

# Contrast as a Discursive Strategy in Editorial Cartoons

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## ABSTRACT

In order to understand how cartoonists use contrast as a discursive strategy for creating and emphasising particular meanings, this study analyses the structure and purposes of contrast in editorial cartoons in a few Nigerian newspapers. 25 cartoons were chosen, categorised as pictorial or lexical, and then analysed using pragmatic shared knowledge, Cruse's (1986) classification of opposites, and Bejar et al. (1991) classification of contrast. According to the analysis, contrast was used to express the realities of Nigeria, the expected versus actuality in Nigeria, as well as affiliation or disaffiliation with the government's actions or inactions. The study asserts that contrast can be used for purposes other than stylistic ones. They can also be a strategy for denigrating the perceived incompetence of Nigerian leaders, a tool for exploiting contextual indices, and a means of signalling polarity, consequently showing disaffiliation with the actions of the government of the nation.

**Key words:** contrast, cartoons, opposites, disaffiliation, editorial cartoons, discursive strategies

## INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the communicative use of contrast, emphasizing the choice of expressions and the meanings they convey in various communicative situations. It specifically focuses on the pairing and contrasting of lexical items and expressions in editorial cartoons, effectively engaging readers by highlighting situations of interest and suggesting specific interpretations through contrasting ideas, people, and things. These issues/ situations of national interest include politics, security, governance, and corruption.

The investigation of contrast in newspaper cartoons in Nigeria holds significance due to the essential functions newspapers serve in society, such as providing access to information and shaping public opinions. Cartoons offer a platform for self-expression, allowing creators to claim anonymity and avoid legal repercussions, thereby enabling freedom of expression. They often employ humor to reflect perceived readers' concerns about serious issues through techniques such as caricature, parody, analogy, and contrasting or juxtaposing elements for political satire.

The socio-political and economic contexts projected in the cartoons provide the basis for employing contrast in relation to the experiences of Nigerians in Nigeria versus people in other countries. So, while some citizens may be interested in the creation of a new state, others may worry about the state of insecurity in the country. Similarly, while leaders in other nations strive to elevate their countries, Nigerian leaders may be perceived as corrupt. The use of contrasting lexical items in these instances contributes to generating meaning and relies on the contextual factors that shape such constructions.

Considering the numerous newspapers that publish editorial cartoons in Nigeria, this study does not aim to cover all publications. Three Nigerian dailies have been selected for analysis to examine how contrast is utilized to convey meaning and challenge government positions and policies. Unlike previous studies that

predominantly adopt corpus-based approaches, antonymous adjectives in sentences and discourse function of antonyms (Spencer & Stulp, 2007; Feltracco et al. 2018; Charles and Miller, 1989; Justeson and Katz, 1991 and Murphy et al., 2008; Jones, 2002 respectively, this research investigates the employment of contrast as a discursive strategy in selected Nigerian newspapers. It draws on the wider social and political contexts from which the cartoons originate to unpack the representations of the issues they depict.

The subsequent sections of this paper delve into the concept of contrast and its pragmatic functions, provide a theoretical background and review previous studies on contrast, discuss contrast as a discursive tool, outline the methodology employed, present the analysis and discussion of findings, and finally, conclude the study.

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## **THE CONCEPT OF CONTRAST AND ITS SEMANTIC FUNCTIONS**

The study of contrast involves exploring lexical items and their role in discourse. This raises questions about considering lexical antonyms when sentential negations are available (Murphy et al., 2009). Exploring these questions leads to an investigation into the discourse features that allow or necessitate contrastive interpretations. Lexical contrast encompasses concepts like antonymy and co-hyponymy.

In conversations, we employ verbal information to evaluate situations, objects, and actions of people. Our evaluation is often influenced by the framing of the information (Holleman & Maat, 2009). For example, when a government policy is described in terms of its success rate, it will be evaluated more positively than if described in terms of its failure rate. This is called attribute framing (Holleman & Maat, 2009).

The semantic relationships between lexical items within a language have consequences for meaning construction and interpretation. Words can have semantic relationships of similarity, difference, or inclusion. While meanings can overlap, true synonyms are rare as words can contrast in dialect, register, or connotation. Antonyms, on the other hand, are minimally different in meaning, while near-synonyms exhibit contrast.

Semantic contrast is distinct from oppositeness. Some word pairs, like “warm” and “cold” or “tropical” and “cold,” have degrees of contrast without being opposites (Mohammad et al., 2013, 556). They may share similarities but differ in certain dimensions. Co-hyponyms, such as “orange” and “apple” within the category of fruit, demonstrate subtle contrasts.

In this study, the focus on opposites is from the perspective of antonyms. Antonyms encompass not only gradable adjectives (contrary to Cruse’s 1986’s position) but also noun, verb, and adverbial pairs, as demonstrated by Mohammed et al. (2013) as described by previous scholars such as Leech (1981), Pyles and Algeo (1970), and Watson (1976) who posit that other categories of opposites are antonyms.

Antonyms provide explicit contrast and carry over this contrastive feature into the structures in which they appear. When an antonymous pair is present in a discourse structure, the listener or speaker can easily discern the contrast between the elements and comprehend the intended meaning. Antonyms play a crucial role in achieving textual cohesion, making sharp comparisons, offering vivid descriptions, and persuading the audience (Gao & Zheng, 2014, 236). In editorial cartoons, where capturing social issues and relating them to the public requires skillful execution, antonyms facilitate meaning construction and deconstruction.

## THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS/ PREVIOUS STUDIES ON CONTRAST

Contrast has been the subject of various linguistic studies, often employing corpus-based approaches. Feltracco et al. (2018) examined the relationship between lexical opposition and discourse relations in Italian documents. They found that while contrast and opposition are important for implicit relations, the connection between them is not crucial in the Italian language. Spenader and Stulp (2007) also conducted a corpus-based study, exploring whether antonymy predicts contrast better. Their findings supported the idea that direct antonyms are stronger predictors of contrast.

Charles and Miller (1989) investigated antonymous adjectives in the Brown Corpus, highlighting their co-occurrence patterns. Justeson and Katz (1991) expanded on this analysis, focusing on antonyms identified by Deese (1962). They found a strong syntactic association between antonym pairs in the corpus. Mohammed et al. (2013) proposed a method of associability for identifying contrastive pairs and measuring the degree of contrast. Their findings demonstrated the effectiveness of the method and showed that highly contrasting words, such as antonyms, co-occur more frequently than synonymous pairs.

Jones (2002) analyzed antonyms in English newspaper sentences, classifying them into various categories such as ancillary, coordinated, comparative, distinguished, transitional, negated, extreme, idiomatic, interrogative, and simultaneous antonymy. Murphy et al. (2008) applied Jones' methodology to the Swedish translation of his data, finding similar functions with some variations due to cultural values.

Cruse (1986) provided a theoretical classification of opposites, including complementaries, antonyms, directional opposites, relational opposites, indirect converses, congruence variants, and pseudo-opposites. Bejar et al. (1991) further expanded on this classification, adding contradictories, contraries, reverses, incompatibles, asymmetric contraries, pseudo-opposites, and defectives. Antonyms are considered a type of opposites in this broader classification. Cruse's classification is largely theoretical as it outlines the classes of contrast but not how they work in spoken discourse or close to real life conversations. Using these classes of contrast in the analysis of editorial cartoons is thus considered a way exploring the discursive potentials that it holds. The expanded framework as achieved through a fusion of Cruse's and Bejar et. al. classification and functions of antonyms form a broader basis for this study's examination of editorial cartoons.

Editorial cartoons, known as political cartoons, serve as graphical commentary on current political issues. Scholars have examined their role in expressing opinions and criticizing socio-political issues. Studies have focused on the visual elements, common ground, ideology, lexical structure, modality, social context, and semiosis of political cartoons. Studies that have examined cartoons from these various fields of study include Jimoh (2010); Adeoti (2015); Usman and Momoh-Tairu's (2016); Oluremi & Ajepe (2016); Mateus (2016); Landbeck (2013); Matthews, 2011 and Al-Momani et al (2017).

While previous studies on contrast have often used corpora or newspaper articles as data (i.e. Spenader and Stulp (2007), Charles and Miller (1989); Justeson and Katz (1991) and Jones (2002), this study aims to assess the types and functions of antonyms as a form of contrast in Nigerian editorial cartoons. It explores how cartoonists utilize contrast as a discursive tool in conveying their messages.

## CONTRAST AS A COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGY

Brown and Levinson (1987) propose that the principle of social cohesion underlies our conversational competencies as speakers aim to achieve social solidarity. Social solidarity refers to the responsive actions that align with the speaker's emotional stance. Affiliation, as defined by Couper-Kuhlen (2012), involves the reception of a speaker's expression, while disaffiliation denotes the rejection or disagreement with the speaker's position. Disaffiliation includes linguistic and extra-linguistic responses that can damage the

speaker's image. In both face-to-face and written interactions, language users employ various strategies, including linguistic resources, facial expressions, gestures, postures, punctuations, spellings, abbreviations, smileys, and acronyms to achieve affiliation (Burch & Kasper, 2016; González-Lloret, 2016).

Contrast plays a crucial role in expressing affiliation or disaffiliation in communication. Lexical choices can signal solidarity, formality, informality, or politeness, while also expressing disaffiliation with the addressee (Clark, 1987). The relationship between linguistic resources and affiliation or disaffiliation has also been studied within frameworks such as Facework, Politeness, and Preference Organization (Drew et al., 2008).

The present study examines how contrast, specifically through common ground, is used to establish affiliation or disaffiliation in editorial cartoons. Common ground serves as the contextual basis for the cognitive analysis of contrasting pairs and the overall intended meaning. The contextual use of contrast requires considering the shared or emergent experiences in the conversation (Blank, 2000; Steffens, 2018; Clark, 1990).

The analysis in this paper focuses on the use of contrast in negotiating common ground within the characters in the cartoons and between the cartoonist and the readers. Two main types of contrast are identified: lexical contrast and pictorial contrast. These types of contrast are instantiated in various ways, including expressing the realities of the nation (such as corruption, fuel subsidy, insecurity, and governance issues), the contrast between expectations and reality, and the affiliation or disaffiliation with the government and its policies.

Cruse's classification of contrasts, including complementaries, antonyms, directional opposites, relational opposites, indirect converses, congruence variants, and pseudo-opposites, is used to explore these instantiations of contrast. However, only the relevant classes will be employed in the analysis, as not all of them apply to the data.

Lexical contrast involves the use of words and expressions to create a distinction between ideas, highlighting the message of the cartoon. This strategy establishes a divide between the readers and the subject of the cartoons, often the government, with the readers usually positioned as disadvantaged. It encompasses antonyms, co-hyponyms, and other instances that allow for contrastive interpretations (Murphy, Paradis, & Willners, 2009).

On the other hand, pictorial contrast focuses on using images to project contrast in the cartoons. Pictorials not only convey the overall message of the cartoon but also visually capture each sub-focus, culminating in the embedded meaning of the cartoons.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The data consisted of 25 purposively sampled editorial cartoons published in 2012, a period characterized by high insecurity and the fuel subsidy removal crises in Nigeria. The cartoons were obtained from three Nigerian newspapers: The Guardian, The Nation, and The Punch. Using a pragma-semantic approach, the cartoons were qualitatively analyzed, considering pragmatic shared knowledge, Bejar et al.'s (1991) contrast classification, and Cruse's (1986) classification of opposites. The cartoons feature fluid movement between backgrounds, allowing cartoonists to leverage contrast for artistic expression.

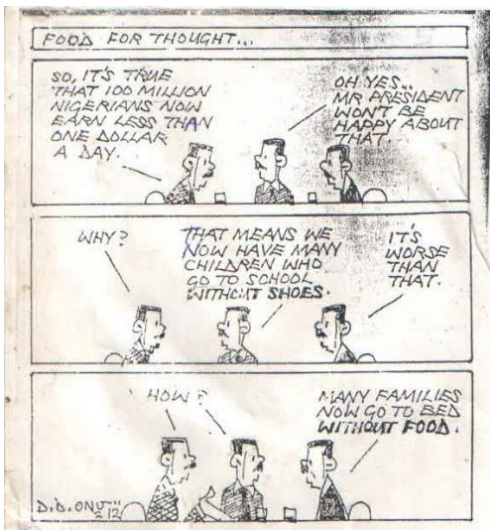
## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

As stated above, the analysis of contrast as a discursive is discussed under the realisations of contrast as an expression of the realities of the nation, contrast as an expression of the expected versus what is obtainable in the country, and contrast as an expression of affiliation or disaffiliation with the government and government policies. They are discussed in turn:

**Contrast as an expression of the expected versus the obtainable in the country**

There are certain expectations that Nigerians hold. Such expectations include that as part of the responsibilities of the government that they, the citizens voted into power, they are to be provided with security, good roads, power, and other basic amenities. Other such expectations include the right to justice, fairness, and equity always. Furthermore, the government is supposed to be answerable to the electorate who voted them into power. When these expectations are not met or are poorly executed, a notable disparity arises between the desired government performance and the reality. Let’s consider some examples:

Example 1. Cartoon description: Three men dressed in suits discuss Nigerians’ daily earnings report.



Example 1



Example 2

The conversation in Example 1 employs lexical contrast to express the nation’s realities. The contrast is based on the expressions “**many children who go to school without shoes**” and “**many families who go to bed without food,**” which are considered pseudo-opposites because their oppositeness varies depending on the context of use. The rationale for the contrast is that the need for shoes and food are not on the same scale in terms of their survival implications. Food is required for survival, whereas shoes are considered dressing accessories. It is thus a living body (fuelled by food) that can consider accessorizing. This emphasizes the gravity of the situation in Nigeria and is also interpreted as an indictment of the President, who, despite

going to school without shoes, is now watching Nigerians suffer the even worse fate of going to bed hungry. Worse, not only do children have to go to school without shoes (as he did as a child), but entire families are now forced to go hungry because of the government’s failure to meet its obligations. This is Nigerians’ reality as opposed to their expectations.

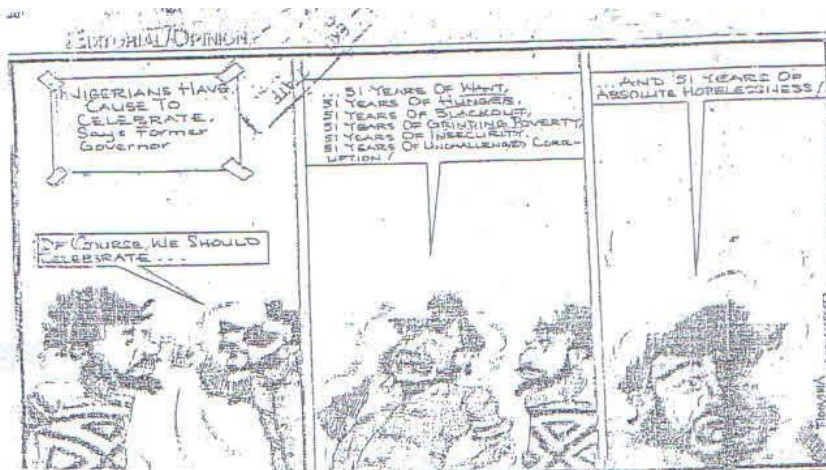
Lexical contrast can also be achieved using antonyms as the next example shows: Example 2:

Cartoon description: A diviner sits with his divining objects. Three old men are in front of him, two sitting while the third leans on a wooden staff. Their dressing is shabby and the forlorn expression on their faces tally with their appearance.

Cartoon dialogue: Go home old ones...Your future as pensioners is so dreadful, especially as that young king from Otuoke...is about to walk the painful path of fuel subsidy.

To create contrast, the dialogue above employs the expressions ‘old ones’ and ‘young king’. Young and old are antonyms used here to distinguish those involved in the conversation (the old ones) from the referent (the young king). The need for a secure future is part of the mutual contextual background in this cartoon. Pensioners who have worked for thirty to thirty-five years expect to be able to retire and live on their pension. However, the future is uncertain due to the government’s insensitive actions. The government is shown as not caring about the welfare of the populace and citizens’ rights are denied. This is Nigerians’ reality as opposed to what they expected. President Jonathan, who said during his election campaign that he attended school without shoes, is consequently blamed for the future disaster that the Seer predicts for the retirees. Thus, the withdrawal of fuel subsidies had the risk of distorting and, more likely, obliterating their intended and anticipated outcome.

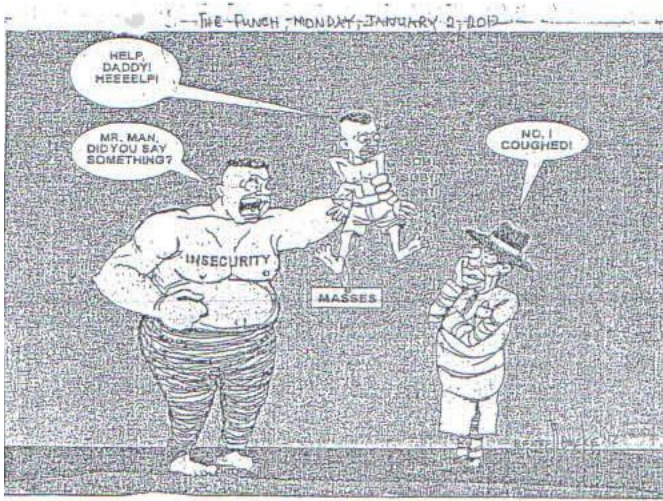
Another way of establishing contrast is through **indirectness**. Sometimes, words are not inherently antonyms of other words, but given the context of use, a contrast is established. Let us consider Example 3:



Cartoon Description: Two men are shown discussing their views on Nigeria’s independence.

The dialogue in Example 3 is a response to the caption which states that “Nigerians have cause to celebrate”. This is the expectation. Celebration and hopelessness are used to create a contrast. However, a counter-response is presented in the following panel, in which the speaker lists the issues that Nigeria has been burdened with since independence. The contrast (indirect contrast) paints a picture of despair in the country. This represents the country’s perception of the situation – Nigeria has gone from one unpleasant issue to another since independence. As a result, 1st October is a time for sober reflection rather than celebration. This is informed by a shared experiential and situational knowledge of how things have worked in the past in the nation.

The Cartoonists also use pictorial contrast in expressing what the realities of Nigerians are, as against what is obtainable. The next example exemplifies this: Example 4:



Cartoon Description: A huge, muscular man (Insecurity), in a pair of trousers with his chest bare is holding up a small man (Masses), squashing the small man in the process.

The graphics communicate a state of vulnerability, a situation where the President of a country is petrified to silence by insecurity, which has now become bigger than the President and even the people.

Example 4's contrast is a pictorial contrast. The cartoonist draws a contrast between the masses and insecurity on the one hand, and the President's disposition and demeanour on the other. The 'Masses' are depicted here as malnourished and unable to thrive. Insecurity, on the other hand, is well-developed and well-fed. While Insecurity holds up 'Masses' with one hand, the other hand poised for an attack, the President watches helplessly, cheek in hand, as 'Masses' hangs in the air, terrified. The graphics depict a state of vulnerability, in which the President of a country is petrified to silence out due to insecurity, which has now grown larger than the President and even the people. This pictorial contrast depicts an anomalous situation that appears to be the norm in the country, The President, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, is tasked with ensuring the safety of citizens' lives and property. Thus, the cartoon exemplifies what is desired/expected and what is available in the country. Table 1 shows additional examples of this type of contrast realisation in the data set.

Table 1: Other Examples of Contrast in the Data and their Modes of Realization

Example	Cartoon description	Type of Contrast	Mode of realising Contrast
5.	A mouse trap (Gains of deregulation) is shown with a mouse (The Nigerian) in front of it, looking quizzically at the trap.	Lexical (Gains vs. Pain)	Pseudo opposites or indirect contrast
6.	Two men are shown discussing over a drink. Their interaction centres on how the President had, during the campaigns, promised Nigerians a <b>breath of fresh air</b> and how that on the contrary, they had <b>inhaled tear gas</b> .	Lexical (Breath of fresh air vs. tear gas)	Indirect contrast

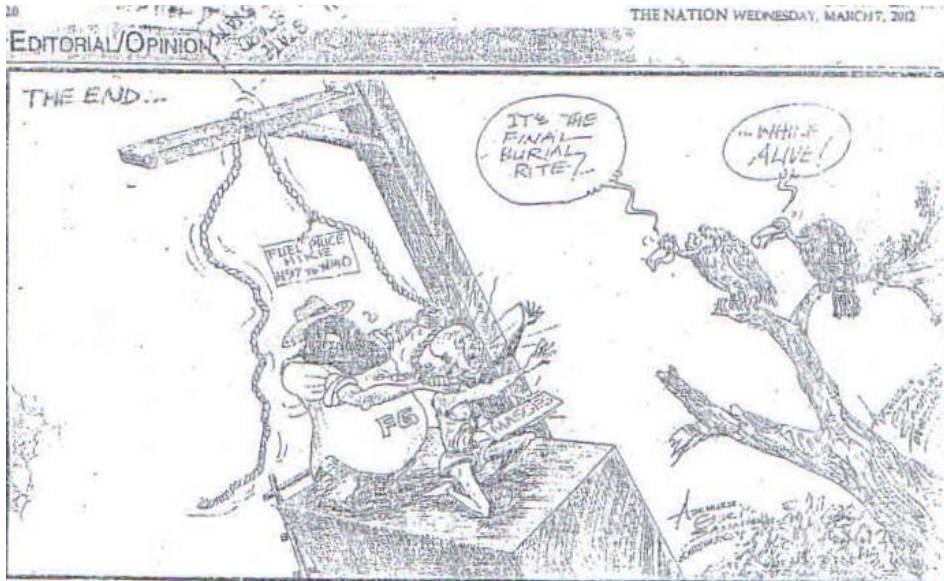
7.	A ‘Bus Stop’ has about seven people. Their attire suggests a diverse range of Nigerians. They discuss a hot topic: the elimination of fuel subsidy. The discussion concluded that the President is attempting to force Nigerian youths and children to go to school without shoes, as he did.	Lexical (Force and emulated)	Indirect contrast as force has to do with compulsion while emulate is volitional.
8.	The four-panel cartoon shows the President evolve from being a civilian president into a military head of state and using military force to his personal advantage. The last panel shows a beastly looking creature tagged ‘Boko Haram’.	Pictorial contrast	Difference in attires and general appearance.
9.	A structure is depicted with two doors labelled ‘IN’ and ‘OUT’. The ‘in’ door is smaller than the ‘out’ door, as well as any other standard-sized door. A slim police officer smiles out the ‘out’ door, holding a ‘PROMOTION LETTER’ envelope. Three pot-bellied cops, on the other hand, are positioned in front of the ‘in’ door. ‘Corrupt Officer’ is among them. They stand next to a sign that says ‘GET YOUR PROMOTION LETTER HERE’. Due to their size, they are unable to enter.	Pictorial (Slim police vs. obese police officers and narrow door vs. wide door.)	The apparent obese state of the corrupt officer and his colleagues as against the slim and fit officer who got his promotion letter.
10.	A large man (FG) is shown holding a club in one hand and an upside-down small animal (Protesters) in the other. The animal’s blood drips, indicating that it has been beaten. A young boy standing next to ‘FG’ is sobbing uncontrollably. In panel 2, ‘FG’ is amusing himself by wrapping a large snake (Violent Sect) around his body. The little boy (NIG) standing next to him places one hand on his head in disbelief.	Pictorial (The towering FG vs. Child Nigeria and the mouse-like creature (protesters)vs. the massive snake (violent sects).	Size difference between the FG and Nigerians on the one hand and the protesters vs. the violent sect on the other hand.

Table 1 highlights other instances of the use of contrast in the data and how the cartoonists capture the expectation of Nigerians as against what is obtainable in Nigeria as at the time the cartoons were published.

**Contrast as an Expression of the Realities of Nigerians**

Aside from using contrast to express what Nigerians expect in comparison to what occurs in the country, cartoonists also create cartoons that project the realities of Nigeria and Nigerians. This they accomplish by making trending national issues as well as issues that Nigerians face the subject of their cartoons. The following examples demonstrate this: Example 11:





Example 11

**Cartoon dialogue:** Speaker A: It's the final burial rite!...

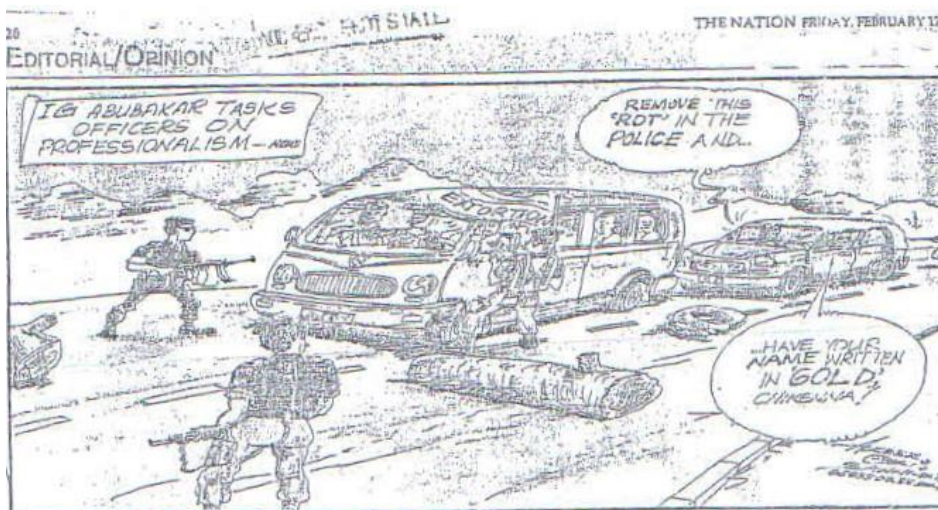
Speaker B: ...While alive!

Example 11 engages lexical contrast through complementaries (burial [dead] and alive). The dialogue establishes the antithesis with the use of 'while' which suggests that the antecedent should not be, given what follows. Burial rites are performed for the dead, it is thus anomalous and bizarre to perform this rite for a person who is alive.

This, however, was the reality for Nigerians, who had to deal with the pressing issue of national interest (the removal of fuel subsidies). It was interpreted as the government's attempt to annihilate Nigerians who were already receiving less than the desired dividends of democracy.

Another strategy for utilising contrast is to focus on a specific sector of the country and consider the associated issues. In the following example, the cartoonist takes on the Nigerian Police Force, whose reputation for corruption had grown alarming.

Example 12:

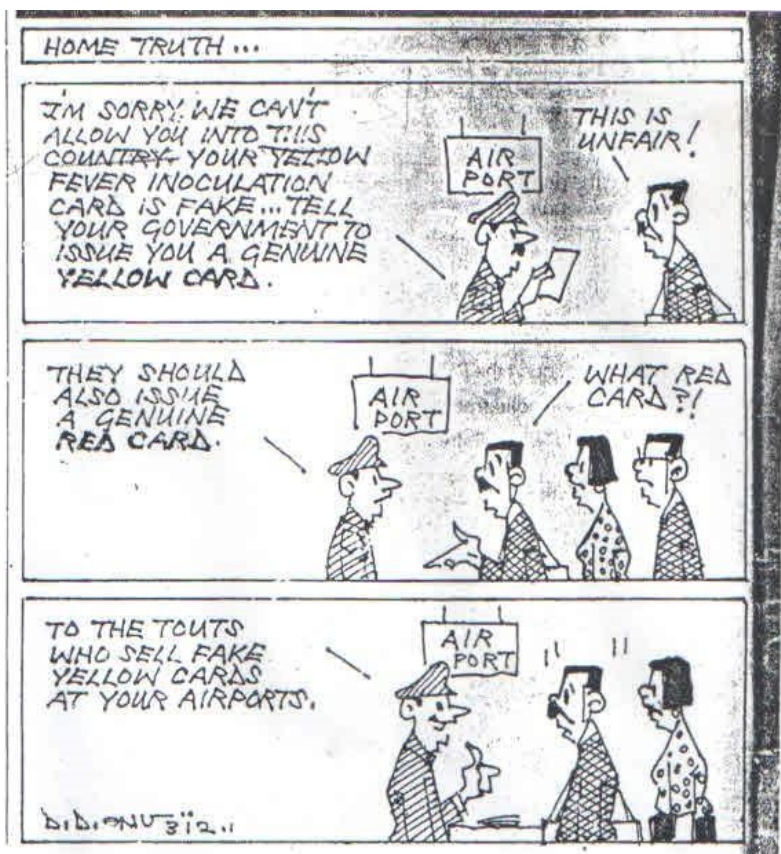


Example 12

Cartoon dialogue: Speaker A: Remove this rot in the police and Speaker B: Have your name written in 'gold', *chikenna* (finish).

Example 12 exemplifies a reality of Nigerians: Corruption has infiltrated the very sector that is supposed to combat it, and it has eaten so deeply into the Force that it has rotted. The contrast is thus generated by the IG sanitising the force by removing the rot, allowing his name to be written in gold. Rot and gold are contrasted based on pseudo-oppositeness, as they are not opposites per se. The context of use, on the other hand, establishes the link, as Nigerians would appreciate and be grateful to whoever is able to solve the endemic problem of corruption in the police force. As a result, the qualities of **rot** as worthless and undesirable are contrasted with those of **gold** as precious and appealing. Another cartoon about corruption that depicts another reality of Nigerians is in the aviation industry. Airports are known to serve as a type of entry point into a country. As a result, the activities carried out there have an impact on the opinions formed about visitors entering the country and the impressions made on them. This vital sector in Nigeria, however, is not free of corruption, which appears to be eating away at the very fabric of the country's existence.

Let us consider the next example: Example 13:



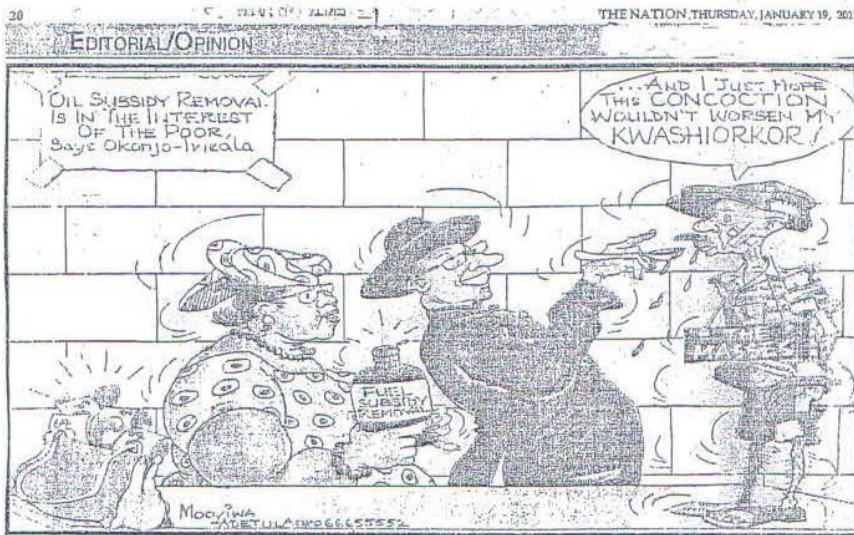
Example 13

Cartoon description: At an airport, three people are seen talking to a man in uniform, possibly an immigration officer.

The cartoon depicts the ordeal of Nigerians at the immigration point of another country's airport, where they were denied entry due to a fake Yellow Fever immunisation card. This is a representation of the difficulties that Nigerians face at home and abroad because of the country's widespread corruption. Thus, lexical contrast is achieved on two levels: genuine versus fake and yellow card versus red card. Complementaries

are used to highlight what is in force and what should be in the case of genuine versus fake. Yellow card versus red card, on the other hand, refers to the game of football (soccer), in which a Yellow Card is issued as a warning and a Red Card is issued after receiving two Yellow cards. As a result, such a player is ejected from the game. The contrast is thus used to challenge the government to put an end to the activities of touts in Nigerian airports, as they have become a menace over time due to their involvement in various unsavoury acts that have the potential to embarrass Nigerians and the country as a whole. The use of pictorials in capturing Nigerians' realities is discussed next.

Example 14:



Example 14

Cartoon Description: The President (Dr Goodluck Jonathan) and the Minister for Finance (Dr Okonjo-Iweala) are seen looking fat and rotund, with the minister holding a bottle (Fuel subsidy removal) while the President, who is standing in front of her, is attempting to feed it to 'The Masses' who, in tattered dress, looks lean and malnourished and wears a worried and helpless look on his face.

Example 14 is an instantiation of contrast using pictorials. Even though there is an utterance and a caption that accompanies the cartoon, the focus here is on the glaring difference between the dressing, body state, and facial expressions of the President and Minister who are on a team and the lone 'Masses' who seems to be at the receiving end of the situation and thus at the mercy of the other team. The reality of Nigerians, as the cartoons suggests, is that of lack, ill-health, and impoverishment caused by the actions/ inactions of the government.

Other instances of use of contrast in capturing the reality of Nigerians are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of contrast under the group 'contrast as an expression of the realities of Nigerians'

Example	Cartoon description	Type of Contrast	Mode of realising Contrast
15.	Four haggard looking men in tattered clothes are in conversation. They react to a post that says "we'll make Nigeria flow with milk and honey. As he laughs, one of them retorts "... even when they've not been able to make Nigeria flow with drinkable water".	Lexical (Water vs. milk and honey)	Pseudo-opposites

16.	Two men are discussing an outbreak of a disease in a community and their experience with epidemics in the past. While that speaker goes on to talk about the reasons for the incessant epidemics, the other speaker gives him the reason: the corruption epidemic.	Lexical (health epidemic vs. corruption epidemic)	Indirect contrast
17.	Two men discuss recent events in their country. They draw attention to the government's intention to borrow a huge amount of money to fund pipeline projects, even though a fraud had been detected in the budget for the next year.  The conclusion is that while some people are thinking about "pipeline projects," others are thinking about "conduit pipes".	Lexical (pipeline and conduit pipe)	Inclusive variants where the words being contrasted almost literally convey the same sense but are used to mean different things.
18.	Two men are walking along the road, discussing an issue involving a politician who had rigged his way into office but now wanted workers to vote before commencing an industrial action	Lexical (Rig and vote)	Complementaries as the act of voting negates rigging.
19.	A man (FG) dressed in the Niger-Delta style is at a Fuel station. Holding a nozzle (N 97 P/litre N140 P/litre), he dispenses fuel into the mouth of a miniature man (The Common Man) who he holds in one hand. The Common man is so tiny that the massive FG is able to pick and hold him up with one hand.	Pictorial (the huge stature and general appearance of the FG vs. that of the Common man.	The glaring difference in size between the FG and the Common man.
20.	Several people are marching forward in a joyous mood. A sign behind them reads "Goodbye to Military Rule". The panel itself is tagged '1999'. The second panel tagged '2012' shows the same group of people wearing forlorn and confused looks as they look.  Standing beside a sign that reads "Welcome to Jungle Democracy... Beware of Boko Haram". Ahead is a sign that reads "Promised Land".	Pictorial (Jubilant vs. dejected looks and actions).	The difference in the demeanour of the group in the two panels, enriched by the contents of the signposts.

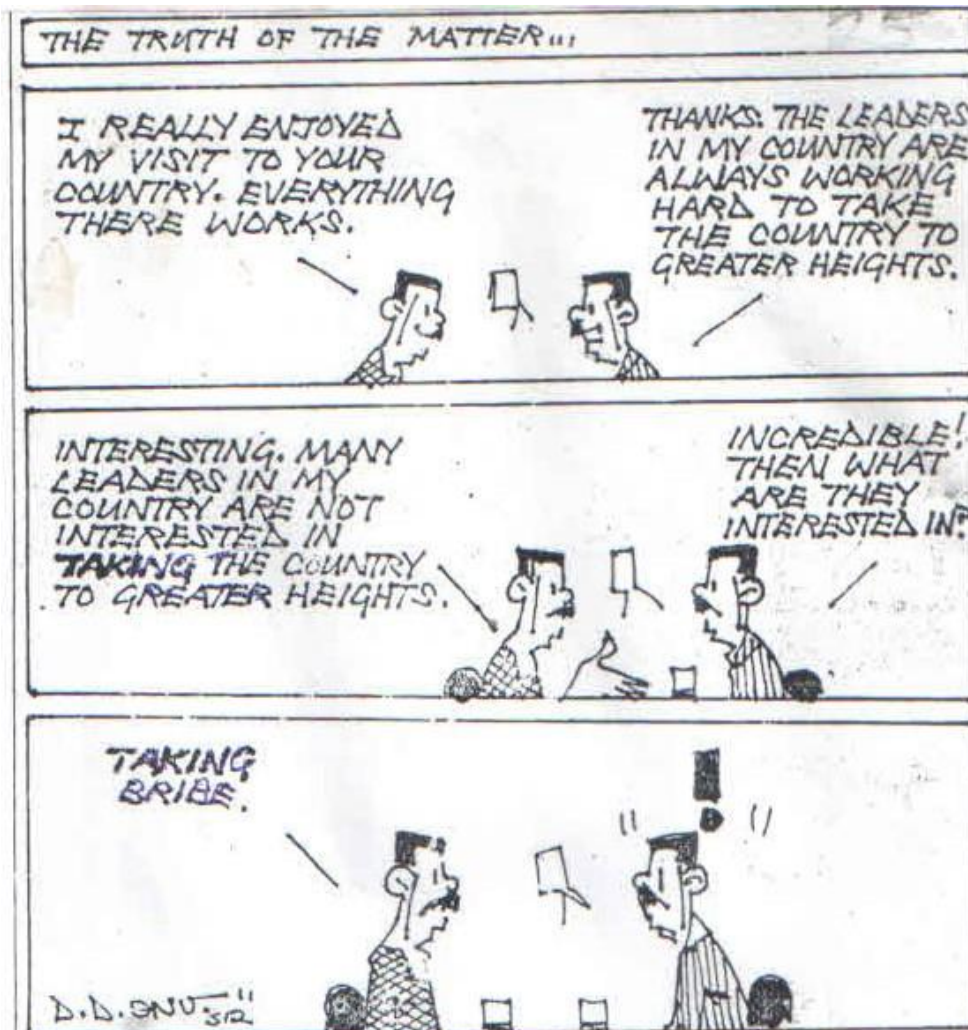
Table 2 shows some other instantiations of the highlighting of the realities of Nigerians using contrast. The next set of examples discusses the use of contrast in the expression of Affiliation or Disaffiliation with the government and/ or government policies.

### Contrast in the expression of Affiliation or Disaffiliation

The expression of affiliation or otherwise has consequences for social relationships. Cartoonists are aware of this, and they exploit the shared knowledge and experiences of Nigerians in highlighting such actions and/or inactions of the government on the one hand, and the expression of discontent on the path of Nigerians because of such actions or lack of them on the other hand. By so doing, the cartoons are used to reflect and justify the disappointment of the people; thus showing, in most instances, disaffiliation.

Example 21:

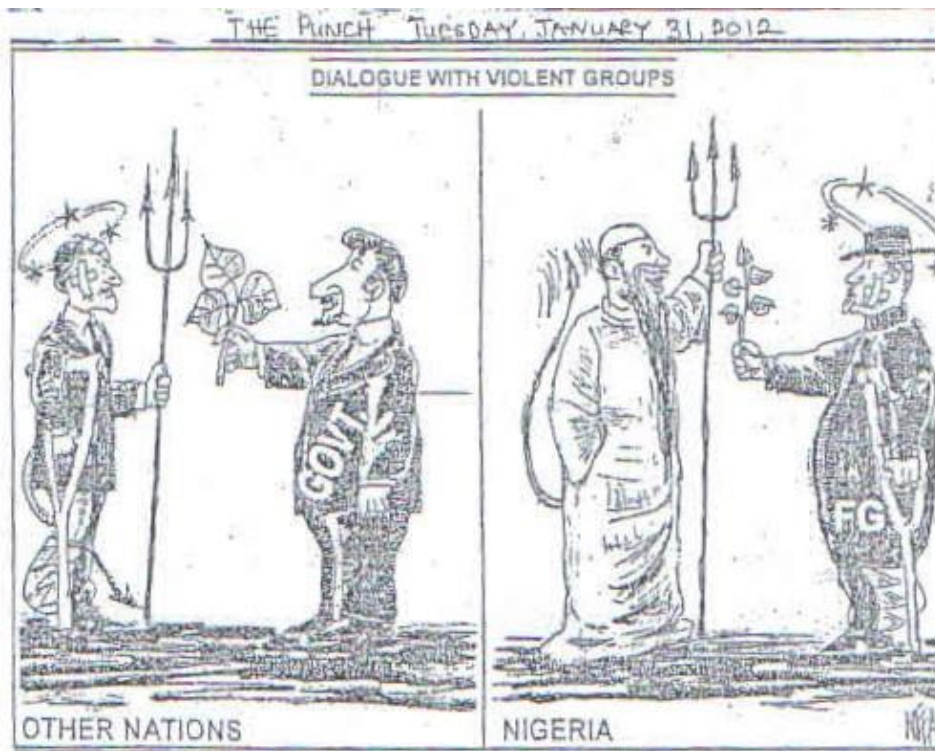
**Cartoon Description:** Two men (a Nigerian and a foreigner) are in a conversation.



Example 21

Example 21 presents a conversation between a Nigerian and a foreigner about the Nigerian’s visit to his country. Using Pseudo-opposites, as a lexical contrast strategy, the cartoonist establishes a contrast between the attitude and disposition of leaders in Nigeria and the leaders in the other country. This is hinged on the expression ‘everything works there’ which immediately communicates an implicature, based on shared experiential knowledge, that in Nigeria, the experience is not the same. The expressions ‘The leaders in my country are always working hard to take the country to greater heights’ and ‘Many leaders in my country are not interested in taking the country to greater heights... (they are interested in) taking bribes’ thus show disaffiliation and disassociation with such unpatriotic acts. The use of ‘the leaders’ (in reference to leaders in the other country) and ‘many leaders’ in Nigeria also establish a contrast. ‘The’, a definite article here, is used to suggest inclusion and specificity. In other words, all the leaders work towards the progression of the country. As a corollary, the use of ‘many’ in referring to the leaders in Nigeria shows that only a few are committed to advancing the course of Nigeria. The others are rather ‘taking bribes’, an act of corruption which has been described as the bane of growth and development.

Pictorial contrasts are also sometimes used in editorial cartoons to denigrate the Nigerian government and disidentify with the government. Example 22 instantiates this: Example 22:



Example 22

Example 22 also contrasts the situations in other nations and in Nigeria. In other nations, in government clashes with violent groups, it is the government who prevails but in Nigeria, it is the government that is at the mercy of the violent sect. This victor and vanquished positioning in Nigeria raise questions firstly on the relations of the government of Nigeria with the violent sect and secondly, on how powerful and formidable the violent sects in Nigeria are. The cartoonist decries the situation, thereby showing disaffiliation with the government. Other instances of pictorial contrast in showing disaffiliation with the situation in Nigeria or direct actions of government are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Types of contrasts and their modes of realisations under the group ‘contrast as an expression of affiliation or disaffiliation’

Example	Cartoon description	Type of Contrast	Mode of realising Contrast
23.	Two panels, A (In the Old Days) and B (Today) present a police post, a police officer and another man holding a bag over his shoulder. In A, the policeman, who is dressed in white shirt and shorts, welcomes the other man to the station. In B, the policeman is dressed in black shirt and trousers. He also welcomes the other man into the post, but the man flees at the policeman’s invitation.	Pictorial (Police-Nigerian’s relation in the past vs. in the present).	Images of a Nigerian man and a police officer from the 1970s and 1980s are used to show the difference in people’s perceptions of the police in the past and now. The use of facial expressions, as well as the action of the Nigerian running away with a scared look, emphasise the contrast between the two images.

24.	There are two panels: A (our former leaders) and B (Today). Panel A depicts a young boy walking up a flight of stairs without shoes, holding books on his head. Scholarship, good roads, good governance, free education, fuel subsidies, and good health care delivery are all signs of progress. Panel B, on the other hand, depicts a man dressed in Niger-Delta garb driving a bulldozer and demolishing the staircase depicted in panel A.	Pictorial (construction vs. demolition.	The stairs, built by past leaders which suggest progression and development is contrasted with President Jonathan and, by extension, the members of his administration demolishing the hard work of past leaders.
25.	Two enormous bears (Economic Hardship) are seen holding a small man (Masses) upside down, each clutching one leg as if attempting to tear the man apart. The man is visibly petrified, and he screams out the name “Jonathaaan”.	Pictorial (Economic hardship tearing the Nigerian masses apart)	The size difference between ‘Economic hardship’ and the masses is striking, and it represents the masses’ helpless and possibly hopeless state.

Table 3 shows examples of the goings-on in Nigeria and tacit innuendos that indict the government as culpable for the status quo, and by implication, absolving Nigerians of blame. This is also consequently a strategy of dissociating from the government and her actions.

**Discussion of findings**

The use of contrast, as discussed above, presents readers with two ideas, things, or issues and attempts to expose to the readers certain anomalous situations or actions of the government or of certain government-related organisations in Nigeria by emphasising the differences between them. Readers’ familiar issues and phenomena are thus used to create the expected effect from the contrast. In setting up these contrasts, the cartoonists exploit and appeal to Nigerians’ expectations of the government, as several examples contrast the ‘expected’ with ‘what obtains’ in Nigeria.

The realities that confront Nigeria (Nigerians) are also a source of inspiration for cartoonists, who express their ideas based on shared experiential knowledge. This further establishes a basis for disassociating from the government by establishing an Us – Them dichotomy, in which Nigerians – the masses, the elderly, among others are the in group, while the leaders – the FG, and the president, among others, are the out group. This polarisation is significant because it communicates the public’s perception of their leaders; the governed and those who govern them are on opposing sides of a divide. As a result, the government is portrayed as being disconnected from the people.

While the cartoonists portray the government as mildly framing or profiling the situation or as attempting to be true leaders, they present the negative frame as a counter argument to expose the government’s insincerity and failings in relation to the issues being reported or represented. This is consistent with Holleman and Maat’s (2009) claim that the frame influences reader evaluations in the sense that positively profiled objects are evaluated more positively than negatively profiled ones. The more unpatriotic, detached, and unconcerned the government appears to be, the lower its approval rating among Nigerians.

**CONCLUSION**

The role of contrast as a discursive strategy in editorial cartoons was examined in this paper. Contrast, as a tool for establishing common ground and accessing shared experiences, can be used to highlight aspects of

contextual meaning in addition to achieving literary compactness or divergent points of view. As discussed above, lexical and pictorial contrast is used in editorial cartoons to express Nigerians' realities experience in terms of expectations versus reality. The use of contrast in the editorial cartoons reinforces the government's lack of basic amenities, endemic corruption, insecurity, and overall lack of commitment to Nigeria's progress. The cartoonists also create polarisation between Nigerians and the government (or leaders), implying a schism between the two groups. This is considered a disaffiliation strategy because the leaders were elected by the people and should serve the people because they are, after all, a part of the people. To achieve the cartoon's communicative intentions, the cartoonists engage issues that form shared situational, shared socio-political, and shared experiential aspects of the common ground that they hold with the readers.

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