gatekeepers who balance meritocratic principles with pragmatic considerations of loyalty and continuity. This ideological stance serves to legitimise the party’s authority while managing potential dissent by framing policy changes as necessary and principled, rather than arbitrary or exclusionary. The discursive issues evident in the headline concern the tension between elite control and internal democracy, highlighting conflicts between maintaining central authority and accommodating regional actors or incumbent politicians. The denial of automatic tickets

challenges expectations of entitlement, raising questions about fairness and democratic principles within party politics. Simultaneously, the discourse manages dissent by delegitimising opposition narratives particularly those propagated by media or rival factions through reframing and crisis management strategies. This duality reflects broader struggles over legitimacy, legality, and political pragmatism, where transactional politics intersect with normative ideals of meritocracy and transparency. Linguistically, the headline employs several strategic devices to construct its ideological effects. The use of *negation* (“No automatic tickets”) is a powerful rhetorical move that asserts control and signals change. Denial and delegitimation strategies are implicit, as the headline pre-empt claims of entitlement or unfairness. The framing of meritocracy and transparency functions to moralise the party’s decision, appealing to democratic values and rule-based governance. The construction of unity and stability is achieved through lexical choices that suggest order and rationality. The headline also engages in crisis management through reframing, positioning the policy as a solution to potential internal conflict rather than a source of division.

Analysing the headline through Grice’s conversational maxims reveals pragmatic manoeuvres that shape reader interpretation. The maxim of quantity is observed by providing succinct but sufficient information to convey the policy shift, while withholding detailed explanations to encourage further reading. The maxim of quality is maintained, as the headline truthfully reports the party’s stance, though the framing invites interpretative nuance regarding its implications. The maxim of relation is upheld by ensuring topical relevance to ongoing political debates about party democracy and candidate selection. The maxim of manner is strategically flouted; the headline’s brevity and negation create a stark, authoritative tone that foregrounds the party’s control while leaving room for reader inference. This analysis demonstrates how the headline functions as a discursive tool that balances ideological commitments to meritocracy and democratic fairness with pragmatic assertions of elite control and party unity. The linguistic and pragmatic strategies employed serve to legitimise the party’s policy decision while managing potential dissent and shaping public perception within the broader context of Nigerian electoral politics.

Datum 7: The Guardian

“32 years later, IBB admits Abiola won June 12, 1993 election, regrets annulment”



Headline	32 years later, IBB admits Abiola won June 12, 1993 election, regrets annulment.	
Discourse Patterns	Temporal framing (“32 years later”), admission and regret narrative pattern.	personalisation, historical justice discourse
Ideology	Political accountability ideology	democratic legitimacy, historical justice, reconciliation ideologies
Discursive Issues	Legitimacy of electoral outcomes, delayed accountability issues	politics of memory, symbolic significance of June 12
Linguistic Strategies	Temporal framing, evaluative verbs (“admits,” “regrets”),	nominalisation (“annulment”), personalisation (IBB, Abiola), brevity and clarity
Grice’s conversational Maxims	Quantity (succinct but incomplete), Quality (truthful and evaluative).	Relation (relevant), Manner (clear yet emotionally charged).

The headline “32 years later, IBB admits Abiola won June 12, 1993 election, regrets annulment” encapsulates a significant political and historical discourse that revisits a pivotal moment in Nigeria’s democratic journey. At the textual level, the headline foregrounds the temporal distance “32 years later” which frames the admission as a delayed but momentous revelation. This temporal marker creates a narrative of long-awaited truth and reconciliation, heightening the dramatic impact of the statement. The use of the verb “admits” carries strong evaluative connotations, implying a reluctant acknowledgement that contrasts with previous denials or silence, thereby positioning IBB (Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida) as an agent of accountability, albeit belatedly. The phrase “regrets annulment” introduces a moral and emotional dimension, signalling remorse and indirectly acknowledging the injustice of the annulment. The headline’s structure is concise yet rich, balancing factual reporting with implicit evaluative and affective undertones. Ideologically, the headline engages with discourses of historical justice, political accountability, and democratic legitimacy. It reflects a broader societal desire to confront past political wrongs and restore democratic integrity. The admission by a former military ruler functions as a symbolic act of reconciliation, which may serve to rehabilitate IBB’s political image while simultaneously validating Abiola’s contested victory. This ideological framing aligns with narratives that seek to redress historical grievances and promote democratic consolidation. However, it also implicitly critiques past authoritarianism and electoral manipulation, highlighting the long-term consequences of political decisions on national cohesion and legitimacy. The discursive issues embedded in the headline centre on the legitimacy of electoral outcomes, delayed accountability, and the politics of memory. The headline problematises the annulment of the June 12 election as a historical injustice whose effects continue to resonate decades later. It raises questions about the timing and sincerity of IBB’s admission and regret, inviting readers to consider the implications of delayed justice for democratic development. The discourse also engages with the symbolic significance of June 12 as a

touchstone of Nigerian democracy, framing the headline as part of an ongoing struggle over historical narrative and political legitimacy. Linguistically, the headline employs several strategic devices to construct its ideological and discursive effects. The temporal phrase “32 years later” functions as a framing device that emphasises delay and the passage of time, enhancing the headline’s dramatic tension. The verb “admits” is a powerful lexical choice that conveys concession and acknowledgement, suggesting a shift in stance. The phrase “regrets annulment” introduces modality of affect, signalling remorse and moral evaluation. The headline’s nominalisation of “annulment” abstracts the political act into a concept laden with negative connotations, while the proper nouns “IBB” and “Abiola” personalise the discourse, anchoring it in identifiable political figures and historical events. The overall brevity and clarity of the headline enhance its immediacy and impact. From the perspective of Grice’s conversational maxims, the headline strategically flouts and adheres to pragmatic principles to engage readers. The maxim of quantity is observed by providing essential information succinctly, though it withholds details about the context or consequences of the admission, encouraging further inquiry. The maxim of quality is maintained, as the headline reports a verifiable statement, but the evaluative language invites interpretative reflection. The maxim of relation is upheld by ensuring topical relevance to ongoing political discourse about Nigeria’s democratic history. The maxim of manner is carefully balanced; the headline is clear and concise but uses emotionally charged verbs and temporal framing to maximise engagement and interpretative depth. This analysis shows how the headline functions as a potent discursive site where language, ideology, and history intersect. Through strategic linguistic choices and pragmatic effects, it revisits a critical moment in Nigeria’s democratic evolution, framing it within narratives of delayed justice and political accountability. The headline thus serves both as a reminder of past injustices and a symbolic step towards reconciliation and democratic consolidation.

Datum 8: The Guardian

“June 12: Soludo, Fashola, Jega advocate Electoral Reform, National rebirth”



Headline	“June 12: Soludo, Fashola, Jega advocate Electoral Reform, National rebirth”	
Discourse Patterns	Problem–crisis–solution pattern	historicization and legitimization, thematic repetition, consultative tone
Ideology	technocratic national rebirth ideology	rule-based electoralism, elite stewardship of democracy ideologies
Discursive Issues	Democracy vs dictatorship, technocracy vs participation, rule of law and electoral integrity, collective memory vs political legitimization issues	nation-building vs regional/ethnic politics, crisis rhetoric vs solution discourse.
Linguistic Strategies	Relational assertions, material and evaluative lexicon.	modal and consultative verbs, repetition, historic anchoring.
Grice’s conversational Maxims	Quantity (adequate information), Quality (truthful with positive framing),	Relation (relevant), Manner (clear and concise).

The headline “June 12: Soludo, Fashola, Jega advocate Electoral Reform, National rebirth” presents a discourse that intertwines democratic ideals with technocratic visions of national renewal. At the textual level, the headline employs a *problem–crisis–solution pattern*, framing electoral reform as a necessary response to a perceived democratic deficit, anchored historically by the symbolic significance of June 12. The use of prominent political figures Soludo, Fashola, and Jega personalises the discourse and lends authority to the call for reform. The phrase “advocate Electoral Reform, National rebirth” encapsulates a dual agenda: reforming electoral processes and fostering a broader national revival. This framing utilises modal and imperative verbs to convey urgency and consultative tone, while repetition of key terms such as “Electoral Reform” and “National rebirth” reinforces the thematic focus and ideological commitment. The headline’s structure reflects a historicization and legitimization pattern, situating current political demands within a continuum of democratic struggle and nation-building. Ideologically, the headline reflects a discourse of democracy as elite legacy and technocratic national rebirth, where democratic progress is framed as the product of elite stewardship and institutional reform. The inclusion of Jega, a former electoral commission chairman, foregrounds a rule-based electoralism ideology that emphasises legal frameworks, institutional integrity, and technocratic governance. This elite-driven narrative positions democracy not merely as popular participation but as a carefully managed process requiring expert intervention and reform. The ideological implications extend to the tension between technocracy and participation, highlighting debates over who should shape democratic processes and how. The headline also evokes collective

memory by referencing June 12, a pivotal moment in Nigeria’s democratic history, thus linking contemporary reform efforts to a symbolic legacy of resistance and legitimacy. The discursive issues embedded in the headline revolve around the democracy versus dictatorship dichotomy, the tension between technocracy and popular participation, and the challenges of rule of law and electoral integrity. The discourse problematises the current state of Nigerian democracy as requiring urgent reform, while simultaneously legitimising elite-led solutions. It also negotiates the balance between nation-building and regional or ethnic politics, suggesting that electoral reform is integral to national cohesion and rebirth. The crisis rhetoric inherent in the problem–solution framing underscores the urgency of reform while offering a hopeful vision of political renewal. These discursive tensions reflect broader societal debates about governance, legitimacy, and the future of Nigerian democracy. Linguistically, the headline employs relational assertions to establish connections between actors, actions, and national goals. The material and evaluative lexicon words like “*advocate*,” “*reform*,” and “*rebirth*” conveys both action and positive appraisal, reinforcing the constructive nature of the discourse. The modal and consultative tone, achieved through verbs that imply recommendation and necessity, invites reader engagement and positions the reform agenda as both urgent and inclusive. Repetition of key thematic terms enhances cohesion and ideological emphasis. The headline’s brevity and clarity ensure accessibility while embedding complex ideological and discursive layers. Analysing the headline through Grice’s conversational maxims reveals pragmatic strategies that shape interpretation. The maxim of quantity is observed by providing sufficient information to signal the importance of

the issue and the actors involved without overwhelming detail. The maxim of quality is maintained, as the headline truthfully reports advocacy by credible figures, though the positive framing invites interpretative optimism. The maxim of relation is upheld through topical relevance to ongoing political discourse surrounding electoral reform and national unity. The maxim of manner is respected by the headline's clear, concise, and structured presentation, facilitating reader comprehension while allowing for deeper reflection on the issues raised. This analysis demonstrates how the headline functions as a strategic discursive site where elite political actors invoke historical memory and technocratic ideals to frame electoral reform as essential for Nigeria's democratic consolidation and national rebirth. The linguistic and pragmatic strategies employed serve to legitimise this agenda while engaging readers in a narrative of urgent but hopeful political transformation.

Findings and conclusion

The study reveals that Nigerian newspaper headlines are instrumental in constructing and negotiating complex political ideologies and power relations. The dominant ideologies identified include elite power consolidation, democratic legitimacy and erosion, regional identity and marginalisation, technocratic governance, and unity versus dissent discourses. These ideologies are articulated through strategic lexical choices, metaphorical framing, and thematic organisation, which consistently privilege elite political actors and institutional narratives while marginalising popular or dissenting voices. For example, headlines often frame political crises as constitutional disputes or power struggles, normalising conflict and reinforcing elite dominance. Intertextual references to significant historical events such as the June 12, 1993 election and debates on zoning and power rotation serve to historicise and legitimise current political claims, thereby embedding contemporary discourse within a collective memory and national identity narrative. Pragmatically, the headlines employ a range of linguistic strategies that engage with Grice's Cooperative Principle and its four conversational maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner, to shape reader interpretation and ideological positioning. The maxim of Quantity is frequently flouted by providing minimal or selective information, which generates curiosity and encourages further engagement with the full text. For instance, headlines often omit contextual details about political controversies, thereby controlling the flow of information. The maxim of Quality is generally maintained in terms of factual reporting but is nuanced by metaphorical language and evaluative terms that invite interpretative flexibility, such as "under fire" or "on the rise." The maxim of Relation is upheld as headlines

remain relevant to ongoing political debates and national concerns, ensuring topical coherence. However, the maxim of Manner is often flouted through ambiguity, metaphor, and nominalisation, which, while enhancing rhetorical impact, can obscure clarity and require readers to infer meaning. These pragmatic manoeuvres amplify the persuasive power of headlines, allowing them to subtly advance ideological positions while maintaining an appearance of neutrality. The study also identifies recurring discursive tensions that mirror Nigerian political realities, such as legitimacy versus illegitimacy, unity versus factional dissent, technocracy versus popular participation, and regional marginalisation versus centralised control. These tensions are discursively constructed through opposing frames and evaluative language, reflecting broader societal debates about governance, democracy, and national cohesion. Importantly, the media discourse analysed serves a dual function: it both normalises political conflict and elite power struggles through metaphors of obstruction and contestation, and simultaneously advocates for reform and national rebirth by framing crises as opportunities for democratic renewal. This duality underscores the media's complex role in shaping public understanding and political engagement. Thus, the integration of critical discourse analysis with pragmatic theory, particularly the explicit examination of Gricean maxims, reveals how Nigerian political headlines operate as sophisticated linguistic and ideological tools. They not only reflect but actively shape the socio-political landscape by managing information, framing ideological narratives, and influencing public perception in subtle yet powerful ways.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Nigerian newspaper headlines are pivotal in the construction and dissemination of political ideologies and power dynamics within the country's complex socio-political context. By integrating critical discourse analysis with pragmatic theory specifically Grice's conversational maxims the research reveals how headlines strategically manage information, employ metaphorical and evaluative language, and frame political narratives to privilege elite actors, normalise conflict, and shape public perceptions of democracy, legitimacy, and governance. The deliberate flouting and adherence to Grice's maxims enable headlines to engage readers effectively while subtly advancing ideological positions. Furthermore, the study highlights the intricate discursive tensions embedded in media discourse, including struggles over legitimacy versus illegitimacy, unity versus dissent, technocracy versus popular participation, and regional marginalisation versus centralised authority. These tensions reflect and reinforce ongoing political debates and

societal divisions in Nigeria. Importantly, the media's dual role in both normalising political conflict and advocating reform underscores its significant influence in shaping democratic discourse and national identity. Overall, the findings affirm the necessity of combining discourse and pragmatic analyses to fully understand the power of media language in political communication and its impact on public consciousness. Future research could extend this work by examining audience reception or comparative media studies across different political contexts.

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