

Re-lexicalization and Over-lexicalization in Nigerian Political Cartoon Discourse on Facebook

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Abstract

Political Cartoons provide an avenue for people across the political spectrum to present their reactions to current events in a relaxed atmosphere. While such discourses provoke laughter in the audience, critical messages lie underneath them. Such messages can be retrieved by a very careful audience. Two major ways in which serious information is presented in cartoons are re-lexicalization and over-lexicalization. This paper, therefore, investigated these phenomena in Nigerian political cartoon discourse. The data for this study was purposively selected Facebook political cartoons in Nigeria. Their selection was, therefore, motivated by the political topics they treated as well as the period in which they were posted. Those cartoons were posted in the first half of 2019, the period which was important in the history of Nigeria, being a period that spanned through pre-election, election and post-election experiences of the country. A multimodal approach was taken in the study— not only the lexical items in the cartoons were important in such a kind of discourse, the images as well as their color also contributed to re-lexicalization and over-lexicalization phenomena in the context of the discourse. The study revealed that Nigerian cartoonists re-lexicalize and over-lexicalize the existing lexical items in a bid to share critical information without causing so much embarrassment to the audience or the subject of political discourse.

Keywords: Re-lexicalization, Over-lexicalization, Discourse, Cartoon, Nigeria

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Introduction

That written and spoken languages have different principles and patterns of organization which can

be lexico-grammatically distinguished has been established (Halliday 1989; Coulthard 2005). However, the linguistic features of the social media are an amalgam of the features of both

written and spoken languages. Social media is regularly improved to accommodate face-to-face communication features through the use of emoji, smileys, and images all of which are expected to communicate certain pragmatic meanings.

Whereas the social media is a broad platform within which, despite their similar features, versatile socio/linguistic practices take place, many researchers into it have approached it from a broad rather than a narrow perspective. For instance, Fridah Erastus and Hilda Kebeya (2018) study the linguistic and sociolinguistic features of Sheng as used on the social media, and Roland Kouassi and Ellen Hurst-Harosh (2018) investigate two African urban languages and how they are used to negotiate community practice and identity on the social media in Cote-d-ivoire and South Africa. Studies in social media in Nigeria tend to concern themselves to general cyber behavior such as cyber bullying and cyber slacking across different kinds of social media (Rotimi Taiwo 2015); others have looked at the sentence peculiarities of the users of social media from structural and functional perspectives (Idehen and Taiwo 2016). While this body of works has its merit, its lack of narrowness in studying the linguistic practices of the social media could leave out important linguistic peculiarities undiscovered. The social media, particularly Facebook, could be micro-segmented into timeline,

sports, group, cartoon, page, and comedy discourse genres, each of which could bear a distinct linguistic and sociolinguistic practice. This gap is noticed in the previous research on the socio/linguistic practices in the social media, and it is this gap that this present research hopes to fill by examining two linguistic phenomena, relexicalisation and overlexicalisation, as they relate to Nigerian political cartoons on Facebook. The paper seeks to address three research questions: how is the meaning of lexemes constructed in Facebook political cartoons in Nigeria; why is it so constructed; and what implication does that manner of construction have? The objective of the paper is, therefore, to examine the construction of lexemes, reason for such construction and its effect on such kind of discourse.

Conceptual Framework

Cartoons are primarily created as a tool to provoke laughter in the audience. Hence, many readers who desire to enliven themselves often take solace in them whenever they are downcast. But they may also be a tool for enlightenment, education and satire. While these new functions are incorporated into cartoons, the bedrock function of laughter-provoking remains intact. In fact, laughter usually remains the surface meaning/message for cartoons nowadays while the deep meaning/message could have a serious implication.

Although studies on the social media in Nigeria, and Africa at large, appear not to be micro-focused, there have been studies on political cartoons in Nigeria. Oluremi and Ajepe (2016) examine the pragmatics of selected political cartoons published in important Nigerian newspapers prior to 2015 general elections using Jacob Mey's pragmatic act theory; they find satirising, indicting, condemning and promoting/demoting among the practs of the cartoons. Other studies perceive Nigerian cartoonists as watchdogs of political happenings (Mohammed Onakpa 2014; Jacob Agba 2014).

Cartoons are capable of providing insights into social trends (Sheik et al, 2016, p. 77). They are, therefore, an avenue for a cartoonist to present his/her reactions to social developments. That presentation must be an amalgam of textual and non-textual skills. Pictorial images, words, phrases, clauses, and maybe colors are dexterously combined to pass the cartoonist perspective(s) and position on a social matter. The success of the message of cartoons lies in the synergy of verbal and non-verbal tools (Tsakona 2009). Both the verbal and the non-verbal tools are expected to 'co-habit' within cartoons so that the non-verbal tools cast some semantic manipulations on the verbal tools. Following Christopher Matthews (2011, p. 15), this research is of the opinion that "logo centric and visuocentric methods" of analyzing cartoons are the best way of understanding cartoons since they are

visual-linguistic texts. However, their linguistic texts could be characterized by lexicalization and over lexicalization.

The term, 'lexicalization', can be best understood when considered alongside a related term, 'lexicalization', which has to do with how meanings are encoded in the lexemes of a language (Levin and Hovav, 2015, p.2). The former has been described as a reference to the process of coding new concepts in 'new sets of lexical terms' (Roger Fowler, 1981, p.31). For Halliday (1978), it is a process which includes a substitution of invented words in language and a systematic alteration of the existing word to cater for its new semantic variant. It, therefore, can be conceived from two perspectives: semantic expansion of the existing lexical items and the invention of new lexemes for existing or new concepts or practices. There is also the possibility of the fusion of the two perspectives into one so that a lexeme is grammaticalized resulting in its "loss of its original semantics" (Tom Guldermann, 2012, p. 75). These perspectives are considered by lexicographers before listing the expanded or additional meanings of a lexical item or the listing of new/additional words in a language. This suggests that the new/additional meaning/lexeme must have been operationalized by language users over a period of time before it is considered worthy of listing in the dictionary, although there could also

be some bias; lexicographers may also select which group(s) of language users should be considered in the process of listing the additional meaning/lexeme. The lexical item, 'bad', for instance, used to have negative meanings in all its listing in the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary until its 8th edition accommodates its positive meaning (of excellence or good) in a slangy expression. This lexicalization of the lexeme appears to be derived from Michael Jackson's use of the expression, "I'm bad", in one of his albums, an expression which refers to his opulent ornament and costume. Since then, many users, particularly the youth, have operationalized this meaning as a superlative expression for any description of good/good-looking item- *the movie is bad, that lady is bad, I've never seen a story as bad as this*- and it finally finds its way in the dictionary. However, there is the possibility that lexicalization of a lexeme is short-lived if it does not gain currency from language users.

Over lexicalization, in contradistinction to lexicalization, conceptualizes the use of many lexemes, more than expected, to describe a phenomenon that could have been described with a few lexemes, often giving rise to 'a sense of over completeness' (Guldermann, 2000, p. 20) or over description. Lexicalization and over lexicalization often feature in the socio/linguistic behavior of the Nigerian cartoonists on Facebook, particularly in an

atmosphere of jokes and humor. Several authors have indicated that linguistic criticism offers an opportunity to establish a relationship between the language user's (perceived) messages with social reality (Fowler, 1981; Simpson, 2004). According to Peter Serracino-Inglott (2001, p.7), "The playful use of language is the most illuminating of all its many and various uses, because the most singular aspect of language - namely its creativity - is most manifest in wit and humor - in jokes". While passing a comment on a particular issue, Nigerian political cartoonists, as we shall soon see below, take lexemes from one semantic field to describe another semantic field thereby lexicalizing the lexemes, and at other times, engage in the tactical use of numerous lexemes in order to present an idea in a roundabout manner.

Theoretical Framework

This article is anchored on Kress' (2010) multimodality theory, which posits that spoken and written language cannot be fully understood without considering the non-verbal factors such as images, colors, topography and layout (for written texts) and paralinguistic such as gestures, facial expression and proxemics (for spoken texts) surrounding the communicative context (Theo van Leeuwen, 2011, p.668). According to Kress (2011, p.38), "Multimodality asserts that 'language' is just one among the many resources for making meaning. That

implies that the modal resources available in a culture need to be seen as one coherent, integral field, of – nevertheless distinct – resources for making meaning.” A multimodal approach enables these semiotic resources to be attended to and moves beyond seeing them as decoration (Jewitt, 2005, p.315)

Multimodality is found on the assumption that all participants in a communicative event share similar goals and, therefore, require full access to the factors that would make the event successful (Kress, 2010, p. 18). In a face-to-face communication, for instance, all the participants would need to rely on intonation, gestures and facial expressions in the interpretation of verbal expressions. The image representation of characters and situations in cartoon is influenced by what Kress (2010, p. 16) calls ‘epistemological commitment’; the cartoonists would have to imagistically (and lexically) decide the extent of satire they intend to present.

The kinds of mode (and their combinations) employed by discourse participants are central to the meaning intended to be conveyed by them. According to Jeff Bezemer and Gunther Kress (2008),

[The] differences in resources [texts] mean that modes can be used to do different kinds of semiotic work or to do broadly similar semiotic work with different resources in different ways. That is, modes have different

affordances— potentials and constraints for making meaning. This enables sign makers to do different work in relation to their interests and their rhetorical intentions for designs of meaning, which, in modal ensembles, best meet the rhetor’s interest and sense of the needs of the audience. That is, by drawing on the specific affordances of different modes in the making of complex signs as modal ensembles, sign makers can meet the complex, often contradictory demands of their own interest, the needs of the matter to be communicated, and the characteristics of the audience. (p.172)

The implication of this is that any alteration in any of the modes that make up a text would result in a variation of meaning, wide or narrow. This realization makes it possible to alter the overall meaning of text through a change in the writing, image or even color of the text. For instance, discourse participants on the internet sometimes circulate old related images but whose meanings have been renewed by making some adjustments to them as well as to the modes accompanying them. This affords them the opportunity to make old (but adjusted) images communicate some information about recent happenings. It is also possible for cartoons to be recycled with different written texts but the same images. This underlies the concepts of mobility and portability of multimodal texts (Kress 2010:28).

Four factors of mode, medium, social and cultural norms are central to multimodal communication (Kress 2010:11). While the first two are visible in images, pictorial representations and cartoons, the remaining two are usually not visibly expressed. But they (social and cultural norms) are required to have the required interpretation or meaning of a multimodal message. They also determine the lexico-grammatical patterns the accompanying text so that re-lexicalization and over-lexicalization could become useful tools to a cartoonist. Discourse participants in multimodal communication, thus, rely on these factors in extracting the appropriate meaning from a text.

Methodology

This study seeks to establish that lexicalization and over lexicalization are two linguistic strategies often employed by political cartoonists in expressing their opinions about current political happenings. It is, therefore, a content analytical research with a multimodal approach. Thus, the research paradigm for the study is based on mode, medium, and social and cultural norms, which are crucial factors in multimodal communication, according to Kress (2010:11). The methodological procedure is given below.

Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study were Nigerian political cartoons randomly selected from Facebook social media within the first half of 2019, the period which was important in the history of Nigeria, being a period that spanned through pre-election, election and post-election experience of the country. Thus, the treatment or handling of political issues informs the choice of those cartons. Twenty-two political cartoons were collected during this period.

Data Sampling

Of the twenty-two political cartoons collected by the researcher only six are randomly sampled for analysis— about one-quarter of the total. This is to allow for a manageable data size. A multimodal approach was taken in the study— not only the lexical items in the cartoons were important in such a kind of discourse, the images also contributed to lexicalization and over lexicalization phenomena in the context of the discourse. Individual relexicalized words are retrieved from the cartoons, and for over lexicalization, instances are identified, all of which are analyzed within the context of the discourse.

Analytical Procedure

The cartoons are analyzed based on five critical concepts identified by the researcher: disrobing, reconceptualization, re-

contextualization de-emotionalization and disjointing. While the first three concepts are linguistic strategies for relexicalization, the remaining two are related to over lexicalization. Each of these concepts is treated under a subheading with relevant cartoon(s) analyzed under it. With insights from Multimodal Theory, the images and color are examined alongside the linguistic expressions. This affords us the possibility of ascertaining the dexterous use of the aforementioned strategies by the cartoonists.

Relexicalization in Nigerian Political Cartoons

Information disseminated in many comic political cartoons is commonly done through a re-appropriation of meaning of lexical items in technical ways so that the readers have to work out the contextual meaning. It is the re-appropriation of the meaning of lexemes that harbors the comicality of the cartoon, and by extension allows the intended meaning to be veiled. It is important to mention that majority of political cartoons by Nigerian are placed within a context, immediate or far. At times, the immediate and the far context are synergized into one cartoon. Three processes may be identified in meaning relexicalisation in Nigerian comic political cartoons. These are: disrobing, recontextualisation and reconceptualization.

Disrobing

Lexical items have their conceptual meaning, and it is difficult to separate the semantic content of a lexical item from its morphological composition. In fact, every morphological composition has its semantic peculiarity. In English, verbs and phrasal verbs are often differentiated not only in terms of the particle that accompanies a phrasal verb, but also in terms of the idiomatic component of the latter. However, when verbs are used in place of phrasal verbs and vice versa, we find a problem of semantic incongruence—so that we may say the ‘robe’ of a lexical item (its meaning) has been taken away (disrobed). This process may be termed ‘disrobing’. That is, a lexical item, such as a phrasal verb, is ‘disrobed’ of its original idiomatic meaning so that it takes up the literal or denotative meaning of, at least, one of the parts that make up the phrase.

In the cartoon below, therefore, the lexeme, ‘frame up’, an expression with a negative connotation is relexicalised as ‘frame’ through the process of disrobing.

Frame up → frame

Figure 1

Comic Political Cartoon 1



The socio-political context behind this cartoon revolves around the controversial suspension of the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) by the President, at the eve of the 2019 election. The CJN has been accused of corrupt practices, and charged to the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT), upon whose pronouncement the President relied to suspend the CJN. While the suspension may not be wrong in itself, the timing of that decision raised a suspicion. The presidential election litigation goes through the Appeal Court and ends at the Supreme Court, where the CJN takes charge. It is either he was eased out of the office to pave way for a new CJN, who would be sympathetic to the

President as a reward for his appointment, or he was eased out so that he would not be able to favor the opposition party, with which it was felt he had some relationship, in his ruling. This cartoon is, thus, a reaction to this development.

In Figure 1 cartoon, the lexeme, 'frame up', therefore, has been neutralized or **disrobed** so that it loses its idiomatic feature. The lexeme ordinarily suggests implicating someone in an unreal or arranged crime so that he/she gets punished for what he/she knows not. The image in the cartoon depicts the president as a carpenter ('framer') and the CJN as the object of framing ('framee'). This allows the lexeme to be perceived cognitively while the discourse background triggers its idiomatic meaning. Put differently, the image, at the surface level, '**disrobes**' the lexeme of its (original) idiomatic meaning while the personalities in the image provide this '**disrobed**' idiomatic meaning at the deep level. An audience not familiar with the context would, therefore, find a challenge comprehending the message.

There is also another lexical item that enhances the neutralization or **disrobing** of the lexeme, 'frame up'. That is 'nicely'. The combination of these two lexemes would definitely make the idiomatic meaning of the former impossible because there is lack of collocation between them. Without the image, this collocation

awkwardness would have suggested that a different meaning is expected, but the expected meaning would not have been clear since the background or context (for the expected meaning) is not explicit enough. It is this likely semantic gap that the image fills.

Reconceptualization

Conceptualization is the process of providing verbal items for particular concepts. It is simply a reference to how terms are developed to capture certain phenomena. It involves keeping and transmitting conceptual information linguistically and non-linguistically (Manerka, 2016: 131). Reconceptualization, therefore, presupposes the existence of a concept for a particular activity, but that the concept is now used for a different activity in a different context, or a different/new activity is now given the conceptual tag of a known activity. Reconceptualization is often employed by Nigerian cartoonists in a bid to relexicalise existing concepts in the light of different but similar cognitive perceptions. For instance, in Figure 2 cartoon, there is a reconceptualization of “severance allowance” as “retirement benefit”.

Severance allowance → retirement
benefit

This process of reconceptualization occurs when a concept or lexeme meant for a particular phenomenon is used to describe a different but similar

phenomenon, which has its legitimate lexeme. The lexeme is reconceptualised on the basis of semantic proximity. While the process of reconceptualization may not be explicit when only the linguistic text is considered, the images within the cartoon provide a clue as to the shift in the semantic implication of the lexeme. As Figure 2 below shows, reconceptualization could be a manner of protesting against a particular practice especially when reality contradicts expectation.

Severance allowance (or benefit) is a lexical item that refers to the monetary benefit offered to employees whose appointments are terminated, and, also in the case of Nigeria, to the benefit given to the legislators who fail to win a re-election to the legislature after a successful completion of, at least, one term. Retirement benefit, on the other hand, is a monetary entitlement given to retired civil servants. Since legislators do not retire, then they could not receive ‘retirement benefit’. They may be ‘severed’ from the legislature through a legal means such as court pronouncement or electoral loss, and, thus could only receive ‘severance allowance’. Logically, one would expect the retirement benefit of civil servants to be larger than the severance allowance of legislators since the former commit more years into service (and cannot find their way back into the system) than the latter. The reality in Nigeria contrasts with this situation, and this is why the

cartoonist transposes 'retirement benefit' on 'severance allowance', and showcases a politician with a large sack and a civil servant a small bag.

Figure 2

Comic Political Cartoon 2



This image is a representation of the Nigerian public opinion at their knowledge of the severance allowance of those legislators, who failed to win their re-election to the National Assembly. The popular reaction is that of repudiation and rejection of the legislators' allocation of a huge sum of money to themselves, not only as serving officers of the legislature but also as 'retiring' officers. The rejection is expected since a civil servant retirement benefit can only be described as 'infinitesimal' compared

to what 'retiring' legislators, who may still find their way back into the political system, receive. The news of the legislators' benefit even came at the time the civil servants were asking for salary increment.

Our interest in this cartoon is the lexicalization of the expression, 'retirement benefit' to conceptualize the legislators' severance allowance. The lexeme is ordinarily used to refer to the financial benefit that accrues to a civil servant after a meritorious service. The legislators' national service is indeed meritorious, but retirement is nothing to describe their leaving office. In fact, the Nigerian constitution allows election into the National Assembly as many times as possible, a development that makes some individuals spend more than twenty years in the Assembly. While the benefit given to a civil servant is not as 'beneficial' as it should be, owing to its 'meagerness', the one given to a 'retiring' legislator is more than 'beneficial' since the entire package outweighs the pension of a civil servant with longer years of service.

Nevertheless, the cartoonist has taken a lexeme from the semantic field of the civil service to capture a similar phenomenon in the semantic field of government. He simply takes a swipe at the 'real' contents of the benefits given to a civil servant and a 'retiring' legislator, displayed by the 'smallness' and the 'bigness' of the sacks respectively carried by the civil

servant and the legislator in the cartoon. The implication of taking a lexeme from the civil service semantic field to describe another field is simply to suggest a misplacement of ‘undue’ honor given to the Nigerian legislators while the civil servants are poorly remunerated. What is called benefit in respect of the legislators’ ‘pension’ is not more than unjustifiably enriching them further while the real machinery for the implementation of the government policies is perpetually kept in penury.

Reconceptualization

As the term suggests, reconceptualization simply involves context re-appropriation: lexemes that

are common with certain contexts are used with the images that correspond with those contexts while the real message points to a different context. This, therefore, indicates that the lexemes have different meanings due to their reconceptualization. *Taste, seasoning, delicious* and *oil*, in Figure 3 below, all belong to the semantic field of cooking/meal; the immediate physical context provided in the cartoon corresponds to this. There is a big pot and a cooking gas with sauce items by the side. Specifically, the lexical items that have been recontextualized in the cartoon are: oil and gold. It is their reconceptualization that would affect the meaning of *taste* and *seasoning* as the following shows.

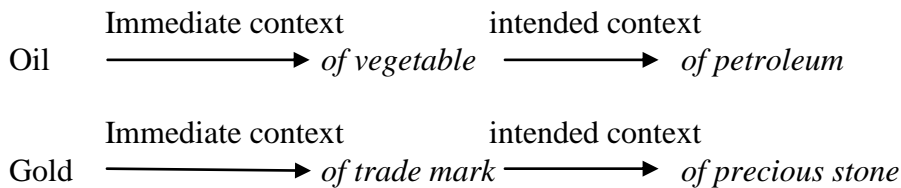


Figure 3
Comic Political Cartoon 3



The context provided in Figure 3 is that of a kitchen, where two chefs cook food. One of the chefs is seen adding oil to the food, and at the same time asking the other how the taste looks like. In response, the second chef asks him to add more oil, and not to add gold seasoning at all.

The process of reconceptualization in the above cartoon involves two items. One has to do with a homonymous lexical item,

‘oil’, whose possible meaning is used in one context while actually referring to its other meaning (of another context). The second has to do with a neologistic trademark (**of a kind of seasoning**), ‘gold’, which is expected to have its cognitive meaning **but** a different context.

The deep meaning of this cartoon when placed in its appropriate context, especially the time of **publication** of the cartoon, will show that ‘oil’ and ‘gold’ do not have the meaning presented in the immediate context. In fact, the **pot**, named ‘national edikang-ikong’, is a metaphorical reference to the Nigeria’s national treasury, which is virtually solely funded by crude oil. Crude oil is found in abundance in the South-South region of the country, a region that appears to have been neglected by successive governments. While crude oil is the major (if not the only) mineral resource exploited by the government, the proceeds of which is shared among all the thirty-six states that make up the country and the federal capital territory, gold, another important mineral resource found in abundance in northern Nigeria, appears to have been abandoned so that only the locals (and maybe other interested individuals) mine it. The question is: why does the Nigerian

government own crude mine (found in one part of the country) but not gold mine (found in another part of the country) in spite of the significance of both to the economy?

Over lexicalization in Nigeria’s Comic Political Cartoons

Two processes, de-emotionalization and disjointing, are involved in the over-lexicalization technique employed by Nigerian cartoonists. These processes are examined below.

De-emotionalization

De-emotionalization refers to the process of expressing a feeling such as frustration, despair and disillusionment without making this obvious. In the process, situations that suggest this feeling are simply presented so that the reader is left to draw a conclusion. This makes an emotive message to be perceived factual since it is the reader that makes the judgment. Thus, instead of a language user to clearly presents his/her evaluation about a situation, he/she rather over lexicalizes via de-emotionalization.

Over wording of messages, otherwise known as over lexicalization, in Nigerian comic political cartoons is sometimes the

cartoonist's method of stating his/her position on an issue without attaching any form of emotion. In doing this, information becomes over-worded giving the reader the opportunity of drawing the conclusion him/herself. Although the over-wordiness provides a kind of information, the real information is expected to be inferred by considering the implication of the surface message.

Figure 4

Comic Political Cartoons 4

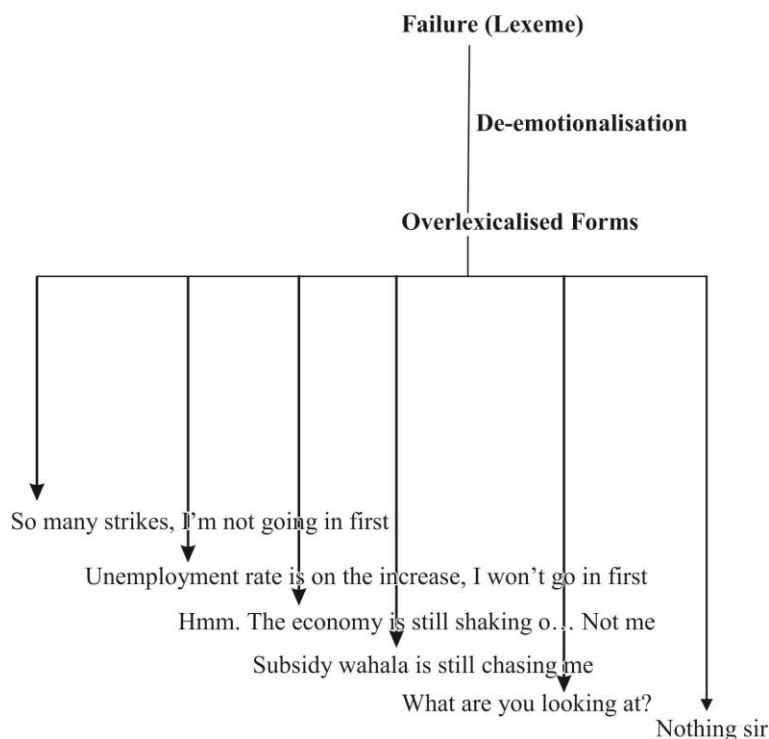


The image above is an enactment of President Buhari's

directive to his cabinet to submit reports/handover notes of their ministries on or before a stipulated date. On the general perception of the Nigerian populace about the performance of many of the ministries, the cartoon presents the ministers' anxiety and fear regarding the submission. Thus, all the human images in the cartoon represent the faces of a number of President Buhari's ministers. Each of these (presented) ministers presents what appears to be the low point of his/her leadership (perhaps there is no high point at all) apart from the last who, apparently, has no report whatsoever to present. Although the presentation of their low point appears to be a justification of their not-so-good performance, the discourse implication is outright failure. The failure of those ministers also, by extension, determines the President's failure in those ministries. A careful reader understands this from the over lexicalization of the message. Over lexicalization technique is employed so that the cartoonist's position is indirectly presented even though the readers are left to determine this.

Figure 5

Overlexicalising via De-emotionalisation



Each of the items in Figure 5 signifies an excuse for failure, and this suggests why the ministers are afraid of going into the president's office for submission of their reports. Indeed, if the ministers' high point performance outweighs their low performance, they would have flagged it. Since this is contrary to reality, instead of designating the government as 'failure', what the cartoonist does is simply to present the low point of each of the ministers so that the readers can figure out the message.

Disjointing

This is a situation where lexemes are not linked, or appear to be isolated from one another. In other words, the lexemes appear as if they are not in the same construction. However, it is expected that all the individual lexemes would have to be pieced together by the reader in arriving at the message of the cartoonist. Put differently, in disjointing, lexical items, phrases or clauses apparently related to one single experience are disjointed. Thus,

rather than present an experience or a piece of information, the cartoonist would spread unconnected linguistic constructions related to that experience or information. This lack of apparent (linguistic) link between them rather reinforces a strong link between them as the reader is expected to negotiate for the intended message. In Figure 6, for instance, there is no apparently stated direct

relationship between the lexemes, *FG*, *LG funds*, *GOV* and *STATE ALLOCATIONS*, which the cartoonist used in reporting the reaction to the abolition of state and local governments' joint account. An audience with the adequate background of Nigerian political development would need to find a cyclical relationship between the lexemes in order to arrive at the main message as the following diagram shows.

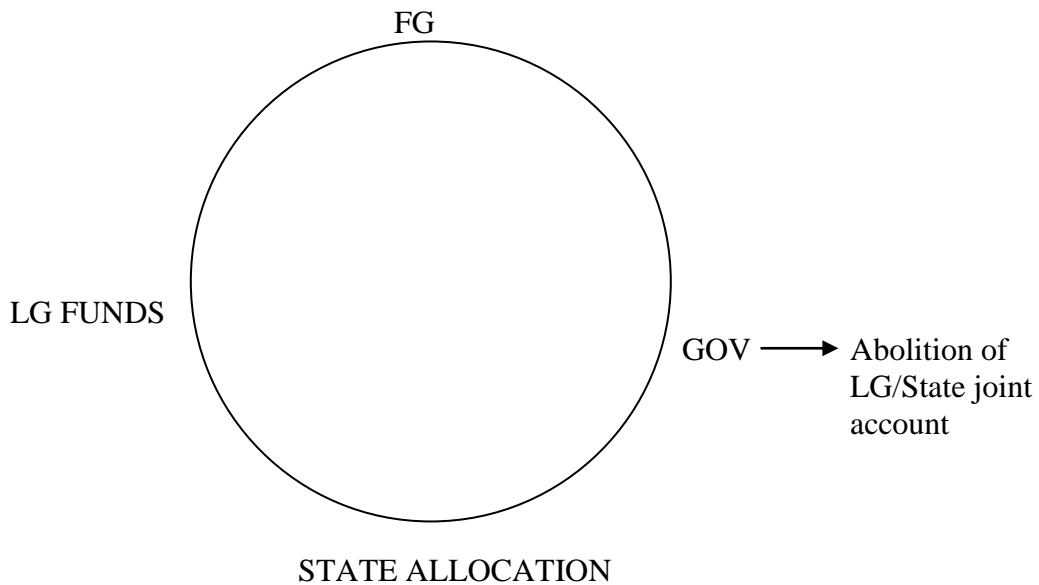


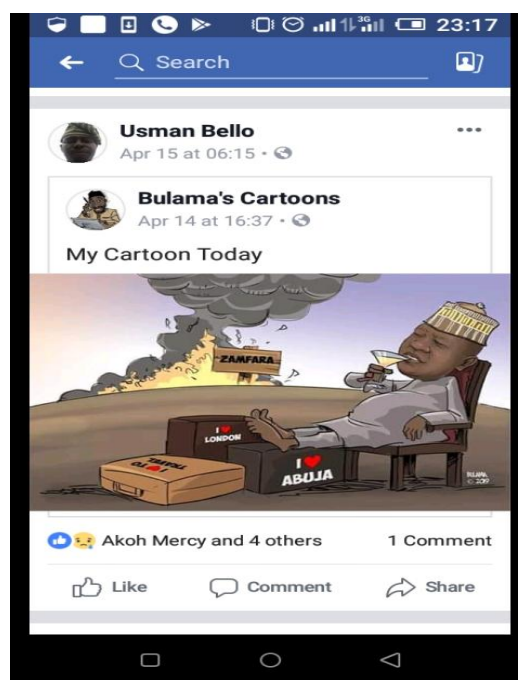
Figure 6
Comic Political Cartoon 5



Figure 6 demonstrates the misunderstanding that arises between the three tiers of Nigerian government (federal, state and local governments) regarding the abolition of joint accounts between state and local governments. There are strong insinuations that the so-called joint account between the two tiers largely results in the impoverishment of the latter. As Figure 6 shows, the relationship between the federal government (FG), the state government (Gov) and the local government (LG) is implicitly stated. The sizes of the sacks held by the state and local governments indicate the wide disparity in the allocated funds to them. Despite this, the state government resists the planned

separation of accounts while the federal government maintains its position. Indeed, the individual expressions employed by the cartoonist in the image have presented the information in a disjointed form. A similar cartoon that exemplifies a case of disjointing is presented below.

Figure 7
Comic Political Cartoons 6



In Figure 7, the immediate past Governor of Zamfara State, one of the troubled states in Nigeria, is presented having refreshment in a quite relaxed atmosphere while his state is wildly burning. Apparently, his legs are placed on what looks like cartons, by the sides of which the expressions, 'I love Abuja', 'I love London' and 'I love to travel' are inscribed. Although

'I love to travel' may be related to 'I love London' and 'I love Abuja', there is no way we can immediately relate 'Zamfara' to these expressions. The lexeme, 'Zamfara', has, therefore, been disjointed from the rest of expressions. If all the expressions are pulled together with the discourse background, what anyone that is conversant with the Nigerian political development would decipher is that the governor globetrots rather than focus on the administration of his state so that he would address the security challenges there. It would also be understood that the trouble in his state did not deter him from enjoying himself. This smacks of nonchalance from the governor. There is nothing in the expressions that directly suggest this information. This is the effect that disjointing is capable of making.

Discussion and Conclusions

From the foregoing, we can find that political cartoons are carefully presented in a way that somehow absolves the cartoonists from prejudice even when the damning or satirized situations are simply from the cartoonists' perspectives. This article has, therefore, responded to the three research questions earlier raised. In response to the first question, 'how is the meaning of lexemes constructed in the Nigerian political cartoons on Facebook?', I have shown that lexemes are lexicalized through disrobing, reconceptualization and reconceptualization. Lexemes are,

sometimes, disrobed of their real meaning at the surface level so that the context returns the disrobed meaning to them at the deep level. While in reconceptualization, concepts belonging to one field are used to describe another due to their semantic proximity, in reconceptualization, one context is re-appropriated for another in determining the meaning of a particular lexeme. Similarly, over lexicalization often features in two forms: de-emotionalization, which allows a cartoonist to present his/her position about a development without an apparently attached emotion, and disjointing, which has to do with de-linking of lexemes, phrases, clauses or sentences so that the reader links them up within the discourse context.

On why meaning is so constructed through the above processes, we find that cartoonists deploy their linguistic dexterity in order to present their position as being objective, factual or correct. This is so because the positions are not directly stated, but rather are meant to be deduced or understood by the reader. On the implication of that manner of construction, we find that Nigerian political cartoons rely not only on the multimodal features for their understanding but also on the contextual knowledge of the political development in the country. This confirms Gunther Kress' (2010) and Theo Van Leeuwen (2011) claim that all participants in a communicative event share similar goals and, therefore, require full access to the

factors that would make the event successful. Contrary to Gulderman's (2000) assertion that over lexicalization often leads to "a sense of over completeness", in Nigerian political cartoons, this is not the case. Particularly via de-emotionalization, cartoonists often resort to over lexicalization in their bid to make their constructed opinions devoid of emotion so that there would not be the possibility of "under-understanding" or "over-understanding" of their perception. Beyond the findings of Oluremi and Ajepe (2016), this study has shown that Nigerian cartoonists adopt lexicalization via disrobing, re-contextualization and reconceptualization, and over lexicalization via de-emotionalization and disjointing as linguistic techniques in constructing their opinions over political developments in the country. Deconstructing these techniques is instrumental to gaining access to the intended message of the cartoonists.

This study has been narrowed down to lexicalization and over lexicalization in Facebook political cartoon discourse in Nigeria. There may be need for future researchers to examine the deployment of these two techniques to other forms of cartoons or even other segments of Facebook. This can reveal the extent to which these phenomena are regularly used across genres. Such studies would, therefore, contribute to the general linguistic features of Facebook discourse.

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