The Pragmatics of Linguistic Creativity in Nigeria's 2023 Elections Campaign Discourse

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Abstract: Elections in Nigeria, as is also obtainable in other countries of the world are characterized by a unique use of linguistic creativity and language codification during campaigns. This is made possible by the different campaign mechanisms employed by different political bodies to market their candidates and as well, de-market candidates of rival political parties. The campaigns preceding the 2023 general elections in Nigeria provide us with a set of unique and creatively inspired texts. The main objective of this study is to understudy the socio-pragmatic content of these texts which manifest mostly as neologisms. The data for this study were elicited using ethnographic approaches and were descriptively analyzed using the principles of post-colonial pragmatics by Anchimbe and Janney (2011,) and Stalnaker's (2002) common ground notion. Findings indicate that although some of the neologisms used in the 2023 general elections were completely new, some were recycled from previous electioneering periods. The neologisms were basically employed as means of showing intra party and inter party or group identities.

Keywords: Common Ground Theory, 2023 Elections, Neologisms, Political Language, Post-Colonial Pragmatics

1. Introduction

One major characteristic of language is that it is a dynamic means of communication in every human society. People across different speech communities express themselves using language, and to be able to capture new activities and events around them, they employ different linguistic means of creating new words or expressions to communicate their feelings, ideas, and emotions. The creative linguistic mechanisms include loaning, clipping, blending, affixation, compounding, neologisms and coinages. Language offers its users an array of linguistic possibilities from which they might select for the purpose of successfully conveying their intentions. These decisions are unique and recognizable from a certain language user's style. For political parties and political actors especially in Nigeria, neologisms are employed to convince and sway the support of the electorates.

Rey (1995 p.77) describes neologism as "a unit of the lexicon, a word element or phrase whose meaning, or whose signifier-signified relationship, presupposing an effective function in a specific model of communication". Neologisms are more common in rapidly changing societies and in contexts where information spreads quickly and easily. "Neologisms represent the dynamic nature of language, as people evolve new ideas, inventions, developments in science, technology, politics, globalization and other fields of endeavours" (Ezeifeka, 2018 p.3). Neologisms are products of linguistic creativity and wordplay. They are indispensable tools in framing the languages used during political campaigns. Zailani (2019) assent to the existence of two types of coinages- chorus and phantom. "Chorus coinage is where a word or phrase pops into political language without recoverable coiner while the Phantom is where a coinage enters the language by osmosis" (Zailani 2019, p. 299). Though some words and phrases have been in the lexicon, by the coming of modern politics, it pops into political discourse and took several interpretations. The terms and phrases formed a political language that electorates had to reckon with because of the strong political culture of the populace.

According to Patrick et al. (2022, p. 114), "the Nigerian political landscape is fraught with dynamics in style of political speech presentation. every politician uses language in a style that helps him to convey a particular

bias to the electorate and also, to reflect a sense of responsibility". The authors also opine that politicians use persuasive language to elicit *empathy* from potential voters. Some political language use may be are propagandistic in nature, others are purely stylistic and persuasive. The focus of this study is on the socio-pragmatic features of the various neologisms used in political campaigns during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The goal of the paper is to increase understanding of the dynamics of political communication, especially the way political actors use neologisms to "deceive, gain advantage or simplify politics" (Mensah et al. 2022, p. 63).

Wilson (1990, p.4) restricts the concept of political discourse to "the real-world linguistic activities of practicing politicians", which was corroborated by (Chilton and Schäffner, 1997; van Dijk, 2015). McNair (1995) believes that political discourse is "purposeful communication about politics". Political language refers to the different human interactions geared towards charting a course for public acceptance of a person or group of persons with political leadership intentions. The major process in any political structure that expresses the use of political language is the political campaign. As affirmed by Zailani (2019), language and political campaign indeed are synonymous, because campaigns cannot be carried out without a language, a persuasive language for that matter. A major feature of political language is the creativity used in framing the issues, to be able to attract and solicit support from political stakeholders and electorates. Campaign, therefore, denotes the activities of an individual or a group in a particular context designed to manipulate the behavior of the electorate". The primary role of political language is to elicit response and preserve relationship among people. In this study, the focus is to analyze linguistic neologisms created specifically for the 2023 elections in Nigeria, and how the different political parties, their candidates and supporters were able to use such neologisms to gain advantage over their opponents.

2. Review of Related Literature

There have been different studies around language used in political campaigns, especially with regard to the linguistic ingenuity and peculiarity in the framing of such languages. Lotfy (2017) focuses on lexical innovation and semantic extension (from 2011 till 2015) in the Egyptian newspapers' opinion articles. Corroborating the view of Baker (2006), Lotfy (2017) opines that since the choice of words in a particular context enables "greater understanding", the linguistic preferences of press language show the social stance of the journalistic response, which mirrors the socio-political stance. The study suggests that the media is a source of coining and producing new lexical items. The study provides insights into the dynamics of linguistic innovations as results of political transformations and revolutions, which prompt journalists to create new lexical terms to characterize these developments. Our study is significantly different from the work of Lotfy (2017) because the latter is particularly concerned with the influence of politics on linguistic innovations used predominantly by journalists, the former underscores the pragmatic import of political neologisms and how they satisfy the communicative needs of the users.

Ezeifeka (2018, p.1) discusses the "influx of ethnically skewed neologisms and nonce expressions in the Nigerian print and online media especially in the present political "change" dispensation". She explains that that the neologisms foreground ethnic identity construction along lines of division and exclusionism with the potential threat to peaceful national dialogue in Nigeria. She also notes that neologisms are new lexical formations that attempt at contesting and subverting the nepotism tendencies allegedly more pronounced among the present political leaders in Nigeria. Her study concludes that instead of "fanning embers of these divisive discourses, political actors and Nigerians as a whole should address fundamental issues of equality, equity, justice and fair play in governance in order to achieve lasting peace in a united, de-ethnicized Nigeria" (Ezeifeka, 2018, p.1). Further, she notes that "the governed should equally "sanitize" their utterances especially in the social media so that constructive criticisms which could help the government understand the needs of the populace are not misconstrued as hate speech" (Ezeifeka, 2018, p.25)

In a similar study, Ofoegbu and Usar (2018) examine lexical creativity of political speeches in Nigeria, The study underscores the fact that language use in political speeches, consciously or unconsciously are embellished with some sort of linguistic creativity. In the study, they use of morphological processes such as clipping, compounding, borrowings, acronyms to create new words from pre-existing words or formation of entirely new words to accommodate the intended meaning the speaker wants to get across to the audience. The authors posit

that there are many reasons why speakers employ lexical creativity in their speeches which include emphasizing salient points**,** expressing an opinion**,** stylistic innovation, and more broadly for effective communication. However the case may be, lexical creativity drives to one aim, which is to communicate to the audience using linguistic tools that will carry the message and drive home the message (Ofoegbu & Usar, 2018). Our study corroborates the fact that lexical creativity such as neologisms are primarily created to communicate salient points, and drive home a message considered valuable by the political group or persons. However, our study particularly aims to provide pragmatic explications on why neologisms used in the 2023 elections in Nigeria were so used.

In another study, Ameer-Hadi and Al-Majdawi (2019) aimed to check the essentiality of neologisms in political speeches and to show the motivations underlying the creation of neologisms that have gained new grounds through political, social, economic and cultural engagements in the society. Their research demonstrates how politics permeates culture and how culture aids politicians in coining political neologisms. They aver that neologisms constitute a larger majority of political idioms and vocabularies. The study concludes that political actors use neologisms to give a hidden message or to refer to the opposite of what they mean. Zailani (2019) in a different study explicates the sociolinguistic perspective of coinage and neologism in the Hausa political context. The study analyses the linguistic issues associated with coinage and neologism arising from Hausa-centric political programmes in the electronic media (radio). The study explains that political activities such as campaigns and propaganda, aired over the radio, give birth to new words/phrases, while already existing words are lexically and semantically expanded to accommodate new meanings. The study further observes and explains how some Hausa lexical items as well as sentences are used in the media (radio) during political programmes to increase the creative potential of the language.

Adeola and Muhyideen (2020) investigate how coinage and slogan are political conduits used strategically by individuals in constructing their identities, especially, in the 2019 general election in Nigeria. They adopted the eclectic approach, where they used the Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical analysis model of CDA, the Clusivity theory and Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. They sampled 24 comments involving coinage and slogan that cut across popular subject areas of politics relating to the Nigerian 2019 general election. They opined that when constructing identity, political actors can employ coinages and slogans as political conduits to delineate and negotiate their political affiliations and dissociations and also to achieve, advocate, alter and (re)build political ideologies. The study also uses "coined slogan to …reflect the notion of "positive self-representation" and "negative other-representation…" (Adeola & Muhyideen, 2020 p.1). The concludes that the linguistic deployment of coinages and slogans is one strategic way political actors construct their identities and reveal their leanings, affiliations, dissociations, similarities and differences. Although our study also briefly reviews the formation of political neologisms, it is however specific on the context of what is said, and what is being understood from what is said.

The above reviewed studies are relevant to the current study because they provide general explanations to the use of coinage and neologism in political discourses in Nigeria.

3. Theoretical Frameworks

This work is situated in the socio-pragmatics sub field of Linguistics. According to Fatimayin (2021, p.2), "socio-pragmatics entails the appropriate usage and selection of language in accordance with context and the ability to understand the social conventions that govern communication". "As an aspect of sociolinguistics, socio-pragmatics borders on the ability to use language appropriately to convey messages while observing the social and cultural conventions guiding such use in a particular speech community" (Ekwelibe, 2015, p.89).

Politicians and electorates use coinage and neologisms to express political ideologies and identities, and to indicate their political affiliations. The socio-political domain and current political activities and context to a large extent, influences the structure and the interpretation of the meaning of the coinage and neologism. Knowledge of socio-pragmatics therefore enables one to interpret not only the literal meaning of an utterance but also the meanings that derive from the norms of formality and politeness that exist in the society where the language is used as well as the unstated meanings that derive from the shared previous knowledge of the speaker and hearer and the situation in which the utterances are used. To properly analyse the data in this study, the researchers

adopt Anchimbe & Janney's Post-colonial Pragmatics and the common ground theory by Stalnaker to explicate the socio-pragmatic dynamics of the neologism used in the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria.

According to Anchimbe and Janney (2011), "postcolonial pragmatics studies all manifestations of discourse in postcolonial contexts (spoken, printed, audiovisual, internet, etc.) in which interlocutors' behavior is influenced by, or explainable by reference to, transfers of pragmatic assumptions, expectations, or strategies from one ethnic, cultural, or lingual frame of reference to another. These include, but are not limited to, studies of influences of indigenous pragmatic practices on European language use and vice-versa. Postcolonial pragmatics takes intermixed languages and communicative practices as its point of departure, investigating different forms, functions, and effects of hybridic discourse in postcolonial speech contexts" (p.1451).

It is based on the experiences of postcolonial language users whose identities, relationships, living situations, communication needs, and social perceptions and expectations have historically been shaped by the complex social environments into which they were born. It aims to provide an understandable explanation of hybridic postcolonial pragmatic practices within the societies in which they are practiced.

Postcolonial speech communities, like Nigeria, are characterized by extreme ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity and by social, economic, and political inequities and tensions exacerbated by their colonial histories. For Nigeria, some believe that the 1914 amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by the British colonialists brought together into an entity, diverse linguistic, cultural and ethnic nationalities, albeit in what is sometimes referred to as a *forceful marriage.* The ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heterogeneity of the Nigerian state is reflected in numerous ways in everyday communication. Western communication patterns, which were imposed by colonial decree into these multilingual, multiethnic communities (and further supported by the federal constitution of Nigeria, which recognizes English as the official language of government and business with three Nigerian languages assuming the co-official status), have mingled with traditional aboriginal ways of communicating in many different ways. through language education, institutionalized European official languages, and media influences.

Robert Stalnaker (2002) describes the notion of the common ground of a conversation as a body of information shared among participants in a conversation. In the first instance, Stalnaker (1974) proposed that these were the propositions participants "mutually assume that they take for granted". But in more recent research, Stalnaker (2022) has elaborated this idea, arguing that the attitudes which determine the common ground have the "iterative" structure of common belief, where a group commonly believes a proposition just in case all believe it, all believe that all believe it, and so on. Allan (2012) notes that common ground can also be referred to as common knowledge, mutual knowledge, shared knowledge, assumed familiarity, and presumed background information. Common ground is dynamic. According to Diedrichsen (2022), the notion of common ground entails that prior to a conversation, mutually shared knowledge is available to interlocutors by virtue of the situational contexts or a shared cultural background. This shared knowledge base may not be fully available prior to the exchange because the interlocutors tend to maintain and adhere to their individual knowledge, but it is established "dynamically and interactively in the course of the conversation" (Diedrichsen, 2022, p.245). Post colonial pragmatics and common ground theory are pivotal to discussing neologisms in the 2023 elections in Nigeria because they provide a background to understanding the infiltrations of new lexemes into the political vocabulary of the Nigerian political sphere, as well as the common belief shared by interlocutors during interactions.

4. Research Methodology

This section explains the approaches that were adopted in collecting data for the research. The study utilizes qualitative sociolinguistic methods of data collection that include the use of oral (informal) interviews, internet social media posts and participant observations since it is concerned with language use in a political context. Another method of data collection used in this research is netnography- an ethnographic system of eliciting data from the internet. Netnography is typically online communication, but also incorporates such multimedia communication as video, audio, and pictures. "Netnography does not exclude body language and tone of voice..its data is useful in examining free social behavior of people on the net..the key is that the communicative behavior here is free" (Patrick & Emezue, 2021 p.156). The netnographic approach was used in this study because

electorates used more of the neologisms during social media conversations. Other sources of data for this study are campaign posters, newspapers, published/printed speeches of candidates of political parties and interviews. The social media posts used as data in this study are gotten from twitter. Twitter was chosen because of the traffic it attracts and the wide-spread usership of the social media platform.

The researchers also conducted random interviews to elicit the meanings people associate with the neologisms, and to verify if they understood the meanings intended by the users. 65 respondents were recruited for this research. The researchers divided the participants into 10 focused groups of 5 members each. The participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in the research, their use of the social media, and their ability to identify and interpret the usage of the different neologisms used during the 2023 elections. The demographic features of the respondents are recorded thus; the age range of the respondents varied between 16 and 63 years. 40 (61.5%) respondents are undergraduates of universities, 15 (23.1%) are graduates who have either masters degrees or Ph.Ds, and 10 (15.4%) of the respondents are secondary school students. 40 (61.5%) of the respondents are Christians, 21 (32.3%) are Muslims, while 4 (6.2%) stated that they are African traditional worshippers. In terms of gender, 30 (46.2%) of the respondents are females, while 35 (53.8%) are males. The occupational activities of the respondents also varied. 50 (76.9%) are students, 10 (15.4%) are civil servants, while 5 (7.7%) are business people/ traders. These focused group discussions aided the researchers to situate the generally acceptable meaning of each neologism, their usage, and extralinguistic underpinning the necessitated their meaning. The data were analysed using the content analysis method and applying the principles of socio-pragmatics, post-colonial pragmatics and the common ground theory.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

In the following analysis, we analyse the formation of the political neologisms created and used during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The neologisms used during the elections exhibit high degree of innovation which results in the creation of new lexical items or the new meaning for existing lexical items. Subsequently, we examine the general use of neologisms among electorates and political party supporters.

In the table below, the researchers present a table of the neologisms used in the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria, their sources (words, activities or contexts from which they were formed), and their meaning/usage (application to the 2023 political discourse). Items 18 – 22 on the table were sourced from the final report of European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria, 2023, while items 1-17 are data aggregated from the social media messages, oral interviews, and focused group discussions carried out by the researchers.

Table 1. Neologisms used in the 2023 Presidential Elections in Nigeria

S/N	Neologism	Meaning/ Usage
1	BAT	Acronym used to refer to the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress)
2	Obi-dients/OBIdients/ obified	Adherents/believers/followers of the political ideology of Peter Obi
3	BATified / BATists	Adherents/believers/followers of the political ideology of Bola Ahmed Tinubu
4	Atikulateds/ Atikulates/ Atikulators	Adherents/believers/followers of the political ideology of Atiku Abubakar
5	Kwankwasiyya	Adherents/believers/followers of the political ideology of Rabiu Kwankwaso, the presidential candidate of the NNPP.
6	Jagabandits / JagaGangsters	Negatively used by opponents to refer to Adherents/believers/followers of the political ideology of Bola Ahmed Tinubu (radicalism)

7	Obidiots,	This is used to refer to Labour Party/ Obi supporters by the rival party supporters
8	YUSful	Also used to refer to followers of the political ideology of Yusuf Datti-Ahmed
9	Kwankwasites	Used by opponents to refer to people who believe in the political ideology of Rabiu Kwankwaso
10	thief-nubu/ tifnubu	Used by opponents of the APC/ Non-supporters of to refer to Tinubu
11	Corn-fident	Used by opponents to mock followers of BAT
12	OBItuary	used by opponents of the OBI-dient movement to refer to the impossibility of the actualization of the OBI-dient aspirations
13	obi-ligation/ OBIligation	Used as a call to responsibility of the members/ followers of Peter Obi
14	Possible	used to affirm that the political aspirations of Peter Obi is achievable
15	Jagaban	Used to refer to Bola Ahmed Tinubu
16	Emilokan	Used by BATists to lay claim to power. Also used as sarcasm by opponents to refer to the greed and desperation of BAT
17	Agbado	Used in a condescending manner by members of other political parties to refer to the ideology of Bola Ahmed Tinubu
18	PDPigs	Used to refer to Supporters of the PDP party by APC supporters.
19	Aboki	Used to refer to northerners in a condescending manner by other ethnic tribes
20	BokoHaram	A condescending reference to the people of the north, who are mostly Hausa
21	Athiefku	A term used to refer to PDP Presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar. With major reference to the "Atiku Gate Scandal" by APC supporters.
22	Obingo	This is used to refer to Labour Party/ Obi supporters by the PDP party supporters

5.1 Formation of Neologisms

As earlier mentioned, neologisms are products of linguistic ingenuity. They do not just occur, they are formed from pre-existing, or newly introduced lexical items. In this section, we shall summarily give an account on the formation of neologisms that have dominated the political landscape during the 2023 electioneering campaigns in Nigeria. Investigating the structure of neologisms is important because it provides a cue to the reader of the social construct that informs the formation and usage of the neologisms.

Lexical borrowing was one of the linguistic processes that was employed in crafting the neologisms used in the 2023 elections. lexical borrowing simply means the process or taking words from one or more languages to fit into the vocabulary of another language. Morphologists regard borrowing as one of the commonest ways of creating new words in human language. The different forms of borrowing adopted in the neologisms used in the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria are loan-word, loan-blend and calque or loan-translation. *Emilokan, Jagaban, Agbado, Aboki, BokoHaram* are examples of neologisms that were loaned from different Nigerian indigenous languages, into the 2023 lingo. In the table above, some examples of neologisms presented as data in this study, which are products of loan-blend. A loan-blend is made up of different parts from different words of different languages, for example, *Athiefku, Obingo, Thiefnubu, Jagabandits, Jagaganster, Yusful,* etc.

Another method adopted in the formation of neologisms in the 2023 election discourse is the morphological process of acronymization. The major neologisms found that are peculiar and unique to the 2023 election are BAT- from Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the initials of the full name the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress, and PO- Peter Obi, the initials of the name of the presidential candidate of the Labour Party. From this study, the acronym BAT was used sometimes without the affixation of other lexical elements. But the PO was always required an affix to be used i.e., it was not used on its own.

PO + - *ssible* = POssible (used to affirm that the political aspirations of Peter Obi is achievable).

Other acronyms used that are unique to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria are; BVAS (Bimodal Voter Accreditation System) and IREV (INEC Result Viewing Portal). This study shows that though these acronyms are peculiar to the 2023 elections, they do not portend any pragmatic value.

Affixation is another word formation process evidently used in forming neologisms that are unique to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria eg. Atiku + *lated* = atikulted, BAT + *fied* = BATified and Yusuf + *ful* = YUSful.

5.2 Recycled Neologisms

Prior to the 2023 elections in Nigeria, some of these neologisms have been in active use. They were used in the 2019 elections where some of the presidential candidates also ran for elections. Prominent amongst them are *Atikulated* and *obedient.* As at the 2019 elections, Peter Obi was a running mate to Atiku Abubakar, who was the presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party. Their campaign slogan was *obediently atikulated.* But they contested for the 2023 elections under different parties as presidential candidates, thereby giving rise to the separation of the neologism to have *obidients* separate from *Atikulated*. However, new neologisms entered into the political space by the entrants of new presidential candidates like Bola Ahmed Tinubu. His political aspiration was the beginning of the use of *bat, batify, batist, etc.* as a political neologism. Also, *kwankwasiyya* is another neologism that has been in use prior to the 2023 elections. This owes to the fact that Rabiu Kwankwaso, the Presidential Candidate of the NNPP had previously contested for the presidential position in the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

5.3 Ethno-sensitive Neologisms

The political space in Nigeria, especially in the 2023 elections was divided along ethnic, linguistic and tribal divides. An appreciable number of the electorates were drawn and swayed by sentiments which have been championed by different ethno-linguistic cry for recognition and emancipation from marginalization. Some of the neologisms with ethnosensitive biases were employed positively, while others were employed negatively. The ones employed positively were used to garner support and appeal to the members of an ethnic group while the ones used negatively were used in a demeaning and stereotypically negative intention, to project a negative social and political face of their opponents. For example, the following neologisms presented in this study have ethno-sensitive undertones.

5.3.1 Kwankwasiyya

On the formation of *kwankwasiyya,* Mohamed (2015 p.237) explains that *−iyya* is a derivative suffix that can denote a theory, philosophy, movement, belief or school of thought. *Naasiriyya −* the political movement based on the ideas and approach of the late Egyptian leader *Jamal Abdu-l-Nasir* is an example that validates the ground on which the neologism *kwankwasiyya* is formed. *Kwankwasiyya* being formed from the affixation of an Arabic siffix *-iyya* will quickly make more meaning to the Hausa-fulani ethnic group from which the neologism was formed because they share the same common knowledge on the meaning of *-iyya,* compared to members of other indigenous ethnic group in Nigeria, who may not even be able to explain the word.

5.3.2 Emilokan

`The neologism *emilokan* found its way into the 2023 Nigerian political lingo as a result of the notion held and propagated by Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the presidential candidate of the APC, that it was his turn to rule as

president, having supported northern presidency for eight years. The Yoruba expression *emilokan* is translated to mean *it is my turn*. It was first used in the 2023 political discourse by BAT during a political campaign to members of his political party in Abeokuta, Ogun state (Odusanya, 2022). Worthy of note in the use of the expression *emilokan* is the fact that the audience/listeners share the same linguistic and social knowledge base with the speaker, therefore providing a common ground for them to understand the message and intended meaning of the speaker. Using the expression in a speech community other than the Yoruba portends a case of disinformation because it can only be interpreted, and properly understood by the Yoruba.

5.3.3 BokoHaram

The word *BokoHaram* is not a relatively new word in the Nigeria speech community. It is translated as 'western education is forbidden'. Overtime it has been used as a referent for the terrorist group that champion the proliferation of western education in the Northern part if Nigeria. However, in the 2023 elections, we observe that the word was used to refer to Hausas or natives of the northern part of Nigeria. The use of this neologism is derogatory, and is used by members of the public to cast a negative social face of the northerners. This is also used as a negative naming strategy for presidential candidates that are from the northern part of thte country.

5.3.4 Jagaban

Contrary to believe of many Nigerian that the name *jagaban* was randomly picked and given to Tinubu because of his fame, influence, and political affluence, Kperogi (2023) states that the word *Jagaban* can be traced to the title "*Jagaban Borgu*" or the "*Jagaba of Borgu*" means the Chief Warrior of Borgu, which was conferred on President Tinubu in February 2006 by the late Emir of Borgu, Alhaji Haliru Dantoro who was in New Bussa and reigned between 2002 to 2015. Kperogi (2023) however explains that the neologism is not a Borgu word, but an hausa word 'jagaba" which means chief warrior, warlord, frontrunner, or simply a brave man. "It's derived from "*ja*," which means 'pull' and "*gaba*," which means 'front'. A *jagaba* is, therefore, someone who leads from the front, which is another way of describing a war commander" (Kperogi, 2023). Noting this, Ishola (2024) notes that there and then, people heard of the title but couldn't pronounce it correctly because of the language and accent barrier. "Ever since the coronation, Tinubu has been popularly referred to as "Jagaban" instead of "Ja a gabar" by his fans or followers" (Ishola, 2024).

It is worthy of note that the neologism Jagaban is not new to the Nigerian sociopolitical space. It has been variously by people to refer to their leaders and superiors. However, in the 2023 elections, this neologism is positively used by supporters of the presidential candidate of the APC (All Progressives Party), Bola Ahmed Tinubu to attribute to his power, superiority and influence, and his ability to get things done regardless of the circumstances. This usage is predicated upon the common knowledge shared by members of the public about the meaning of the word, *Jagaban.*

5.3.5 Aboki

In the Nigerian linguistic space, there are some ethnic labels or stereotypes used by members of different ethnic groups to refer to other ethnic groups. *Aboki* is one of such stereotypical labels. Although the word is translated to mean 'friend' in Hausa language, it has been often used within the Nigerian context as a derogatory nickname to describe someone who behaves stupidly, clumsily and sometimes annoyingly in a given situation. For example, someone once crossed the road absent-mindedly and then a taxi driver described him in Nigerian Pidgin as follows: "Abeg, comot for road. You be typical aboki," meaning: "Please, leave the road, you (are a) typical *aboki* (idiot)" (Ugwu & Ekundayo 2013, p.12). The use of *Aboki* in the 2023 political discourse takes it bearing and derives it meaning from the commonly shared stereotypical use of *aboki* to mean stupid, and this is used by people of other ethnic groups to refer to northerners in the 2023 election. This was used to refer to both Atiku Abubakar of the PDP and Rabiu Kwankwaso if the NNPP because they are both northerners who contested for the 2023 elections.

5.4 Derogatory neologisms

The neologisms presented in this section are neologisms crafted by opponents of the different political ideologies, parties and candidates. Some of them portend a derogatory presentation of the political ideologies, while some portend a derogatory depiction of the candidates, their parties or their supporters.

5.4.1 Kwankwasites

We observe also that the use of *kwankwasiyya* is positively motivated by members or supporters of the presidential ideology and aspiration of Rabiu Kwaankwaso, the, the presidential candidate of the NNPP (New Nigeria's Peoples Party). However, opponents of the Kwankwaso aspiration adopted the use of a negative neologism to de-market the positive socio-political face foregrounded by the supporters of the NNPP. This introduced the formation and use of the neologism *kwankwasites. Kwankwasites* is formed from the blending of two loaned words, *Kwankwaso* and *Parasites*. The neologism is used by opponents to refer to the the supporters of the 'kwankwaso' presidential aspiration as parasites who want to leech on the economic resource of the country. The user intends to pass the message across to the supporters of the NNPP with the common knowledge shared by both parties that parasites are no good organisms.

5.4.2 Jagabandits / Jagagansters

The use of *Jagabandits* and *Jagagangsters* is foregrounded on the premise that the hearer shares the interlocutor's knowledge of the negative denotation of the words *bandits* and *gangster* to mean 'a member of a violent criminal group'. The average Nigerian is aware of the rising insecurity in the country, occasioned by the activities of armed violent groups such as herdsmen, bokoharam, etc., often referred to as bandits on the media. The prior knowledge of what a bandit or gangster is provides the common ground on which the interlocutor and the encoder understand the usage of the neologism. Taking a close look at the neologisms, the words *gangster* and *bandit* are suffixed to *Jaga-* a clipped form of the name *Jagaban-* used to refer to the presidential candidate of the APC. This further narrows down the meaning deducible from the neologisms to mean pragmatically, that the interlocutor is referring to anybody supporting the presidential bid of Bola Ahmed Tinubu as a gangster or a bandit.

5.4.3 Thiefnubu / Tifnubu

Thiefnubu is formed by loan-blending the English word *thief* with the Surname name of the presidential candidate of the APC, Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This neologism is used to refer to Tinubu, with reference to him being a drug lord (EUEOM, 2023, p. 89). The neologism is used by the interlocutors, and as well understood by the public from the shared knowledge they have, of the word, thief- which means one who steals. Prefixing thief to the name is therefore connotative of the intention of the interlocutor to refer to Tinubu as a thief. *Tifnubu* is the Nigerian pigin variant of *thiefnubu.*

5.4.4 Agbado

Agbado came to being into the political discourse of the 2023 election after a speech delivered by Bola Ahmed Tinubu on March 29 in Kano, on the occasion of hs 69th birthday celebration. He suggested that an effective way to fight unemployment in the country and demobilize bandits in the North was to employ 50 million youths into the military. In his words,

"To recruit from the youths who are unemployed—33 percent are unemployed?" he said followed yet again by an uncomfortably stuporous 12-second silence. "Recruit 50 million youths into the army and errr [indistinct]. Take away from their [i.e. the bandits'] recruitment source. What they will eat— cassava, errr, agbagdo, errr, corn, yam in the afternoon… it is grown here. You create demand and consumption for over five million army of boot camps" (Kperogi, 2021).

The word *agbado* has been used for different comic videos, cartoons and other caricature in the 2023 elections. For the purpose of this article, the researchers point to the fact that *agbado* was used to refer to Tinubu in a condescending manner, and more as a joke that portends negativity, other than positivity. Followers of

Tinubu's political philosophy where therefore labeled the *agbado family.* It is important to note that the words *agbado* is a Yoruba term for corn.

5.4.5 Obidiots / Obingos

Just like other neologisms presented in this section of the article, *Obidiots* and *Obingos* are crafted to portend a derogatory representation of a particular political group in the political discourse of 2023. The both neologisms are derogatory representations of supporters of the political aspirations of Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party. The formation of the neologisms gives insight to their understanding and usage. In *Obidiots,* we find by analysis, that it can be divided into two; 'Ob' from the name 'Obi' and 'idiots'. Idiots is simply a plural form of the noun 'idiot' which means a stupid person. Being used in its plural form, it is used to refer to the supporters of Peter Obi, while when used in its singular form as '*obidiot'*, it is used to refer to Peter Obi as a person, or to the individual supporter. The same analysis can be used to deduce the pragmatic import of the neologism *obingo.* The word bingo in this context derives its meaning from the Nigerian usage of the word to mean a local dog breed, characterized by its dirty and uncultured attitude. Therefore the understanding of what the neologisms mean can be attributed to the common ground knowledge of what *idiot* and *bingo* means in the Nigerian speech community, which is shared between the interlocutor and the receiver of the message

5.4.6 PDPigs

The above neologism is particularly referent to the supporters of Peoples Democratic Party and their presidential candidate in the 2023 elections. The pragmatic value of this neologism is tied to the interpretation of what a pig is. Just as a pigs is regarded as a dirty animal which always goes back to dirty, no mater the clean bath it has been given. The APC supporters used the dirty characteristics of the pig to describe the attitude of Atiku, the presidential candidate of the PDP, who is known to decamp from one party to the other, just so that he can become president. They described PDP as the dirty which he has returned to, having being 'bathed' in APC, where he sought to win the presidential position, but was defeated by Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. Therefore, the pig blended into the party's name is connotative of the act of decamping.

5.4.7 Athiefku

Athiefku is formed by the infixation of the English work '*thief'* in *Atiku.* This neologism is believed to take bearing from the Atiku gate saga, in which Atiku stole money while in office as vice president of the Federal republic between 1999-2007. From our interview, we also found out that some people ascribe the use of thief in the neologism to mean the greed of Atiku, who haven been a former vice-president, still wants to be the president. However, the atiku gate saga is not a common knowledge shared by users of the neologism, as most of them do not even know of such an event taking place. From our study, it is therefore deducible that the neologism gained wide usage and acceptance into the political lingo simply from the users shared knowledge about the meaning of thief attached to the name. Hence, opponents of the PDP, and the Atiku presidential ambition, simply used the neologism negatively to speak or write about Atiku.

5.4.8 Obituary

Borrowed from the English lexicon, obituary which means the notice of someone's death, was used in the 2023 elections with an extended meaning. Like other neologisms studied, the word obituary is seen to have alphabets of the name of one of the presidential candidates in the election- Peter Obi. Taking cue from the above establishes a common ground for the use of the neologism for Peter Obi, and with the common knowledge of the literal meaning of the word obituary, the neologism was used to describe the imminent and impending death of the political ambition of Peter Obi, by his opponents.

5.5 Positive Neologisms

Neologisms considered under this section are one used by the supporters of different political ideologies to present their candidates, political ideology and themselves in a positive light.

5.5.1 Obidients / Obified

These neologisms have been in existence prior to the 2023 election, however, it gained much usage in the just concluded election. Supporters of the political aspiration and ideologies of the Labour Party, Peter Obi, used the name to signify their unflinching support for him. Taking root from the English word 'obedient', which means will to comply with given instruction, or submission to the authority of another, the word was loaned and blended by the removal of 'obe' in obedient and suffixing the surname of the candidate to the remaining 'dient'.

5.5.2 Batified / Batists

The supporters of the APC and Bola Ahmed Tinubu's political ideology referred to themselves as *batists* or members of the *batified family.* This is realized by the suffixation of -ist and -ified to the acronym BAT. These neologisms identified them as adherents of the political party ideologies.

5.5.3 Atikulateds / Atikulators / Atikulates

Using the English word articulate- which means having the ability to speak fluently, the supporters of the PDP presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, were able to loan-blend the word to express their solidarity to the political ideologies of their candidate. Although this neologism has come into the political lingo of Nigeria, our study shows another application of the usage of the neologism to the 2023 political discourse of 2023. It was used to amplify the fluency of speech Atiku has, which is a lacking quality or ability in Tinubu. Therefore, *atikulates* used their neologism as a reminder to their opponents, specifically, the *batists* that their principal lacked the oratorical qualities and fluency of speech.

6. Discussion of Findings

6.1 Neologisms as Naming strategies

Drawing from the data presented, some neologisms elicited as data from the political discourse in this article show that they were used as names for the different political groups, people and ideologies. The use of titles instead of personal names is aimed generally to cope with the complex systems of naming and its relationship to respect, politeness and deference. Although some of these words may be loaned from the English lexicon, their usage as names in this discourse portends a very different meaning which is different and independent of their English meanings. For example, the word "bat" refers to an animal- a nocturnal bird. But when used in the context or discourse of Nigerian politics, especially during the 2023 elections, the speaker or writer is specifically using the name outside the original English meaning, to refer to the presidential candidate of the APC Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This further corroborates that politics as a domain of language usage is dynamic and unique, and as such, requires linguistic creativity. Some of the neologisms, when considered on the surface level can be taken to be wrongly spelt or used eg. *Atikulates, atikulated*, *obidients, etc.* yet, they became relevant and present pragmatic sense when used in the context of political discussions of the Nigerian political space

Few neologisms crafted from the names of vice-presidential candidates such as *YUSful*- (Yusuf Baba Ahmed Datti, the vice-presidential candidate of the Labour Party, and running mate to Peter Gregory Obi), didn't gain much usage and attention as those crafted from the names of presidential candidates.

6.2 Neologisms as Social/collective face

On the usage of neologisms, it is deducible that neologisms used in the 2023 elections is used to show a socio-political collective face which is exemplified in the use of neologisms to depict followership and belief in the

political ideologies of different political parties and individuals. According to Spencer-Oatey and Kotthoff (2009), in explaining what a collective face/social face is; ever that intercultural contexts, people regard themselves as belonging to different social groups and that members through contact and socialization processes, develop family resemblances in their practices beliefs and values. They also explain that the concept of 'family' here is not restricted to the bond created by blood alone but is rather used as an abstract phenomenon to denote any grouping of people which may also be political.

In the 2023 elections in Nigeria, through social media contact electorates were able to build a social and collective face, what the researchers will refer to as a *collective political face*. This political face is exemplified in the use of neologisms to depict followership and belief in the political ideologies of different political parties and individuals. The use of these neologisms as collective political faces to refer to a group/entity is a conscious and joint construct of the members of the group. This aspect of the use of neologisms in the election gave rise to the use of the following examples during different discussions; *Agbado family, Obidient family.* Adding family to the neologism signifies that the user is aware of the fact that the neologism is descriptive of a family face.

In the examples below, we exemplify the conscious use of the neologisms in the social media texts of group of members of the same political ideologies, to refer to their supporters, that belong to the same political persuasions as they do.

Figure 1. Excerpt from X

Figure 2. Excerpt from X

Also, it is observed from data obtained, that the neologisms used by the members of opposite political ideologies to refer to their opponents are also conscious construct used as frames to face shame other groups/ members of differing ideologies. The use of neologisms to establish a social or collective face as seen in this work is corroborates the classical view of Malinowski who opines that the purpose of a speech is to create social bond or sociability rather than to communicate information or ideas.

The major languages adopted in the coinage of neologisms used in the campaigns of the 2023 elections are English, Nigerian Pidgin English, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. This is obvious because of the ethno-linguistic backgrounds of the major presidential candidates. As a multiethnic and multi-lingual society, it is a herculean, if not impossible task to separate the political activities of the presidential candidates and their supporters from their ethnocentric biases, idiosyncrasies and tendencies.

Another important observation the researchers made on the acronymization of Bola Ahmed Tinubu as BAT can be loosely associated to a pattern traceable to the title, POTUS, which is an acronym that stands for President of the United States. The media has adopted this style of acronymization for presidential candidates and presidents of successive governments in Nigeria, for easy reference. For Olusegun Obasanjo, it was OBJ, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as GEJ, and President Muhammadu Buhari as PMB.

The study shows that the contest for political and elective offices is characterized by the use of competitive language as a means of marketing a candidate of a political party and at the same time, de-marketing candidates of other political parties. This is the backdrop upon which the researchers submit that, given that data presented in this article, the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria witnessed more derogatory, negative and abusive neologisms than positive neologisms. The study also shows that, with regards to the 2023 elections in Nigeria, languages used during campaigns are crafted with the aim of creating awareness, affirming solidarity to preferred political ideologies and candidates, and de-marketing the candidates and members of other political parties and their ideologies.

This study affirms the view of Lehrer (2003), who posits that neologisms appear in contexts where their meaning or interpretation is usually obvious, and when it is not obvious, either a definition or explanation is provided. In this study, the neologisms presented show that the given the political context wherein the neologisms were used, their meanings were easily deducible by interlocutors, making it easy for them to entrench a common ground on which texts and social media conversations, as well as in-person discussions were understood.

7. Conclusion and Summary

The study investigated neologisms in the political discourse of the 2023 elections in Nigeria. The study, on a general approach, is hinged on the socio-pragmatics sub category of sociolinguistics. Socio-pragmatics as explained in this study entails the appropriate usage and choice of language in accordance with context and the ability to understand the social conventions that govern communication. Using the principles of Post-colonial Pragmatics, the neologisms retrieved from different social media handles were analyzed, with particular focus on the context of usage of the neologisms and how they are used to show a collective face at an intra and inter family level. The study, adopting the common ground notion exposes that interlocutors and users of the politically motivated neologisms share a prior knowledge of the neologisms used, and as such, they are able to understand the intention of the interlocutor's usage of such neologisms.

This paper concludes that neologisms, just like other linguistic creativity, are motivated by the communication needs of the people as well as the peculiar situations for which language is needed to communicate ideas and feelings. The data studied in this article shows that the neologisms used during the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria are politically and socially motivated along the lines of ethno-centrism and different social class. Hence, they were used as tools to communicate the ideas, feelings, opinion and thoughts of the electorates, and to also show their loyalties to different political ideologies, socio-political family and personalities.

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