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**A CRITICAL PRAGMATIC REPRESENTATION OF ECONOMY-BASED
NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL REPORTS**

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Abstract

This study investigates the critical pragmatic representation of economy-based newspaper editorial reports in Nigeria, with emphasis on how linguistic and pragmatic resources construct economic realities and shape public perception. Adopting a qualitative research design, the study analyses selected editorials published between 2024 and 2026 in leading Nigerian newspapers, including *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard*, *The Nation* and *NewsDay*. The analytical framework integrates Critical Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics and Media Framing Theory to examine the interaction of ideology, context and language use. Data were purposively selected based on their relevance to key economic issues such as inflation, fuel subsidy removal, unemployment, currency instability and fiscal policy. The study finds that editorial writers employ assertive, directive and expressive speech acts, alongside presupposition, implicature, evaluative lexis, deictic expressions, modality and politeness strategies, to construct persuasive and ideologically driven interpretations of economic events. These pragmatic devices enable newspapers to criticize government policies, assign responsibility, and influence public opinion while maintaining institutional credibility and journalistic restraint. The study further demonstrates that framing strategies consistently organise economic discourse around narratives of crisis, governance failure, reform and accountability. It concludes that Nigerian economy-based editorials are not merely vehicles for reporting economic developments but powerful discursive instruments that negotiate ideology, shape public understanding and reinforce particular socio-political perspectives on national economic governance.

Keywords: Critical Pragmatics, Newspaper Editorials, Economic Discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis, Media Framing, Nigeria.

Introduction

Language plays a central role in the construction, interpretation and negotiation of social realities in public discourse. This is particularly evident in newspaper editorials where institutional voices interpret national events, evaluate policies and shape public opinion. Editorials do not merely present information. They function as persuasive and evaluative texts that encode ideological positions through carefully selected linguistic and pragmatic strategies. In doing so, they influence how readers perceive complex socio political and economic realities, especially in contexts where public trust in governance and institutions is constantly negotiated (Fairclough, 2020; van Dijk, 2021).

In Nigeria, newspaper editorials serve as important platforms for engaging with pressing economic issues such as inflation, unemployment, fuel subsidy removal, currency devaluation, public debt and rising cost of living. These issues are not simply reported as economic statistics; they are linguistically framed and interpreted in ways that reflect editorial stance and institutional ideology. The language of editorials often encodes evaluation and judgment, thereby guiding readers toward particular interpretations of national economic conditions. Recent studies on Nigerian media discourse have emphasised that editorial language plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of economic governance and policy outcomes through subtle evaluative and argumentative strategies (Odebunmi, 2006; 2015; 2021; Taiwo, 2019).

The pragmatic dimension of editorial discourse is particularly significant because meaning in such texts is not restricted to literal interpretation. Instead, meaning is constructed through context-dependent mechanisms such as implicature, presupposition, deixis, speech acts and politeness strategies. These pragmatic tools allow writers to express criticism, assign responsibility and evaluate government actions in ways that may be indirect or strategically mitigated. According to pragmatic theory, meaning is highly dependent on context and shared assumptions between interlocutors, which makes it a useful framework for analysing editorial communication (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996).

In addition, editorial writers often rely on implicature and presupposition to communicate implicit meanings about economic performance and governance. Such strategies enable them to suggest blame or approval without explicit statements, thereby maintaining institutional neutrality while still projecting evaluative stances. This aligns with the view that much of human communication involves implied meaning rather than explicit expression, particularly in institutional discourse (Grice, 1975; Mey, 2001). In the Nigerian context, such pragmatic strategies are frequently used to navigate the sensitive nature of political and economic criticism in the media space (Odebunmi, 2015; Mohammed, 2020).

A critical pragmatic approach is therefore appropriate for examining newspaper editorials because it integrates the study of meaning in context with an analysis of power, ideology and social relations. While pragmatics focuses on how meaning is constructed and interpreted in interaction, critical discourse perspectives emphasise how language reflects and reproduces social inequality and ideological positioning. This combination is particularly useful for analysing editorial discourse, where institutional voices simultaneously inform, evaluate and influence public perception. As Fairclough (2020) and van Dijk (2021) argue, media discourse is a site where ideology is reproduced through subtle linguistic choices rather than overt statements.

Furthermore, editorial discourse in Nigeria operates within a multilingual and socio-culturally diverse environment where language choices are influenced by audience expectations, political sensitivity and institutional ideology. As a result, editorial writers often employ indirectness, hedging, and face-saving strategies when addressing government economic policies. These pragmatic choices help manage potential conflict while still enabling

critique and evaluation. Studies on African media discourse have shown that such strategies are common in postcolonial contexts where public discourse is shaped by power asymmetries and socio-political constraints (Bamgbose, 2019; Taiwo, 2019).

Although editorials frequently engage with issues such as inflation, unemployment, fuel subsidy removal and currency instability, existing studies often emphasise the content of these discussions rather than the underlying pragmatic processes that shape them. The ways in which speech acts, implicature, presupposition, deixis, and politeness strategies are deployed to construct meaning in editorial commentary have not been adequately examined systematically. This creates a gap in knowledge regarding how editorial writers implicitly assign responsibility, express criticism or construct authority while maintaining institutional objectivity and rhetorical balance (Odebunmi, 2021; Mohammed, 2020).

There is a contextual gap in how Nigerian economic realities are represented through editorial language. Given the sensitivity of economic discourse in a developing-country context, editorial writers often rely on subtle linguistic strategies to navigate criticism, accountability, and public expectation. However, there is limited empirical evidence explaining how these strategies function pragmatically across different newspapers and editorial contexts. This lack of focused analysis makes it difficult to fully understand the communicative strategies that shape public perception of Nigeria's economic conditions.

Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the inadequate critical pragmatic examination of how selected Nigerian newspaper editorials use linguistic and pragmatic strategies to construct meaning, express evaluation, and represent economic realities. The specific objectives of this research are not only to identify economy-related speech acts and how they construct economic criticism and evaluation in the editorials but also to examine the use of presupposition and implicature in conveying implicit meanings; and also, to investigate how politeness and face-management strategies reflect ideological positions and power relations in critiques of government policies and actors.

An earlier work in critical discourse studies is relevant but does not fully operationalise pragmatic tools. van Dijk (1988) and Fairclough (1995) show how media texts reproduce ideology and power at the discourse level but pay less attention to detailed pragmatic mechanisms in editorials. Foundational pragmatic theories by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) on speech acts, Grice (1975) on implicature and Brown and Levinson (1987) on politeness and face provide useful analytical tools for explaining how meaning is performed and negotiated. These theories, however, were not developed with media economic commentary in view. This study applies them directly and systematically to editorial discourse.

Within Nigerian scholarship, related studies have examined media language and ideology without fully integrating pragmatic categories. Taiwo (2007) analyses ideology in Nigerian newspaper discourse with emphasis on representation and power. Chiluwa (2012) studies media framing and evaluative language in Nigerian print media. Osisanwo (2003) discusses pragmatic acts and contextual meaning in Nigerian English usage, though not specifically in editorials on economic issues. Lamidi (2008) investigates discourse and stylistic patterns in Nigerian newspapers with a focus on rhetoric. While these studies contribute to understanding discourse and ideology in the Nigerian press, they do not systematically combine speech acts, presupposition, implicature, and politeness as analytical tools for editorials on economic matters. The present study attempts to extend these works by providing a more detailed pragmatic account of how economic criticism is linguistically constructed.

The beneficiaries of this study may include scholars and students of linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis and media studies, journalists and editorial writers who may gain insight into the effects of their language choices, policy analysts and communication

experts interested in how economic policies are framed in public discourse and readers who become more critically aware of how language influences their interpretation of economic issues.

Discourse

Discourse refers to language use beyond isolated sentences and includes spoken and written communication shaped by context, social relations, and institutional practices. It is concerned with how meaning is produced, organised, and interpreted in interaction. In contemporary linguistics, discourse is understood as a socially situated form of communication in which language constructs reality, maintains social relations, and negotiates meaning within specific contexts (cf. Willis, Meachan & Tarle 2026; Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough (2003) conceptualises discourse as a form of social practice in which language does not merely describe reality but actively shapes it, constructing identities and institutional relations.

van Dijk (2011) similarly describes discourse as a communicative event involving text, cognition, and society, mediated through mental models and social representations. Wodak and Meyer (2009) emphasise that discourse is inseparable from power and ideology, as language use reflects and reproduces social inequality. In institutional and media contexts, discourse is shaped by selective representation and framing that influence audience interpretation (cf. Polyzou, 2018). Nigerian studies further show that media discourse is influenced by ownership structures and political economy factors (Oso, 2012), with newspapers reflecting institutional and ideological interests (Ojebode & Akinwale, 2022).

Critical Discourse

Critical discourse refers to an analytical approach that examines language as a form of social practice in which meaning is shaped by power, ideology and institutional structures. It is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which investigates how language constructs social reality, reproduces inequality and legitimises dominance in society. Fairclough (2003) defines discourse as a form of social practice in which language simultaneously reflects and shapes social structures, meaning discourse is never neutral but embedded in relations of power.

van Dijk (2011) extends this by linking discourse to cognition and society, arguing that mental models and social representations shaped by group interests influence how meaning is produced and controlled. Wodak and Meyer (2009) emphasise that critical discourse analysis uncovers hidden ideologies in language, showing that lexical choices, framing, and argumentation are ideologically motivated and historically situated. Contemporary studies (cf. Osisanwo 2024; Olajimbiti, 2024) further demonstrate how institutional discourse uses selective representation to shape public understanding by foregrounding certain narratives while suppressing others. In the Nigerian context, Oso (2012), Ojebode and Akinwale (2022), Okoro and Chukwuma (2023), and Nwaezeihenatuoha (2023) collectively show that media discourse reflects ownership structures, political economy, and evaluative framing, especially in relation to economic and governance issues.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies language in use and how meaning is interpreted within specific contexts (cf. Adegbija 1982; Taguchi & Kadar, 2023). It focuses on speaker intention, hearer inference, and the role of shared knowledge in communication. Yule (1996; 2006) defines pragmatics as the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener, while Levinson (1983) emphasises contextual interpretation over isolated sentence meaning.

A core principle of pragmatics is that meaning extends beyond literal expression, as shown in Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, where implicatures arise from assumed cooperation in communication. In Nigerian scholarship, Lawal (1997) argues that meaning is inseparable from socio-cultural context, while Adegbija (2004) highlights indirectness, politeness, and contextual inference in multilingual communication. Odebunmi (2005) and Adedimeji (2009) further demonstrate that institutional and media discourse in Nigeria relies heavily on implicature, presupposition, and pragmatic acts, allowing meaning to be conveyed indirectly while shaping interpretation.

Critical Pragmatics

Critical Pragmatics is an interdisciplinary framework that integrates pragmatics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how meaning is constructed in context and shaped by power, ideology, and institutional structures. While traditional pragmatics focuses on speaker meaning, implicature, speech acts, and communicative intention, Critical Pragmatics extends this by showing that context itself is socially constructed and ideologically constrained (Mey, 2001; Chilton, 2004). Mey (2001) introduces the concept of the *pragmeme* as a socially situated speech activity embedded in institutional and cultural norms, while Chilton (2004) argues that political discourse is inherently strategic and shaped by power asymmetries.

Recent discourse-pragmatic studies further emphasise that meaning in institutional communication is not only context-dependent but also ideologically mediated through framing, presupposition, and evaluative encoding. Media texts often guide interpretation by embedding preferred ideological readings of social reality while marginalising alternatives (media discourse synthesis, 2024). In Nigerian scholarship, Ojebode and Akinwale (2022) show that editorial language reflects ownership ideology and political economy, while Okoro and Chukwuma (2023) demonstrate that economic editorials rely on evaluative and implicational strategies to frame policy outcomes. Overall, Critical Pragmatics bridges micro-level language use and macro-level social structures, showing that editorial discourse is shaped by ideological conditions and functions as a tool of influence and interpretation.

Editorials

Editorials are institutional opinion texts produced by newspapers to express collective editorial board positions on public issues and, unlike news reports that are expected to adhere to objectivity norms, they are inherently subjective, evaluative, and argumentative. van Dijk (1996) conceptualises media discourse as a site of ideological reproduction, arguing that media language functions in ways that reproduce "ideological power relations in society," while Bell (1991) similarly characterises editorials as persuasive instruments that guide interpretation and support agenda-setting and ideological positioning. In the Nigerian context, scholars such as Adedimeji (2005) and Opeibi (2009) emphasise that editorial discourse reflects sociopolitical interests and is shaped by ownership structures and political environments. Empirical studies further show a consistent pattern of evaluative framing in Nigerian newspaper editorials, particularly regarding economic policies, which are frequently represented in terms of hardship, inequality, and policy failure (Nwaezeihenatuoha, 2023; Okoro & Chukwuma, 2023), while broader analyses highlight recurring crisis-oriented narratives around inflation, unemployment, subsidy removal, and currency instability (Adebayo et al., 2024). These findings align with critical discourse perspectives, including Fairclough's view that media texts are ideologically embedded and socially constructed, and with agenda-setting theory, which holds that editorial opinion significantly influences public prioritisation of issues (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2023), collectively demonstrating that Nigerian economic editorials function as ideologically structured and persuasive constructions of national economic reality.

Newspaper Discourse

Newspaper discourse refers to the linguistic and semiotic practices involved in producing news texts such as headlines, reports, features, and editorials, and it is shaped by journalistic conventions as well as institutional ideologies. Richardson (2007) argues that news production is never neutral but is socially situated and influenced by editorial policies, institutional routines, and ideological orientations that determine how events are selected and framed. Fowler (1991) and van Dijk (2011) similarly maintain that news language constructs versions of reality through ideological structures that influence perception and control the visibility of perspectives in public communication. Empirical studies, including Bednarek and Caple (2017) and recent research (2022–2024), show that framing processes in newspaper discourse selectively highlight and suppress aspects of events to guide interpretation, a pattern strongly evident in Nigeria where ownership structures, political economy, and elite interests shape media output (Oso, 2012; Ojebode & Akinwale, 2022). Overall, Nigerian newspaper discourse on economic issues is consistently evaluative and crisis-oriented, with studies showing frequent emphasis on hardship, inequality, and policy failure (Okoro & Chukwuma, 2023; Nwaezeihenatuoha, 2023), reflecting Fairclough's (2003) view of discourse as social practice that both represents and constructs ideological reality.

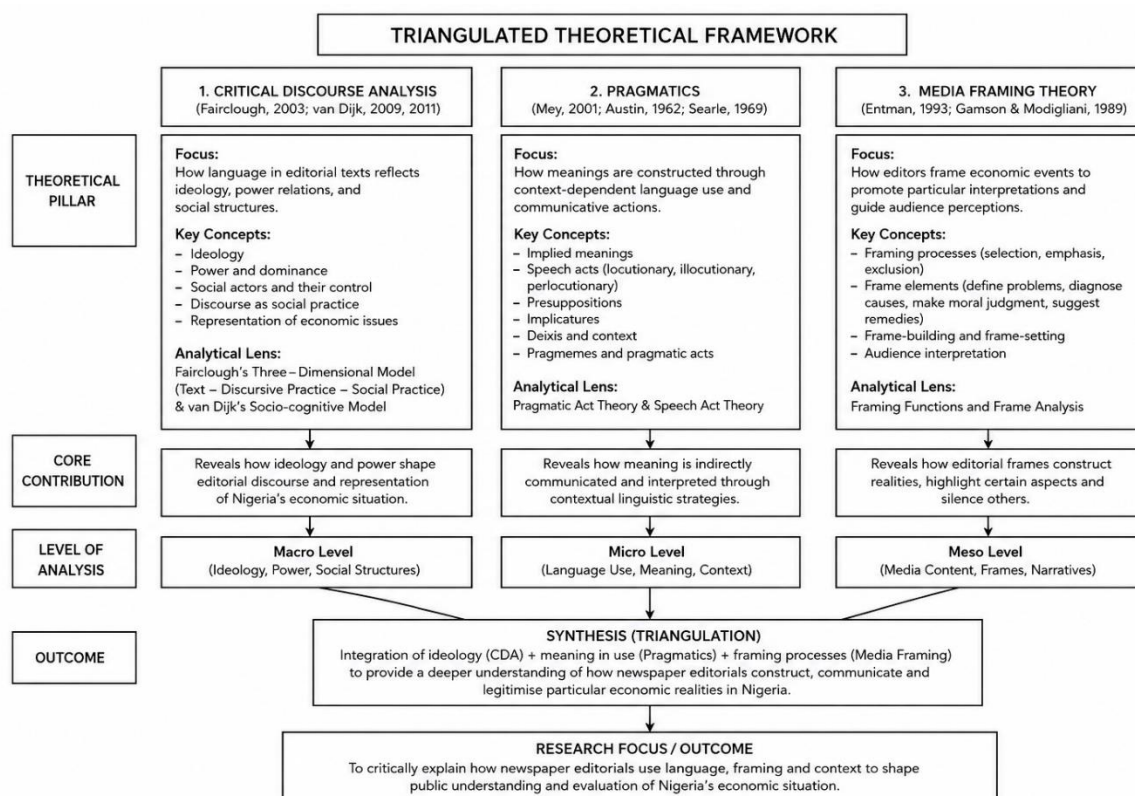
Empirical Review

Taiwo (2007) investigated ideology and power in Nigerian newspaper discourse using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The study analysed selected newspaper reports to examine how linguistic choices reflect ideological positions and shape public opinion. The research found that lexical selection, transitivity, and modality were deliberately employed to legitimise certain political and socio-economic ideologies while marginalising alternative viewpoints. Similarly, Chiluwa (2012) examined media discourse in the Nigerian public sphere, emphasising how newspapers construct social realities through evaluative language and framing strategies. Adopting a qualitative discourse analytical approach, the study found that newspaper reports frequently employ persuasive linguistic devices to influence readers' perceptions of national issues. Although both studies significantly advanced the understanding of media discourse and ideology in Nigeria, they concentrated primarily on discourse structures and ideological representation without giving adequate attention to pragmatic elements such as speech acts, implicature, presupposition and politeness strategies in editorial discourse. Their major contribution lies in demonstrating that newspaper language is ideologically motivated and capable of shaping public opinion through strategic linguistic choices.

In a related study, Mohammed (2020) examined media discourse in contemporary Africa with particular attention to contextual meaning and institutional communication. Using qualitative discourse analysis, the study established that newspaper language reflects institutional interests and socio-political realities through contextualized meaning and evaluative expressions. Likewise, Okoro and Chukwuma (2023) investigated the representation of economic issues in Nigerian newspaper editorials and found that economic reports were predominantly framed around narratives of hardship, policy failure, inflation, and governance challenges. The study demonstrated that framing and evaluative lexical choices significantly influenced readers' interpretation of economic realities. However, both studies paid limited attention to integrating Critical Discourse Analysis with Pragmatics to explain how implicit meanings are negotiated in editorial discourse. Consequently, the present study differs from previous works by integrating Critical Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics, and Media Framing Theory to provide a more comprehensive explanation of how speech acts, implicature, presupposition, deixic expressions, modality, and politeness strategies collectively construct ideological representations of economic realities in Nigerian newspaper editorials. This integrated analytical approach constitutes the study's principal contribution to knowledge by bridging the gap between discourse analysis and pragmatic interpretation in media studies.

This study is anchored on a triangulated theoretical framework that integrates Critical Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics, and Media Framing Theory to examine how newspaper editorials construct Nigeria's economic reality. Critical Discourse Analysis, drawing on Norman Fairclough (Fairclough, 2003) and Teun A. van Dijk (van Dijk, 2009; 2011), provides the macro analytical lens for investigating ideology, power relations, and institutional control in media discourse, particularly how economic issues are represented and legitimised through linguistic and structural choices within editorial texts. Pragmatics, informed by Jacob L. Mey (Mey, 2001) and Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), offers the micro analytical dimension for examining implied meanings, speech acts, presuppositions, implicatures, and context-dependent interpretation, thereby revealing how editorial stance is indirectly conveyed through language use rather than explicit statements. Media Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) complements these perspectives by explaining how editors selectively organise and present economic events through interpretive frames that highlight certain aspects of reality while suppressing others, thereby guiding audience perception and evaluation of Nigeria's economic situation. In combination, these three frameworks enable a comprehensive analysis of how ideology is embedded in language, how meaning is pragmatically constructed, and how media framing shapes public understanding of economic discourse.

Figure 1. Triangulated Critical Pragmatic Theoretical Analytical Approaches



This triangulated theoretical framework integrates Critical Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics, and Media Framing Theory to provide a multi layered explanation of how newspaper editorials construct and communicate Nigeria's economic reality. At the macro level, Critical Discourse Analysis, drawing on Norman Fairclough and Teun A. van Dijk, explains how ideology, power relations, and institutional structures shape editorial discourse. Fairclough's model links textual features to discursive and social practices, while van Dijk's socio cognitive approach explains how media discourse influences public cognition through

mental models and ideological framing. Together, these perspectives reveal how editorials are not neutral reports but ideologically structured texts that reflect and reproduce dominant socio-economic interests.

At the micro level, Pragmatics and Media Framing Theory provide complementary analytical tools for examining meaning construction and interpretation. Pragmatics, grounded in Jacob L. Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory, explains how implied meanings, speech acts, presuppositions, and implicatures allow editorial writers to express evaluation indirectly while relying on shared contextual knowledge. Media Framing Theory further explains how editorial boards select, emphasise, and organise economic information in ways that guide audience interpretation and shape perception of events. The integration of these three perspectives therefore enables a comprehensive analysis of how ideology is embedded in language, how meaning is contextually negotiated, and how media frames influence public understanding of Nigeria's economic situation.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in critical-pragmatic discourse analysis to examine how Nigerian newspaper editorials construct economic discourse through pragmatic and ideological strategies. It draws on Pragmatics (Speech Act Theory, Grice's Cooperative Principle, and Relevance Theory) and Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks, particularly Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model and van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Model, to interpret contextual meaning, ideology, and power relations in editorial texts. The research population comprises editorials published between 2024 and 2026 in selected Nigerian newspapers, including *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard*, *The Nation Newspaper*, and *NewsDay Newspaper*, focusing on major economic issues such as inflation, subsidy removal, unemployment and fiscal policy.

Data were collected through purposive sampling of editorials retrieved from official newspaper archives using economic-related keywords, with inclusion criteria emphasizing relevance, depth of economic discussion, evaluative language, and institutional authorship. Approximately twenty (20) editorials were selected using purposive sampling to ensure topical relevance, ideological diversity and manageability of the dataset for in-depth qualitative analysis. Only ten of the data samples were analysed using Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which includes textual, discursive practice and social practice; examining speech acts, implicatures, intertextuality, and ideological framing to reveal how editorials shape public opinion and reflect broader socio-political power relations.

Data Presentation

The sampled data are drawn in the table below.

Sample Newspaper	Editorial Title	Date Publication	of Dominant Theme	Economic
Sample 1 <i>BusinessDay</i>	"Government's Flawed Policies Push Citizens to the Brink"	20 June 2024	Cost of living, inflation,	food economic policy
Sample 2 <i>BusinessDay</i>	"Nigeria's Inflation Woes: A Perfect Storm of Internal and External Pressures"	23 June 2024	Inflation and monetary policy	
Sample 3 <i>The Guardian</i>	"Towards Tackling Inflation for Economic Stability"	31 May 2024	Inflation, fuel subsidy removal and economic stability	

Sample 4	<i>BusinessDay</i>	"Nigeria's Silent Crisis: Inflation's Grip Tightens"	28 November 2024	Inflation and cost of living
Sample 5	<i>BusinessDay</i>	"A Taxing Truth: Will Nigeria's Reform Ambitions Deliver?"	29 November 2024	Tax reform and economic policy
Sample 6	<i>BusinessDay</i>	"A Nation in Debt: Nigeria's Fiscal Recklessness Continues"	3 December 2024	Public debt and fiscal management
Sample 7	<i>BusinessDay</i>	"Choking the Economy: How CBN's War on Cash is Hurting Nigerians"	25 December 2024	Cash policy and monetary regulation
Sample 8	<i>BusinessDay</i>	"Inflation in Nigeria: A Silent Tax on a Struggling Nation"	31 December 2024	Inflation and purchasing power
Sample 9	<i>BusinessDay</i>	"Can Nigeria Escape the Shadow of 2024? A Call for Urgent Action"	3 January 2025	Economic recovery and national reforms
Sample 10	<i>BusinessDay</i>	"Rethinking Revenue: Can Tinubu's Tax Reforms Unite a Divided Nation?"	21 January 2025	Revenue generation and tax reform

Across Samples 1–10, the editorial discourse consistently mobilises a triangulated Critical Pragmatic Analytical (CPA) framework to construct and evaluate Nigeria's economic realities through recurring themes of inflation, fiscal policy, taxation, public debt, monetary policy, economic reforms, and the rising cost of living. At the textual level, corresponding to Fairclough's first dimension of Critical Discourse Analysis, the editorials employ highly evaluative lexical items such as "inflation woes," "silent crisis," "taxing truth," "fiscal recklessness," "war on cash," "silent tax," "struggling nation," and "urgent action" to foreground economic hardship and institutional inadequacies. These lexical choices are reinforced by metaphorical expressions, rhetorical questions and modal constructions that communicate urgency while simultaneously inviting readers to evaluate government economic policies critically.

Pragmatically, Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory is realised through shared situational knowledge of Nigeria's economic challenges, enabling editorial writers to rely on readers' familiarity with inflation, subsidy removal, exchange-rate volatility, and declining purchasing power to generate implicatures and presuppositions without making every criticism explicit. Consequently, assumptions of economic hardship, policy inconsistency, fiscal irresponsibility and governance challenges are presented as commonly accepted realities rather than contested propositions. Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies further facilitate indirect criticism through hedging, institutional caution, rhetorical questioning and collective solidarity, allowing editorials to perform face-threatening acts against government institutions while maintaining professional journalistic decorum.

At the discursive and social levels, corresponding to Fairclough's second and third dimensions, the editorials demonstrate strong intertextual dependence on persistent public narratives surrounding inflation, subsidy removal, exchange-rate depreciation, taxation, public debt, and economic reforms. Rather than presenting isolated economic events, the editorials construct coherent ideological narratives in which current economic developments are interpreted through accumulated experiences of policy failures, fiscal instability, and governance challenges. van Dijk's socio-cognitive perspective is reflected in the activation of shared mental models through which readers readily associate inflation with declining living standards, public debt with fiscal irresponsibility and tax reforms with competing

expectations of economic recovery and increased public burden. Entman's Framing Theory equally explains how the selected editorials consistently foreground particular dimensions of economic realities while backgrounding alternative interpretations. Samples dealing with inflation frame rising prices as evidence of policy inadequacies and declining household welfare, whereas those focusing on taxation and fiscal reforms present economic restructuring as both a necessity and a source of public apprehension. Likewise, editorials addressing public debt and monetary policy frame government economic management within broader narratives of accountability, transparency and institutional responsibility.

Across the corpus, ideological work is accomplished not through overt political condemnation but through systematic repetition of evaluative language, presupposed economic realities, strategic modality, selective framing and pragmatic inference. Collectively, the ten editorials demonstrate that Nigerian economy-based newspaper editorials function as persuasive ideological texts that shape public understanding of national economic conditions by integrating linguistic evaluation, pragmatic interpretation, discourse framing and socio-cognitive activation within a coherent Critical Pragmatic Analytical framework.

Critical Pragmatic Representation

Critical Pragmatic Representation (CPR) of economy-based newspaper editorial reports as investigated in this article examines how linguistic and pragmatic resources are employed to construct, interpret and evaluate economic realities beyond the mere presentation of facts. The investigation integrates insights from Critical Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics to reveal how speech acts, presupposition, implicature, evaluative language, deixis, modality, politeness and framing encode ideological positions and shape public understanding of economic issues in Nigeria. Accordingly, the critical pragmatic representations of the economy-based newspaper editorial reports sampled for this article are discussed below under the following thematic categories: speech act representation of economic realities, presupposition and implicature, evaluative lexis, deixis and modality, politeness strategies, and media framing.

Speech Act Representation of Economic Realities

Economy-based newspaper editorials are fundamentally speech-act-driven texts that do more than report economic events; they perform communicative actions intended to shape public understanding and influence policy discourse. Within the framework of Speech Act Theory, editorial writers employ assertive, directive, expressive, and occasionally commissive acts to construct representations of Nigeria's economy. Assertive speech acts present economic situations as objective facts, thereby legitimizing particular interpretations of inflation, unemployment, exchange rate instability, public debt, or fuel subsidy removal. Statements such as "The economy has entered another phase of uncertainty" or "Inflation continues to erode household purchasing power" function not merely as descriptions but as institutional assertions that encourage readers to accept these representations as unquestionable realities. Editorials also make extensive use of directive speech acts by urging governments, policymakers, and regulatory institutions to implement reforms. Expressions such as "The government must diversify the economy" or "Fiscal discipline should be prioritized" implicitly recommend policy actions while positioning newspapers as credible participants in national economic governance. Expressive speech acts further communicate disappointment, concern, or approval concerning government performance through evaluative expressions that reveal institutional attitudes toward economic management. Collectively, these speech acts transform editorials into persuasive communicative events where reporting is inseparable from evaluation and ideological positioning.

Presupposition and Implicature in Economic Representation

One of the most powerful pragmatic mechanisms in economy-based editorials is the strategic deployment of presupposition and conversational implicature to construct implicit meanings. Rather than making direct accusations, editorial writers frequently presuppose economic failure, corruption, or policy inconsistency as shared background knowledge. Headlines and statements such as "Another failed economic policy" presuppose previous policy failures before the reader even engages with the argument. Such presuppositions reduce opportunities for readers to question underlying assumptions because the information is linguistically presented as already established. Likewise, implicature enables newspapers to communicate criticism indirectly while preserving institutional neutrality. Editorial comments questioning whether "the promised reforms have yielded any meaningful results" imply governmental inefficiency without making explicit accusations. This indirectness allows newspapers to perform criticism within acceptable journalistic conventions while avoiding unnecessarily confrontational language. Pragmatically, these inferential strategies depend upon shared socio-political knowledge between writers and readers, making editorial discourse highly context-dependent. Consequently, economic hardship, rising inflation, unemployment, and currency depreciation become ideologically normalized through repeated pragmatic assumptions rather than direct assertions. The cumulative effect is the construction of a socio-economic reality that appears self-evident because readers are encouraged to supply the implied meanings from their shared experiences.

Evaluative Lexis and Ideological Construction of Economic Reality

The representation of economic realities in newspaper editorials is equally achieved through carefully selected evaluative lexical items that communicate institutional attitudes and ideological preferences. Economic events are rarely described through neutral vocabulary. Instead, editorial writers deliberately employ adjectives, adverbs, metaphors, and nominal expressions that assign value judgments to government actions and economic outcomes. Lexical choices such as "crippling inflation," "runaway debt," "failing economy," "economic catastrophe," "policy inconsistency," and "fiscal irresponsibility" construct highly negative perceptions of economic governance while encouraging emotional engagement from readers. Conversely, expressions such as "economic recovery," "renewed investor confidence," "fiscal discipline," and "inclusive growth" project optimism whenever government policies are viewed positively. These evaluative expressions function ideologically because they frame economic developments from particular institutional perspectives rather than presenting them as objective realities. The repeated use of crisis-oriented vocabulary gradually establishes dominant narratives that portray Nigeria's economy either as perpetually failing or progressively recovering depending on editorial orientation. Through such lexical evaluation, newspapers influence public attitudes toward economic reforms, political leadership, and institutional accountability while simultaneously reinforcing their editorial ideologies. Thus, lexical evaluation constitutes a central mechanism through which economic discourse becomes persuasive rather than merely informative.

Deixis, Modality, and Construction of Institutional Identity

Deictic expressions and modality significantly contribute to how editorials position themselves in relation to readers, government institutions, and national economic discourse. Personal deixis frequently employs inclusive pronouns such as "we," "our," and "us" to construct solidarity between newspapers and ordinary citizens experiencing economic hardship. Such linguistic choices portray editorial boards as collective representatives of public interest rather than detached media institutions. In contrast, exclusionary references including "they," "the government," "policy makers," or "officials" distance political actors from the public, thereby reinforcing ideological distinctions between those who govern and those affected by economic decisions. Temporal deixis further organizes discourse by contrasting

"past failures" with "future reforms," thereby constructing narratives of continuity or change in national economic management.

Modal expressions similarly regulate the strength of editorial claims and recommendations. Strong obligation markers such as must, should, ought to, and need to communicate urgency and institutional authority by presenting recommended policies as necessary rather than optional. Epistemic modal verbs such as may, might, could, and appear to introduce degrees of uncertainty, enabling editors to make cautious predictions about economic outcomes while maintaining journalistic credibility. Through modality, editorial writers negotiate certainty, probability, obligation, and possibility, thereby carefully balancing criticism with professional responsibility. These pragmatic resources ensure that newspapers remain persuasive without appearing excessively partisan, allowing editorial discourse to influence public perception while preserving institutional legitimacy.

Politeness Strategies and Mitigation of Economic Criticism

Although newspaper editorials often criticize government economic policies, such criticism is frequently moderated through politeness strategies that reduce direct confrontation while maintaining persuasive force. Following Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, editorial writers employ indirectness, hedging and mitigation to perform face-threatening acts with minimal interpersonal conflict. Rather than declaring that "the government has failed completely," editorials may observe that "recent economic policies appear not to have achieved their intended objectives." This mitigated expression softens criticism without reducing its communicative impact. Hedging devices such as perhaps, seemingly, arguably, and it appears similarly reduce categorical judgments while inviting readers to participate in evaluating economic developments.

Rhetorical questions also function as important politeness strategies by prompting readers to draw critical conclusions independently. Questions such as "How long can citizens continue to bear the burden of inflation?" or "What measurable gains have emerged from recent reforms?" simultaneously express dissatisfaction and encourage public reflection without making overt accusations. These pragmatic devices enable newspapers to maintain professional decorum, institutional credibility, and legal caution while effectively challenging government policies. Consequently, politeness strategies become rhetorical resources for balancing criticism with journalistic restraint.

Framing and Ideological Representation of Economic Narratives

Media framing represents the culmination of critical pragmatic representation because it determines how economic realities are organised into coherent interpretive narratives. Editorial boards selectively foreground certain economic events while backgrounding others, thereby influencing what readers perceive as significant. Inflation may be framed as evidence of governance failure, unemployment as proof of ineffective economic planning, and fuel subsidy removal as either necessary economic reform or avoidable public hardship depending on the newspaper's ideological orientation. Through framing, isolated economic events become interconnected narratives of crisis, reform, accountability, corruption, resilience, or national recovery.

Framing also determines attribution of responsibility by identifying who is blamed or praised for economic outcomes. Some editorials foreground institutional inefficiency and political leadership as the primary causes of economic decline, whereas others emphasize global economic pressures, fluctuating oil prices, or international financial institutions. Such selective representation demonstrates that editorials do not merely reflect economic realities but actively construct them through ideological interpretation. Consequently, economy-based newspaper editorials function as powerful discursive instruments that shape public cognition, influence policy debates, and reproduce institutional ideologies through the strategic interaction of speech acts, presupposition, implicature, evaluative language, deixis,

modality, politeness, and framing. This integrated critical pragmatic representation reveals that economic discourse in the Nigerian press is both communicative and ideological, serving as a significant mechanism through which newspapers negotiate meaning, exercise institutional influence, and shape national conversations on economic governance.

Summary of Findings

This study has examined the critical pragmatic features employed in economy-based newspaper editorial reports in Nigeria, establishing that such editorials are not neutral informational texts but ideologically constructed discourses that shape public understanding of economic realities and government policy. The findings show that speech acts are dominant, with assertive, directive, and expressive functions used to present economic conditions as factual, criticise government performance, and recommend policy actions. Evaluative expressions are also pervasive, with lexical choices related to inflation, poverty, unemployment, and policy failure constructing predominantly negative representations of Nigeria's economic situation and reflecting clear ideological positioning. Presupposition and implicature further reinforce this orientation by embedding assumptions of hardship, corruption, and institutional failure as taken-for-granted truths, while also enabling indirect criticism through implied meanings and contextual suggestions that maintain editorial professionalism.

The analysis further reveals that framing plays a central role in structuring economic narratives around crisis, hardship, and governance failure, thereby guiding reader interpretation and attribution of responsibility. Modality is frequently used to express obligation and urgency through terms such as "must" and "should," positioning newspapers as authoritative voices in policy discourse. Deictic expressions contribute to ideological alignment by constructing solidarity between editors and citizens through inclusive pronouns while distancing political elites through exclusionary references. Rhetorical questions intensify persuasion and emotional engagement, whereas politeness strategies and hedging maintain institutional decorum while mitigating direct confrontation. Overall, the study demonstrates that Nigerian economy-based editorial discourse relies on an integrated set of critical pragmatic strategies to construct meaning, negotiate ideology, and influence public perception, confirming the value of pragmatics and Critical Discourse Analysis in interpreting editorial representations of economic realities.

Conclusion

The study examined the critical pragmatic representation of economy-based newspaper editorials in Nigeria and established that such editorials are not merely informational texts but ideologically constructed discourses that interpret, evaluate and communicate economic realities. The findings show that editorials employ speech acts, presupposition, implicature, evaluative language, deixis, modality, politeness strategies and framing to shape public perceptions of economic conditions, government performance and policy outcomes.

Speech acts emerged as a dominant pragmatic resource. Assertive acts present inflation, unemployment, exchange rate depreciation and fiscal instability as factual realities, while directive acts recommend policy reforms and expressive acts convey approval or dissatisfaction with economic governance. Consequently, editorials function not only as reports of economic developments but also as persuasive platforms for evaluating policies and advocating socio-economic reforms.

The study further found that presupposition and implicature reinforce the ideological orientation of editorials by presenting economic hardship, corruption, policy inconsistency and governance failure as shared assumptions. Through implicature, newspapers indirectly criticise government policies, assign responsibility and suggest institutional inefficiency while maintaining professional objectivity and preserving journalistic credibility.

Evaluative lexical choices also play a significant role in constructing economic realities. Negative expressions such as "crippling inflation," "economic mismanagement," and "policy failure" shape readers' perceptions of economic challenges, whereas terms such as "reform," "recovery," and "economic growth" project optimism. Similarly, deixis and modality strengthen ideological positioning. Inclusive pronouns foster solidarity with the public, exclusionary references distance policymakers from citizens, and modal verbs such as "must" and "should" express obligation and urgency, reinforcing the newspapers' authoritative stance.

Finally, rhetorical questions, politeness strategies, hedging, and framing enhance the persuasive force of editorials while maintaining institutional professionalism. These devices balance criticism with objectivity and organise issues such as inflation, unemployment, fuel subsidy removal, exchange rate volatility, and public debt into broader narratives of crisis, accountability, reform, and national recovery. The study therefore concludes that Nigerian economy-based newspaper editorials employ an integrated network of critical pragmatic strategies to construct meaning, negotiate ideology, and shape public understanding of economic realities, affirming the complementary relevance of Critical Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics and Media Framing Theory in explaining editorial discourse.

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