

Pragma-Semantic Silences in the Nigerian 2011 Presidential Elections News reports

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Abstract

The Nigeria 2011 presidential election was the most violent in the history of democratic processes in Nigeria as several hundreds of people were killed and thousands displaced as a result of the post-election violence across the country (United States Institute of Peace, 2011). While the ruling party (the People's Democratic Party) claimed the election was free and fair, the opposition claimed otherwise. This study, therefore, uses the pragma-semantic silences in presuppositions to examine the election news reports in order to unveil the ideological stances in the representation of the election. This is because presuppositions could be both semantic and pragmatic inferences, which are most often silent in texts, and are capable of concealing ideologies. Khaleel's (2010) category of presupposition triggers is adopted and six national daily newspapers were selected for this study. The study observes that even though the Nigeria 2011 presidential election was the most violent, this reality does not seem to preoccupy the representation in the news reports as there were more of presupposition triggers supporting the ideology of free fair and peaceful election.

63

Keywords

Elections news reports, media representation, Nigeria, Presupposition, Silence

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Introduction

The debate on presupposition was birthed in 1892 by Frege, a German Logician. Presupposition is foregrounded information that a speaker assumes the hearer shares with him for their conversation to thrive. This mutual knowledge enables the speaker to be implicit, most times, in during conversation by assuming that the co-interactants are aware of what he does not directly mention. The concept was initially a semantic concept because of the role it performs in constructions of meanings. That is why semanticists such as Kempson (1975) posits that presupposition is a logical concept connected to truth-conditional semantics because even when the proposition is negated in an utterance, the truth value of the presupposed information does not change. As a semantic concept, it is tied to the encoded meanings in specific words referred to as ‘triggers’.

On the other hand, Stalnaker (1974) came up with pragmatic presupposition which is different from the literal meanings of an utterance. He opines that there is a need for context in order to correctly interpret an utterance in respect to its truth value. This is because presupposed information may not always be traceable to specific words or phrases but understood from general properties of context and expectations of participants in a discourse.

In the present study, we argue that the strategies of semantic and pragmatic presuppositions are used by media practitioners to conceal their slants thereby allowing readers to figure out the proposed or intended inferences in a news discourse by themselves. Media does not explicitly say everything most times but could imply more than what is said in their representation of persons or events. Many studies such as Bekalu (2006), Khaleel (2010), Mustapha Ahmed (2011), Zare et al., (2012), and Haile (2014) have examined presuppositions in media discourse. What are thus common to these studies are two conclusions: presuppositions are both semantic and pragmatic; and presuppositions have ideological or political intents. These conclusions mean that presupposition work from inside-out. That is, from the internal system of language to external and cultural knowledge. It is also used to mystify certain ideological or political issues to the interest of certain powerful groups.

Khaleel (2010) for instance, examines the presupposition triggers in journalistic texts and discovers that journalistic texts rely heavily on existential presupposition, followed by structural and lexical presuppositions. The frequency of each trigger shows that definite descriptions has the highest frequency under existential category, while adverbial triggers in structural presupposition and conventional items under lexical category. The finding on the prominent category of triggers is similar to Zare et al, (2012) study on broadcast news discourse from Press TV and CNN. They compared the presupposition triggers in the two media news reports and discovered that existential category of presupposition was dominant. In their conclusions, they were of the opinion that existential presupposition is ‘a constant property of news discourse’ partly because of its simple structures which are possessive constructions and definite noun phrase. As for Bekalu (2006), he looks at three Ethiopian newspapers in English to unveil the types of knowledge that are presupposed in news articles by journalists. That is whether the presupposed knowledge types are fairly or unfairly presupposed. The study is hinged on Speber and Wilson’s (1995, 1986) Relevance Theory and van Dijk’s (2001, 2005) typology of knowledge. The study discovers that in situations where the journalists make use of unfair

presuppositions, they tend to obscure certain issues which consequently condition their readers to invest more processing efforts to understand and achieve the required cognitive effect of the articles.

As part of the earlier debates on media studies, van Dijk is one of the notable scholars who have conducted a lot of researches on media role in the representation of people and events. His area of interest has usually been a socio-cognitive approach to the study of media. The approach takes cognizance of social and cognitive parameters in media representations. For instance, in his study on racism, van Dijk, (2012) opines that ethnic domination as represented in discourse is of two dimensions namely: social and cognitive. The social deals with the daily discriminatory practices against the 'out-groups' (ethnically different people) by excluding them from basic human rights or unequal social resources distribution; and the cognitive dimension is in form of stereotypes, prejudices and ideologies which motivate the discriminatory practices. The implication of these dimensions is that the discourse is made polarized where the 'we' or the 'ingroup' is represented positively while the 'outgroup' or 'them' is represented negatively. Therefore, having the knowledge of media representation of social and political activities helps to further come to terms with the reality that media plays a prominent role as the most influential source of influence and shaping of attitudes.

In Nigeria, the 2011 Presidential election news reports in the press could add to the knowledge of how media representation of political activities influences the attitudes of the people. The different representations have attracted studies from different fields of human endeavor and linguistics is not an exception. For instance, the recent waves of studies into political and media discourses have resulted into studies, such as language, ideology and power relations in newspapers and magazines headlines (Oyeleye & Osisanwo, 2013); styles in political slogans (Osisanwo, 2011); patterns of metaphorical language use in Kenya's political discourse (Orwenjo, 2010); representation of people in the news in the Nigerian print media (Alo, 2008); discourse pragmatics of news headlines and lead stories (Chiluwa, 2005) and many more.

Oyeleye and Osisanwo (2013) explore the linguistic feature of lexicalization in media representation of the 2003 and 2007 general elections in Nigeria with the aim of accounting for how different ideologies that permeated the representation of the elections are lexically anchored. The study relies on Fairclough's (1992) theory on wording to see how ideologies are expressed in *Tell* and *the News*; two famous Nigerian magazines. In their findings, they contend that lexicalization helps to unveil some of the ideologies of the selected magazines in respect to the general elections. Some of the ideologies are: election is fraudulent, rigged, dirty game and that the power of incumbency plays a crucial role in dictating the pendulum of the election. These claims are further investigated through overlexicalisation and re-lexicalization by adopting Osisanwo's (1986) formula to work out the thematic preoccupations in the news stories. It concludes that lexical choices are non-neutral because they could reveal the ideological focus of the magazines.

In another study, Taiwo (2007) takes issue with language, ideology and power relations in Nigerian Newspaper headlines. He situates the study within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and observes the peculiarity in the vocabulary and rhetorical devices in the selected Newspaper headlines. The study is not a completely political discourse study because it includes headlines on religious discourse, health and education. The study observes that the

headlines have hidden ideological meanings and leanings which are polarized between the powerful people or groups whose interests are being served and those whose interests are being undermined. This review, though largely a quantitative classification of headlines along their themes and surface structures, is significant because it lays a foundation for the present study by demonstrating that headlines are not ideologically neutral. They are the most powerful persuasive and auto-promotional tool used to attract newspapers readers (Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard, 1996).

The linguistic structures of two Egyptian newspapers, *Al-Gomhuria* and *Al-Dostour* in their framing of police news story were analyzed by Mahfouz (2013). He takes a comparative look at a totally state-controlled newspaper and an independent newspaper using CDA framework to explore the nature and scope of the newspapers' ideologies. This attempt is borne out of an assumption that language can be used in constructing ideologies and the ideologies can exercise a great deal of power in shaping the reader's interpretation. The study, therefore, examines the words of the headlines, the lead and the structure of the news stories to decipher ideological polarity between the newspapers. It observes that *Al-Gomhuria*, in its style and tone, follows the official line by showing solidarity with the police and downplays their negative side while *Al-Dostour* is biased against the police. The findings in this study are further evidences that news reporting is shaped by the ideologies of the owners which in turn usually have elements of bias against the other group. That is, news reporting is never neutral and ideology-free. That is why there is careful construction of news headlines, lead paragraphs and structures of news stories in order to reflect the ideological slant of the writer.

All the above studies indicate that countries on the African continent have witnessed different political issues in the 21st century and those issues have resulted into tribal conflicts, and in some cases, disunity and secession. Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa with over 180 million people according to the results of the National Population Commission's census of 2006. It has experienced its own instability too. Nigeria has had course to experience political struggles after independence in 1960 and by 1966 there was the first blooded coup d'état. The coup plunged the country into one military regime to another till 1979. By 1983, there was a democratically elected government which was later botched out by another successful military return. The military was therefore in power up to the year 1999 before they handed over to yet another democratically elected civilian government. The year marked the likely end of military governments in Nigeria and the country commenced another democratic system of government. There have been four different general elections since 1999; (2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015) but the 2011 presidential election was the most violent.

The media as a social institution that is expected to be objective is generally still being perceived as a ready tool to be used by powerful institutions in Nigeria. In that case, newspaper representation of events, such as the 2011 presidential election and other political activities in the country, may not be value-free but may be imbued with certain underlying ideologies and power play which, in turn, could impact on the outcomes of political events.

In this study therefore, we examined the structures of the news reports which indicate media bias of the election representation. This is in line with the opinion of van Dijk (1998, p. 10) that “in order to understand the role of the news media and their messages, one needs to pay detailed

attention to the structures and strategies of such discourses...”. This was done through the internal system of language (triggers) and the presupposed silences which are inferable in order to unveil the media slants in the representation of the election. The Nigerian 2011 presidential election is very significant in the annals of the country’s democracy. On one hand, it was the first time, in the history of the country’s democracy, in which someone (*Ijaw* man) from the minority group, would become the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria after many years of ‘political marginalization’ (Higgins, 2009). On the other hand, the 2011 election was the most violent as it claimed eight hundred (800) lives over three days in some parts of Nigeria and displaced 65,000 people, (United States Institute of Peace, 2011). Therefore, there was a lot politicking during and after the electioneering processes which might have also had considerable impacts on the representation of the presidential elections in the press.

1. Data Collection

The corpus used for the study is built as follows (see **Table 2**). A multistage sampling technique was adopted. This is because it involves different stages owing to the large number of daily newspapers in Nigeria. Also, each paper has several news articles and there is therefore the need to narrow down our selection to the needed news articles.

As a result, the initial stage had to do with random sampling of two national daily newspapers from each of the most populated states in the zones; Lagos, Kano, Benue, Bauchi, Rivers, and Anambra. The outcome gave us twelve national daily newspapers. The second stage was to random sample one newspaper from each city. These newspapers were selected from the national dailies that were kept by the national libraries in each of the states selected for this study. The total numbers of the newspapers are six. The last stage adopts a non-probability purposive random sampling whereby two (2) election news articles (the lead articles and one other news article) were selected from the newspapers. The total sample consists of twelve news reports selected from six (6) different newspapers in the country. The sampled news articles gave account of the voting processes, counting and the announcements of results by some electoral commissioners from some states of the federation. The newspapers are national dailies hence they have a general audience who are Nigerians and other nationals residing in the country. They do not have obvious ideological affinity or interest clearly stated in their publications with any political party or government but we do know that their representation of social and political events in the country may not be value-free.

Table 2: The sampling procedures adopted in the study

Stages	Processes	Newspapers	Total
Stage 1	Random sampling of two national daily newspapers from each of the most populated cities in the zones	<i>Punch, Nigerian Tribune, Guardian, New Nigeria, Daily Trust, Daily Triumph, Vanguard, This Day, The Nation, Trumpeta, The Truth, The Pointer</i>	12 newspapers
Stage 2	Selecting one newspaper each from each geo-political zone	<i>Nigerian Tribune, Punch, Guardian, New Nigeria, Daily Trust, This Day</i>	6 newspapers
Stage 3	Non-probability purposive random sampling of two election news reports		12 news articles (see Appendix)

It is important to state that there is no up-to-date statistics, to the best of our knowledge, which states the actual number of registered newspapers in Nigeria and the criteria for being called national dailies. However, the Nigerian Press Council came up with 46 daily newspapers in their 125 pages inventory of newspapers and magazines published in Nigeria. All daily newspapers attribute relevance to themselves by claiming that they are national. Therefore, this study posits that national dailies are the newspapers that discuss national issues and they are widely circulated in the most populated cities in Nigeria and can also be found in the repositories of the national libraries. The newspapers as we found out above are *Punch*, *Tribune*, *The Guardian*, *New Nigerian*, *Daily Trust*, and *This Day*.

Six lead articles were purposively selected from these newspapers. The lead articles are the major articles which are positioned on the first pages of the newspapers and they are most times conspicuously printed in bold letters to attract readers. They are also articles that reported the outcomes of the presidential election. To reduce the bias that could result from this selection, we limited our article selection to the ones published on 17 and 18 of April, 2011 when the results of the election were reported across the country.

The six lead articles were complemented by purposively selecting one other news article each which discourses the outcomes of the election from all the newspapers under investigation. The selection makes the news articles twelve in number. The study also concentrated on the whole contents of the articles albeit the headlines and lead paragraphs were given more attention because they are most times concentrated on by readers. Also, in the preliminaries of the paper, especially in the structures of news media and theoretical framework, some of the examples cited are from the corpus and such examples are marked with their sources. They are however not part of the analysis under the analysis section. All the articles are labeled as samples 1-12, and a list is attached as appendix at the end of this study.

2. Structures of News in Print Media

News reports in print media constitute a particular genre of media discourse, thus should be accounted for in terms of their structures at different levels of linguistic descriptions. These descriptions should not be restricted to grammatical, phonological, syntactic or semantic structures of isolated words, phrases, or sentences as it is customary in structural or generative linguistics (van Dijk, 1988). Their descriptions should also include a social context. News reports can have local and global structures. These structures are not only about description of isolated sentences in terms of syntax, semantics and pragmatics; these account only for local structures of news reports (Aljayrudy, 2011). For van Dijk, (1998), he is of the opinion that a comprehensive description of news reports should account for both the micro level and macro level structures.

At the microstructural level, news reports are organized in propositions through different means, such as lexicalization, coherence, implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness, metaphors, and rhetoric. A proposition is the smallest unit of meaning constructs which are used to denote facts (van Dijk 1988). Consider the following example from the corpus of the study:

Hurricane Jonathan knocks out Buhari, others (*THE PUNCH*, Monday April 18, 2011, page 2).

This example contains one argument and a predicate and it is verifiable as true or false. In news discourse, an argument can be persons, groups and institutions.

Meanings and ideological stands can therefore, manifest through microstructures, such as lexicalization. The lexical items can reveal the ideological bias of the writer. For instance:

A confident President Jonathan...promised to quit his position if he fails to win the election (*SUNDAY PUNCH*, Sunday April 17, 2011, page 2)

The use of “confident” to qualify President Jonathan may not be neutral bearing in mind the caption of the article which claims that “Jonathan and Buhari are in a tight race”. Also, this can enhance ideological awareness because putting “confidence” at the sentence-initial position may represent the view of the newspapers. This may portend that the other contender, Buhari is not confident.

However, many of the structural properties in discourse, such as implications and presuppositions make their ideological beliefs implicit in discourse. For instance:

Jonathan sweeps South-West (*SUNDAY VANGUARD*, Sunday April 17, 2011, page 1)

The meaning in this example is contextually signaled. The context helps to presuppose that the reader is aware of the elections and that there are contenders and a region called South-West. Similarly, the verb “sweeps” connotes an overwhelming victory for Jonathan in the South-West, a zone that is regarded as the stronghold of the opposition. Without the background knowledge, it would be problematic assigning meaning out of context to this example. That is why it is of interest to note that most information required to understand and interpret discourse are socially shared by language users and members of a society. Therefore, speakers may not necessarily be explicit in most cases because they expect their listeners to activate their shared knowledge of the situation and culture in the interpretation of discourse.

69

The above expectation is required across newspapers stories and we can guess that much of the information that is captured is left implicit or presupposed. According to van Dijk, (2006: 12) “discourses are like proverbial icebergs; most of their meanings are not explicitly expressed but presupposed to be known, and inferable from general sociocultural knowledge”. Presuppositions are propositions which are assumed by the writer to be known by the reader based on what is included in the sentence and their shared social cultural knowledge. Some presuppositions are tied to the meaning of the lexical items while some are grammatically signaled.

Entailments and implicatures are also two concepts that are related to presuppositions. Entailment is also known as implication and according to Levinson (1983: 174) ”A semantically entails B if every situation that makes A true makes B true (A ||-B)”. In other words, it means that one proposition is contained within other proposition. For instance:

General Sanni Abacha was Nigeria Head of State in 1998. (*Not from the corpus*)

This means that Sanni Abacha was a Nigerian and was in the Military. The proposition “Head of State” entails another proposition which is “Sanni Abacha was in the Nigerian Army”. Similarly, the word “General” also includes another proposition which is “Sanni Abacha was a soldier”. This type of implication is a strong one because the relations between the propositions are obvious in the sense that, a “General”, for instance, is known to be a rank in the military. However, it is not in all cases that the meaning of the entailed proposition will be obvious or strong.

I am indeed happy that we are consolidating democracy (*SUNDAY PUNCH*, Sunday April 17, 2011)

The above sentence does not have direct or obvious entailed information which may be signaled by the lexical items in the sentence but that the president is “indeed happy” presupposes his acceptance and belief in the exercise. There can also be weak or subjective implications; these are referred to as implicatures. They are not explicitly said or written in discourse. That is why van Dijk (1988) observes that implied or presupposed proposition which is not expressed directly or explicitly in discourse is implicit information. In news discourse, many things are left implicit or taken for granted and all these information can be accounted for or realized through the understanding of the background knowledge that produces the particular news report. All these structural properties and examples are at the local level of discourse.

At the macro level structures, there are global topics, global themes and macro propositions which are organized at the global semantic level or semantic macrostructures. At the global pragmatic level, news reports accomplish macro speech acts. At the syntactic level, there is a syntactic or organizational pattern in form of news schemata which organizes the overall meaning of a text (syntactic superstructures) just like a syntactic form which also organizes meaning at the sentential or micro level. For instance, in everyday narrative schema, categories such as, Summary, Setting, Orientation, Complication, Resolution, Evaluation and Coda are likely features (van Dijk, 1988). This is also similar to Labov and Waletzky (1967) oral narrative stages; Abstract, Orientation, Complicating action, Evaluation, Result/resolution and Coda. If a category is missing from these categories, it may render the story as either incomplete or uninteresting.

News reports also have a similar hierarchical schema. They consist of conventional categories, such as headlines and lead, which form the summary category; body of the text which includes main events, context and history form the background category; verbal reactions or comments category can also include smaller categories, such as evaluation and expectations. Of all these categories, the most obligatory categories are the Summary and Episode categories (Bell, 1991; van Dijk, 1988) which include headlines and lead paragraphs. The present study, therefore, examined the headlines (at the macrostructural level) and other categories in the newspapers. Both micro and macrostructures can be deployed to achieve some form of representation of events and people.

3. Theoretical Underpinning

This study is hinged on Critical Discourse Analysis; a multidisciplinary framework which draws tools from different fields of studies, such as Linguistics, Media, Psychology, Philosophy, etc. Moreover, it is imperative to clearly indicate where the tools for any study are drawn from. Many researchers working on media discourses have adopted CDA framework in their studies. For instance, van Dijk (1991) studies news discourse and uses a sociocognitive model of CDA to focus on the nature of the reproduction of racism by the press. Chouliaraki (2005) analyzes the television footage of the September 11th attacks and the Iraq war using the same framework. Therefore, the adoption of CDA in media discourse is no longer novel, and irrespective of the different dimensions and models of the above researchers, “the focus of their studies remains the same; studying the linguistic features of media texts” (Macdonald, 2003). Moreover, Bell and Garrett (1998) opine that CDA is the standard framework for analyzing media texts. In this study, we adopted van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach to doing CDA in order to uncover hidden meanings and biases in the Nigerian 2011 presidential elections news reports. This approach is credited to Teun van Dijk. He opines that CDA should be performed based on a sound theory of context and that if contexts control discourse at all, it is only possible when they are conceived as cognitive structures of some kind (van Dijk, 2006; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). A similar opinion is held by Chilton (2005, as cited in Li, 2013) that CDA should attend to the cognitive dimension of discourse in social and political contexts. This is because cognition is seen as the lost segment of many Critical Linguistics studies. Therefore, mental models and context models are the major tenets of sociocognitive model of CDA. It means that, for discourse to be produced and comprehended, mental model is crucial. Discourse production and comprehension involve the formation, activation or actualization of a mental model which is long-stored personal experience (Li, 2013). Mental model is therefore a subjective representation of the events that make up the discourse. It includes personal knowledge, beliefs and opinions of the writers which may be controlled by ideologies. Context is the participant’s subjective definition of the situation i.e. what is relevant to the social situation by the participants (Van Dijk, 2009). Context models therefore, are the ‘participants’ mental models of communicative situations’ (Van Dijk, 2006). Contexts manage the mental models of any event regarding the knowledge to be considered relevant for the immediate communicative situation (Li, 2013).

In media discourse, the mental models of the journalist have a lot of influence on what s/he writes and how such models consequently determine the perception of the readers. The representation is also driven by the journalist’s ideology or the media institution’s stance on such event or people. The basic impact of this is polarizing the discourse by pitching ‘us’ (the powerful, government, elites) against ‘them’ (the opposition).

In this study, we draw on pragmatic tool of presupposition to unearth the ideological stances of the news representation of the Nigerian 2011 presidential election. From the introduction above, presupposition is based more on the actual linguistic structure of sentence than certain contextual assumptions or pragmatic inference. That is why Saeed (1997: 98) opines that “many presuppositions are produced by the presence of certain words”. In this study, therefore, both semantic and pragmatic presuppositions are collapsed as one. This is because semantic presupposition must be evaluated in the discourse participants’ common ground just like pragmatic presupposition, at times, needs to be encoded into linguistic structures through

‘presupposition triggers’ (Frege, 1980). Triggers are ‘presupposition-generating linguistic items’ (Levinson, 1983: 179) which signal the existence of presupposition. And these triggers help to achieve the speaker action of presupposing. It is worth mentioning that presuppositions also have ideological functions just like implicatures because they relate to general sociocultural knowledge or beliefs which are not asserted but could be inferred.

Reah (2002: 106) suggests three linguistic measures of how presupposition could be marked in discourse. First, certain lexical category, such as ‘change of state verbs’ and ‘implicative verbs’ (stop, begin, manage, forget) have presupposed meanings. For instance, ‘*have you stopped stealing?*’ presupposes that the person had stolen before. Secondly, the definite article, ‘the’ and possessive articles, ‘his/her-----’ presupposes existence of something. For example, ‘*the CPC candidate*’ (*Sunday Vanguard*, April 17, 2011, page 7)¹⁴ presupposes there is a candidate contesting under the CPC party and an existence of a party called CPC. Presupposition could also be triggered by wh-questions, such as ‘*why, who, when*’ and this is evident in example like, ‘*why do you want to abandon your family?*’ presupposes that the person being addressed does want to abandon his family. The fourth category which Richardson (2007: 64) calls nominal presupposition can be triggered by nouns and adjectives used to qualify noun phrases, ‘*Britain’s asylum system takes new hammering*’ (*Daily Express*, 25 Feb, 2005). The adjective new presupposes that Britain’s asylum has experienced old or past hammerings.

For Yule (2010), the categorization of presupposition triggers are in six (6) groups. They include: existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive, and counter-factual. However, Potts (2015) came up with seventeen categories of presupposition triggers and what is observable in his categories is that many of the categories could be collapsed into Yule’s (2010) groupings. The categories are: Aspectual predicates like ‘*continue*’ and ‘*stop*’; Attitude predicates like ‘*know*’, ‘*realize*’, and ‘*regret*’; Definite determiners and demonstratives; Indefinite determiners; Pronouns; Proper names; Quantifier domains; Sortal restrictions; Additive particles like ‘*too*’, ‘*also*’, and ‘*either*’; Adjunct clauses headed by prepositions like ‘*before*’ and ‘*after*’; Appositives Clefts; Discourse particles like ‘*even*’ and ‘*only*’; Implicative verbs like ‘*manage*’ and ‘*fail*’ Intonational contours, including topic and focus accents and verum focus; Evidentials; and Manner adverbs like ‘*quickly*’.

In this study, Khaleel (2010) categorization is adopted with some modifications. Khaleel tries to collapse Karttunen’s thirty-One presupposition triggers as (cited in Levinson 1983: 181-184), and Yule (1996: 28). The classification is in three types, namely: existential, lexical and structural. Each category has sub-categories that are modified based on the types of presupposition triggers found in our data. The major categories and their sub-constituents as we have in the news reports are shown in Figure 1 below.

¹⁴ In order to illustrate both the presentation of the used theory and how the analysis will be implemented subsequently, examples are taken from the corpus.

PRESUPPOSITION TRIGGERS		
Existential	Lexical	Structural
Definite descriptions	Implicative verbs	Cleft constructions
	Factive verbs	Wh-questions
	Change of state verbs	Adverbial clauses
	Counterfactual verbs	
	Conventional items	
	Iteratives	

Figure 2: Presupposition Triggers

3.1. Existential presupposition

Existential presupposition is achieved through names or definite phrases and possessive constructions. By using names or definite phrases as triggers, the writer is assumed committed to the existence of the referents he names. The sentence below presupposes the existence of a place acknowledged as the opposition's territory. It also implies that there is a group referred to as the opposition.

President Goodluck Jonathan...broke into the stronghold of the opposition.
(*Vanguard*, Sunday April 17, 2011, page 1)

3.2. Lexical presupposition triggers

These are forms of lexical items, such as verbs and adjectives which are interpreted when used as presenting some forms of non-asserted meanings. Lexical presuppositions include implicative verbs, factive verbs, change of state verbs, counter-factual verbs, conventional items and iteratives. Below is the explanation of each category.

Implicative verbs

In using implicative verbs, certain presupposition is invoked. For example, forget, try, manage, fail, etc. To Yule (1996) these types of verbs have asserted and presupposed meanings in their very usage. In Karttunen's example, '*John managed to open the door*' presupposes that he tried to open the door and he succeeded. If we have another example like, *he tried to escape from the police*. This means that the person made attempts but he did not succeed in escaping from the police.

Factive verbs

They presuppose the truth of their complement clauses. The presupposed information is usually realized on verbs, such as *know, regret, realize, amuse, agree, forced to, saw, appreciate*, and

phrases like *it is odd, it is sad, it is unfortunate, bear in mind* etc. These verbs are also referred to as ‘attitudes predicates’ (Beaver, 2010). For Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1971) cited in Levinson (1983: 181), factive verbs could also include: ‘*know, be sorry that; be proud that; be indifferent that; be glad that; be sad that*’. Consider the example below:

...It was high time politicians realized that power belongs to the people.
(*Sunday Punch*, April 17, 2011)

The example presupposes that the complement clause after the verb ‘*realized*’ is presented as a fact. It means that politicians did not realize before the election that power belongs to the people. The factive verb ‘realize’ presupposes that power indeed belongs to the people.

Change of state verbs

This is also referred to as ‘aspectual predicates’ (Potts, 2014) and it is another type of lexical presupposition where the verbs switch from one state to another such that the presupposed meaning in the verb did not hold prior to the change. The verbs include: *finish, enter come, go, begin, stop, continue; take; leave, start, carry on, cease, arrive, etc.* Consider the sentence below:

INEC stopped the announcements of the results at the Abuja collation centre...
(*The Punch*, April 18, 2011 page 2)

The asserted meaning here is that the action is no longer in process but was in progress at some time in the past. It also means that the announcements of result took place at the Abuja collation centre.

Counter-factual verbs

These are verbs that presuppose the opposite of what is being proposed in a complement clause construction. This means that such verbs are contrary to facts. Also, conditional expressions in subjunctive mood could also trigger falsity in expressions.

Conventional items

Presupposition can also be triggered by conventional meanings of lexical items despite the arguments by scholars that presupposition does not belong to semantic but pragmatic domain (Levinson, 1983: 204). He claims that presuppositions are not stable or context-independent aspects of meaning, and as a result, it should belong to pragmatics. However, Palmer (1981: 170) is of the opinion that presupposition is associated with specific features of lexical items. Levinson (1983: 206) also supports the same opinion that presuppositions could be ‘part of the conventional meaning of expressions, even though they are not semantic inferences’. The conventionality of meaning of words is not restricted to verbs, other classes of words such as nouns, adjectives and adverbs could also have presupposed conventional meanings. Consider the example below:

‘He lost the election’.
‘He is a Nigerian’.
(Not from the *corpus*)

The conventional meaning and the context of usage of the verb *'lost'* presupposes that he contested and did not win. Similarly, part of the conventional meanings of the noun *'Nigerian'* is that the person is from Africa.

Iteratives

Iterative is a term used to 'refer to an event which takes place repeatedly' (Crystal, 1997: 206). Levinson (1983: 182) states that iterative presupposition is associated with certain words, such as, *another; again; repeat; anymore; returned; another time; to come back and restore*. They are often adverbs, adjectives or main verbs. The main verbs are those that have morphological evidence of reiteration. In English, iterative could be marked morphologically, typically by adding an affix on the verb. An example like *'The police decided to reinvestigate the money laundry case against the president'* is presupposed information triggered by the morpheme (re). It presupposes that the police had investigated the case against the said president before.

It could also be done by reduplication (Greenberg et al., 1978) where the verb is mentioned successively. *John coughed and coughed* is iterative in its interpretation. It could mean John coughs repeatedly, and each time, he coughs with more intensity or for a prolonged period of time. Also, the words (*yet, anymore*) are adverbs while (*another*) is an adjective and (*rewrite*) is a verb. Adverbs like *'too'* and *'again'* also presuppose some sorts of repetitions. He locked the gate again presupposes he locked the gate before.

Consider the following example from the data:

The PDP had a smooth sail too in Benue,...
(*The Punch*, April 18, 2011, page 2)

75

The above is an example of iterative. It is triggered by the underlined adverb *too* which presupposes that PDP had won earlier in other places.

The third category that is adopted in this study is structural presupposition and it is explained below.

3.3. Structural presuppositions

This occurs when part of a sentence structure is presupposed or assumed to be true conventionally and regularly. When this type of structure occurs, the information therein is treated as true. Yule (2010: 28) believes that such structures could "be used by speakers to treat information as presupposed (i. e. assumed to be true) and hence to be accepted as true by the listener". According to Blaze (2013: 446), "structural presuppositions are effective in the form of a question where the option to negate the question, or otherwise answer in the negative, has been eliminated". The various forms of structural oppositions are cleft constructions, wh-questions, adverbial clauses, comparative constructions, counterfactual conditionals and non-restrictive clauses.

Wh-questions

Wh-questions are also known as *'information questions'* (Quirk et al, 1985: 817) and are formed with the aid of simple interrogative words, such as *who, whom, whose, what, which, when, where,*

how, why. The wh-elements (the clause element containing the wh-word) come first in sentences. In wh-questions, normal statement order of elements is altered through the inversion of subject and operator, and they have positive and negative realizations with their corresponding presuppositions. The presupposed statement contains an indefinite expression such as ‘*somebody*’ in place of the wh-element. The presupposed statement is assumed to be true by the user of the question.

Levinson (1983: 184) opines that Wh- questions ‘introduce the presuppositions obtained by replacing the wh-word by the appropriate existentially quantified variable, eg. *who by someone, where by somewhere, how by somehow, etc.* Levinson’s example ‘*Who is the professor of Linguistics at MIT*’ presupposes that someone is a professor at MIT. For Richardson (2007), an example like this has two questions: an explicit request to name someone and the presupposed question which is left implicit. Therefore, ‘*Who is the professor of Linguistics at MIT*’ requests the person being addressed to name the professor of Linguistics at MIT and it also presupposes the existence of a professor of Linguistics at MIT. Consider another example below:

‘When did he buy the house?’
(*Not from the corpus*)

This example is mostly likely to be interpreted conventionally that the information after the wh-question is already true. This presupposes that the person bought a particular house. It also presupposes an existence of ‘*he*’ and ‘*the house*’.

Relative/Adverbial clauses

Adverbial clauses are clauses that function as adverbs. They are introduced by subordinating conjunctions, such as *because, when, soon, until, before, if, provided, since, though, while, etc.* An adverbial clause modifies verbs, adverbs, and adjectives by signaling their place, time, manner, reason, condition, etc. The placement of adverbials in sentences could be initial, middle and final. They enjoy freedom of positioning. Adverbial clauses could trigger presuppositions in their main clauses. Consider the example below:

Former Chief of General Staff, Admiral Augustus Aikhomu, became vice-president under the Ibrahim Babangida military regime after the removal of of Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe...
(*Nigerian Tribune, April 18, 2011 page 53*)

The underlined is an adverbial clause of time or reason and it presupposes or confirms that *Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe* was removed.

Having explained the various forms of presuppositions, let us consider the following examples taken from the news reports. The examples are the ones that are used to support the oppositional ideologies of free and fair election, and an election bedeviled with malpractices. The examples are presented in tables 2, 3, and 4 below. In this study, we did not dwell much on existential presupposition. This is because we assumed that the types of knowledge that the news writers will presuppose which may likely not be ideological are existential. Similarly, the readers belong to the same epistemic community of being Nigerians.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Findings

In this section, we start by examining an aspect of lexicalization (Prenominal Adjectives) as used in the news reports to portray the presidential election and we also show how the prenominal adjectives suggest a biased representation which left readers into a positive inference and acceptance of the exercise. Then, we examined the presupposition strategies in the news reports. It must be noted that presuppositions could also manifest in form of polarities between one group and the other. In socio-cognitive approach, the most likely way of expressing polarity is saying positive things about 'Us' and negative things about 'Them'. That is a general feature of opposing groups, such as political parties, social actors participating in elections, media groups, etc. This feature is well encapsulated in what van Dijk (2003, p.44) refers to as *ideological square*.

- a) Emphasise positive things about *Us*
- b) Emphasise negative things about *Them*
- c) De-emphasise negative things about *Us*
- d) De-emphasise positive things about *Them*

In the news reports, there are two groups whose ideologies are represented. One group is portrayed in such a way that makes the outcome of the presidential election acceptable to the public, while the other group is presented in a way that suggests that the outcome of the election is rejected.

4.1. Prenominal Adjectives

A prenominal Adjective is used to modify a noun. The modification helps to elucidate or adjust the meanings of nouns that it precedes. This will allow a 'finer gradations of meaning' than the meanings which the nouns would have when used alone (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 526). Prenominal adjectives could reflect the writer's choice of expressions that will echo their ideologies or beliefs. In the data, different prenominal adjectives abound and they are classified into two groups; adjectives that present the outcome of the Presidential election as peaceful, organised and indeed won by President Jonathan, and adjectives that present the exercise as sham, violent and rigged.

Consider the following prenominal adjectives from the corpus:

- a) He said last week, there were obvious lapses which the party drew attention to in the elections...
- b) In Bauchi state, two persons were killed by irate youths for an alleged attempt to snatch a ballot box at Kofar Dumi Polling unit in Bauchi metropolis yesterday.(Sample 12)
- c) He said the college is a collation centre in Yalwa area of Bauchi state where youths caught the three who attempted to smuggle fake ballot boxes. (Sample 12)
- d) Wild jubilation in Gombe state yesterday greeted the announcement of results of the presidential polls...
- e) The PDP also took its winning magic to Kwara State where it scored 268,243 [votes] (Sample 4)
- f) The PDP had a smooth sail too in Benue, the home state of the President of the Senate
- g) Significantly, Dr Jonathan had a clean sweep in the Middle Belt of the country, a region populated by Northern ethnic minority groups. (Sample 6)

- h) From the already received results from virtually all the 35 states of the Federation, Jonathan maintained a comfortable lead...

The pronominal adjectives in the sentences above could be categorized into two groups: the group that negatively presents the Nigerian 2011 Presidential election news reports, and the one that presents the election in positive light. The underlined pronominal adjectives in sentences a-c (*obvious lapses, irate youths, fake ballot boxes*) suggest there are problems with the election. The election was characterized by killing and smuggling of ballot boxes. The adjectives (*irate*) used in qualifying the youths indicates that the youths were angry about something (the conduct of the election) part of which was the attempt to smuggle in (*fake*) ballot boxes.

In sentences d-h, the pronominal adjectives present an atmosphere different from the one in sentences a-c. *Wild, smooth, a clean and a comfortable* are all adjectives which precede nouns in sentences d-h. Meanwhile, the nouns they precede are the types that relate to the conduct of the election and performance of aspirants. These adjectives have positive interpretations and a peaceful atmosphere which could make the readers to infer that the exercise was free and fair. The pronominal adjectives show the presence of group polarization in the articles. One group is presented in negative terms while the opposing group emphasizes their own ‘positive-face’ by using positive pronominal adjectives to qualify their actions and the exercise. There are evidences of more positive pronominal adjectives than negative evaluators which portray the exercise and the main actors negatively. Other pronominal adjectives in the articles are: *massive turnout, free and fair election, wild jubilation, a carnival-like celebration, a mammoth crowd of voters, an exercise of comfort, democratically elected President, an ethnic minority president, clean sweep, national interest, winning magic, smooth sail, a comfortable lead, impressive victories, no victor, no vanquished*, (Positive Adjectives). *Foul play, crying wolf, electoral irregularities, outright lie, Mob attacks, a bomb blast, the explosion, youth restiveness, election violence, 20 thugs, widespread corruption, a lot of anomalies, main opponents* (Negative Adjectives). The pronominal adjectives also reflect the subjective judgment of the writer with some adjectives that could be classified on the far edge of ‘*objective scale*’ as presented below. The representation would have been a bit neutral if the pronominal adjectives on the objective side were used.

Objective ← ————— → **Subjective**
Adjective objective scale

1. **Objective** ← ————— → **Subjective**
Huge A carnival-like (celebration)
2. **Objective** ← ————— → **Subjective**
Large numbers A mammoth crowd (of voters)
3. **Objective** ← ————— → **Subjective**
Delightful Wild (jubilation)

The above adjectives ‘*wild*’ (jubilation); ‘*a carnival-like*’ (celebration); ‘*a mammoth crowd*’ (of voters); ‘*clean*’ (sweep), ‘*winning magic*’, ‘*smooth sail*’, ‘*a comfortable lead*’ are on the subjective axis of the adjective scale. The same nouns could have been qualified with adjectives

such as *huge, large, delightful, and significant lead* which could have possibly toned down the force of the modification. The implication is that the representation achieved with the use of these words may be biased and not objective. The force or tone of those words could have been mild, thereby placing them in between the two continua or on the objective continuum. What is therefore presupposed with the use of ‘somewhat biased’ pronominal adjectives is that the election was generally peaceful rather than being violent.

In the analysis of the headlines in this study, the following was observed on the use of ‘verbs’ in the representation of the conduct of the election. The focus on these verbs in the twelve headlines in the study is presented in **Table 3** below.

Table 3: Headlines of the Selected News Reports

<i>Labour</i>	<i>rates election high, lauds voters</i>
<i>Hurricane Jonathan</i>	<i>knocks out Buhari, others</i>
<i>Jonathan</i>	<i>Cruises to victory, reaches out to opponents</i>
<i>Jonathan</i>	<i>floors Buhari, Ribadu</i>
<i>Jonathan</i>	<i>sweeps presidential poll</i>
<i>Bakare, Obasanjo, IBB, Okotie</i>	<i>laud peaceful election</i>
<i>Jonathan</i>	<i>wins the big prize</i>
<i>Jonathan</i>	<i>sweeps South-West</i>
<i>Presidential Poll</i>	<i>massive turnout, generally peaceful</i>
<i>Trend in Nigeria Politics</i>	<i>wind of change</i>
<i>Jonathan, Buhari</i>	<i>in tight race</i>
<i>Hail to the Chief! Jonathan</i>	

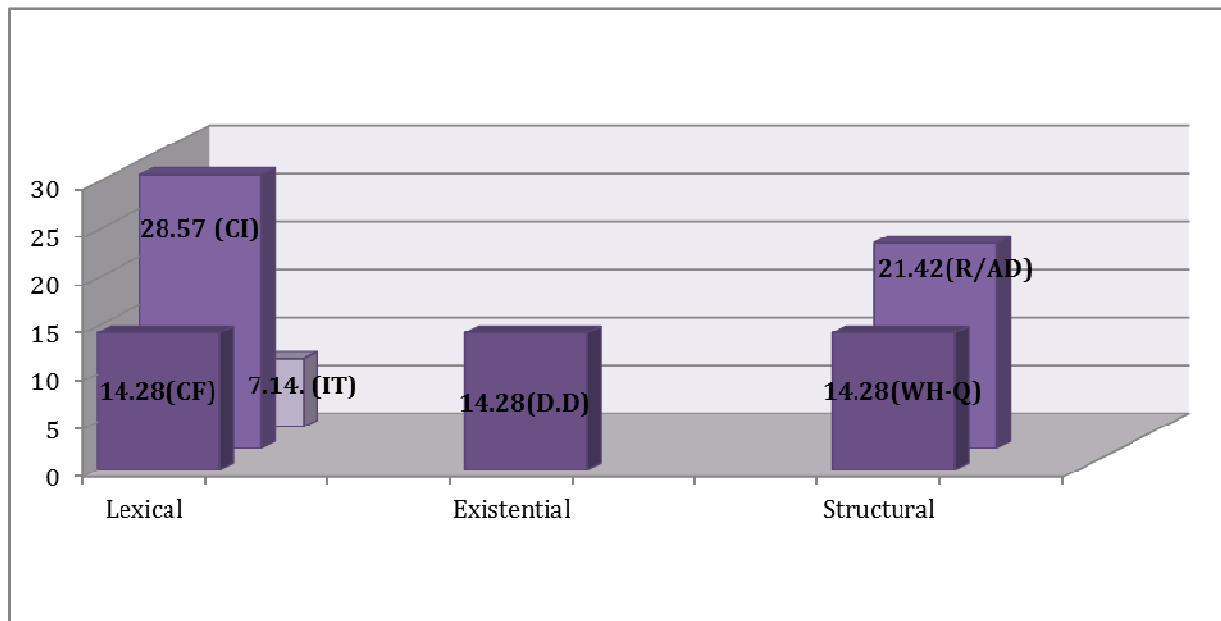
In **Table 3**, the verbs that are used in the headlines portrayed the election as peaceful, free, fair and credible. Some of the verbs also suggest a general approval of the election because those verbs were exaggerative. For instance, verbs such as ‘sweeps’, ‘floors’, ‘knocks out’ and ‘cruises’ were used figuratively. These verbs are used in a way different from their ordinary signification or meanings. This was done in order to embellish the headlines by creating mental images of events usually attached to ‘sweeps, cruises, floors and knocks out’ and relating them to electoral process. The choice of ‘sweeps’, ‘floors’, and ‘knocks out’ in the headlines to depict how Jonathan won the Presidential election may suggest a landslide victory for him in the minds of the readers. Going by the lexical and connotative meaning of ‘sweep’ which is ‘to clear something completely’, we can assume, bearing in mind the context of usage, that ‘sweep’ may be intentionally used to make the victory appear total and devoid of electoral irregularities. Similarly, the verb ‘floors’ could literally mean ‘hit’ or cause someone to fall. Therefore, it could arouse some form of biased interpretation. The verb ‘knocks out’ is a jargon associated with boxing bout and it is used to refer to an act of hitting the other fighter so that they fall to the ground and are unable to get up again.

The representation may be sensational because it portends, first, that other aspirants were not ‘serious contenders’ in the election. It could also arouse in the minds of readers, a scene of physical combat where Jonathan knocks out his opponents. In the election context, it could mean a situation of helplessness on the part of fellow contestants because Jonathan’s knockout has rendered them unconscious and defeated. The allusion to boxing is a conscious one and it is capable of informing the opinions that readers would have about the contest. However, in another article, the two main contenders were depicted as ‘Jonathan, Buhari in tight race’. If we are to go

by this headline, the verb *sweeps, floors and knocks out* may be sensational and unwarranted. They may therefore have been used emotively to ‘exaggerate and propagandize [the report to ideologically favor Jonathan and his party] without actually lying but are cunningly loaded with biases’ (Alo and Ogungbe, 2012). This could help to reiterate the dominance of President Jonathan in the election which may likely be the opinion that the writers presuppose and allow the readers to infer themselves. All the verbs sampled are loaded and are capable of evoking a train of positive thought and emotions about the exercise.

The next discussion in figure 2 shows the quantitative results of the presuppositions that characterize the two ideologies in the data. Afterwards, **Table 4** indicates the categories of presupposition triggers (counter-factual, conventional items and iteratives); the examples from the data and the actual words or morphemes that trigger the presupposed information.

Figure 3: Percentages of Presupposition Triggers



The results presented in the bar chart above indicate that conventional items have the highest occurrence with 28.57%, followed by relative/adverbial clauses with 21.42%; counter-factual verbs; definitive descriptions; and wh-/yes/no questions with 14.28%. Iteratives are the least occurred presupposition triggers with 7.14%.

The counter-factual verb ‘allege’ presupposes information which is not true. Therefore, the speaker is trying to discredit the claims of Buhari about the ‘*foul play*’ and the ‘thumb-printed ballot papers being airlifted’. Ideologically, it shows that the claims are non-factual and unfounded though the speaker does not explicitly state it but it is presupposed in sentences *a* and *b*. In sentence *c*, the adverb ‘*further*’ presupposes that the people had already believed in the transparency and credibility of election hence their resolve to participate in the exercise.

Table 4: Lexical Presuppositions

Categories (Lexical)	Examples	Triggers
Counter-factual	a) <i>But Buhari... has already <u>alleged</u> foul play in the conduct of the exercise.</i>	<i>Alleged</i>
	b) <i>Buhari had...<u>alleged</u> that thumb-printed ballot papers were airlifted to different states... (SUNDAY PUNCH April 17, 2011)</i>	<i>Alleged</i>
Conventional items	c) <i>The massive turnout recorded on Saturday had <u>further</u> emphasized people's belief in the credibility and transparency of the process. (SUNDAY PUNCH April 17, 2011)</i>	<i>Further</i>
	d) <i>People have shown high degree of commitment so you can describe it as a <u>new dawn</u> in our political evolution. (SUNDAY PUNCH April 17, 2011)</i>	<i>New</i>
	e) <i>Nigeria is now experiencing <u>true democracy</u> where we the politicians have to go to the people because the power belongs to the people. (SUNDAY PUNCH April 17, 2011)</i>	<i>True</i>
	f) <i>Former President Olusegun Obasanjo in his reaction described the presidential election as a <u>victory</u> for Nigeria and Nigerians... (Vanguard, Monday April 18, 2011)</i>	<i>Victory</i>
Iteratives	g) <i>...the ongoing elections <u>had restored</u> people's confidence in the electoral process (SUNDAY PUNCH April 17, 2011)</i>	<i>Restored</i>

In sentences *d*, *e*, and *f*, the election is regarded as a new dawn because it is peaceful, orderly and it shows high commitment from the people. The adjective *new* presupposes that the election is different from the old practice or it is a shift from what used to characterize previous elections in Nigeria. Therefore, if the election is a new dawn, it means the previous democratic processes were not good enough; thus not free and fair. In a similar vein, the adjective ‘*true*’ further supports the idea that the election is better than the previous ones because it presupposes that what Nigerians experienced in the past was not true democracy probably because the politicians had the absolute power with no regard to the people’s choice.

In sentence *f*, ‘*victory*’ is used to lay credence to the success of the election by presupposing that the exercise was credible because it represents the wish of Nigerians. The speaker could have said the exercise is ‘*a victory for Jonathan*’ without attributing it to Nigerians but he chose to attribute it to Jonathan because he may want to cajole his listeners into believing that the outcome of the election represents their wish.

Finally, ‘*restore*’ is used as iterative presupposing recurrence or regaining of something that was lost in the past; confidence of Nigerians in electoral process. It means that the people had lost confidence in the electoral process before because of the irregularities that usually characterized the process.

In **Table 5**, the instances of existential category of presupposition triggers in the study are presented. The category has only *definite descriptions* which are achieved through definite articles to show existence of the presupposed information.

Table 5: Existential Presuppositions

Categories (Existential)	Examples	Triggers
Definite descriptions	a) <i>Also commendable is the political leadership of the country whose utterances and body language sent a clear message that <u>the era of do-or-die politics, or imposition of elected leaders, is over</u></i> . (The Guardian, Monday April 18, 2011)	The era of do-or-die politics
	b) <i>...deciding the winner in the first ballot <u>would reduce the tension in the country</u></i> . (SUNDAY PUNCH April 17, 2011)	The tension

In sentence *a*, the underlined definite article ‘*the*’ presupposes two things; the existence of *do-or-die politics* and *imposition of elected leaders*. The speaker may be implying that the current leadership (Goodluck Jonathan) is not an imposition by any political leader but the wish of the people. That is, in the previous political dispensations, elections were generally known to be war-like because speeches and actions of political actors always portend danger, violence and threats. Also, where there is imposition of leaders on the people and party for elective positions, there must be existence of *God fatherism*.

Similarly, the definite article in sentence *b* indicates that there is tension already in the country due to the fear of agitation and violence that usually accompany elections in the country. Another pointer to the presence of *tension* in the country may have been caused by the various campaign speeches of contestants and their parties which heated the political space with hate speeches. Therefore, these examples tend to support the credibility of the election by comparing it with the presupposed previous elections which made people to lose interest in the process.

The next table (**Table 6**) presents structural category of presupposition triggers which include: wh-questions and adverbial clauses.

Table 6: Structural Presuppositions

Categories (Structural)	Examples	Triggers
Wh-/ yes/no questions	a) <i><u>How</u> did they know the number of percentage of people who voted?</i>	How and Are
	b) <i><u>Are</u> they REC?</i> (THIS DAY April 18, 2011)	
Relative/Adverbial Clauses	c) <i>My party, the CPC, would like to praise Nigerians <u>who have shown more enthusiasm to pick the leaders of their choice than many involved in moderating the elections have exhibited</u></i> . (Nigerian Tribune, Monday April 18, 2011)	Who
	d) <i>The commission had hardly finished announcing the results for the two states <u>when</u> Sirika and Garba alleged that there was foul play</i> . (This Day, Monday, April18, 2011)	When
	e) <i>..the agents were arrested by the police <u>when</u> they protested their denial of entry into the collation centre</i> . (This Day, Monday, April18, 2011)	When

The interrogatives ‘*how and are*’ are used as means of generating presupposed information. For wh-question ‘*how*’, it should presuppose that the addressed know the number of percentage of people who voted and at the same, it is assumed that the speaker wants the addressed to name

their source. However, in the context of the news report, the speaker may be presupposing another thing different from the expected information. The speaker may be implying that the people being addressed have no claim concerning the percentage of voters because they are not the Resident Electoral Commissioner. This example may be an attempt to dislodge their claims because the speaker knows that the addressed are not REC as well because only REC could authenticate the percentage of people who voted.

In sentence *c*, the relative clause identifier *'who'* shows that voters are committed to choose leaders of their choice. Meanwhile, the presupposed information is triggered by comparatives such as the adjective *'more'* and conjunction *'than'*. The comparatives in the relative clause presuppose that officials involved in the conduct of the election are not committed like the voters. That could possibly mean that the officials gave room for malpractices since they did not exhibit the same level of commitment as the voters. The presupposition in sentence *d* is triggered by the adverbial clause of time *'when'*. What it presupposes is that there was an allegation leveled by Sirika and Garba. The allegation is on foul play observed in the conduct of the election. In sentence *e*, there are two propositions. The two propositions are triggered by the adverbial *'when'*. The first presupposed information is that *'there was a protest by the agents'*, and secondly, *'the agents were not allowed to enter the collation centre'*. Though we could deduce that the cause of their protest was their denial of entry into the collation center, it thus still presupposes that probably the exercise was not devoid of irregularities.

Conclusion

In this study, pronominal adjectives were used to signal ideological slants. Some groups are presented positively while others are represented negatively. This was done by polarizing the arguments in the news reports. The effect that pronominal adjectives have on the news reports is that it showed the group that is presented with a form of dominance which translates to a fact that the representation was biased. That is, apart from giving information about the event, media also evaluates or gives judgement through the lexical items employed in the reports. Alo and Ogungbe (2012) contend that language, in news reports, is not a mere instrument of communication but it is imbued with power; it is action-oriented; it has the ability to influence or control reader's thoughts and actions. The form of power that is wielded by media representation commences from the selection stage of what should constitute news reports and consequently makes it to the pages of the newspapers and what is discarded. The difference that is observed in this study is that generally the representation, though judgemental, is used more to maintain the dominant power structure of the ruling party than other political parties. Also, the issue of news objectivity and difference of opinions, as expected, should have been solved by merely reading the outcomes of the election from different newspapers but that was not the case in this study. All the newspapers examined presented the news reports from almost the same point of view; the point of view which does not go in consonance with the reality of what was observed as the aftermath of the exercise in terms of post-election crisis.

Similarly, the two ideological or political opinions fronted in the study are (a) the election was free, fair and peaceful; and (b) the election was rigged and not peaceful. The former opinion is supported by the ruling party while the latter opinion was of the opposition. In our observations, the headlines and the pronominal adjectives suggest a more peaceful election than one bedeviled

with violence. Similarly, as represented in figure two above, there are more instances of conventional items under lexical category of presuppositions than relative/adverbial, and wh-/yes/no questions in structural category of presupposition. Furthermore, all the presuppositions identified show more of peaceful conduct of the election than presuppositions which could imply that the exercise was rigged. Also, there are more instances of lexical triggers in relation to the ideological slants than structural. We also conclude that the amount of knowledge invested in the comprehension of the presupposed information by the readers may not be much because the readers are assumed to be members of the same epistemic community with the news writers. In the same vein, we submit that since the exercise was more of positive representation, that is, free, fair and peaceful, the presupposed information could be controversial or unfair because a general survey of the election showed that the exercise was very violent.

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Appendix: Corpus – List of the News Reports

Sample 1: “Hail to the Chief! Jonathan”, *The Guardian*, Monday, April 18, 2011, pages 1 and 2.

Sample 2: “Labour rates election high, lauds voters”, *The Guardian*, Monday, April 18, 2011, page 6.

Sample 3: “Jonathan, Buhari in tight race”, *The Sunday Punch*, Sunday, April 17, 2011, pages 1 and 2.

Sample 4: “Hurricane Jonathan knocks out Buhari, others”, *The Punch*, Monday, April 18, 2011, pages 1, 2 and 6.

Sample 5: “Jonathan cruises to victory, reaches out to opponents”, *This Day*, Monday, April 18, 2011, pages 1 and 8.

Sample 6: “Jonathan floors Buhari, Ribadu”, *Nigerian Tribune*, Monday, April 18, 2011, pages 1, 4 and 53.

Sample 7: “Jonathan sweeps presidential pool”, *New Nigerian*, Monday, April 18, 2011, page 1.

Sample 8: “Presidential poll: massive turnout, generally peaceful”, *New Nigerian*, Sunday, April 17, 2011, pages 4 and 5.

Sample 9: “Jonathan sweeps South-West”, *Sunday Vanguard*, Sunday, April 17, 2011, pages 1 and 7.

Sample 10: “Bakare, Obasanjo, IBB, Okotie laud peaceful election”, *Vanguard*, Monday, April 18, 2011, pages 1 and 5.

Sample 11: “Jonathan wins the big prize”, *Daily Trust*, Monday, April 18, 2011, pages 1 and 5.

Sample 12: “Violence, fraud mar presidential poll”, *Sunday Trust*, Sunday, April 17, 2011, pages 1 and 2.