HILL PUBLISHING

Journal of Literature Advances, 2026, 3(2), 153-161
https://www.hillpublisher.com/Journals/jla/
ISSN Online: 3066-0998

Practs of Delegitimisation in 2018 Nigerian Vice-Presidential Debate Speeches

Amaka G. Nwuche, Ogechi C. Unachukwu*, Chinenyenwa L. Ogbonna

Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka Enugu State 410001, Nigeria.

How to cite this paper: Amaka G. Nwuche, Ogechi C. Unachukwu, Chinenyenwa L. Ogbonna (2026). Practs of Delegitimisation in 2018 Nigerian Vice-Presidential Debate Speeches. *Journal of Literature Advances*, 3(2), 153-161.
DOI: 10.26855/jla.2026.12.008

Received: July 19, 2026
Accepted: August 26, 2026
Published: September 14, 2026

***Corresponding author:** Ogechi C. Unachukwu, Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka Enugu State 410001, Nigeria.
Email: ogechi.unachukwu@unn.edu.ng

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Abstract

This study examines the pragmatic strategies of delegitimisation in the speeches of two Nigerian vice-presidential candidates, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, running mate to Muhammadu Buhari, of All Progressives Congress (APC) and Mr Peter Obi, running mate to Atiku Abubakar, of (PDP) in the 2018 Nigerian vice-presidential debate discourse to ascertain how their language structures function as contextualised pragmatic acts that enact the illegitimacy of the other. Data for the study are eight excerpts that are purposively selected from thirty-two transcribed speeches from the debate discourse downloaded from Channels TV station's YouTube and qualitatively analysed using insights from Jacob Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory (PAT). Findings reveal that the candidates act strategically to construct the other's negative social identities in order to undermine credibility using four practs: criticism, accusing, attacking, and blaming deployed to question the opponent's integrity, legitimacy, competency, and at the same time maintaining the speaker's integrity; these are inferred through contextual features of REF, INF, SSK, REL, MPH, and M. The study, therefore, concludes that delegitimisation strategies in the speeches are fundamentally context-driven acts of political survival and conflict avoidance. The study is significant for providing a context-sensitive framework for analysing how linguistic elements are deployed by two prominent Nigerian political actors to contest legitimacy and encode integrity in debate speeches.

Keywords

2018 Nigerian vice-presidential debate discourse; delegitimisation; pragmatic acts theory; APC; PDP

1. Introduction

Nigeria political campaign milieu has always been a hotbed for legitimacy contestation. This is as a result of its multi-party, unique historical, and socio-political realities surrounding each of the party's structures and antecedents. Thus, since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, electoral campaigns have been characterised by intense competition between parties where political actors deploy various strategies to contest credibility, integrity, and legitimacy of the other. At the point, political debate, as a specific activity event within the broader political context, intensifies the contestation as each party arms itself with a calculated communicative act that is rooted in, not only the party's legitimation, but also the delegitimisation of the opponents. Delegitimisation is a process where a speaker uses language to challenge the moral standing of another. It is not just merely a byproduct of political rivalry, but a calculated pragmatic act that is rooted in the realities of the modern political culture where actors often consciously and/or unconsciously strive to undermine their opponents' integrity, but still within the established rules of debate system of decorum, which require them to avoid overt, face-threatening attacks against their opponents. Here, language use occupies a central position where its illocutionary force is derived not only from the literal meaning of the words and

sentences, but also from the language's resonance with the context of use.

Language use is an act that performs particular function with reference to, not only the linguistic constituents, but also, the shared knowledge and situational context of use. Ezeifeka (2018, p. 13) concurs that "since language use is framed within particular situations, institutions and social structures that provide the context of use, the discursive events are not only shaped by them, but it also shapes them in a kind of dialectical relationship". This entails that since language is an activity that is constructed by humans to suit their purported goals, man shapes language as well as language shapes man's behaviour. To wit, the framing of linguistic items in certain kinds of discourses is oftentimes constrained by the text type, societal, and situational circumstances. Political discourse is one of such text-type, where language structure is constrained by context and purpose of the discourse.

Political discourse, in the view of Chilton (2004, p. 21), "is the use of language in ways that humans, being political animals, tend to recognize as political". He, further, asserts that language use in political discourse is both cooperative and uncooperative. Thus, "one should in this sort of perspective expect some of the structural components of language to have a functional role. It should be possible to see a connection between what we can interpret as political discourse and the use of a particular features of language" (21). Consequently, its language structure is goal oriented and the purpose of the discourse constrains which structure is to be adopted at a particular time. In the light of the above assertion that man constructs his language use to suit his message and purpose, how then does the hearer recover the user's communicative goal? This is where the notion of pragmatics comes in. Hence, the role pragmatics plays in our everyday interpretation of communicative functions becomes paramount in language interpretation and understanding. Mira (2008) concedes that there are coded messages in our everyday use of language in conversations which require a pragmatic theory for proper interpretations.

According to Huang (2017, p. 2) "pragmatics is the systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on, the use of language". Morris cited in Horn and Ward (2006, p. 1) espouses that "pragmatics is the study of those context-dependent aspects of meaning which are systematically abstracted away from the construction of content or logical form". Pragmatics emphasizes what speakers do with language when they interact. It holds that meaning is as a result of the interaction between the speaker, hearer, and contextual factors, thus, providing the user with different avenues of communicating disparate information. These pragmatic resources enable politicians to attack their opponents indirectly while maintaining political decorum and at the same time appealing to diverse audiences. Thus, in political discourse, an utterance cannot be fully understood by its grammatical form, but also through the knowledge of pragmatic resources and shared political knowledge. This is why scholars engage in analysing language use in political discourses to clarify different meanings inherent in the speeches for better understanding of this discourse type. For instance, Inegbe (2024) examined the linguistic features of selected speeches of some prominent Nigerian politicians used during political rallies in 2022. The study utilised J. L. Austin's speech act theory to analyse eleven extracts that were purposively selected. The speeches, in view of the study, was sourced from Nigerian media outfits with the aim to identify what the speakers did with the words used. The findings revealed that their utterances were laced with vituperations, repetitions, and the choice codes designed to persuade and manipulate the electorates against their opponents. In another study in the Nigeria context, Omotunde (2024) investigated Peter Obi's Chatham house speech delivered in Washington D.C. on January 26, 2023 in order to identify the lexical choices and sentence patterns that help to reveal Obi's ideology. The study used Jefferies linguistic tools of analysing language use and the three tools chosen for the analysis were naming and describing, prioritizing and equating, and contrasting. Findings revealed that the ideology behind Obi's language choices was that of positive self-presentation and negative 'other' presentation. Also, Nwuche et al (2021) analysed speeches of two major Nigerian vice-presidential candidates during the 2018 Nigerian vice-presidential debate to examine the identities constructed through their language choices. It employed Langenhove and Harri (1999) positioning theory using purposive sampling technique to select five excerpts from thirty-two transcribed discourses. Findings revealed that the candidates made use of first and second order performative and accountive positioning acts to show self-moral order and positive stance and the other's immoral attributes. This study, therefore, aims to examine the pragmatic acts of delegitimisation in Nigerian vice-presidential debate between Prof. Yemi Osinbajo of APC and Mr Peter Obi of PDP to demonstrate how their language use functions as contextualised pragmatic acts that enact the illegitimacy of the other.

2. The Concept of Delegitimisation

Delegitimisation, according to Bal-Tal and Hallmack (2012), is the categorisation of group(s) into extremely negative social categories that exclude them, that is, the group(s) from the sphere of human groups that act within the limits

of acceptable norms and values. They further state that "delegitimisation is a concept that sheds light on behaviours that go beyond the acceptable norms and codes of morality. It involves a cognitive-emotional and linguistic process of placing individuals and/or collectives beyond the realm of what is considered normal, moral, or within the accepted standards of beliefs, norms, and practices of a group" (31). They posit that "the idea of delegitimisation is intimately connected with notions of legitimacy, which Zelditch (2001) relates to the acceptable norms, values, beliefs, and practices of a group. In our view, delegitimisation is one of the key concepts for understanding the social system and its rules and norms for particular types of intergroup interactions" (Bal-Tal & Hallmack 2012, p. 31). As such, in the view of Chilton (2004), "delegitimisation can manifest itself in acts of negative other presentation, acts of blaming, scape-goating, marginalizing, excluding, attacking the moral character of some individuals or groups, attacking the communicative cooperation of the other, attacking the rationality and sanity of the other. The extreme is to deny the humanness of the other" (p. 47).

It is a concept in political sphere that is uncooperative as it can amount to conflict and breach of goal attainment. However, political actors cannot do without it as it is one of their strategies of creating negative categorisation and devaluation of their rivals' importance in debate discourses. As such, they devise a means of not involving any canonical speech act of the communicative acts in order to maintain each other's face wants and/or run less risk of conflict.

3. Jacob Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory (PAT)

This study draws insights from Mey's (2001) pragmatic acts theory. PAT is a theory that analysis various pragmatic acts that language users perform with language. Mey posits that PAT stands to examine and interpret communicative effects of language use including its unconventional use that require pragmatic interpretation for meaning recovery. He avers that "once an utterance is properly placed in its linguistic co-text as well as in its entire world context and its effects have become visible, the speech activity in question is established and recognized as situated, pragmatic acts" (2001, p. 190). In the light of this, Mey's pragmatic acts do not necessarily include specific speech act rather it is the context that determines a particular pragmatic act employed in speech situations. Consequently, in pragmatic acting, "it is impossible to pinpoint a particular predetermined use of any canonical speech act" (215).

According to him, his theory of pragmatic acts arises as result of speech act theory's inadequacy in accounting for unconventional utterances that are conditioned by context. He espouses that "what is wrong with speech act theory, in general, as has often been remarked, is that it lacks a theory of action; and even if it does have such theory, the action in question "is thought of atomistically, as wholly emanating from the individual (214). This assertion recognizes PAT in the light of a theory of action; a theory of action explained by appealing to the 'underlying goal orientation' among participants in the discourse (216). Moreover, Mey avers that "the theory of pragmatic acts does not try to explain language use from the inside out, that is, from words having their origin in a sovereign speaker and going out to an equally sovereign hearer. Rather, its explanatory movement is from the outside in: the focus is on the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as on what is actually said" (221). In essence, this assertion lays its emphasis on situational context of language use rather than the linguistic constituents of the language structure. Thus, in the analysis of utterances using PAT, the situation of use and user are more significant in the interpretation of meaning than the stated or said of the utterance.

Mey (2001) defines pragmatic acting as "contextually adaptive behavior", thus, pragmatic act is an instance of adapting oneself to a conditioned context. He also calls pragmatic act "a pragmeme" and instantiated individual pragmatic acts the 'ipras' or 'practs'. Ipras or practs refer to a particular pragmeme as its realisations. He further states that every pract is at the same time an allopract, that is, concrete and different realization of a particular instantiation of a particular pragmeme (221). Thus, in identifying the practs of pragmeme, one is not concerned with matters of grammatical correctness of rules of grammar, but specifically by the understanding of the context, user and the effects of the practs in a given context. Capone (2010, p. 7) calls pragmeme "speech acts in context". And Kecskes (2014, p. 2891) concedes that Mey's use of the term 'pragmeme' in his PAT refers to a generalized pragmatic act that is concretely realised by 'practs' in situational use".

In the view of Mey (2001), pragmeme involves two parts: the activity part (interactants) and textual part (co(n)text). The activity part has to do with various choices of acts that the language user has at his or her disposal in communicating; this is considered a feature matrix, whose cells can be filled or emptied. The activity part comprises 'speech acts', 'indirect speech acts', 'conversational acts', psychological acts(emotion)', 'prosody (intonation, stress …)',

physical acts: body moves, facial expression, bodily expressions etc. On the other hand, textual part concerns those elements that are present in the textual chain. In any ordinary length of text, most of the elements will be found concurrently existing. Some of these elements are 'INF' for 'inferencing', 'REF' for 'reference', 'REL' for 'relevance', 'VCE' for 'voice', 'SSK' for 'shared situation knowledge', 'MPH' for 'metaphor', while 'M' denotes 'metapragmatic joker which is an element that directs the reader's attention to something happening on the metapragmatic plane (Mey, 2001). Practically, whichever element that is chosen by the language user in performing the pragmeme also helps in the realisation of a particular pract and its effect. Consequently, the pragmatic act of speech acting does not necessary require an explicit speech act to have its pragmatic value, the user has metric of features to choose which one to adopt in different circumstances, though linguistic realisation is one of them, it is not a significant element. The theory is essential in the retrieving of informational contents of propositions that are function-oriented as well as context-sensitive.

4. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research design using content analytical procedure. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study seeks to identify, describe, and interpret the pragmatic functions performed by the participants through their linguistic choices in the speeches. The analysis is guided by Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory, which emphasises the relationship between linguistic choices, contextual factors, and the pragmatic functions performed by language users.

The data for the study were obtained from a video with recorded voices of debate candidates in the 2018 Nigerian vice-presidential debate discourse held on 14 December 2018 at Channels TV station; the debate was organised by the Nigeria Elections Debate Group (NEDG) and the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON). It featured five vice-presidential candidates: Prof. Yemi Osinbajo of All Progressive Congress (APC), Mr Peter Obi of Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), Ganiyu Galdima of the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Khadija Abdullahi-Iya of the Alliance for New Nigeria (ANN), Umma Gestso of the Young Progressive Party. For the study, only two candidates: Prof. Yemi Osinbajo and Mr Peter Obi were chosen, this is because their parties represent the two major political parties in Nigeria and also, their speeches were identified to provide relevant instances of use of implicit delegitimisation.

The video was sourced from the TV station's You Tube and the downloaded video was converted into an audio file to facilitate repeated listening and accurate transcription for the written data. The transcribed data produced thirty-two interactional excerpts that constituted the data pool from where eight excerpts were subsequently purposively selected for detailed analysis. Purposive sampling was employed because they serve as representative of the research objectives as not all utterances in the debate were relevant to the study's aim. The selected excerpts were analysed using Mey's Pragmatic Acts Theory where the relationships between the utterances, the situational context, the participants, and the political circumstances surrounding the interaction were put into consideration in determining how a particular utterance functions as pragmatic acts of delegitimisation.

5. Pragmatic Acts of Delegitimisation in 2018 Nigerian Vice-Presidential Debate Speeches

This section identified the practs of delegitimisation in the selected speeches and analysed them with reference to their context of use in order to identify their functions in the speeches. It showed that the 2018 Nigerian vice-presidential debate speeches of the two candidates selected were replete with implicit delegitimisation of the other. Thus, the candidates, being aware of the situational context, act pragmatically on sensitive issues to mitigate the effects of the discourse contents.

> **Excerpt 1 APC candidate**: The excerpt is from Yemi Osinbajo's opening remark.
> Practically, sixteen years after the Lagos – Ibadan express way was abandoned, we are dealing with that today and we are building that Lagos – Ibadan express road everyday today. That is the major road out of the commercial nature of Nigeria....

The above excerpt performs the pragmatic act of criticism. Thus, criticising PDP government's sixteen years in power before APC's emergence. This is understood through 'REF', 'SSK', 'REL', 'INF' and 'M'. Through the use of the clause 'sixteen years after the Lagos – Ibadan express way was abandoned', PDP's sixteen years in power was implicitly talked about, therefore, implicating their sixteen years of inefficiency of management in terms of the

physical infrastructure of the national development. Although, there is no explicit use of any canonical speech act of criticism or the name PDP, the audience infers (INF) this, through the shared situational knowledge (SSK) of the country at the time. The utterance, also, metapragmatically 'M' indexes that because PDP group was inefficient during their days of leadership in the country, they should not be voted in or allowed to come back to power. This analysis shows that in the proposition, more was communicated than is stated, and that its sense has to be recovered by situating its use as is conditioned by the society and context of use. Thus, by mere allusion to sixteen years and abandonment of the major road (Lagos - Ibadan), what comes to the mind of every average Nigerian is PDP government's tenure in Nigeria and the negligence of their moral obligations to the nation. The adjective 'major' in the excerpt is significant for the communication; to wit, it is not just any road that can be easily overlooked but the major one; thereby, implying that if such road was abandoned during their (PDP) tenure in office what else did they do in terms of development both infrastructural and human capital development. Here, Prof. Osinbajo did not employ any canonical speech act in the statement, but pragmatically, called people's attention to that. This is because, he strategically did not want to explicitly criticise his opponent so as to avoid the effect considering the situational context and purpose of the debate. Probably, he feared that being direct in his speech could lead to a loss of public support. He, therefore, strategically created a room for inference, while at the same time maintaining his supporters' trust on his integrity. The pragmatic act function of the utterance is an implicit criticism of PDP's years in power.

Excerpt 2, PDP candidate:

If you look at what China has been able to do with MSMES. MSMEs in China is contributing 60% of their GDP and 60% of china GDP is 7.2 trillion which is 18% of Nigeria's GDP; they are contributing to 60% of their employment. On urban employment, they are contributing 80%. 80% of urban unemployment in china is 480, 80% of that is 380 which is twice Nigeria's own. China today, using the same MSME is guaranteeing 10 million jobs annually. This year alone, half of this year, China has produced 7.2 million jobs which is over 40% of their target. Within the same period, Nigeria lost 4 million jobs. So, we need to rejig this and have a better focus on how we can create jobs. As long as we don't create jobs and have the number of unemployed youths in their productive age that we have today, we gonna have crisis. That's why we have issue of insecurity, issue of instability. All sorts of thing we are witnessing today is because we have not been able to create jobs that other countries are creating with effortless ease….

This excerpt performs delegitimisation function through pragmatic acts of criticism, attacking, accusing and blaming. These are used to construct APC government as a failure in term of economic and human development. By analysing China's economic success in MSMEs, the APC's failure in economic development is by implication pointed to. Literally, the expression seems to be informing the audience about the height of China's economic development through the encouragement of MDME in its country and the rate of Nigerian underdevelopment level, but is tactically foregrounding the inadequacy of favourable Nigeria development policies. The clause, "…within the same period, Nigeria lost 4 million jobs" is not just informing the audience about China's economic success, but a pragmatic way of pointing at the high rate of the negligence, thereby, questioning the justification of APC's group in power especially when they have failed in the promotion of the economic system of the country. One infers (INF) this through the shared situational knowledge (SSK) of the situation of the country at the time. Also, the clause, "so we need to rejig this…" performs an indirect attack on the government. For instance, the use of the verb 'rejig' implies that something about the existing economic policies in the government required a change.

The use of the inclusive pronoun 'we' in many instances in the excerpt such as "**we** need to rejig this… **we** can create jobs. As long as **we** don't create jobs and have the number of unemployed youths…**we** have today, **we** gonna have crisis. That's why **we** have issue of insecurity… **we** are witnessing today…. **we** have not been able to create jobs…" is significant in the text. It contains a criticism that is rhetorically mitigated by its embedment in the collective responsibility indicated by the use of "we". This, however, allowed Mr Obi to perform the act of criticism without constructing an overtly hostile interpersonal relationship with his opponent. Strategically, by choosing 'we' in the context, he symbolically places himself alongside the people rather than positioning himself as a detached and unconcerned individual. The use helped him to construct a shared identity aimed at winning people's support. This, however, is particularly important in the discourse type as the actors frequently need to construct a relationship between themselves and the masses. Generally, the discourse constructs APC government as economically ineffective and in need of policy correction, while simultaneously positioning Mr Obi, PDP, as a concerned, solution-oriented, and collectively aligned political alternative.

Excerpt 3, APC candidate: (The extract is Prof. Osinbajo's response to the moderator's statement that in 2018, Nigeria's aggregate investment and GDP are not encouraging whereas other countries, such as China even South African from the same continent, are doing well).
I think a common, a common denominator of the countries you mentioned, both China and South Africa, is strong infrastructure. Our country over the past 16 years has suffered a major infrastructural deficit. So, we don't have rail, we don't have roads, power you know, when we came into office in 2015, power was at 4,000 megawatts. That is 16 years, in 16 years. So, you need strong infrastructure and nobody can make excuses about that, infrastructure, which is one of the major focuses of our administration's policy in putting in place the right infrastructure. The second thing is that you cannot have a driving economy if you allow the type of brand corruption that has taken place in Nigeria in the past 16 years

The excerpt performs pragmatic acts of 'accusing' through 'REF', 'SSK', 'INF' and 'M'. The moderator in his interview seeks from Prof. Osinbajo (APC candidate why the aggregate investment of the country even in 2018 was still below what is obtainable in other countries, even south African in African continent, but Prof. Osinbajo in his response, pragmatically, denied the accusation, shifting the blame to PDP government as the cause. Though, he did not categorically make mention of any party as the cause, but the use of a particular year (past sixteen years) alludes to PDP group's tenure in the office. Thus, it accuses PDP government's years in power with poor infrastructural facilities as the cause of problems Nigeria economy facing. The utterance metapragmatically 'M' indexes that the economic problem the country was facing at the time was as a result of the infrastructural deficit incurred in the country during the PDP group's tenure in the office.

Excerpt 4, PDP candidate:
…You can't shut down your shop and be chasing criminals.

The utterance is a pragmatic act of attacking through 'MPH', SSK, 'M', and INF. It serves as a counter-discursive pragmatic act that is aimed at redefining the meaning and significance of APC's government anti-corruption argument. Thus, employed by Mr Obi to counter his opponent's belief that their fighting of corruption is to help better the country's economic system, thereby, indirectly informing Prof. Osinbajo that their government is trailing on the wrong direction towards the nation's development. To Mr Obi, it is of no importance minimizing or curbing corruption when the major task of developing the human capital of the country's economy, which helps in creating jobs and empowering the citizens is neglected

The speech is a metapragmatic act of stating that there is corruption in the country as a result of poor economy. Thus, the government is concentrating on fighting corruption while deviating on the major task. Hence, if economy is improved by creating jobs, corruption is equally minimized or curbed. This is also communicated through the metaphors: Nigeria economy as shop, economic inactivity as shut down, and by implication, Nigerian leaders as shopkeepers. Here, Nigeria government is constructed as the shopkeeper who is so preoccupied with chasing the thieves, while the shop itself is being neglected. Thus, the government is prioritising anti-corruption at the expense of the country's economy. By placing these within an alternative conceptual frame, Prof. Osinbajo's argument is made to appear unreasonable; the inference is as a result of shared situational knowledge of the Nigeria's economy at the time.

In addition, the second person pronoun 'you' and the modal auxiliary verb 'can't' in the phrase 'you can't…' are significant in the text. The 'you' performs accusatory function; it is used to shift the blame to the opponent and his party, thereby, not only used in the attack of Prof. Osinbajo's morality and personality, but also the reasonability of the position his group adopted. The modal auxiliary 'cannot' is equally significant, as it helps to make the action logically and practically unacceptable. It would have sound different if 'you shouldn't…' is used rather than 'you can't …', this is because, 'you shouldn't' would sound more as suggestion or advice in the context.

Excerpt 5, APC candidate: The extract is a response from APC candidate to the moderator's inquiry on whether the government's policy on the exclusion of the importation of certain commodities is a good one,
Well, let me say first of all that the Central Bank of Nigeria is independent in terms of its own activities and I really cannot change their policy but let me say to you that just take some of the example, toothpicks, for example, were being important to Nigeria. Fertilizer which we have now cracked with the collaboration we have with Morocco, we are now able to deliver fertilizer at half the cost so you have fertilizer now, as you know some 6000, 7000. At some point it was 12, 13000 even higher. So, you can no longer do that and rice

> is also another example. We were importing practically all our rice. As I said, 5 million dollars of rice every single day. Today, we are no longer doing so, we encourage local production by preventing a situation where anyone can simply go and buy rice eehm, simply go and, you know, open form and bring in rice so if you are going to protect local industry, if you are going to protect local activity, you need to do something like what eehm you may need to do something such as what CBN is doing.

This response performs what Grice (1975) would term flouting of quantity and manner maxims. Here, Prof. Osinbajo rather than concentrating on the answer expected of him by the interrogator, diverted to criticism of the past government's heavy dependence on the importation of goods and commodities during their time in office. This is done to let the audience know that through the government's banning of the importation of certain commodity, their government is in the process of encouraging local production, which is in the best interest of the people whereas the past government dependence on imported goods was detrimental to the nation. With this, relevance to the protection of locally produced goods is made.

Also through the phrase "at some point…", reference 'REF' is made to the past government's (PDP) time in office. Thus, informing the audience that the importation rate during the past government's time in office was tremendously high, and that virtually everything was imported even up to toothpick. This is inferred (INF) through the shared situational knowledge (SSK) of the situation at the time. The extract, therefore, contains pragmeme of criticism through 'REF', 'INF', 'SSK', and 'M'.

> **Excerpt 6, PDP candidate**: This excerpt is PDP candidate's response to the moderator on how their government plans to move the country forward in terms of improvement in the ICT sector of the economy.
> … we will take ICT seriously. We will invest in it that is why I said that you can't continue doing subsidy when you need to invest money in the future. You are driving yesterday and today will miss tomorrow. We need to invest tomorrow and that we will invest in aggressively.

The excerpt performs a pragmatic acts of 'criticism' and 'attacking' through the contextual features of 'MPH' and 'REF'. It criticises the incumbent government's rationality and morality in the subsidization of the country's production costs at the expense of, or negligence of the educational sector, specifically, ICT sector, which he (PDP candidate) avers will significantly boost other aspects of the country's economy if proper consideration is given. Furthermore, the sentence "you are driving yesterday and today will miss tomorrow..." is a metaphorical expression that is intended to attack and ridicule the APC candidate's upholding of subsidization policy as their government's achievement in the country. Though, the response explicitly started by clarifying their party's plan towards ICT, the speaker later diverts to delegitimisation of the other's morality in prioritizing subsidy rather than education.

> **Excerpt 7, APC candidate:** The extract is from APC candidate's response on the moderator's inquiry on how his government plans to work to ensure ease of doing business in the country, that is, on how to attract more foreign direct investment, if re-elected to power.
> …we need to improve power which is one of the critical issues for which we are doing, improving transmission access, improving distribution access at the moment, we have improved transmission access by 200 megawatts to where we inherited 5 thousand megawatts of delivery on transmission. We are able to do 7 thousand megawatts delivery on transmission and we need to keep improving, we need to improve our rail roads because, for example, if you look at Lagos-Kano rail, it starts from the port from the Apapa port so that goods can be taken out of the Apapa port, out into the hinter land so, we need to improve roads infrastructure. We need to improve rail infrastructure which is what we are doing, so, the critical investment that need to be made in infrastructure are been made now because today you have a prudent government. You have a government that is ensuring that ground corruption is not allowed so that resources available to us are been invested in the economy. That's how we can improve, invest 5 times more than when we are earning a hundred dollars a barrel. So, that's the thing we will simply focus on; what we are doing to improve the infrastructure, once you improve the infrastructure, foreign investment will come. We will also create the environment for local industry. That's one of the critical issues for us, creating the environment for local industry and we are creating that environment already for local industry by all the steps we are taken by entry and exit of course, we are doing all of that looking at the taxation regime.

His response started by informing the audience the efforts his party has and is still making to the improvement of

the road infrastructure, which he claims will augment foreign investment. Thus, stating its relevance in the national development. However, along the line, he makes subtle delegitimisation of the past government, PDP. Thus, by the statement "We need to improve rail infrastructure which is what we are doing, so, the critical investment that need to be made in infrastructure are been made now because today you have a prudent government. You have a government that is ensuring that ground corruption is not allowed so that resources available to us are been invested in the economy". The pragmatic acts of blaming, accusing and criticising of PDP is made through the contextual features of reference (REF), inference (INF), relevance (REL) and shared situational knowledge (SSK).

The time deixis 'now' is very significant in the statement. It points to the time the improvement in the infrastructure is been started. It entails that during the past government's tenure, there was nothing of the nature. Thereby, criticising the past government's negligence of road infrastructure. The clause, "… because today you have a prudent government" and "you have a government that is ensuring that ground corruption is not allowed…", also accuse the past government of being imprudent in the management of the country's economy as well as being basically corrupt in the handling of the nation's resources.

> **Excerpt 8, PDP candidate**: This discourse sequel was as a result of the moderator's inquiry from the PDP candidate on what his party's foreign policy trust will be, if the party wins the next presidential election.
> Well, it will remain so because I believe that we are the first Africans and we have a lot to gain and to offer Africa. And while dealing with other nations, making sure that our relationship is beneficial to our country and bringing a lot of value in terms of security, in terms of high economy turn around and everything that will help us to create jobs and help us to see that it will be a win win situation not a situation where we will now go around all over the world borrowing. We will go more to learn about what they are doing because I know that what they are doing will be more valuable to us to implement here than a situation where we are almost going to borrow everything from China.

Through the response, "… not a situation where we will now go around all over the world borrowing…", the candidate makes an implicit delegitimisation of the other, thus, the communicative function of his utterances is to create a negative impression of the ruling government thereby making an implicit critique of the government's stance on the country's foreign policy. Again, "…going to borrow everything from China" makes implicit negative reference to APC's foreign loan-driven model of governing the citizens, though with no specific party's name mentioned, the audience still infers this through shared knowledge of the system of government (SSK). The phrase "borrow everything from China" is a hyperbolic statement that frames APC as being too dependency, myopic, and incautious. He further stated that he is to make sure that the relationship between the country and other countries is beneficial to the country, thus implying that what the incumbent government is doing at the time is detrimental to the country, therefore criticising APC's heavy dependence on borrowing.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the pragmatic acts of delegitimisation in the speeches of Prof. Yemi Osinbajo of APC and Mr Peter Obi of PDP in the 2018 Nigerian vice-presidential debate discourses. It utilized Mey's (2001) pragmatic acts theory to ascertain the extent of implicit negative categorisation of the other in the speeches as well as to recover the communicative functions/goals of the acts. Findings showed that the candidates' utterances were replete with implicit delegitimisation of the other. Thus, the candidates indirectly undermine the opponent's legitimacy, while enhancing one's own competency, legitimacy, and integrity within the situated interaction affordances. Four practs of criticising, accusing, blaming, and attacking of the other were identified through the contextual cues of 'INF', 'REF', 'REL', 'VCE', 'SSK', 'M' and 'MPH'. The study showed that the participants were tactical in their language use; they pragmatically structure their utterances in such a way that their communicative goals are brought to the fore, while at the same time mitigating the effects of the discourse contents. Conclusively, as revealed from the findings, while considerations on the communicative goals is paramount in the speech acting, their linguistic realisations are insignificant in the interpretations of the utterances. This study is significant because it will help equip language users with the capacity to recognise and understand pragmatic acts in interactions, thereby promoting communication in man's social life.

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