

**A LEXICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED 2026 X POSTS OF PETER OBI ON NIGERIA'S
SOCIAL REALITIES**

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Abstract

This study undertakes a lexico-semantic analysis of three selected X (formerly Twitter) posts published by Peter Gregory Obi, a Nigerian politician and 2023 Labour Party presidential candidate, in 2026. The posts which X-ray Nigeria's social realities, are examined through the theoretical frameworks of Leech's (1981) model of lexical meaning and van Dijk's (1993, 2001) socio-cognitive approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA). The study investigates how Obi deploys specific lexical choices, rhetorical devices, and evaluative language to construct Nigeria's social realities and to position himself discursively as a credible advocate for systemic national reform. The study reveals consistent patterns of crisis-signalling vocabulary, extended bodily metaphor, antithetical constructions rooted in statistical contrast, moral appeals anchored on affective meaning, and inclusive nation-building pronouns. The analysis demonstrates that Obi's political X posts function as sophisticated instruments of persuasion and social critique, reflecting a clear awareness of digital platforms as arenas for ideological contestation. The study concludes that lexico-semantic analysis, grounded in Leech's seven types of meaning and van Dijk's ideological square, provides a productive and replicable framework for studying political discourse in African digital spaces, and contributes to the growing body of scholarship at the intersection of linguistics, politics, and new media in Nigeria.

Keywords: lexico-semantics, critical discourse analysis, Peter Obi, X posts, Nigeria, social realities.

Introduction

Language has become an instrument whereby politicians build their public identities, present social problems, and capture audiences. According to Etuk and Urujzian (2024, p. 187), "It is a means by which humans carry out activities, exchange shared beliefs and thoughts and as well ponder on their individual and collective experiences." Words then describe, inform, and question the ill deeds posed in the social environment. This insight, long established in the philosophy of language by scholars such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), has become a cornerstone of modern linguistic approaches to political communication. Lexico-semantics occupies a central place, as it is at the level of individual words and their meanings that the most consequential ideological choices are made (Akpan, 2022). When a politician describes a healthcare system as "almost comatose" rather than "underfunded" or "poorly managed," the lexical choice is simultaneously a factual claim, an emotional appeal, and a political stance. Tracing these choices systematically is the primary task of lexico-semantic analysis.

Lexico-semantics is a sub-field of linguistics, that studies the meaning of words, what marks a connection between them, and the ways these words tell of the ideological, cultural, and evaluative positions in their utterances (Cruse, 1986; Leech, 1981; Saeed, 2009; Enang & Urujzian, 2013). It explores connotation, denotation, evaluative lexis, collocation, hyponymy, antonymy, and metaphorical meaning in its analysis (Urujzian & Etuk, 2024). Leech's (1981) influential model, that identifies seven different types of meaning in linguistic utterances (conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic), offers a particularly fine-grained toolkit for the study of political vocabulary, where the difference between a word's literal dictionary meaning and its emotional or ideological resonance is frequently the difference between persuasion and failure.

X, formerly known as Twitter, has emerged as one of the prominent arenas for political communication (Etuk & Okon, 2025; Mbede & Etuk, 2026). Politicians and people as a whole have been able to speak directly to large and diverse audiences, bypassing the filtering and framing functions of traditional news media (Enli & Skogerbo, 2013). The brevity imposed by character limits, combined with the platform's culture of immediacy and shareability, creates specific discursive pressures: messages must be emotionally resonant, lexically compressed, and rhetorically striking if they are to attract attention in a crowded information environment (Mbede, 2026).

These pressures make the lexical choices of political actors on X especially, worthy of close linguistic scrutiny. Peter Gregory Obi, a former governor of Anambra State and the 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party, emerges as one of the political figures who engages on X. He circulates posts about violence across states in Nigeria, insecurity, Nigeria's debt level, poor healthcare and infrastructure, corruption, electoral issues and most importantly, the poor funding of education, and often signs them off with a slogan "a new Nigeria is POSSible. PO." Obi's three posts directly address what he constructs as the most urgent crises in Nigerian public life: the near-collapse of the healthcare system, the escalating tide of violence and insecurity across multiple states, and the systemic disappearance of federal revenue. These posts form the body of this study.

The linguistic features of politicians' digital posts remain surprisingly unexplored in academic research; scholars rather focus on newspapers, political speeches, election manifestos, and broadcast interviews (Ayeomoni, 2012; Odebunmi, 2011; Ofulue, 2013; Taiwo, 2010). Social media posts, precisely, posts on X, have received limited attention in political discourse. Thus, there is need to examine how vocabulary encodes ideological positions, constructs social realities, and manages audience emotions. This study addresses that gap by illuminating the strategies through which Obi's language constructs Nigeria's social realities and advances a reformist political agenda.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two theoretical frameworks: Leech's (1981) model of lexical meaning and van Dijk's (1993, 2001) socio-cognitive approach to critical discourse analysis.

Geoffrey Leech's Model of Lexical Meaning

Geoffrey Leech's (1981) central contribution to lexico-semantics is his taxonomy of seven distinct types of meaning an utterance or utterances carry. They include conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning. Each of these captures a different form of semantic content in an expression.

Conceptual meaning, which he also calls logical or cognitive meaning, refers to the essential, propositional content of a word, which can also be given as a dictionary definition. It is the meaning that makes communication possible at its most basic level. Conceptual meaning relates to synonymy (similar in meaning), antonymy (opposite in meaning), hyponymy (inclusion of meaning, as in the relationship between mango and fruit), and meronymy (part-whole relationships, example, body and leg). Connotative meaning refers to the communicative value that an expression has by virtue of what it refers to, beyond its pure or dictionary definition (Urujzian, 2016). Connotations are the cultural, experiential and ideological associations that accrue around a word through its patterns of use. Social meaning refers to that aspect of meaning that shows the social circumstances in which language is used. It uncovers the relationship between speakers, their social status, and level of formality, regional background, and class (Udoinwang and Akpan, 2023). Affective meaning refers to the emotional attitude of the speaker or writer as encoded directly in the linguistic expression itself. It signals the speaker's emotional response to situations. Reflected meaning arises when a word has multiple conceptual senses, that is, it occurs when one sense of a word evokes another meaning or association because the word has multiple meanings. In this case, one meaning "reflects" onto another and influences how the word is understood. Collocative meaning refers to the associations that a word acquires by virtue of the words it typically appears alongside in actual language use. This association guides readers to apply the full semantic weight of words referred to (Affiah, Amaku and Akpan, 2023). Thematic meaning refers to what is communicated by the way a speaker or writer organises the message. It may be through ordering, focus, or emphasis.

Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Van Dijk's (1993, 2001) approach to CDA is concerned with the relationship between language, power, and ideology, showing how discourse reproduces, challenges, or transforms relations of domination in society (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). What distinguishes van Dijk's approach within the CDA tradition is his emphasis on the role of mental representations, what he calls social cognition, as the crucial mediating link between discourse and social structure. For van Dijk (1993), the relationship between a text and its mode of production is dependent on their belief, their social group belief, their political ideology, their cultural understanding, and their mental representations of society. He argues that ideology, understood as the shared cognitive framework through which social groups organise their beliefs about the social world, is systematically encoded in discourse through identifiable linguistic and rhetorical strategies. Van Dijk's (2001) idea of context models explains that people do not produce or interpret language in isolation, they construct in their mind a picture of the utterance situation around them, and this affects the kind of language used and how they understand it.

Review of Related Literature

The linguistic study of political language has a rich and well-developed history. Early foundational work by Orwell (1946) on the relationship between politics and the English language drew attention to the ways in which political actors deliberately obscure meaning, distort reality, and manipulate audiences through the strategic use of language. While Orwell's account was primarily critical and polemical, it established several enduring themes in the study of political language: the weaponisation of abstraction, the strategic use of passive constructions to remove agents from descriptions of harmful actions, and the deployment of emotionally loaded vocabulary to bypass critical reasoning. The formal linguistic study of political language gained major theoretical impetus from the development of CDA in the 1980s and 1990s. Fairclough (1989, 1995) argued that discourse is a form of social practice, and that linguistic choices in any text both reflect and reproduce the social and institutional power relations within which the text is produced. Fairclough's (2003) later work on analysing discourse extended this framework to the analysis of specific textual features, including the ideological dimensions of vocabulary choice, the functions of nominalisations and passives, and the role of presupposition and implicature in political argumentation.

Van Dijk (1993) offered a model of ideological discourse analysis grounded in cognitive science, arguing that the ideological structures of texts are best understood as reflections of the shared cognitive models that social groups hold about themselves and others. Van Dijk's (2001) account of political discourse and political cognition extended this model to the specific domain of politics, identifying the ideological square as the central organising structure of politically motivated discourse. In the African and Nigerian context, the linguistic study of political language has developed along several lines. Taiwo (2010) investigated the discourse of Nigerian newspaper editorials during election periods, identifying a consistent pattern of "crisis framing," a linguistic strategy in which national problems are presented as severe, urgent, and demanding of immediate remedial action. His analysis revealed that crisis framing in Nigerian political discourse typically involves the accumulation of negative evaluative vocabulary, the strategic use of statistics to establish the empirical severity of the crisis, and the implicit or explicit invocation of a responsible agent whose failures have produced the crisis. Odebunmi (2011) examined the pragmatic strategies deployed in Nigerian political interviews, with particular attention to the use of euphemism, mitigation, hedging, and indirect speech acts as strategies for managing face and projecting authority. Ofulue (2013) examined the language of Nigerian election campaigns, identifying features including the strategic deployment of promises, the use of collective identity markers, and the rhetorical construction of opponents as threats to the national interest.

The study of social media political communication has generated a significant international literature. Enli and Skogerbo (2013) discovered that politicians use platforms such as Twitter to project personalised, authentic images that bypass the institutional framing of traditional news media, enabling a kind of direct citizen-politician relationship that is both more intimate and more controlled than media-mediated communication. Ott (2017) offered a more critical assessment of Twitter's effects on political discourse, arguing that the brevity, immediacy, and emotional register encouraged by the platform tend to promote simplistic, reactive, and divisive political communication. His analysis was primarily focused on the Twitter behaviour of Donald J. Trump, whose communication style is characterised by aggression and emotional simplicity. Chiluwa (2012) examined online discourse in the context of Nigerian religious and ethnic conflict, demonstrating the ways in which digital platforms can function as sites of discursive resistance and identity construction for marginalised communities.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytic approach. Its focus is to show how meaning is constructed through choice of words and their connection. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select three 2026 posts of Peter Obi on X that explicitly explore Nigeria's current social realities. This analysis was guided by Leech's conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic types of meaning; and van Dijk's CDA. The posts were retrieved directly from Obi's X account, each was then analysed in line with Leech's (1981) Model of Lexical Meaning and van Dijk's (2015) Socio-Cognitive Approach to CDA.

Post One: Now a Disgraced Country Indeed

Today, as the world marks World Health Day, we must pause for honest reflection.

Nigeria, a nation of over 200 million people, continues to grapple with one of the weakest healthcare systems in the world. Our primary healthcare structure is almost comatose. We now record worse infant mortality outcomes than India, a country with a larger population, while health insurance coverage in Nigeria remains below 5%. These are not just statistics; they are a painful indictment of our priorities.

Recent disclosures by the Honourable Minister of Health show that out of the ₦218 billion appropriated for healthcare capital expenditure, only about ₦36 million has been released. This is deeply troubling. At the same time, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has projected over ₦135 billion for legal expenditures.

Let us reflect on this.

The amount earmarked for election-related litigation is far higher than what has been made available for primary healthcare, the very foundation of a nation's wellbeing. This is the same primary healthcare system expected to serve millions of Nigerians and support critical institutions such as:

- University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Benin City
- University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Calabar
- University of Abuja Teaching Hospital, Gwagwalada
- University College Hospital, Ibadan
- Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital, Ile-Ife
- University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital, Ilorin
- Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua
- University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku-Ozalla, Enugu
- Jos University Teaching Hospital, Jos
- Aminu Kano University Teaching Hospital, Kano
- Lagos University Teaching Hospital, Lagos
- University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, Maiduguri
- Nnamdi Azikiwe Teaching Hospital, Nnewi
- University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital, Port Harcourt
- Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital, Sokoto
- University of Uyo Teaching Hospital, Uyo
- Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria
- Federal Teaching Hospital, Abakaliki
- Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital, Bauchi
- Federal Medical Centre, Yola

These institutions represent hope for millions. Yet, they remain underfunded, overstretched, and burdened by systemic neglect.

A nation that prepares more for electoral disputes than for the health of its citizens is a nation that has lost its way.

We must begin to ask the difficult but necessary questions: What are our true priorities? What kind of nation are we building? And for whom?

Healthcare and education are not optional; they are the foundation of national development. Any country that neglects them undermines its own future.

Nigeria must urgently reorder its priorities. We must invest in the health and wellbeing of our people, strengthen our institutions, and build a system that works for all, not just a few.

A new Nigeria is POSSible. –PO

Obi's first post titled "Now a Disgraced Country Indeed," is a political piece published on World Health Day. It compares Nigeria's healthcare capital expenditure release of ₦36 million against INEC's projected ₦135 billion for legal expenditure. He uses this difference to construct a sustained criticism of government priorities. Lexical items such as "comatose," "infant mortality," "underfunded," "overstretched," and "systemic neglect" cluster within a semantic field that conceptually constructs the Nigerian healthcare system as dying. "Comatose" denotes a state of deep unconsciousness. Connotatively, it carries associations of hopelessness, imminent death, and irreversibility. By application, Obi communicates the system as weak and dying. Similarly, the word "indictment" in the expression "...they are a painful indictment of our priorities." suggests a serious accusation, similar to what happens in a law court. It makes the government appear not just careless, but strongly responsible for the problem being discussed. "...lost its way" in the expression "A nation that has lost its way" connotes confusion, failure, and poor leadership rather than physical movement. "Indictment" in Leech's (1981) reflected meaning reflects on the legal meaning and makes the government appear guilty.

Phrases such as 'deeply troubling,' 'painful indictment,' 'lost its way,' 'systemic neglect' and "We must pause for honest reflection" introduce Leech's affective meaning. Here, he displays his emotions that are not mere descriptors of the situation, but affectively charged to the point that the reader shares the moral outrage. The exclamatory title "Now a Disgraced Country Indeed," also carries intense affective meaning. It conveys shame,

anger, and national disappointment. “Disgraced” implies not merely failure but the loss of honour before a watching world. “Indeed” functions as an affective intensifier, communicating that what follows confirms what the speaker has long known or feared. Together they communicate a posture of sorrowful, indignant confirmation rather than surprise. “Primary healthcare” “national development” “health and wellbeing” are collocations that create semantic associations with governance, policy failure, and social welfare. Thematically, the post foregrounds healthcare problems alongside political spending. For instance, the expression, “The amount earmarked for election-related litigation is far higher than what has been made available for primary healthcare...” emphasises the contrast between political priorities and citizens’ welfare.

Leech (1981) explains that social meaning is communicated by what language reveals about the social circumstances, register, and identity of the speaker. The text alternates between two registers: the formal, technical language of public policy (“capital expenditure,” “appropriated,” “projected”) and the morally urgent language of civic appeal (“we must,” “let us reflect,” “a nation that has lost its way”). Obi presents himself as an informed policy analyst and a concerned citizen speaking on behalf of the collective, “we,” “our,” “us.” These construct a shared social identity between Obi and his readers against the implied “them” of government. The listing of twenty federal teaching hospitals by name is also a carrier of social meaning. It signals institutional knowledge, positioning Obi as someone with credibility, while simultaneously giving the abstract claim of “underfunded institutions” a concrete, geographical, and emotionally resonant reality for readers who may have received treatment or been trained in those institutions. The naming of specific institutions in the post deploys nomination. The author refuses to allow the government’s financial decisions to remain abstract. Each hospital named is a site of popular need, a place where ordinary Nigerians go when they are most vulnerable. Their naming is an act of counter-power: it makes the human cost of misallocation visible and undeniable.

Van Dijk’s (2015) CDA explains how powerful groups use language to control ideas, influence society, and maintain dominance. In the post, a strong contrast is created between ordinary Nigerians (“our people,” “millions of Nigerians,” and “citizens”) and the political leadership, which is indirectly criticised through expressions like “a nation that has lost its way.” Obi places himself and the readers on the side of suffering citizens, while the political class is presented as responsible for the country’s problems. The phrase “not just a few” in the conclusion, “build a system that works for all, not just a few” makes this binary explicit. The “few” are the elite who currently benefit from the system; the “all” is the imagined egalitarian future. This construction is ideologically significant: it implies that the current system is not merely inefficient but deliberately designed to exclude the majority. The post exposes inequality through the financial comparison and challenges it through the series of rhetorical questions such as “What are our true priorities? What kind of nation are we building? And for whom?” It also offers resistance by ending with an affirmative counter-vision: “A new Nigeria is POSSible.” The capitalisation of “PO” within “POSSible” becomes an embedded signature, fusing Obi’s initials into the text’s final affirmation.

Post Two: A decaying Nation Crying for Leadership.

What we have witnessed across our country in just the past 48 hours is not only tragic, it is utterly unacceptable and a damning indictment of our collective failure of leadership.

From the reported killings in Katsina, Adamawa, Kaduna and Benue States, to the gruesome murder of an entire family in Plateau State, and the heartbreaking abduction of innocent children in Kogi State, one of the incidents involves children conveying their mother’s dead body for burial. Nigeria is bleeding. We are fast becoming a nation where human life is treated as expendable, where citizens live in fear, and where the basic duty of government, to protect lives and property, is repeatedly neglected.

11 innocent Nigerians were killed in Katsina State. 7 more in Benue State. 23 in Adamawa State in just one day. An entire family was brutally murdered in Plateau State. 24 children were abducted from an orphanage in Kogi State, and 10 more children were taken in Kaduna State, all within 48 hours.

These are not mere statistics; they are our fellow Nigerians, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, whose lives have been brutally cut short or violently disrupted.

This cannot continue. A nation cannot develop under the weight of such persistent insecurity and human tragedy. The normalisation of these horrors is itself a crisis. We must ask, with all sense of urgency and responsibility: where is the leadership? Where is the coordination, the competence, and the compassion required to confront this menace decisively?

My heart goes out to all the grieving families across these states. I pray for divine comfort for those who have lost loved ones and for the safe and immediate return of all abducted children.

A New Nigeria is not just a slogan; it has become an urgent necessity.

A New Nigeria is Possible. –PO

Peter Obi's post "A Decaying Nation Crying for Leadership" is a politically situated response to a wave of killings, murders, and abductions across five Nigerian states within a single 48-hour period. The text was published on X (formerly Twitter) and functions simultaneously as a public lament, a political critique, and a statement of opposition leadership. Both Leech's (1981) lexico-semantic framework and van Dijk's (2015) CDA provide the tools for examining how Obi constructs meaning and communicates ideology through his lexical choices. The title of the post immediately establishes its dominant semantic field. The phrase "a decaying nation" draws on the semantic field of biological decomposition. According to Leech (1981), every word carries a conceptual meaning, its basic, dictionary-level denotation, as well as associative meanings that extend beyond it. At the conceptual level, "decaying" denotes the progressive breakdown of organic matter. At the connotative level, however, it carries associations of neglect, irreversibility, and internal collapse, the image of something left unattended until it rots from within. This connotative meaning is considerably more damning than neutral alternatives such as "struggling" or "weakening" would have been, and its selection at the very opening of the text signals the severity of the judgement Obi intends to deliver.

The opening sentence reinforces this severity through a cluster of affective vocabulary. Leech (1981) defines affective meaning as the personal emotions and attitudes of the speaker communicated through word choice. The phrase "not only tragic, it is utterly unacceptable and a damning indictment of our collective failure of leadership" deploys three affectively charged expressions in rapid succession. "Utterly" functions as an intensifier that removes any qualification from "unacceptable." "Damning indictment" imports the gravity of legal language into a political context, constructing the failure of leadership not merely as an administrative shortcoming but as a moral offence warranting formal judgement. The affective meaning of this opening positions the reader to receive the rest of the text in a state of moral alertness.

The body of the text is structured around a dense semantic field of bodily harm and death. Lexical items such as "killings," "murder," "abduction," "brutally cut short," "violently disrupted," and "bleeding" all belong to a semantic cluster organised around physical violence inflicted on human bodies. Their concentration in the early paragraphs produces what Leech (1981) would identify as a cumulative connotative effect: each item adds to the weight of the others, so that by the time the reader reaches "Nigeria is bleeding," the nation itself has been constructed as a wounded body requiring urgent attention. The metaphor of national bleeding is not merely figurative; it is a precise lexico-semantic choice that connotes acute injury, loss, and the need for immediate intervention.

The decision to follow the descriptive narrative with a paragraph of specific statistics, "11 innocent Nigerians were killed in Katsina State. 7 more in Benue State. 23 in Adamawa State in just one day," carries significant thematic meaning. Leech (1981) explains that thematic meaning is communicated through the organisation and emphasis of a text, including the order in which information is presented. Obi places the statistics after the emotionally charged description, ensuring that the numbers arrive in a context already saturated with moral feeling. The short, declarative sentences that carry the statistics are deliberately stripped of rhetorical elaboration, which gives them the quality of evidence in a legal case. The thematic organisation of the text moves the reader from feeling to fact, and from fact back to feeling, "these are not mere statistics; they are our fellow Nigerians, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters", a sequence that reinforces both the credibility and the emotional force of the argument. The phrase "these are not mere statistics" is itself a notable lexico-semantic move. The word "mere" carries connotative meaning that implies dismissiveness and reduction. Obi uses "not mere statistics" to implicitly accuse those in power of treating the dead as abstractions rather than human beings. The list that follows, "fathers, mothers, sons, daughters," enumerates the most fundamental human relational categories, activating what Leech (1981) calls reflected meaning: each of these words carries associations drawn from the reader's own family life, so that the deaths described are felt as losses within the reader's own emotional world, not only within the abstract category of "fellow Nigerians."

The term "expendable" is perhaps the most ideologically precise lexical choice in the entire text. At the conceptual level it means able to be sacrificed without significant loss. At the connotative level, however, it imports the cold calculus of military strategy, where expendable resources are those acceptable casualties in the pursuit of a larger objective. By stating that "human life is treated as expendable," Obi attributes to the Nigerian government a mode of thinking associated with warfare and instrumentalism rather than governance and care. This is not an accusation of incompetence but of moral failure, and the connotative meaning of "expendable" carries that distinction precisely.

The rhetorical questions that follow the statistical paragraph carry both thematic and affective meaning. “Where is the leadership? Where is the coordination, the competence, and the compassion required to confront this menace decisively?” These are not genuine requests for information; they are discursive challenges. Leech (1981) notes that thematic meaning is produced partly through syntactic choices, and the repeated “where is the” structure creates a rhythm of accumulating accusation. Each question narrows the indictment: leadership in general, then coordination, then competence, then compassion. The final word, “decisively,” implies that whatever token response may have been offered has been characterised by hesitation and half-measures.

From the perspective of van Dijk's (2015) CDA, the text is an act of discursive resistance against the ideological narrative of the ruling government. Van Dijk's CDA focuses specifically on the discursive reproduction of power abuse and social inequality, as well as the resistance against such domination. Obi, as a former presidential candidate and opposition figure, uses the occasion of a national tragedy to challenge the government's claim to legitimacy by exposing the gap between its foundational duty “to protect lives and property” and its actual performance. The phrase “repeatedly neglected” is particularly significant here: “repeatedly” implies not a single failure but a pattern, which shifts the accusation from incompetence to wilful abdication.

The ideological architecture of the text rests on a consistent us/them binary, which van Dijk (2015) identifies as one of the primary mechanisms through which political discourse constructs ideology. Van Dijk's framework identifies how discourse reproduces polarisation between “us” and “them” as a central feature of ideological work, where dominant groups shape public attitudes by controlling how social groups are represented in discourse. In Obi's text, the “us” is constructed through pervasive inclusive language — “our country,” “our fellow Nigerians,” “our collective failure,” “we are fast becoming.” This inclusive “we” aligns the author with ordinary Nigerians who are suffering. The “them” which stands for the governing class responsible for the failure, is never named directly. No minister, no security chief, no official is identified. This is a deliberate discursive strategy: by keeping the accused anonymous and abstract, Obi generalises culpability to the entire political system without the legal and political risks of direct nomination, while ensuring that his audience knows precisely who is meant.

The post also makes systematic use of nominalisation (the conversion of actions into nouns) which van Dijk (2015) identifies as a discourse structure that manages the representation of agency. “The reported killings,” “the gruesome murder,” “the heartbreaking abduction,” and “the normalisation of these horrors” all describe events without naming who caused them. This concealment of agency is ideologically significant: it names the harm while withholding the identity of the responsible agent, allowing the implied accusation to land without the precision of a direct charge. The effect is that the reader supplies the agent from their own political knowledge, which makes the accusation more powerful than any explicit statement would have been.

The closing movement of the post shifts register from outrage to pastoral empathy and then to political vision. “My heart goes out to all the grieving families... I pray for divine comfort” carries affective and social meaning that repositions Obi from political critic to compassionate leader. The social meaning of “divine comfort” is particularly resonant in the Nigerian context: it identifies the author as a person of faith and signals to his audience that his solidarity with them extends beyond the political into the spiritual. The final line “A New Nigeria is Possible” is not just a slogan but an urgent necessity. It reintroduces his campaign signature and reveals the text's underlying discursive function. The tragedy has been named, the government indicted, and the author presented as the alternative. The capitalisation of “PO” within “POssible” encodes his initials into the word for hope itself, a typographical act of self-inscription that is consistent across his social media posts and constitutes, in Stubbs's (2001) terms, a recognisable discursive signature.

Post Three: Nigeria Is Bleeding From Within

It is deeply troubling to read recent World Bank reports indicating that, while Nigeria's Federation Revenue surged to ₦84 trillion in just three years, a staggering 41% —amounting to ₦34.44 trillion — never reached the Federation Account. This sum exceeds the combined ₦34 trillion earmarked for capital projects in the 2024 and 2025 Appropriation Bills, a comparison that underscores the gravity of the situation and signals that something is fundamentally wrong.

This is not a mere oversight; it points to institutionalised corruption on a massive scale. In 1994, when the Okigbo Panel reported about \$12.4 billion from the Gulf War oil windfall as unaccounted for, Nigerians were outraged and the nation shook with indignation. Today, an even more troubling situation appears to be unfolding, yet it is met with a disquietening silence.

We are trapped in a lethal paradox: Earning more as a nation, yet having less to invest in healthcare, education, and infrastructure. From 2025, systemic “deductions” have allowed agencies to capture more resources than entire states and even critical ministries.

These leakages explain why countries with fewer resources are out-performing us across key development indices. With such a broken system, how can we fix power, strengthen our schools, build resilient healthcare, or develop critical infrastructure?

Nigeria has no business being poor. We must stop these leakages through disciplined, transparent leadership driven by character. It is time to redirect our hijacked resources back to the people and move Nigeria into the league of developed nations.

With our collective resolve to change this corruption-infested system.

A New Nigeria is POSSible. -PO

Peter Obi's third post, “Nigeria Is Bleeding From Within,” departs from the emotionally charged register of his previous posts and adopts a more data-driven and economic argument. Rather than responding to immediate physical violence, this text engages with financial malfeasance, the disappearance of ₦34.44 trillion from Nigeria's Federation Account as indicated in a World Bank report. Despite this shift in subject matter, the same lexico-semantic strategies and ideological structures identified in the earlier posts are present here, and are deployed with equal precision in the service of political critique and self-positioning.

The title “Nigeria Is Bleeding From Within” immediately connects this post to the previous one, which used the phrase “Nigeria is bleeding” as its emotional climax. The repetition of this metaphor across two separate posts is not coincidental. According to Stubbs (2001), when a writer returns consistently to the same lexical pattern across multiple texts, that pattern constitutes a discursive signature, a stable ideological orientation encoded in recurring language. The bleeding metaphor constructs Nigeria as a living body suffering haemorrhage, and the addition of “from within” in this title is lexico-semantically significant. Bleeding from within (internal bleeding) is medically more dangerous than external bleeding precisely because it is invisible and therefore more difficult to diagnose and treat. Applied to a nation, it connotes corruption that is systemic and hidden, operating beneath the surface of official account. This connotative meaning, in Leech's (1981) framework, goes considerably beyond the conceptual definition of the phrase and carries the full weight of the post's ideological argument before a single statistic has been presented.

The opening paragraph anchors the post's credibility in external authority, which is identified as the “recent World Bank reports.” The social meaning and relevance of this citation is significant. As Leech (1981) explains, social meaning is communicated by what language reveals about the register and positioning of the speaker. Thus, by invoking the World Bank rather than a Nigerian government source or his own assertion, Obi positions himself as a leader who reads international economic data and holds the government accountable to global standards. The specific figures that follow (₦84 trillion in revenue, 41% unaccounted for, ₦34.44 trillion missing, compared against the ₦34 trillion capital expenditure in two national budgets) are presented with precision that carries thematic meaning. Thematic meaning according to Leech (1981) is produced through the organisation and emphasis of a text. In placing the missing sum in immediate comparison with the capital budget, Obi's post constructs a numerical argument whose logic is devastating. He alludes that Nigeria has lost more money to corruption than it has spent on building the entire country across two years.

The phrase “institutionalised corruption on a massive scale” is one of the most ideologically loaded in the entire post. At the conceptual level, “institutionalised” means embedded within the structures and processes of an institution. At the connotative level, however, it carries associations of deliberateness, systematicity, and normalisation. This connotative meaning is considerably more damning than terms such as “widespread” or “extensive” corruption would have been, because it implies that the system cannot be reformed from within; it must be fundamentally changed. This implication directly supports Obi's political positioning as a reformer rather than merely a critic. The affective intensifier “on a massive scale” adds emotional weight to the conceptual and connotative meaning, ensuring the reader does not underestimate the gravity of the claim.

The post goes on to provide a historical comparison with the Okigbo Panel of 1994 “when the Okigbo Panel reported about \$12.4 billion from the Gulf War oil windfall as unaccounted for, Nigerians were outraged and the nation shook with indignation” and deploys reflected meaning with considerable rhetorical sophistication. Leech (1981) explains that reflected meaning arises when the associations of one usage of a word or phrase colour its reception in another context. The Okigbo scandal is a touchstone of Nigerian political memory, associated with the Abacha military era and the depths of institutional corruption. By reflecting the current situation against that

historical benchmark and then adding that “an even more troubling situation appears to be unfolding,” Obi constructs the present administration as worse than a military dictatorship by the standards of financial accountability. The most affectively powerful element of this comparison, however, is the contrast between the public response of 1994 when “Nigerians were outraged and the nation shook with indignation” and the present response: “a disquietening silence.” The word “disquietening” carries both connotative meaning (something troublingly wrong is implied by the silence) and affective meaning (the speaker is personally disturbed by it). The silence itself is constructed as a symptom of the same systemic failure that produced the corruption.

The phrase “lethal paradox” introduces the semantic field of medicine and danger into what is otherwise economic discourse. “Lethal” at the conceptual level means capable of causing death. At the connotative level, it carries urgency, irreversibility, and the language of crisis. “Paradox” at the conceptual level denotes a logical contradiction. Together, the compound carries both connotative and reflected meaning: the nation is caught in a contradiction that is not merely frustrating but fatal, one that kills the possibilities of development even as revenue grows. Udoinwang and Akpan, 2022). The elaboration that follows: “Earning more as a nation, yet having less to invest in healthcare, education, and infrastructure”, is a precise lexico-semantic enactment of that paradox, setting two semantic fields in direct opposition: the field of abundance (earning, surged, revenue, trillion) against the field of deprivation (less, broken, leakages, poor). The juxtaposition is the argument.

The word “leakages” deserves particular attention as a carrier of connotative and reflected meaning. At the conceptual level, a leakage is an unintended escape of liquid through a gap or crack. At the connotative level, the term imports the language of engineering and plumbing. Interestingly, they (plumbing and engineering) are systems that can in principle be fixed if the source of the leak is identified and sealed. This is a strategically chosen metaphor because it frames corruption not as a moral failing requiring punishment but as a structural problem requiring technical competence. The connotative meaning of “leakages” thus supports Obi’s political self-presentation as a managerial problem-solver rather than merely a moral critic. However, the phrase “institutionalised corruption” earlier in the same text reveals that Obi intends both readings: corruption is at once a moral failure and a structural one, and the language oscillates between these two framings throughout the post. The series of rhetorical questions near the end of the analytical section like “how can we fix power, strengthen our schools, build resilient healthcare, or develop critical infrastructure?” functions in the same way as the rhetorical questions in the previous posts. They do not seek answers; they perform the impossibility of the current situation. Verb choices are significant at the lexico-semantic level (Uruzian, 2012). For instance, in the text, “fix,” “strengthen,” “build,” and “develop” all belong to a semantic field of construction and improvement, a field that implies the existence of a capable agent who could accomplish these things under different conditions. The rhetorical questions ask how these things can be achieved given the broken system, but they also imply, through the semantic field they activate, that they could be achieved under competent leadership. The questions simultaneously indict the present administration and gestures toward a different future.

The declaration “Nigeria has no business being poor” is affectively and ideologically the most direct statement in the entire post. At the conceptual level it means Nigeria should not be poor, especially, given the wealth of her natural resources. At the connotative level, the phrase “has no business being” carries the meaning of something that is wrong by definition; therefore, it is an anomaly, an injustice, a situation that violates a fundamental logic. The social meaning of this phrase is equally important: it is the language of economic confidence and national pride, positioning Obi as someone who believes in Nigeria’s potential rather than accepting its condition. The phrase “corruption-infested system” in the closing line reinforces the reflected meaning of disease and contamination that runs through the entire post. “Infested” connotes an infestation of parasites or vermin, organisms that consume resources from within. Here, the gist is that the (political) system is infested by corrupt politicians (political leaders) who destroy the country through their greed. The biological metaphor is consistent with the bleeding imagery of the title and reinforces the post’s central argument that Nigeria’s problem is internal, systemic, and parasitic rather than the result of external circumstances.

From van Dijk’s (2015) CDA perspective, the post performs the same ideological work as the previous two, but through a different discursive register. Van Dijk’s CDA examines how power abuse and social inequality are enacted and reproduced through text, and how resistance against such domination is discursively constructed. Whereas the second post constructed governmental failure through the evidence of physical violence, this post constructs it through the evidence of financial data. The effect is cumulative: across three posts, Obi has built a case that the current administration has failed Nigerians in their physical safety, their health and welfare, and their economic rights. Each post adds a dimension to the indictment while maintaining the same discursive architecture.

The us/them binary that van Dijk (2015) identifies as central to political ideology is present here in a more economically framed form. The “us” in this post is constituted not through the language of grieving families but through the language of citizens deprived of their national resources, “our hijacked resources,” “back to the people,” “our collective resolve.” The word “hijacked” is particularly striking as a carrier of connotative meaning: it imports the language of violent theft into a discussion of public finance. Van Dijk’s framework identifies how dominant groups control discourse access and shape public understanding of social inequality. Obi uses “hijacked” rather than “misappropriated” or “diverted,” to construct the removal of public funds as an act of criminal violence against the Nigerian people, which aligns with his broader discursive strategy of framing governance failure as an assault on citizens rather than a failure of administration.

The closing lines maintain the signature structure observed across all three posts. “With our collective resolve to change this corruption-infested system. A New Nigeria is POSSible. -PO” reintroduces the campaign slogan and the typographical self-inscription. Across all three posts, this closing is consistent in structure and in the embedding of “PO” within “POSSible.” In Stubbs’s (2001) terms, this constitutes a stable collocational pattern that encodes authorial identity into the language of hope itself. The closing is not merely a sign-off but a discursive act: it transforms each post, regardless of its specific subject matter, into an episode in a single, ongoing political narrative in which the author is the consistent alternative to the failure being described.

Conclusion

This study examined the lexico-semantic features of three selected 2026 X posts by Peter Obi on Nigeria’s healthcare crisis, insecurity, and financial corruption using Leech’s theory of meaning and van Dijk’s socio-cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis. The analysis showed that the three posts share a consistent discourse pattern. Through metaphors such as the “nation as body,” emotional vocabulary like “comatose,” “expendable,” and “institutionalised corruption,” the posts present Nigeria as a country in deep crisis while creating solidarity between Obi, the writer, and ordinary citizens. At the same time, the political elite is indirectly represented as responsible for the nation’s problems. The repeated use of “POSSible” also combines personal political identity with a message of hope and reform. The findings support earlier studies on Nigerian political discourse, digital communication, and ideological struggle. The study confirms that crisis framing remains central in Nigerian political language and that social media platforms are now important spaces for political persuasion, identity construction, and ideological contestation. It also shows that political X posts can contain complex and carefully structured arguments despite the brevity of the platform.

Future studies may compare the language of different Nigerian politicians on X, examine how political language changes over time, study audience reactions to political posts, or investigate how specific lexical choices influence public engagement such as likes, reposts, and comments. Researchers may also compare X discourse with speeches and interviews to determine whether political language changes across communication platforms. The study shows that the relationship between language, politics, and digital media in Nigeria remains an important and developing area of linguistic research.

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