ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A Critical Discourse Analysis of *The Guardian*, *The Nation* and The *Daily Trust*'s Reports on The PDP and APC Candidates in 2019 Presidential Election Campaigns in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of how language was used through a careful selection and deployment of lexical items and framing of headlines by journalists in the 2019 Presidential Elections in Nigeria. Often, Presidential Elections in Nigeria especially are a two-horse race characterised by a north-south and Christian/Muslim divide. Since the return to democratic governance of the Fourth Republic in 1999, political parties have been careful to reflect the country's religious plurality in the way political parties field their candidates in terms of the north/south and the Christian/Muslim variables. However, the 2019 Presidential Elections were different because the two contenders: Muhammadu Buhari of the All Peoples' Congress (APC) and his main challenger Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) were both from the northern region. They are of the Fulani ethnic extraction and both are Muslims by religion. Ideology is usually embedded in the language and frames used by news media professionals to produce an ideological prism through which their readers read and interpret texts. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine *The Nation*, *Daily Trust*, and *The Guardian* (the three selected newspapers), using the lens of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the key conceptual explanatory framework for the analyses of the news reports on the 2019 Presidential Elections. This paper argues that the findings from CDA showed *The Nation*'s waves of attacks on Abubakar, while its support for Buhari is unquestionable; the *Daily Trust* showed overwhelming support for Buhari but it disparaged Abubakar; but *The Guardian* appeared more balanced in their reports on both candidates.

Keywords: Newspaper, elections, north-south, CDA, framing.

Introduction

Nigerian politics is very much like Thai wrestling: you kick your opponent with your foot, hit him with your hand on the teeth, and even below the belt. Therefore, elections in Nigeria have been murky and often a do-or-die-affair. Blair's remarks, for example, regarding politics in the United Kingdom sums up the nature of politics in Nigeria: "By and large politicians are an odd mix of rhino hide and super soft tissue. They need the hide just to get through the day, since slings and arrows are constant" (Blair, 2010, p. 240).

Yet, elections in a democratic environment remain, in the views of, the most acceptable process for changing leadership. Nigeria has had four attempts at democratic rule since it achieved political independence from Britain in 1960. Three of such attempts have been shut down by the Nigerian military adventurists' incursion into the country's body polity; not only did they thwart the country's democratic process and growth, but also destroyed most of the political institutions that were in place. This scenario was probably what Nigeria's renowned political scientist, Claude Ake, cited in Maier (2002), had in mind when he said that: "We have essentially relations of raw power in which right tends to be co-existent with power and security depends on the control of power. The struggle for power, then, is everything and is pursued by every means."

Basically, all elections in Nigeria have been fraught with all kinds of irregularities characterised by intimidation, vote-buying, ballot snatching, thuggery, rigging, among a host of many other criminal activities. For instance, it is on record that, the two-third problem between the National Party

of Nigeria (NPN) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), in the aftermath of the 1979 elections in which Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the NPN was declared winner, Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the UPN went to court to challenge the outcome of the elections, claiming that Alhaji Shagari did not secure the two-third majority as enshrined in the country's constitution to be declared winner . Furthermore, Ochonogor and Omego contend that the violence that followed thereafter in Ondo State, for example, between the supporters of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) candidate, the incumbent governor of the state, Chief Michael Ajasin and his political rival in the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Akin Omoboriowo, led to the destructions of lives and property in the state in 1983.

The north-south and Christian/Muslim political divide that exists today in Nigeria is part of the British colonial legacy the country has inherited because the system that the British colonial administrators imposed on their conquered territory differed not only between regions in the same country but also within territories ; Somerville, 2015). Past political leaderships in Nigeria, including the military, were somewhat sensitive to the ethnic and religious pluralities of the country, except for the Military Government of General Muhammadu Buhari in 1984 where his Deputy (Brigadier General Tunde Idiagbon), although a fellow Muslim, was of the Yoruba ethnic group. What the study does seek to do is to appraise the selected newspapers (*Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, *The Nation*) reporting and framing of the 2019 Presidential Campaigns of the two main Presidential Candidates: Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the build-up to the elections.

Herman and Chomsky (2002), in their much-acclaimed book entitled *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, extolled the importance of the mass media as veritable catalysts for communicating varied messages and symbols to the members of the reading or viewing public. They further argued that in climes where the levers of power are concentrated and aggregated in the hands of the state actors, bureaucracy, and other political and power elite, there is no second guessing the fact that the media would only serve the interests of the dominant political elite.

Theoretical Conceptual Framework

This study is rooted in two explanatory conceptual framework, namely critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the news framing theory.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a broad church and it is traditionally a field of study that is interested in the way language is used as a social practice and others. CDA, according to scholars (Titscher *et al*., 2000; Fairclough, 1995b; Wodak, 1996; Richardson, 2007), is guided by these general principles: Firstly, CDA is not enthusiastic in language or language use, as such, but with social problems. It is concerned with language use only insofar as it relates to the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures; Secondly, the notion 'power' in CDA is viewed in relation to such variables like social groups, both as groups and as groups and persons, which in the final analysis comes down to the issues of control based on wealth, social position, education, income, among others (Yusha'u, 2012); Thirdly, Richardson (2007) notes that both society and culture have a symbiotic relationship because society and culture are shaped by discourse; Fourthly, CDA is keen on discovering how ideas, for example, are presented in a text.

However, the interest of this paper is in how language is used by the journalists of *The Guardian*, the *Daily Trust* and *The Nation* newspapers in their framing of the 2019 Presidential Elections. Critical discourse analysis (CDA), as Fairclough (1989) explains, is deployed to analyse the language of the mass media in terms of power and struggle, as well as a site where the language is seen to be explicit. Although, the power of language cannot be ignored, on its own, its value is neutral. It becomes powerful only to the extent it is animated or used

(Wodak, 2001). The words or frames used in the news construction of the headlines by the news media professionals of the selected newspapers are in no way arbitrary. Rather, they are a product of deliberate choices. This is especially so because in Fairclough's analysis of the use of language by *New Labour* in the United Kingdom, for example, it clearly brought to the fore the different ways in which linguistic tools can be deployed to convey a message, by either emphasizing or de-emphasizing some aspects of the message through the use of certain discursive strategies such as the use of rhetoric, hyperbole, litotes, propaganda, presupposition, metaphors, among others (Fairclough, 1995b; Wodak, 2001; Richardson, 2007). This too is in accord with the news framing theory, as enunciated by scholars (Frame, 2013; Entman, 1993). This way of study, as Van Dijk (1993) argues, aims to explain how the use of language enhances understanding of social inequality.

News Framing Theory

The news framing theory is fundamental to this to paper. Scholars have divergent views on what constitutes news framing. For example, McCombs (2004) refers to framing as the process of choosing and emphasising a feature for the news media agenda, that is, cutting and trimming news narratives to shape it as the producer wishes. News media professionals, for example, using framing as a discursive strategy, would frame objects, by placing various degrees of emphasis on the characteristics of a person or object before they are presented to either the reading or viewing public. For Tankard (2010, news framing is the main organising idea for news which provides a context, and further suggests what the issue is by either selecting, emphasising, or excluding as aspect of a news content. Through this process, Tankard states that the news media influence the public on what they should think about. The implication of this, according to Ojebuyi and Ekennia (2013), is that news media professionals and their organisations could manipulate the reader or viewer's cognition or even his or her sense of judgement when reporting on issues of general interest.

Although scholars (Brewer & Gross, 2010; Pfefferbaum & Rosenholtz, 2012) may see and define news framing differently, the most common and acceptable definition of framing is by Robert Entman which, according to him, is to 'select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication context in such a way to provide a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation' (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Similarly, Mitchell (2007) asserts that what news frames do is 'to select, highlight, and therefore have the potential to direct attention to specific elements of an event, making them more salient' (p. 67). Thus, the process of news media professionals making valued judgements as to what to include, highlight or exclude are deliberately aimed at making their readers or viewers think in the way they want them to.

News framing, as Carvalho (2008) have already affirmed, is not a matter of choice. Rather, it is a must, because any journalistic writing is intrinsically a function of framing. Thus, this study aims to deconstruct how journalists of the selected three newspapers framed their headlines on the 2019 Presidential Elections in Nigeria and the kind of language they used in the process.

Methodology

This paper is situated within the constructivist worldview with its notion that news media professionals do not just discover meaning but construct it. Two conceptual explanatory frameworks, namely, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and news framing theory are identified and deployed in this study. CDA as a method only is applied for the analysis of the headlines and adverts of the three selected newspapers, namely, *The Guardian*, *The Nation* and the *Daily Trust* reports of the 2019 APC and PDP Presidential Elections. All three newspapers are national daily and weekly publications. The *Daily Trust* is clearly the most widely read newspaper in northern Nigeria since *The New Nigerian* went into extinction. The choice

of the *Daily Trust* was necessary because the two main Presidential Candidates (Buhari and Abubakar) were both from the north, *The Nation* and *The Guardian* are southern-based. The imperative of these analyses is contingent upon the language used in the newspapers. It is important to also note that the three newspapers were purposively selected. Content analysis and survey methods were also used to analyse the manifest communication content on the 2019 APC and PDP Presidential Elections. A random selection was used in the count of 1-7 and every 1 and 7 were picked. This means that in each newspaper, 4 editions were picked. The manifest communication contents of these four newspapers from November 18, 2018 to January 14, 2019, were analysed. The total population is 360. A sample size of 64 was drawn from the population of the study.

Statement of the Problem

News media professionals, especially reporters, editors are constantly engaged in the process of news construction through a careful process of selecting frames, interpretation and exclusion of some texts. Journalists use various discursive strategies in their news construction which they present to the public. Through power that has been aggregated in the media, they have the capacity to influence public opinion in a very profound way. Scholars have studied and reported on Nigerian elections (Sule et al., 2019; Nwofe, 2016; Orji, 2015; Galadima, 2012). Galadima's study focuses on press and political development in Nigeria; Orji's and Nwofe's were on the voting pattern of the 2015 between Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari; while Sule et al.'s was on the voting pattern of the 2019 presidential elections between Muhammadu Buharia and Atiku Abubakar. Despite the efforts of these scholars on their perspectives, there is still a lack of knowledge regarding how language was used using critical discourse analysis (CDA) in the coverage of the 2019 Presidential Elections between Buhari and Abubakar. This is, therefore, the gap in knowledge which this paper attempts to close.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to obtain and evaluate the relevant textual data which will provide a better understanding of the way language was used inframing the PDP and APC Presidential Candidates in the 2019 Nigeria's election campaigns. To achieve this, the research set out the following key objectives:

i. To examine the kinds of lexical items, phrases and metaphors used by the journalists of the three selected newspapers in their headline construction in depicting the two Presidential Candidates.
ii. To know the frequency of the coverage of the APC and PDP candidates in the selected newspapers during the 2019 Presidential Election.
iii. To identify the dominant frames and metaphors in the coverage that dominated public discourse in the build-up to the 2019 Presidential Elections.

Literature Review

Democratic discussions in Africa often coalesces around the twin issues of socio-economic and cultural conditions of citizens. Often, also, elections in Africa are a do-or-die affair, resulting in the destruction of lives and property. Still, elections are characterised by a winner-takes-it all-attitude, which explains why it is often murky and bloody. For example, the 2007 Kenyan post-election violence captured the global public imagination, largely, because over 1,500 were adjudged to have lost their lives . The two principal Presidential Candidates in the 2007 Kenyan Presidential Elections were Mwai Kibaki, a Kikuyu (and who at the time of the election was the incumbent) and his main rival, Raila Odinga of the Luo ethnic group. The supporters of the two Presidential Candidates were pitched against one another not on any clear political ideology, but rather on their ethnicities. Kenya, very much like Nigeria, at independence, held high hopes for its peoples as a beacon of hope and prosperity. This is because, as Somerville (2015) postulates, when the majority of African

countries attained political independence between 1956 and 1966, there was not only an atmosphere of euphoria, but indeed a sense of expectation spearheaded by the African nationalists. Unsurprisingly, citizens hoped for a better living standard as well as the restoration of dignity and the power to make their own choices which had eluded them for long under colonial rule, but sadly and tragically too, like Nigeria, Kenya has continued to be ravaged by several decades of misrule and political ineptitude, as Wrong (2009) posited.

In his study of the 2015 Presidential Elections between Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP and Muhammadu Buhari of the APC, Orji (2015) observed that Buhari won in the key battleground states of the north-central and south-western states of the country. This situation, in the views of Orji, put the usual voting pattern of north/south and Christians/Muslims characterisation on its head. The dismissal of the north/south and Christian/Muslim voting pattern in Nigeria's elections viewed by Orji as 'simplistic story' totally ignores the British colonial policies such as the Final Amalgamation of 1914 that forcefully brought together the diverse ethnic and religious communities as an entity called Nigeria (Mangvwat, 2013; Okidu, 2011; Kukah, 1993). Dewan (2019) notes that one of the several strategies used by politicians soon after independence in 1960 was the appeal to religious and ethnic sensibilities, as well as the use of negative stereotypical epithets, especially in the media to disparage the other. In their study of media and religion in Nigeria, Ihejirika and Dewan (2018) argued that religion is so deeply rooted in the Nigerian psyche to the extent that it is an important factor to be considered in all its ramifications, not least in politics.

On the surface, Buhari appeared to have had a very good political outing in the north-central and the south-west in the 2015 Presidential Elections when he got 57.1 per cent of the votes in the 2015 elections compared to his rather awful showing in the same south-west in the 2011 elections when he got just a paltry 6.9 per cent against Goodluck Jonathan (Orji, 2015). However, analysts and commentators attributed Buhari's success at the 2015 elections against his major challenger, Jonathan, to a trinity of factors: vote-rigging that favoured Buhari, disenchantment with the Jonathan administration and the alliance between Muhammadu Buhari and Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu that gave birth to the All Progressive Congress (APC) (Nwofe, 2016).

Equally, studies on Nigerian Presidential Elections by scholars have been cross-cutting and wide-ranging. However, Sule *et al*.'s (2019) study on the voting patterns of the electorates did not show any significant departure from the usual voting patterns of Presidential Elections in Nigeria since 1979. But Galadima's (2012) review entitled *The Press and Political Development in Nigeria: A Review of Intergroup Struggle for the Control of Power During the Democratic Period* is indeed profound. Galadima did a critical expose of the country's political trajectory thus: the First Republic was marred by political intrigues, horse-trading, mudslinging that eventually got the press enmeshed in and later tainted with the ethnic, regional and religious brush; the Second Republic continued almost in the same trajectory, except at this time the press was, in most cases, jointly owned which helped to douse the regional triangle of politics. Media reports were aimed at political parties which gave a more objective report that satisfied the political parties; the Fourth Republic which Nigerians had looked forward to, from the media perspective, turned to be more of the same thing. The assumption that every transition would unquestionably lead to democracy lacks logic because, as Kukah (1999) explained, Nigerian democracy and transitions have not been tested on the anvil of ideology, which clearly is the missing link in our statecraft. Galadima (2012) explained that hardly had the dust of jubilations at the return to democratic rule in the country settled down with the 1999 elections when the media started to exhibit their regional, ethnic and religious patterns of reporting issues. This position is therefore a testament to Somerville's (2015) assertion that the Nigerian nationalists failed to

seriously challenge and dismantle the British colonial power's statist and authoritarian administrative structures.

2019 Presidential Elections: Voting Pattern and Geopolitical Distribution

The analyses of the voting pattern of the 2019 Presidential Elections did not show any significant changes from what it had always been. Indeed, the voting direction and geopolitical distribution of the 2019 Presidential Election show the continuous culture of Nigerian voters towards their leaders in an election. The APC Presidential Candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, had north-west and north-east as his traditional support base since his venture into party politics in the 2003 Presidential race. This strong support in this region is attributed to such variables as religion, ethnicity and regionalism (Sule *et al*., 2019). The PDP could be said to be the unofficial party of the south-south and south-west since 1999, and this was much more so with the emergence of President Goodluck Jonathan from the south-south in 2011. Expectedly, the north-west and north-east voted massively for President Buhari, while the south-east and south-south voted for Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. This is because President Buhari was perceived in the north-west and north-east as a charismatic Islamic religious leader of a sort, possessing an incorruptible persona, as well as a dominant Hausa/Fulani figure in whose hands northern interest would be much more secure. Atiku Abubakar, on the other hand, is perceived by the north-west and north-east as corrupt, elite-oriented and pro-southern part of the country and in whose hands northern interest could not be protected. The south-east and south-south saw President Buhari as a religious bigot and ethnic chauvinist, while Atiku was not seen in such light. Besides, PDP is a strong and dominant party in the southeast and south-south; thus, a PDP Candidate of whatever origin would be expected to win there.

In Sule *et al*.'s (2019) opinions, the north-central was split between the two leading contenders, with the APC candidate winning in four of the six states but with a narrow margin. The south-west zone presented a surprise because it was one of the strongholds of the APC. The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and the political godfather in the region, Chief Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu spearheaded the alliance and the formation of the APC and its success at both the 2015 and 2019 elections. See the table below for details.

2019 Presidential Elections: Voting Pattern and Geopolitical Distribution

Geopolitical zone	APC	%	PDP	%	Differences	Winner
North-east	3,238,783	74.36	1,116, 873	25.64	2,121,910	APC
North-central	2,313,375	54.92	1,763, 772	45.08	549, 603	APC
Northwest	5,995,651	72.45	2,280, 465	27.55	3,715,186	APC
South-east	403,968	19.26	1,693, 485	80.74	1,289,517	PDP
South-south	1,051,396	32.01	2,233, 232	67.99	1,181,836	PDP
South-west	2,036,450	53.41	1,776, 670	46.59	259,780	APC
FCT	152, 224	36.77	259, 997	63.23	110,773	PDP
Seven Zones	15,191,847	55.54	11,262,978	41.18	3,928,869	APC Won

Source: Suleet al. (2019).

The voting direction from the table above shows that the APC candidate secured huge votes from the north-east and north-west to emerge victorious, while the PDP candidate secured his majority votes from the south-east and south-south. This is because President Buhari is perceived in these two regions, as earlier noted, as a religious bigot and ethnic chauvinist, while Atiku Abubakar was seen as a true nationalist with alliance across the nation and also because of the fact that the PDP has been the dominant political party in the regions since 1999, and all the previous Presidential Candidates won with a landslide victory in the regions under the platform of the PDP. The remaining two zones of north-central and south-west were shared between the two major contenders. Based on postulations, the voting pattern is expected to take a different dimension in 2023 when The Presidency may likely shift to the south-west

where a larger voter turnout may be witnessed and a lesser one in the north. This is so because each region in Nigeria tend to vote greatly when a Presidential Candidate with similar religious and ethnic attributes is from that region since the politics of manipulation of religion and ethnicity have gained currency in Nigeria (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Sule *et al.*, 2018; Mudasiru (2015).

Sampling Procedures

Right from the outset, this study purposively selected the under listed national newspapers (*The Guardian*, *The Nation* and the *Daily Trust*) and gave the rationale for their selections in this study.

The Guardian

The *Guardian* newspaper is a family business established by the late Chief Alex Uruemu Ibru in 1983, essentially to provide a balanced editorial and coverage of issues in the country (Daramola, 2013). The paper is adjudged to be one of the flagships of journalism practice in Nigeria because of its liberal, independent approach and its promotion of democratic values. It has a crack team of highly tested and qualified journalists. Its news and editorial contents have stood the paper out among a litany of newspapers in Nigeria. *The Guardian* has both Sunday and Daily editions. The paper is headquartered in Lagos in south-western Nigeria.

The Daily/Weekly/Sunday Trust

The Trust Media Group is made up of the *Daily/Weekly/Sunday Trust* established in 2001 by Kabiru Abdullahi Yusuf (a Hausa/Fulani). From its comparatively short history, Dewan (2018) and Dewan (2014) noted that the newspapers' penetration has gone far beyond its northern markets (its base) to the southern part of the country. The paper's national spread has been further attested to by Adesoji and Hahn (2011). Since the demise of *The New Nigerian*, it has become the authoritative voice of the north. Dewan contends that the impact of the paper is being felt especially in political discourses in Nigeria. Its head office is in Abuja, Nigeria's capital.

The Nation

The Nation is a daily newspaper published in Lagos, Nigeria. The newspaper is owned by the former governor of Lagos State, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. According to a 2009 survey it was the second most read newspaper in Nigeria, and this result was repeated in a 2011 report by The Advertisers' Association of Nigeria (ADVAN). The newspaper covers businesses and economy, public policies, the democratic process and intuitions of democracy, arts and culture. *The Nation* newspaper became the first of its kind to gain nationwide circulation across the 36 states of Nigeria within two years of operation.

2019 Presidential Elections Discourses in *The Guardian*

The Guardian carefully deployed phrases, frames and linguistic categories in its headlines of the 2019 Presidential Elections between Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progress Congress (APC) and Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). The following headlines are insightful:'11 Feared Dead in Bloody Polls,' 'INEC Urges Peaceful Conduct During Today's Polls,' 'Buhari, Atiku Shun Presidential Debate,' 'FG Fingers Atiku in Bank PHB Collapse,' 'FG Accuses Atiku of N156 Million Fraud,' 'EU, U.S. Warn Police, DSS, others on 2019 Elections,' 'Resign, PDP tells INEC Chairman, Police IG.' These headlines were among the many several headlines of *The Guardian* that were purposively selected for analysis in this paper. However, a few of the headline news drawn from *The Guardian* are analysed due to their importance.

Carvalho (2008) has provided a pathway for conducting critical discourse analysis of news contents, especially newspaper. She declares that the analysis of a newspaper, for example, should begin from the headlines and the text of the report. Following this suggestion, then, a few of the above-listed headline reports of *The Guardian* were purposively selected and examined.

The headlines of *The Guardian* on Monday, November 19, 2018, by Niyi Bello *et al*. reads 'EU, U.S. Warn Police, DSS, others on 2019 Elections.'

The Guardian's deliberate use of the lexical item 'Warn' is loaded with meaning. The use of 'warn' by *The Guardian* to refer to the European Union and the United States of America, during the countdown to the 2019 Presidential Elections implies that the roles of those agencies of the Nigerian government (the Police, Directorate of Security Services and others) are critical to the success of the elections. According to Richardson (2007), the lexical choices in a newspaper text are more often than not the starting point of any discourse analysis. The reason for this, as Richardson avows, is because lexical items often convey the imprint of society and they also convey connoted and denoted meanings. *The Guardian*'s use of the word 'warn' in its report was part of a journalistic storytelling protocol meant to remind the two main Presidential contenders (Buhari and Abubakar) that the international election monitors (EU, US, and others) were not only watching but that there would be consequences should those relevant agencies of the Nigerian government detailed with the conduct of the elections decide to skew the outcomes of the elections in favour of any of the Presidential Candidates. A warning is usually issued by a superior to a subordinate for wrongdoing or intended wrongdoing. Leaders of the Western countries have always seen themselves as superior to Developing Nations, because of their (Western countries) advantage as developed democracies. On the surface, *The Guardian* can be said to be objective in its report since the 'warning' was not directed at just one of the two main Presidential Candidates but to all.

The second headline of the news report carried by *The Guardian* on Sunday, February 24, 2019, by Kabir Alabi Garba *et al*. is entitled '11 Feared Dead in Bloody Polls.' In this headline report by Garba and his colleagues, it clearly, gives the impression of what characterises Nigeria's political elections, especially the Presidential Elections (fear, death and blood). The newspaper in its headline deliberately used the metaphors of war (fear, death, blood). If these are the features of Nigerian elections, as Garba and his colleagues claimed, it is no wonder, then, that the EU, US and other international observers who monitored the elections 'warned' the agencies in charge of the elections (the Police, DSS and others). Commenting on the state of electoral processes on the African continent, Elklit and Svenssor (1997) posited that it is a do-or-die-affair. They cited several examples of flawed Presidential Elections in Africa to include (but not limited to) the Mwai Kibaki and Rahila Odinga 2007 in Kenya; Robert Mugabe's refusal to cede power in 2008 Zimbabwe's elections; the manipulation of the Presidential Elections in Guinea by Lansana Conte, and so on. It, therefore, did come as a surprise that *The Guardian* news report of Friday, November 30, 2018 by Msugh Ifyokura thus 'Presidential Candidates Sign Peace ahead of 2019 poll.' Due to the murky and violence infested nature of elections in Nigeria, a National Peace Committee was established by the Founder of the Kukah Centre, Most Rev Matthew Hassan Kukah, the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto. The Chairman of The Committee is the former Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar (retd). The task of the Committee is to always get politicians to sign an undertaking pledging to refrain from campaigns that would involve incitement either by reason of ethnicity, religion or tribal profiling. Thus, Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progress Congress (APC) and Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) had to sign the pledge that they will respect the outcome of the Presidential Elections after much coaxing and persuasion.

The deliberate use of lexical items like 'fear, death, bloody' by *The Guardian*, although intended to show the severity of the electoral atmosphere, was not devoid of the use of hyperbole.. The use of hyperbole the figure of exaggeration is consistent with Van Dijk's (2001) use of semantic and rhetorical selection of metaphors. This is because reading through *The Guardian* report one does not get the kind of severe apocalypse the headline portrays. In other words, the severe headline is not supported by the text.

2019 Presidential Elections Discourses in *The Nation*

Following similar pattern of purposively selecting headlines in *The Guardian*, some headlines were selected from *The Nation* newspaper as follows: 'FG to Quiz Atiku,' 'Fresh S/South headache as Atiku Rejigs Campaign,' 'Tinubu Blasts PDP, Atiku,' 'Osinbajo, Oshiomhole, Tinubu attack Obasanjo.'

The Nation of Saturday, January 19, 2019 by Yusuf Alli, Augustine Ehikoya and Gbade Ogunwale entitled 'FG to Quiz Atiku,' was attention-grabbing. Reading through the text, the report did not sound as dire as the headline. To better understand why the federal government of Nigeria wanted to 'Quiz' Atiku, it imperative to establish the context that led to the above statement. Atiku Abubakar, the Presidential Candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) was being accused for refusing to pay back the sum of N156million he purportedly obtained from the defunct Bank PHB. The Information and Culture Minister, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, accused Alhaji Abubakar of allegedly benefitting from the failed bank and promised that 'any time Abubakar returns home from the US, he has questions to answer following the fresh evidence that we have that he benefitted from 'slush funds.' Abubakar travelled to the US shortly before 2019 Presidential Elections to galvanise support from the US Congress. Alhaji Abubakar returned from his trip to the US and participated in the 2019 Presidential Elections and, to date, he has not been 'Quizzed' by the federal government on the matter. The choice of the word 'quiz' by *The Nation* may have been a discursive strategy aimed at validating the 'change' mantra of the All Progressive Congress (APC) that had promised to fight corruption. Fighting corruption was Buhari's campaign slogan which he used as his key selling point. The use of the lexical 'quiz' by *The Nation* by its reporters resonates with one of the core interests of critical discourse analysis (CDA) which is that it has an interest in the use of vocabulary and how grammar is used in the text. It is worth noting that CDA by its nature pays attention to the study of ideologically biased texts and its polarising representation of 'Us' and 'Them.' Van Dijk (2001) uses the approach of 'positive' self-representation and 'negative' other representation. 'Our good things and their bad things' are highlighted, while conversely 'our bad things and their good things' are de-emphasised (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 103). Applying Van Dijk's CDA, this comparison suggests that Abubakar, by *The Nation*'s judgement, is corrupt, while Buhari, in their judgement, is incorruptible.

In another headline by *The Nation* of Wednesday, January 9, 2019, a very strong adjective is used to describe both Abubakar and his party, the PDP: 'Tinubu blasts PDP, Atiku.' In the Tuesday, January 22, 2019 edition, *The Nation*'s headline is not different in tone from the Wednesday, January 9, 2019 edition entitled 'Osinbajo, Oshiomhole, Tinubu attack Obasanjo.' In these two headlines, *The Nation* newspaper used another two strong metaphors of war, namely, 'blasts,' and 'attack.' What is worth noting here is that Tinubu's names featured in the two headlines by *The Nation* which was not an accident Chief Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu is not only a chieftain of the APC, but the owner of *The Nation* newspaper. Perhaps, as a confirmation of the fact that the piper dictates the tune, *The Nation*, unsurprisingly, was out to serve its proprietor's interest by using those metaphors ('attack' and 'blasts). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is not just interested in the structure of a sentence, for instance, but it equally pays attention to the use of language across multiple texts, and how sentence communicates a message (Yusha'u, 2012; Johnstone, 2002). Munday (2009) cited in Youssefi, Kanami and Shojaei (2013, p. 1343), however, disagrees with both Yusha'u and Johnstone as:

> overly simplistic to view language as nothing but a tool for communication… it is a potentially manipulative instrument which reflects ideologies through lexical, syntactic and discourse choices.

The former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, although a fellow Yoruba like Tinubu, belongs to

the PDP. That explains why Tinubu, Osinbajo (both Yoruba) and Oshiomhole (APC National Chairman) 'attack' Obasanjo, who in their views, was out of tune with them. What this means, from the perspectives of critical discourse analysis (CDA), is that *The Nation*'s report was ideologically meant to align with the political interest of their proprietor (Tinubu) as a major chieftain of the APC as a party. *The Nation*'s history of supporting whichever political party Tinubu pitches his tent is well documented. For example, Adesoji and Hahn (2011, p. 195) have noted how *The Nation* newspaper, with the tacit approval of Tinubu gave 'extensive and positive coverage to the Action Congress which later became known as Action Congress of Nigeria (Tinubu's former party). This, as already observed, is mirrored in the paper's deliberate selection and utilisation of metaphors, lexical choices and adjectives.

2019 Presidential Election Discourses in the *Daily Trust*

The Nation and the *Daily Trust* appear to have a lot in common in the way they reported the '2019 Presidential Elections' in Nigeria. The *Daily Trust* used such words as 'We have Uncovered Corruption Case on Atiku-FG,' 'Atiku has Nothing to Offer-Ex Women Leader,' '2019: Atiku Can't Stop Buhari in Adamawa-Bindow,' 'Aitku: US Supports my Candidature,' '…Buhari is Jittery-PDP.' 'APC: Shine Your Eyes-What 2019 Means to Us,' 'PDP: Better Life for Nigerians.'

From the list of headlines sampled above, there is a common theme in all the three newspapers (*The Guardian*, *The Nation* and the *Daily Trust*). The main headline of the *Daily Trust* of Saturday, January 19, 2019 by Ismail Mudashir reads 'We've Uncovered Corruption Case on Atiku-FG.' This headline by the *Daily Trust* is the same as the one by *The Nation* of Saturday, January 19,2019, by Augustine Ehikoya and Gbade Ogunwale with the caption 'FG to Quiz Atiku.' Both headlines by the two newspapers were written against the backdrop of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and Alhaji Bukola Saraki's (former Senate President) trip to the US to canvass support from the US Congress in which the Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed, disclosed to State House Correspondents that the government had uncovered a corruption case against Atiku. The coverage of the alleged corruption case against Atiku fits into what in critical discourse analysis (CDA) is called 'intertextuality.' This notion, according to Richardson (2007), is based on the belief that a text cannot be studied separately because texts are not consumed in isolation; they must be read and understood in relation to other texts.

The framing of other headlines by the *Daily Trust* such as 'Atiku has Nothing to Offer-Ex-Women Leader,' and '2019: Atiku Can't Stop Buhari in Adamawa-Bindow,' creates an anti-Atiku impression by the newspaper. As earlier noted, the perception of Atiku Abubakar by the north-west and north-east is that he is corrupt, representing the elite and more inclined towards the southern part of the country (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Sule *et al*., 2019; Mudasiru, 2015). Muhammadu Buhari, on the other hand, is seen within the northern region as a dominant Hausa/Fulani figure possessing an incorruptible persona. The *Daily Trust*'s perceived support for Buhari and taking of a somewhat anti-Atiku stance may not be unconnected with the fact that Dewan (2018) has opined that since the demise of *The New Nigerian*, the *Daily Trust* has now become the authoritative voice of the north. The newspaper does not only champion but projects and promotes northern interests.

Summary and Conclusion

The discourses in this paper have been on the 2019 Presidential Elections between President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and his main challenger, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). The appraisals of the selected newspapers, using critical discourse analysis (CDA), revealed how the newspapers used certain frames, metaphors, lexical choices and discursive strategies to promote certain ideologies in terms of good and bad. That is why journalists construct texts that can

be analysed using linguistic categories, tools and notions that can be used to examine other categories of texts. That why frames are carefully and methodically selected by journalists in their news construction processes, because they are highly potent, and they could be compared to arsenals. Thus, phrases must, therefore, be chosen with utmost care, otherwise, when used 'recklessly' or 'loosely' they could be potentially explosive (Shaw, 2012; Rehman, 2007).

In the analyses, *The Guardian*'s newspaper report on the Presidential Election was more balanced and objective, unlike *The Nation* and the *Daily Trust* newspapers, whose reports, as manifested in their selection of frames, metaphors, lexical items, phrases and so on, suggested some biases in favour of the APC candidate (Buhari).

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