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# Typology of Lexical Choices in Nigerian Pidgin Political Headlines: Evidence from BBC News

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the lexico-semantic role of Pidgin in political headlines published by BBC News, with the aim of identifying lexical choices and language use in the media. Using a mixed design within the framework of SFG, the study analysed 10 purposively selected headlines drawn from 105 BBC news articles published between January and June 2025. The headlines construct reality through five categories, such as government policies, legislative activities, political party announcements, political controversies and conflicts, or legal cases involving politicians, revealing how Pidgin functions as an accessible medium for discourse. Findings show that headlines rely on action-oriented verbs, idioms, and interrogatives to simplify complex realities while maintaining cultural familiarity and emotional connection. From a linguistic perspective, these lexical choices reveal ideational interpretation of events in experiential terms, interpersonal connections with solidarity, and textual organization of information that reflects coherent structures. The study found 349 words, of which 103 were Pidgin lexis, yielding a proportion of 29.5%. This high proportion supports *BBC News Pidgin* as a lexically marked and metafunctionally distinct from Standard English news, revealing how lexical choices are driven towards communicative goals rather than stylistic ones. Further studies could explore comparative framing across Pidgin and Standard English news.

Keywords: BBC News Pidgin headline, Nigeria, metafunction, lexical choice, lexico-semantic feature, idiomatic language use in media

## 1. Introduction

Language serves as a medium for communication, enabling individuals to construct meaning, share experiences, and interpret events within their social network (Aljarelah 2024; Rabiah 2018). In print media communication, language is influential because it frames

understanding of political issues through lexical choices. News headlines play a role in shaping interpretation, considering language as a concise and attention-driven linguistic unit. Headlines condense complex political realities into short phrases that are loaded with ideological, cultural, and emotional meaning. Their lexical structure determines not only what readers learn but also how they perceive political actors, conflicts, and politics.

In multilingual societies like Nigeria, where English coexists with numerous indigenous languages and Pidgin, the language of news carries significant linguistic implications. *BBC<sup>1</sup> News Pidgin*, established in 2017, has become an influential digital platform for disseminating political information to millions of Pidgin speakers across West Africa (Ajagbe, Fonkeu, and Edegbe 2022; Yakpo 2024). By using Nigerian Pidgin as a lingua franca, the platform bridges linguistic gaps, enhances accessibility, and provides a culturally grounded alternative to Standard English news reporting. Political headlines on BBC Pidgin blend directness, informality, and cultural familiarity, making the news a rich source for linguistic analysis. Catchy expressions such as *Tinubu don swear-in* or *Wetin PDP governors position mean ahead 2027?* reveal how lexical choices compress meaning while maintaining immediacy and reflect political communication.

From word function and lexical choice, this perspective analyzes how these headlines construct political framing, adopting SFG proposed by Halliday (1985, 1994) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2013). This framework views language as a means for meaning-making and emphasises how linguistic choices are shaped by social roles and contexts. SFG is relevant to the lexico-semantic analysis of

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used in this paper: APC (All Progressives Congress), BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), EX (extracts), NYSC (National Youth Service Corps), PDP (Peoples Democratic Party), SDP (Social Democratic Party), SFG (Systemic Functional Grammar).

*BBC News Pidgin*, as it provides a frame for examining how news writers use Pidgin to construct meaning, engage readers, and organise information. The ideational explains how Pidgin headlines represent actions, events, and experiences through simplified verb forms, familiar expressions, and culturally motivated structures. The interpersonal clarifies how the BBC builds rapport with its readers by using a conversational tone, modality, and evaluative expressions. The textual accounts for the organisation of headlines into concise, coherent, and easily interpretable messages that communicate relevant political events. These metafunctions enable people to have comprehensive information on how *BBC News Pidgin* headlines frame political events and function as an effective political communication medium within Nigerian multilingual media.

The challenge in political language use in the media lies in the gap between lexical choices and the metafunction framing of news headlines. Previous studies (Isyaku and Oreoluwa 2025; Jackendoff 2022; Scholman et al. 2025) have explored syntax, semantics, and discourse analysis of Nigerian Pidgin. Some studies (Osoba 2014; Oyeleye and Osisanwo 2013) have explored the role of Nigerian Pidgin in the media, but few studies have focused specifically on BBC headlines and their metafunctions in political discourse (Adebayo 2023; Mokal and Halim 2023). The relevance of this study is significant, as language use and lexical choice intersect with issues of access, inclusivity, and power, particularly given the growing scholarly interest in language use in public discourse. The focus on lexical use and choice in BBC headlines is appropriate, as headlines represent a linguistic and ideological medium for meaning construction (Alo and Mesthrie 2008; Ugwuanyi and Aboh 2025). The link between language and politics through Pidgin has attracted scholarly attention, and a considerable number of past studies (Adebanwi 2004; Akande 2010; Oyeleye and Osisanwo 2013) are evidence that Nigerian Pidgin

has been widely examined as a medium in political communication, protest discourse, digital activism, and electoral reporting. Collectively, these studies (Agbo and Plag 2020; Okafor et al. 2024; Yuguda 2024) demonstrate that Pidgin has a role in reporting political events (ideational), fostering audience solidarity (interpersonal), and organising political messages in accessible forms (textual). These studies (Aniche and Falola 2021; Muhammad 2024) confirm that lexical choice offers valuable insight into the interpretive process of language used in the media. However, most existing research has focused on extended discourse forms such as social media posts, protest slogans, campaign narratives, or general news reporting, with little attention given to headline lexical choice, particularly within *BBC News Pidgin*. Though some studies have focused on the SFG perspective (Halliday 1985, 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen 2013; Martin and White 2005), other studies on Nigerian political discourse (Adebayo 2023; Isyaku and Oreoluwa 2025; Scholman et al. 2025) and media language use (Bell 1991; Fowler 1991; Van Dijk 1988) have made important contributions. The present study advances the field through the combination of SFG with lexical choice and frequency counts for BBC headlines.

BBC headlines constitute compressed texts where metafunctional meanings are densely used. The ideational is realised through lexical choices that construe political events and actors; the interpersonal is enacted through evaluative language use that informs readers; and the textual is achieved through lexical structuring that focuses on salient political meanings. While studies such as Agbo and Plag (2020) acknowledge the framing power of Pidgin in headlines, they do not offer a detailed lexico-semantic analysis based on SFG. Consequently, there remains a gap in exploring how BBC News uses lexical choices to balance “us” and “them,” power struggles, and party positioning ideologies. Building on the insights of the reviewed literature, the present study fills this gap by adopting SFG-based lexico-semantic

analysis of Pidgin political headlines. By doing so, it contributes to scholarship on language use and lexical choice in political communication by demonstrating how Pidgin functions as a medium for framing politics and enhancing public inclusiveness in Nigerian multilingual media. Therefore, this study investigates language use and lexical framing of political headlines published by *BBC News Pidgin*. The aim is to identify the lexical choices in BBC headlines. The study specifically analyses lexical choices and investigates the frequency of occurrences in *BBC News Pidgin* political headlines.

## 2. Conceptual Review

SFG (Halliday 1985, 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen 2013) provides a framework for analysing how language functions in political communication by proposing ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions of meaning. Previous studies (Adebanwi 2004; Akande 2010; Okafor et al. 2024) on Nigerian Pidgin in political discourse varied in focus and did not interpret headlines through metafunctions to highlight how lexical choices construct political reality, negotiate social relations, and organise political messages.

From the ideational perspective, Akande (2010) demonstrates how Nigerian Pidgin is used on social media to construe political experiences in accessible and experiential terms. By analysing political hashtags and posts, the study shows how Pidgin lexical items translate processes, participants, and circumstances that reflect political realities. Similarly, Adebanwi's (2004) examination of protest slogans reveals how Pidgin lexis represents collective struggle and resistance, construing political events as shared experiences and representing marginalised voices.

The interpersonal is evident in studies that emphasise audience inclusiveness and solidarity. Adebanwi (2004) illustrates how emotional lexical choices in Pidgin may establish affective bonds between speakers and audiences, positioning protesters as insiders within a shared sociopolitical context. Also, Adebisi (2025) shows that in elections, evaluative meanings can shape public attitudes toward political discourse. These evaluative lexical choices function as interpersonal metafunctions for persuasion and political branding.

From a textual perspective, research by Agbo and Plag (2020) and Yuguda (2024) highlights how Pidgin and Standard English organise political messages differently. While Standard English headlines tend to focus on authority through language choices and formal structures, Pidgin headlines rely on verbal clarity, immediacy, and coherence through familiar lexical patterns. This textual organisation enhances accessibility and facilitates the information flow, particularly for audiences with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Lexical studies on digital activism further reinforce the metafunctional relevance of Pidgin. Okafor et al. (2024) show how Pidgin lexis in online campaigns functions ideationally to represent social injustices, interpersonally to mobilise collective action, and textually to share concerns through repetition and emphasis. Similarly, Osoba (2014) shows how the informal nature of Pidgin strengthens interpersonal trust and communal bonds, especially during periods of political uncertainty.

Although extensive research (Agbo and Plag 2020; Alo and Mesthrie 2008; Aniche and Falola 2021; Muhammad 2024; Oyeleye and Osisanwo 2013; Yuguda 2024) has examined Nigerian Pidgin across political media contexts, there is a need to add to the research on the lexical choices of Pidgin headlines. Given that headlines are condensed texts where ideational representation, interpersonal positioning, and textual organisation converge, SFG lexico-semantic analysis offers

valuable insight for language use in the media. This study, therefore, extends existing scholarship by analysing the role of Nigerian Pidgin lexical choice in framing *BBC News Pidgin* headlines.

## 2.1. Lexical Choices in Language Use

Lexical choice is a branch of linguistics that examines the intricate relationship between words and their meanings. It also examines how meaning is created, represented, and altered across different texts (Feist 2022). Lexical choice also investigates how words or phrases in a language convey meaning. Word meaning involves individual or collective senses (Li and Chen 2025). It also examines how meaning is constructed through vocabulary and lexical relationships such as synonymy, polysemy, metaphor, idiom, and collocation. The concept of lexis is defined by Alexander and Dallachy (2020) as the system or bridge between the linguistic item and a higher-order lexical meaning. Similarly, Norén and Linell (2007) highlight that lexis is used to express meanings that are context-specific. Caro and Mendinueta (2017) and Reilly et al. (2025) suggest that lexis and lexical choice are so closely intertwined that trying to separate them can feel like a daunting task, if not completely pointless. While they do not mean exactly the same thing, they work hand-in-hand in a linguistic framework. Feist (2022) emphasises that lexical choice is essential to understanding linguistic items and plays a role in how we use language. The importance of lexis in a literary text may stem from the idea that meanings are strengthened by the words we choose; thus, there's a connection between words in a text and the conveyance of a particular idea, as noted by Odebunmi and Oni (2021). Also, Halliday (1985) emphasises that lexical choice is key in constructing meaning, particularly in political discourse.

From a linguistic perspective, as Chilton (2004) observes, words

are chosen to persuade, obscure, or legitimise actions. In Nigerian studies, scholars (Omolabi 2023; Osoba 2014; Taiwo 2007) have applied linguistic analysis to examine the political lexicon and its ideological implications. Omolabi (2023) explored Nigerian print media discourse, highlighting how lexical selection reveals political bias and emotional connection. Similarly, Taiwo (2007) found that lexis and metaphor in Nigerian newspapers frame politics as a contest or drama, shaping readers' perceptions of political actors. Osoba (2014) studies the lexical choices and tactics used in political discourse, showing that Pidgin news headlines create meaning that expresses bias and engages various audiences in postcolonial settings. Lexical choices are not just individual words but also larger units of meaning, like idioms, which make political news headlines meaningful.

## **2.2. Idiomatic Language Use and News Headlines**

News headlines serve as compressed linguistic forms designed to attract attention, summarize information, and shape interpretations of events. Scholars such as Van Dijk (1988) and Bell (1991) describe headlines as “semantic macrostructures” that guide how readers process news discourse. They employ brevity, ellipsis, and creativity to achieve formativeness and impact. Headlines rely on lexical economy, selecting a limited number of but catchy words that evoke semantic associations. Fowler (1991) further suggests that the language use in headlines is never neutral; it is ideologically driven and reflects particular perspectives embedded in lexical choice. From a media perspective, headlines act as bite-sized summaries of larger stories, using figurative language, connotations, and simplification to provoke specific responses from readers (Agbo and Plag 2020). Therefore, analysing lexical choices in headlines is essential for understanding political messages and the ideologies they convey

(Mokal and Halim 2023). For example, Jackendoff (2022) points out that lexical choice provides an understanding of the main traditions surrounding word meanings. In African and Nigerian media, news headline studies (Jackendoff 2022; Mokal and Halim 2023) have revealed similar patterns of framing, manipulation, and cultural adaptation. Likewise, Ehineni (2014) examined the syntactic structures of Nigerian newspaper headlines, showing how lexical and functional headlines shape readers' interpretations of politics.

Idiomatic language refers to expressions whose meanings are not directly predictable from the literal meanings of their individual components but are conventionally understood within a speech community (Jackendoff 2022; Kovács 2016). For instance, *kick the bucket* means to die, not literally to kick a bucket. In media discourse, idioms function as framing lexis, enabling writers to compress complex meanings into brief, culturally familiar expressions. Fowler (1991) argues that such lexical choices are ideologically motivated, as idiomatic language guides the reader's interpretation and evaluation of events due to its ready-made meanings. In Nigerian Pidgin, idiomatic language such as *wahala dey* "there is a serious problem," *e don cast* "something has been exposed," and *carry last* "to fail or be left behind" exemplifies how political realities are simplified and emotionally idiomatised. In headline discourse, especially in *BBC News Pidgin*, such idioms allow complex political events to be presented in accessible and engaging ways, reinforcing Pidgin's role as an effective medium for language use in Nigeria. The findings in the current study suggest that idiomatic language and word choice in headlines are not arbitrary but systematically related to communicative goals. These findings support the relevance of analysing idiomatic and lexical features of headlines in Nigerian Pidgin.

### 2.3. Pidgin and Language Use in Media

Nigerian Pidgin, a creole language with English as its lexifier and influences from various indigenous languages, functions as a unifying lingua franca across social and ethnic boundaries (Aminah 2023; Elugbe and Omamor 1991; Faraclas 1996). It has moved from informal domains to formal use, such as music, social media, and broadcast journalism. The establishment of *BBC News Pidgin* in 2017 marked a milestone in the legitimisation of Pidgin as a medium of formal information dissemination. For the purpose of this study, Nigerian Pidgin lexis is defined as vocabulary forms that exhibit distinctive phonological, grammatical, or idiomatic features of Nigerian English (e.g., *wetin*). Borrowed Standard English lexical items (e.g., *take react*, *go*) are only classified as Pidgin when they appear in phonologically or syntactically adapted forms consistent with Nigerian Pidgin usage (Faraclas 1996; Ugwuanyi and Aboh 2025).

Scholars like Adebayo (2023) have examined the syntactic features of Pidgin in BBC news, revealing that Pidgin headlines simplify Standard English syntax while maintaining communicative clarity. The study shows that BBC News bridges literacy gaps, allowing wider participation in political discourse. Similarly, Isyaku and Oreoluwa (2025) studied war metaphors in Nigerian news, identifying eight conceptual metaphors that frame politics as conflict or battle, confirming the semantic richness and metaphorical creativity of Pidgin in media. The findings reveal how political realities are linguistically and culturally motivated.

Pidgin is a unique and simplified version of English that blends lexical items from various languages, and it has become a way for people to communicate in many multilingual communities (Ugwuanyi and Aboh 2025). In West Africa, Pidgin serves as an informal language, enabling people from different backgrounds to communicate with one

another. It captures local cultural flavors and mirrors the socio-political realities of speech communities. Scholman et al. (2025) suggest that one of the features of Pidgin is its adaptability; it can communicate rich meanings that might not be found in Standard English. Using Pidgin can make discussions more relatable and engaging for the public, especially for those who may not be fluent in Standard English, weaving in local cultural tone into the political conversation (Oyeleye and Osisanwo 2013).

Research (Aniche and Falola 2021; Muhammad 2024) on the effectiveness of headlines demonstrates how lexical choices can shift readers' views on politics, revealing the power at play in political communication. In Alo and Mesthrie's (2008) study, emphasis was made on the value of lexical choice in showing its role in digital discourse, particularly in a linguistically diverse community like Nigeria. Mensah and Ndimele (2013) investigate the rhetorical techniques used in Nigerian political advertising and newspaper headlines, pointing out how Pidgin serves as a connector to the audience. The results show the use of humor, irony, and euphemism as core lexical strategies that not only inform readers but also stir up emotional reactions. The findings reveal that Pidgin brings a playful twist to language use, which in turn boosts the impact of political messages.

On the other hand, Ekpenyong and Sunday (2024) examine how Pidgin plays a role in political language, analysing how a politically relevant lingua franca frames national integration amid ethnic language politics. The findings suggest that Pidgin critiques politicians and policies by using linguistic choices that spark laughter while also prompting the audience to think critically. That study highlights the strength of Pidgin as a medium for communicating national unity, where the choice of words challenges authority and explores power.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts SFG, put forth by Halliday (1985, 1994) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2013). The theory considers language as a means for creating meaning and highlights how language is influenced by social roles. It investigates how speakers or writers use language to share ideas, build relationships, and arrange information. SFG outlines three main metafunctions of language as follows:

- i. Ideational: shows experiences, actions, and events in accessible ways.
- ii. Interpersonal: builds rapport with readers, reflects attitudes, judgments, and social interactions.
- iii. Textual: structures information into clear and coherent messages for public consumption.

These metafunctions are used to analyse lexical choices in headlines in *BBC News Pidgin*. The study identifies idioms and lexis (like *wetin*, *dey*, and *don happun*) as resources to create meaning. By using SFG, the research reveals how headlines serve as a channel for political communication. Previous research (Adebayo 2023; Mokal and Halim 2023; Oyebola and Ugwuanyi 2023; Ugwuanyi and Aboh 2025) has established that news headlines are linguistically and ideologically meaningful. This study investigates lexical choices in *BBC News Pidgin*, aiming to highlight how Pidgin serves as a linguistic and semantic tool in Nigeria.

## 4. Material and Method

This study used a mixed research design to examine the lexical role of political headlines published by *BBC News Pidgin* in 2025. A mixed approach is appropriate because it triangulates on the frequency of lexical choices that cannot be captured through an in-depth design alone without occurrences (Creswell 2003). The analysis is guided by SFG, which provides a framework for examining how language constructs meaning through metafunctions. Frequency adds validity to the in-depth analysis, not evidence in itself. Frequency is a quantitative property, and metafunctional analysis is a qualitative interpretation, but in a mixed-method approach, both account for an added reliability in the results.

### 4.1. Data Collection

The data consists of political headlines from *BBC News Pidgin*, retrieved from the official website (<https://www.bbc.com/pidgin>), published within a six-month period (January to June 2025). These headlines were published during this period marked by intense political activities in Nigeria, including debates over party leadership, legal controversies, reactions to international affairs, and preparations ahead of the 2027 general elections. Ten headlines were selected because they focus on relevant political topics, and the sample was divided into five operationally categorised groups, such as government policies, legislative activities, political party announcements, political controversies and conflicts, or legal cases involving politicians. These categorisation benchmarks ensure that only headlines relevant to political discourse are selected. Although the corpus comprises 105 headlines, the analysis focuses on a ten-headline sample. This

reduction is intended to prioritise in-depth analysis over statistical representation, allowing for detailed linguistic and discursive insights that would not be feasible. However, this mixed analysis relies on a smaller but richer dataset that allows for close textual examination of linguistic items (Halliday and Matthiessen 2013). Similarly, researchers (Creswell and Plano Clark 2017; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998) note that a small sample of representative texts is appropriate when the objective is in-depth and interpretive validity is prioritised rather than statistical generalisation. The selected headlines were therefore selected because they represent different domains of political discourse in *BBC News* and exhibit clear instances of lexical choices suitable for metafunctional analysis.

Purposive sampling was used to sort out headlines that relate to political categories. The samples were used to provide a manageable but representative set for data analysis. The purposive sampling procedure followed these steps and selected headlines based on four linguistic criteria: the headline must:

- iv. address an identifiable political issue involving government institutions, political parties, or public officials;
- v. contain identifiable Nigerian Pidgin lexical items or idiomatic language (*go begin do*), borrowed English lexis (*take react*), and Pidgin spellings (*govment*);
- vi. demonstrate linguistic features relevant to SFG metafunctional analysis; and
- vii. belong to one of the five operational political categories established for the study.

This criterion-based purposive sampling ensured that the selected headlines were not randomly chosen but deliberately identified as representative examples of Pidgin headlines in *BBC News*. The study

focuses on current political trends in Nigeria, where political discourse continues to evolve through *BBC News* channels following the 2023 general elections, to show how Pidgin is used as a linguistic tool to express political messages and reflect ongoing political events in Nigeria.

## **4.2. Data Presentation**

Headlines were manually extracted and compiled into a spreadsheet. Each headline was assigned an extract number (EX 1 to 10), and lexical choices were categorised according to codes (1 to 5). Data analysis was conducted using a mixed-method approach combining qualitative (lexical choices) and quantitative (frequency of occurrences) methods (Creswell and Plano Clark 2017; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998). Results were presented using extracts and tables to illustrate lexico-semantic patterns.

## **4.3. Data Analysis**

The analysis identifies lexical choices (lexis and idioms) used in *BBC News Pidgin*. To ensure reliability, lexical coding followed a systematic procedure. Each headline was independently examined to identify Nigerian Pidgin lexis based on established linguistic criteria of Nigerian English vocabulary (Elugbe and Omamor 1991; Faraclas 1996). Lexis was then cross-checked against standard English equivalents to distinguish between pure Pidgin forms, borrowed English lexical items, and function words. In discourse-analytic studies, coding validation is achieved through iterative re-examination of data and consistency of categorisation rather than large-scale statistical reliability testing (Schreier 2012). The dataset was re-coded multiple times to ensure consistency in classification and to minimise

subjective bias in identifying Pidgin lexical forms. Lexis was first identified and categorised based on its lexico-semantic properties as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample of Data Analysis

Categorisation	Lexical Choices	Lexical Features	SFG Metafunctions
government policies (1)	EX 1	EX 1 ideology semantic context	EX 1 ideational interpersonal textual

Five categories were then analysed through recurrent lexical choices and lexico-semantic features based on SFG metafunctions. Data were obtained from publicly accessible sources and required no formal consent. Proper attribution to *BBC News Pidgin* was maintained when the data were used.

## 5. Findings

This section presents data for analysis, based on SFG.

### 5.1. Lexical Choices in *BBC News Pidgin* Headline

Table 2 presents 10 EX and topic-based categorisation of headlines in *BBC News*.

Table 2. List of Headlines in *BBC News Pidgin*

Extract	News Captions	Categorisation
EX 1	Tinubu Probe: Presidency Reacts	government policies (1)
EX 2	Youth Corper Faces Free Speech Test	government policies (1)
EX 3	Reps Members Take Rivers Assembly	legislative activities (2)
EX 4	Nigeria Stop Coup for Benin Republic	legislative activities (2)
EX 5	Natasha Akpoti Sues Lawmaker	legal cases involving politicians (3)
EX 6	Akpabio Denies Natasha Allegation	legal cases involving politicians (3)
EX 7	PDP Governors: Road to 2027	political party announcements (4)
EX 8	Opposition Parties Fate Dey Shake	political party announcements (4)
EX 9	Labour Party Crisis Deepens	political controversies and conflicts (5)
EX 10	President Wins Praise Over Trump	political controversies and conflicts (5)

Table 2 presents ten headlines from *BBC News Pidgin*, grouped into five political categories. Two headlines were assigned to each

category to illustrate how BBC News frames political events through lexical choice.

## 5.2. Lexical Analysis

Data analysis is divided into two components: lexico-semantic and statistical distribution. Lexico-semantic analysis includes lexical features and metafunctions.

### EX 1. Tinubu Probe: Presidency Reacts

Category 1: Government Policies (14 April 2025)

#### Lexical choices

*How presidency take react to US court order to FBI and DEA on Tinubu probe records and wetin go happun next?*

#### Lexico-semantic features

*Take react* is a Pidgin expression used to represent the presidency's response in an informal and accessible way.

*Wetin go happun* means "what will happen," expressing future tense in Pidgin through the auxiliary *go* combined with the base verb *happun*.

Ideologically, EX 1 emphasizes political accountability, scrutiny of leadership, and accessibility through the use of the US court and Tinubu, reflecting a "them versus us" perspective.

Semantically, *take react* refers to borrowing words that seek an explanation of the presidency's reaction to the legal order, and possible future developments. *Wetin go happun next* connotes the conventionalisation of Pidgin lexis with a standard English tone.

Contextually, the headline seeks public opinion and interpretation of this political event.

### **SFG metafunctions**

Ideational: shows government reaction to international legal developments.

Interpersonal: employs *how...take react...* and *wetin go happun next?* to show skepticism and promote active questioning.

Textual: combines past action and future consequence, creating cohesion between events.

## **EX 2. Youth Corper Faces Free Speech Test**

Category 1: Government Policies (17 March 2025)

### **Lexical choices**

*Youth Corper wey call Tinubu 'terrible president' break any law? (Wetin NYSC Bye-Law Tok).*

### **Lexico-semantic features**

*Youth Corper* refers to a member of NYSC. This demonstrates lexical borrowing and abbreviation from a formal English word into Pidgin.

*Wetin NYSC Bye-Law Tok?* is a direct Pidgin-English blend in interrogative form, meaning “What does the NYSC bye-law say?”.

Category 1 is a critique of the government versus NYSC discipline, framed as a “them versus us” ideology. The ideological tension is between democratic free speech and NYSC loyalty or discipline. Semantically, the lexical item *terrible president* is a negative evaluation of the government. Contextually, EX 2 is an expression of frustration over economic hardship. Legally, human rights protect freedom of speech, but in this case, it is not clearly stipulated by NYSC law.

### **SFG metafunctions**

Ideational: raises a legal question related to freedom of speech.

Interpersonal: uses *terrible president* as an evaluative phrase and a questioning tone to express public concern.

Textual: begins with the subject (*Youth Corper*) and ends with the legal debate, giving it a cause-and-effect framing.

### **EX 3. Reps Members Take Rivers Assembly**

Category 2: Legislative Activities (15 April 2025)

#### **Lexical choices**

*Who be di House of Reps members wey go begin do Rivers House of Assembly work?*

#### **Lexico-semantic features**

*Who be* is a Pidgin expression “who are,” functioning as a subject–verb interrogative.

*Wey* is a relative pronoun in Pidgin, meaning “who” or “that,” used to introduce relative clauses.

*Go begin do* refers to a Pidgin future tense framing, meaning “will start doing,” combining the future auxiliary *go* with *begin*, and the base verb *do* to indicate imminent action.

Referentially, the headline questions that federal lawmakers would take over legislative duties meant for the Rivers State assembly. EX 3 connotes a question that expresses uncertainty or skepticism about federal intervention in state legislative matters.

Contextually, this involves the political crisis in Rivers State.

Category 2 is the conflict between the state governor and factions of the state assembly, using “them versus us” and power struggle ideologies that reflect criticism, satire, or concerns about federalism, legitimacy, and political power in Nigeria.

### **SFG functions**

Ideational: refers to unusual interference or overlap of responsibilities.

Interpersonal: uses an interrogative tone (*Who be...?*) to question legitimacy and provoke critical thinking.

Textual: employs the expression *wey go begin do...* to create a narrative framing showing a future tense that denotes undecided action.

## **EX 4. Nigeria Stop Coup for Benin Republic**

Category 2: Legislative Activities (8 December 2025)

### **Lexical choices**

*Five tins to know about wetin hapun (Tori wey long says on Sunday, some soldiers storm one TV station for di Republic of Benin wia dem bin declare say dem don overthrow di civilian govmnt. But anoda report wey later come out from govmnt confam say di coup wey di soldiers try do no succeed. Di soldiers bin criticise how President Talon dey run di govmnt and kontri. So wetin we know about di?)*

### **Lexico-semantic features**

*Wetin hapun* means “what happened, an informational Pidgin expression used to indicate inquiry or curiosity about events.

*Di* (occurs 5 times) is a common Pidgin lexical item for “the,” functioning as a definite article.

*Wia dem bin* is an expression mix of Nigerian English and Pidgin, implying “where they have been” or “that they declare,” showing semantic adaptation and context-dependent meaning.

*Dem don* means “they have,” marking completed action (perfect aspect) in the Pidgin.

*Anoda, govmnt, confam* are Pidgin spellings for “another,” “government,” and “confirm,” illustrating orthographic adaptation from English to reflect phonological and informal language use in media.

Ideologically, the headline frames a power struggle between the military and civilian authority. It contrasts democratic governance with military rule, indicating the “them versus us” ideology that reinforces the legitimacy and stability of the civilian government.

Semantically, Category 2 functions as a news briefing that describes a developing event in the *Republic of Benin* against President Patrice Talon. Connotatively, the coup attempt was labeled as an illegitimate challenge to the democratic order while acknowledging grievances.

Contextually, EX 4 is an explanation about a suspected coup attempt and clarification on its outcome to the West African Pidgin audience.

### **SFG metafunctions**

Ideational: offers information on an attempted coup and who stopped it.

Interpersonal: makes use of the expression *wetin hapun* “what happened” to reflect a tone of public awareness and update.

Textual: begins with an informational cue to past military action, making clear the misconceptions.

## **EX 5. Natasha Akpoti Sues Lawmaker**

Category 3: Legal Cases Involving Politicians (8 April 2025)

### **Lexical choices**

*Why Senator Natasha Akpoti dey sue fellow lawmaker 5 billion naira (Akpabio Deny Natasha Sexual Harassment Allegation: Senate Reject Natasha Akpoti Petition against Senate President).*

### **Lexico-semantic features**

*Dey sue* is a progressive aspect meaning “is suing.” It simplifies the legal issue and makes it more accessible to a wider audience.

*Fellow lawmaker* is a standard lexical item with an informal tone (fellow senator), indicating that legal action demands financial compensation for alleged wrongdoing.

Semantically, the headline denotes a legal and political dispute involving conflict between two senators, a legal demand for damages (₦5 billion), and Senate involvement. EX 5 connotes a lawsuit, denial of allegations, and Senate rejection.

Contextually, the headline reflects Nigeria's contemporary politics, power, gender representation, media framing of political conflict, and public opinion.

Legal cases involving politicians use power struggles and gender-biased ideologies to portray the "them versus us" justice in Nigerian politics.

### **SFG metafunctions**

Ideational: questions the legal action and monetary claim in the national assembly.

Interpersonal: uses the lexical term *Why* to make the reader seek justification, adding an inquisitive tone.

Textual: opens with the reason clause, signaling cause and effect for what follows thereafter.

## **EX 6. Akpabio Denies Natasha Allegation**

Category 3: Legal Cases Involving Politicians (5th March 2025)

### **Lexical choices**

*Akpabio deny Natasha sexual harassment allegation plus wetin happun for Senate ontop dis mata (Senate Reject Natasha Akpoti Petition against Senate President).*

### **Lexico-semantic features**

*Wetin happun* uses a questioning verb, common in legal cases.

*Ontop dis mata* is a Pidgin expression, meaning “concerning this issue.”

Contextually, the BBC headline refers to a controversy in the Senate involving Godswill Akpabio (the Senate President) and Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan (a senator) on a legislative dispute and allegation of sexual harassment. Ideologically, the case involves “them versus us,” which reflects deeper perspectives about power, gender, and authority. The ideology reflects tensions between female representation and a male-dominated power hierarchy. Semantically, the headline reports that Akpabio denied the allegation, the Senate rejected the petition, and the narration adopts a neutral standpoint.

### **SFG functions**

Ideational: reveals an allegation and the Senate’s response.

Interpersonal: uses *wetin happun* and *ontop dis mata* to give it an emotional and confrontational tone.

Textual: uses the expression *plus wetin happun* to add a sequential question and update to avoid future occurrences.

## **EX 7. PDP Governors: Road to 2027**

Category 4: Political Party Announcements (16 April 2025)

### **Lexical choices**

*Wetin PDP governors position mean for di party ahead of 2027 (PDP Reject Coalition with SDP, Labour Party).*

### **Lexico-semantic features**

*Wetin* is a Pidgin lexical item for “what”; an interrogative form used to introduce questions.

*Di* is used as an article substitution for “the,” serving a definite determiner function in Pidgin syntax.

*Mean* is borrowed from English but used in an informal, direct sense, and reflects semantic adaptation in Pidgin.

Semantically, the headline is an explicit message that the governors of the PDP have decided not to form a coalition with other opposition parties, such as the SDP and the Labour Party, ahead of the 2027 Nigerian general election. EX 7 asserts that PDP prefers independence and strategic self-reliance in the upcoming 2027 elections.

The context reflects current opposition parties in Nigeria after the 2023 election, where the opposition vote was divided among several parties. The ruling party, APC, led by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu won. After the 2023 election, analysts and politicians suggested that opposition parties such as PDP, Labour Party, and SDP should form alliances to challenge APC in 2027, but it seems opposition parties have a conflict of interest.

Ideologically, “them versus us” involves the Labour Party/SDP’s interest in alliance and PDP dominance. Rejecting a coalition suggests an attempt to maintain party identity, instead of merging interests with other opposition parties. The ongoing debates suggest two things: internal power by PDP leaders to retain control or unite with other parties (Labour Party/SDP) as a strategy for defeating the ruling party (APC) in 2027.

### **SFG functions**

Ideational: expresses concern about the implications of party positioning and its effect on the future election.

Interpersonal: uses a question *wetin...mean?* to create a curious and engaging tone, encouraging public awareness.

Textual: is structured around *wetin* to show the issue and signal a future-looking mood toward 2027.

## **EX 8. Opposition Parties Fate Dey Shake**

Category 4: Political Party Announcements (11 April 2025)

### **Lexical choices**

*Wetin be di fate of major opposition parties for Nigeria? (Internal Crisis in PDP, APC, Labour Party: SDP Get Hope?)*

### **Lexico-semantic features**

*Wetin be di fate* is a Pidgin interrogative meaning “what is the fate.” It is used to introduce questions and set a tone of inquiry or curiosity.

*Be* is used as a simplified form of the verb “to be,” used to link the subject with its complement, functioning as a copula.

*Di* is an article substitution for “the.” In Pidgin, *di* replaces the definite article to indicate specificity.

*Fate* is borrowed from Standard English, meaning “destiny” or “future outcome,” reflecting semantic borrowing and adaptation in Pidgin.

The headline uses interrogative framing and evaluative lexical choices to present uncertainty and competition. It contrasts a future outcome (crisis) with fate (hope) in the ongoing leadership disputes and restructuring among opposition parties before 2027.

Category 4 encourages audiences to evaluate party stability and leadership competence, shaping public perception about which parties are viable alternatives in the next election. It situates instability within the general struggle for opposition relevance and electoral competitiveness in Nigeria.

EX 8 uses the “divide and rule” ideology that compares uncertainty (fate, crisis) with possibility (hope) by emphasizing “internal crisis.” The discourse constructs the opposition parties as weak, fragmented, and incapable of challenging power effectively in 2027.

### **SFG metafunctions**

Ideational: includes the copular verb *be* to show a state of being disunited or a political experience; *For Nigeria* indicates a national crisis.

Interpersonal: uses the expression *wetin be...* as an informal Pidgin framing to mean “what is...” and is often used to pose thoughtful or provocative questions. EX 8 shows a neutral but curious tone, prompting readers to think or speculate.

Textual: the headline starts with *wetin be*, which questions, places emphasis on uncertainty, and provokes public concern.

### **Ex 9. Labour Party Crisis Deepens**

Category 5: Political Controversies and Conflicts (9 April 2025)

#### **Online lexical choices**

*Labour Party crisis and all di drama wey don happun*

#### **Lexico-semantic features**

*All di drama* is a Pidgin idiom for informal and emotive (all the events).

*Don happun* refers to completed action (perfect aspect), which means “has happened.”

Metaphorically, EX 9 describes the series of controversies, accusations, suspensions, court cases, and confrontations that have occurred in the *Labour Party*. The word “all the drama” here is figurative, suggesting chaos, threats, and disputes. This headline means a prolonged internal conflict in the *Labour Party* marked by disagreements and controversies.

The context highlights instability within the *Labour Party* and the media portrayal of the conflict as chaotic drama in a theatre. The drama inside the *Labour Party* after the 2023 elections includes the

party's national leadership, disputes over control, and disagreements between different factions linked to flagbearers like Peter Obi and Julius Abure (party chairman).

EX 9 shows the post-2023 election leadership disputes and factional power struggles ideology.

### **SFG metafunctions**

Ideational: describes internal conflict within the Labour Party.

Interpersonal: uses the expression *all di drama* to add emotive and evaluative information, indicating turbulence or scandal.

Textual: is framed as a narrative and summary of the crisis as an unfolding mood.

## **EX 10. President Wins Praise over Trump**

Category 5: Political Controversies and Conflicts (13th March 2025)

### **Lexical choices**

*Di president wey dey win praise for how she takes handle Trump and im policies* (Claudia Sheinbaum)

### **Lexico-semantic features**

*Wey dey win praise* means “is receiving praise.”

*She takes handle* uses informal Pidgin idiomatic framing to mean “she managed/dealt with.”

*Im policies* “his policies” is a possessive in Pidgin expression as an example of functional word localisation.

Connotationally, the headline means that Claudia Sheinbaum is being praised for her leadership and diplomatic management of issues related to Donald Trump and his policies.

The context shows effective leadership in international diplomacy and the role of Mexico's leader under pressure from the United States

government.

Ideologically, the BBC News uses “them versus us” (Mexico vs. the United States) and portrays her as a strong national leader, a protector of Mexican interests, and a counterbalance to Trump-style nationalist policies.

### **SFG metafunctions**

Ideational: adds an achievement mood, showing contrast with Trump’s leadership.

Interpersonal: is represented by the expression *wey dey win praise...* and conveys approval and admiration, showing a favorable event.

Textual: presents a comparison in the simple tense (*dey win...*) by placing Trump and his policies as a contrast to Sheinbaum’s.

The findings in this section present lexical choices in political discourse not as neutral but as ideologically, contextually, and semantically loaded. Lexico-semantic features and metafunctions have linguistic features that shape public awareness of political events and influence political discourse in the media.

### **5.3. Statistical Distribution of Pidgin Political News Headlines in BBC**

This section presents the distribution of pidgin lexical choices across 5 categories of 10 headlines in BBC News, listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Pidgin Lexical Choices Across Categories

Categories	Number of Words in BBC	Frequency of Pidgin in BBC	Percentage of Total Pidgin in BBC (%)	Lexical Proportion (%)
1	72	16	15.5	22.2
2	106	41	39.8	38.7
3	57	10	9.7	17.5
4	58	14	13.6	24.1
5	56	22	21.4	39.3
Total	349	103	100	29.5

Table 3 shows a total of 349 lexical items in *BBC News Pidgin*, 103 of which are Pidgin frequency of occurrences, representing an overall lexical proportion of approximately 29.5%. Category 2 records the highest frequencies with 41 occurrences, accounting for 39.8%, while Category 3 shows the lowest frequency with 10 occurrences. Conversely, Category 3 contributes only 9.7% of the Pidgin linguistic lexis proportion of 17.5%, significantly below the total average (29.5%). The analysis identified 349 total lexical items across 10 headlines, of which 103 were classified as *Nigerian Pidgin* lexical forms. This represents approximately 29.5% of the lexical items in the dataset. Rather than measuring lexical density in the traditional Hallidayan sense, which refers to the ratio of lexical to grammatical words in a clause (Halliday 1985), the present study calculates the proportion of Nigerian Pidgin lexical items within the headlines to determine the extent to which Pidgin lexis contributes to headline framing in *BBC News Pidgin*. This statistical reduction aligns with its

in-depth lexico-semantic framing and metafunctional role, where clarity and informational precision take precedence over numerical generalisation.

#### 5.4. Discussion

The analysis of *BBC News Pidgin* headlines reveals how language use and lexical choice shape the representation of political events in Nigeria. This discussion interprets these linguistic features in relation to SFG, the research objectives, and relevant literature. The findings show that lexical choices contribute significantly to portraying Nigerian politics based on the three SFG metafunctions. As shown in Table 2, the findings across five categories demonstrate a tendency toward conciseness, clarity, and figurative expressiveness consistent with the communicative goals of *BBC News Pidgin* reporting.

The first category, Government Policies, highlights official decisions, reforms, and national directives. The analysis focuses on lexical choices used to report government reactions to legal or diplomatic issues. Expressions such as *how... take react* and *wetin go happun next* frame political events as ongoing developments and invite readers to anticipate future outcomes. Ideologically, these choices construct a “them versus us” perspective, positioning government authorities in contrast to the public or other nations, such as the United States.

Headlines such as *Youth Corper wey call* and *Wetin NYSC Bye-Law tok* introduce debates about freedom of speech, authority, and legal consequences, often implying criticism of political leadership. Expressions like *take react*, *court order*, and *probe records* convey authority and political action while remaining accessible. These headlines also demonstrate code-mixing, combining Pidgin with English acronyms and proper names such as FBI, DEA, NYSC, Youth Corper, and Tinubu, illustrating Pidgin’s flexibility in reporting local

and international political issues.

Within the SFG framework, the ideational represents legal and political processes, the interpersonal invites public evaluation, and the textual links current developments with past actions and potential consequences. The lexical and semantic features illustrate how EX 1 and EX 2 Pidgin blends informal and formal language to communicate political and legal issues in a clear, relatable, and culturally meaningful way.

The second category, Legislative Activities, focuses on parliamentary debates and legislative oversight. Headlines in this category employ process-oriented verbs, lexis such as *criticise how President Talon dey run di govment*, *sue fellow lawmaker*, *harassment allegation*, and *petition against Senate President*. These lexical choices simplify complex legislative procedures and present them in a relatable narrative form. Simplified grammatical structures, including interrogatives, verbal constructions, and tense markers, are used to enhance accessibility and expressiveness. EX 3 headlines highlight political irregularities or controversial legislative actions, emphasising tensions and power struggles within Rivers State legislature. EX 4 report events such as attempted coups, presenting them as conflicts between military actors (“them”) and civilian authorities (“us”) while clarifying uncertain outcomes. These lexical choices emphasize governance instability and political rivalry.

Within SFG, the ideational represents governance processes, the interpersonal encourages public reflection, and the textual organises events by linking past developments with potential future implications. Category 2 headlines demonstrate linguistic flexibility and contextual relevance in reporting political and government developments.

The third category: Legal Cases Involving Politicians examines headlines concerning legal disputes involving two politicians (male and female). Expressions such as *dey sue*, *fellow lawmaker*, and

references to allegations or petitions frame political disagreements as formal legal conflicts involving authority, accountability, and Senate power. Although these headlines report legal accusations and denials, the use of familiar Pidgin vocabulary ensures readability and audience engagement. In EX 6 cases, details such as financial claims (e.g., 5 billion naira) heighten public interest in the controversy. Idiomatic language like *plus wetin happun ontop dis mata* signals the continuation of unresolved issues and encourages readers to follow ongoing developments. These lexical choices highlight ideological themes such as power struggles, gender representation, and political rivalry.

In SFG metafunctions, the ideational represents legal processes, the interpersonal conveys confrontation and public evaluation, and the textual links events through sequential or cause-and-effect relationships.

The fourth category, Political Party Announcements, includes headlines focusing on internal party crises, leadership decisions, and candidate selection. Interrogative forms such as *Wetin...* present political developments as issues open to public judgment, highlighting party divisions, coalition strategies, and electoral prospects ahead of the 2027 elections. Lexis such as *pick, endorse, opposition, and election strategy* signal shifts in party positioning, while conflict-related expressions like *drama, accuse, probe, and court order* frame politics as a struggle for power and accountability. EX 7 and EX 8 headlines use simplified syntax and adapted English forms to make political discourse accessible while preserving expressive meaning.

Within SFG, the ideational represents political strategies and leadership actions, the interpersonal engages readers through questioning and evaluation, and the textual gives information by connecting past controversies with present developments and future possibilities or outcomes.

The final category 5: Political Controversies and Conflicts contains headlines centred on allegations, investigations, and political disputes.

Lexis such as *accuse*, *probe*, *charge*, *arrest*, and *court order* construct tension and uncertainty, thereby enhancing the newsworthiness of political events through representations of conflict and accountability.

For example, EX 9 headline referring to turmoil within the Labour Party uses the lexis *drama* to metaphorically frame the crisis as a spectacle, signaling instability and inviting audience curiosity. This reveals the ideational representation of party conflict and the interpersonal by encouraging evaluative responses from readers. EX 10 headline evaluates the leadership of Claudia Sheinbaum in relation to Donald Trump through the expression *win praise*, which means positive appraisal. Contextually, the headline draws on diplomatic tensions between Mexico and the United States, particularly debates surrounding migration and border policy. Ideologically, the evaluative framing positions Sheinbaum as a competent leader, while the explicit use of the pronoun *she* shows female political authority, subtly challenging gendered representation that traditionally associates political power with male leadership, unlike Natasha's incident in Senate House or *NYSC Youth Corper freedom of speech*.

Table 3 shows that the distribution of Pidgin in *BBC News* headlines reflects functionally motivated language choices. Across the five categories, the total lexical count is 349 (69.8%), while Pidgin occurrences account for 103 lexes (20.6%). The distribution is therefore moderate but patterned rather than random in *BBC News Pidgin*. Category 2 contributes the highest number of Pidgin lexical choices (41), representing 39.8% of all Pidgin occurrences despite comprising only 30.4% of the total word count. Categories 2 and 5 also display the highest lexical proportions, indicating a stronger reliance on Pidgin in reporting legislative actions and political controversies.

From an SFG perspective, this pattern demonstrates the role of Pidgin lexis in realising metafunctions. Pidgin lexical choices represent everyday political processes while simultaneously fostering solidarity

and inclusiveness between the news platform and its audience. BBC involves (1) high interpersonal (solidarity and inclusiveness), (2) ideational experiential function (daily processes and participations), and textually, the patterned distribution of Pidgin contributes to a hybrid news register, narrative organisation, and coherence. The alternation between Pidgin and Standard English features supports effective information flow, allowing messages to be expressed clearly while maintaining accessibility.

Categories with a lower Pidgin proportion of 29.5%, such as legal cases, perform explanatory roles where reduced Pidgin usage enhances precision, which is central to the *BBC News* mandate for public information dissemination. These headlines demonstrate that Pidgin is more than an informal lingua franca; it functions as a medium for political communication. The use of Pidgin allows for readability because it simplifies grammar and lexical choices, making the news understandable to the reader. The role of Pidgin in Nigerian political news is characterised by significant social and political implications. Pidgin functions as a common language that connects people across different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, making information accessible to everyone. In contrast to Standard English, which can sometimes leave out those who are uneducated or from rural areas, Pidgin encourages inclusivity and active participation. The use of gendered language in headlines, like ... *she takes handle Trump*... in contrast to *Natasha* and the *corper*, indicates a change in societal narratives, highlighting the importance of female political leadership, a topic that has not received much attention in Nigerian politics. This shift reflects changing cultural views on gender and power struggles in politics, which is confirmed by several studies (Adebayo 2023; Agbo and Plag 2020; Akande 2010; Dunmire 2012; Ehineni 2014; Mosunmola 2023; Yuguda 2024).

Semantically, these headlines convey referential (denotational)

meanings that label events, states, or political categories. In this sense, they function as semantic condensers, replacing longer Standard English expressions normally used in formal media discourse. For instance, the lexis *drama* may denote crisis or conflict, while *take react* can refer either to a literal action or, idiomatically, attitude depending on context. These lexical choices represent political events and processes rather than directly expressing interpersonal relationships. Over time, with repeated use in news discourse, many Pidgin idioms undergo conventionalisation, gradually becoming a familiar phrase of journalistic style. As a result, their earlier associations with informality or solidarity weaken, while their referential meaning and cultural acceptability become stabilised in media reporting. The lexical item *drama* functions as a nominalisation that condenses complex political processes such as conflict, governance failure, or party confrontation into a single abstract event. This condensation can obscure agency and responsibility by shifting attention from specific actors and causes to the drama of the event itself. Idioms such as *all di drama* may also evoke a sarcastic or trivialising tone that aligns audiences through shared scepticism, reducing social distance while downplaying the seriousness of Labour Party events. Through this idiomatic framing, political conflict is simplified and presented as recurring instability. Lexical items such as *wey go begin do* further dramatise political conflict by signaling urgency or impending action.

Language choice can also reshape assumptions about authority, social alignment, and power relations without altering the topic itself. The Pidgin interrogative *wetin* does more than request information; it implicitly demands accountability and invites audience critical thinking. Its use in BBC News headlines signals cultural proximity and constructs an “them versus us” ideology, positioning audiences alongside ordinary citizens in contrast to political elites. By selecting *wetin* instead of Standard English *what*, the discourse shifts away

from elite linguistic norms toward a localised communicative style in which meaning is negotiated through everyday language practices.

Interrogative headlines such as *Wetin to sabi?* and *Wetin happun?* introduce a conversational tone that draws readers into the discourse. Lexis such as *happun*, *drama*, and *mata* rely on culturally familiar language use that enhances relatability and memorability. These questions also frame political events as unfolding issues, foregrounding emotional reaction rather than detailed analytical explanation. These choices not only make the content accessible but also influence how the public connects with political narratives. The lexical choices and patterns reveal a notable preference for idiom, interrogation, and simplified syntax. Frequently occurring items such as *wey*, *dey*, *go happun*, and *mata* carry semantic and functional significance within the discourse. The analysis identifies recurring ideological themes, including them-versus-us positioning, power struggles, internal party conflict, governance debates, gender representation, and public accountability. These patterns highlight the role of Nigerian Pidgin as a communicative medium capable of presenting complex political realities in accessible and culturally acceptable ways to frame politics in Nigeria.

The study used a mixed approach to analyse ten purposively selected headlines from *BBC News Pidgin*. Meaning in discourse emerges from how linguistic functions within communicative structures rather than from simple frequency counts. Therefore, high-frequency lexis such as *wey*, *wetin*, *dey*, *di*, *happun*, and *mata* may reflect editorial style, topical emphasis, or genre conventions rather than fixed lexico-semantic meanings. However, meaning is realized not only through metafunctions but also discourse features such as mood structure, evaluation, addressivity, and inclusiveness, which shape the relationship between the BBC writer and the audience.

Data collection does not extend to the analysis of news headlines

disseminated by other media outlets, nor does it examine audience perception or the potential impact of these headlines on public opinion. Its scope is constrained by a focus on written headlines, thereby excluding other modes of communication in Pidgin such as radio broadcasts, televised debates, social media commentary, and informal interpersonal discourse. Headlines that were advertisements or unrelated to politics were excluded. Only those headlines that featured significant lexical features suitable for analysis were included in the sample. A mixed approach was suitable for data analysis and ensured it was intentional, focused, and aligned with research objectives. The qualitative analysis supports data collection that determines the quantitative proportion of Pidgin idioms and lexical choices, providing quantitative support for qualitative interpretations of the inclusive lexico-semantic and metafunction analysis of Pidgin in a linguistically diverse society such as Nigeria, where Standard English does not always guarantee accessibility or relatability.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper examined the lexico-semantic role of Pidgin in ten headlines published by BBC News. The study concludes that Pidgin, as an informal language, has linguistic capabilities of communicating complex political ideas with clarity, inclusiveness, and cultural relevance. From an ideational perspective, Pidgin lexis is used to construe political realities in experiential terms that connect with readers. Interpersonally, Pidgin lexical choices serve as a medium for solidarity, inclusiveness, and interaction, reducing social distance between news producers and readers. Textually, framing patterned and code-switching between Pidgin and Standard English lexis contributes to narrative organisation and information flow, balancing accessibility

with informational clarity. Through lexical choices, BBC headlines inform, persuade, and evoke diverse meanings, thereby contributing to political participation and public awareness. By using culturally familiar lexis, Pidgin creates a communicative space that bridges linguistic hierarchies and fosters interpersonal interaction, which reinforces *BBC News Pidgin's* role as an accessible yet authoritative news platform. The study shows how *BBC News* constitutes a hybrid news register in which Pidgin is not merely a marker of informality but a meaning-making process that supports SFG metafunction of ideational clarity, interpersonal inclusiveness, and textual coherence, thereby enhancing ideological framing in political discourse. *BBC News* uses lexical framing to enhance inclusiveness, reduce linguistic barriers, and structure discourse in ways that reveal Nigeria's multilingual reality. By employing Pidgin idioms and lexical features across metafunctions, it expands public access to news and redefines conventional norms of broadcast journalism. This study contributes to research on political discourse, emphasising the need to recognise Nigerian Pidgin as a valuable medium in the media. Future research could explore comparative framing across Pidgin and Standard English news in many stations. Such an inquiry would add to the communicative significance of Pidgin in contemporary political discourse.

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