

Linguistic Representations in Selected Presidential Concession Speeches

By Ayo Osisanwo* & Emmanuel Chinaguh†

Defeat comes to politicians with shock and the default response of disappointment; nevertheless, its management has implications for peaceful transition, national stability, and aspirants' democratic and public image. Extant works on election speeches have focused on different aspects of meaning in defeat concession, but have overlooked the ideational aspect of the speeches. Yet, it has the potential of revealing how losing aspirants use language in the realisation of their experiential meanings, within the context of their election defeat. Therefore, this study investigates the linguistic representation of candidates' election defeat experience as embedded in variant themes, together with associated realities that suggest certain political postures. Using Thematics and the Transitivity system of the Systemic Functional Grammar as theoretical framework, representations were purposively taken from presidential concession speeches delivered in Nigeria and the United States, between 2012 and 2016, and subjected to linguistic analysis. The selected data are Romney's Concession Speech (RCS), Jonathan's Concession Speech (JCS), and Clinton's Concession Speech (CCS), which all together comprise 2,145 word corpus and 209 clauses. The analysis identifies the prominent use of four Transitivity processes, which are Material, Relational, Mental and Verbal Processes; and these encrypt candidates' defeat realities across nine themes: Appreciation, Concession, Good Wishes, Recalling Defeat, Closing Ranks, Inclining to Democracy, Framing, A Plea to Fight on, and Benediction. More specifically, the study reveals the actual act of concession to be a Verbalisation in a clause. The paper concludes that the ideational reading of a concession speech transcends yielding to bringing closure to an election, and includes resetting post-election narrative, renewing tarnished image, and keeping the fold together as political postures for future elections.

Keywords: concession speech, election defeat, generic structure, transitivity processes.

Introduction

"Don't let success go to your head and failure to your heart" Will Smith (n.d.)

Elections are held at regular intervals to choose new or retain current leaders that will preside over a political entity for a designated period, usually four years. Elections serve as a process of decision-making among the eligible citizens of a country to select someone for public office through the voting exercise. The pattern and procedure that this process follows is determined by each country's electoral law. The spread of democracy has seen more countries changing from authoritarian rule and embracing democratic government which often emerges through competitive elections. Election affords voters the opportunity to choose who will lead them. It reinforces government's legitimacy, and contributes essentially to democratic governance and sustenance of democracy. Besides

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...serving as an instrument of selecting individuals for public offices, elections are also held to withdraw the mandates given to such persons; this is called "recall election." Plebiscite or referendum is another election type, which is held to decide on a vital national issue. However, the focus of this study only lies with election as a means of choosing leaders.

The reliance on electoral results to decide the cream of the crop demonstrates the primacy of the people's will, which drives democratic government. This originates from the very essence of democracy, viewed as a rule by the people—meaning the people are handed the power of governance. The power is ceded in trust to an elected few as trustees of the people's authority. By implication, political power is primarily handed down by the citizenry, and credible, free and fair elections are, therefore, taken for granted for democratic sustenance and the continuity of legitimised governance. This presupposes the presence of competition and contest for power, which in the end is expected to produce the winner and loser. While the winning camp launches into ecstasy for realising their desire for power, the losing camp is left distraught.

Background and Motivation for the Study

Defeat often comes to politicians with shock after their dashed hopes from a supposedly promising campaign. It comes with the default response of disappointment and painful feeling. For months of gruelling campaign to have ended in failure, may be incomprehensible to the aspirants; and sometimes, the defeat may be highly unexpected, especially when it happens against the projections of forecast polls. Kleinknecht and Shaffir (n.d.) conducted interviews with some defeated politicians and detailed their traumatic experiences as a case study to review the dynamics surrounding career terminations. They surmise that majority of the interviewees relate their loss to the analogy of death to depict the intense disappointment and regret they feel with the defeat.

Inability to accept election loss and distrust of the electoral process have often prompted politicians to reject and protest election results and sometimes mobilise their support base against the authority in a way that threatens the stability, peace and security of a nation. Therefore, how this experience is managed during democratic transition for national unity, stability and the sustenance of democracy is important. At such a crucial time we are able to construe politicians' (unique) inner and outer experience of defeat and the values and beliefs they retain in the face of it (defeat). This is made possible through the resources that language offers. Language indexes experience, intentions, beliefs and other social realities. It is "a human vocal noise or the arbitrary graphic representation of this noise," which is used "systematically and conventionally...for purposes of communication" (Osisanwo, 2008, p. 1). It is the communicative agency that enables speech participants to accomplish different communicative purposes (Bradac, 1999). As a means of public communication, it is used not just to determine whom to entrust with power, and how those in power or desiring power use language to achieve their goals; but it is also used to determine how those who lose contest for power respond and symbolically represent their experiences.

This is appropriately presented through the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), which both accounts for language sociologically as networks (systems) of interlocking options or choices and then the realisation of these options in their structural portion (Halliday, 1985). The first part of the definition is systemic, while the latter is functional. SFG is a linguistic approach that reveals how language serves as a process of making meaning of our inner and external worlds, which consist of goings-on like "happening, doing, sensing, meaning, and being and becoming" (Halliday, 1994, p. 106; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, p. 24). This meaning-making process indicates how a speaker's preference for particular linguistic choices communicates some special meanings. So SFL, in this way, implies that language is a set of systems that each offers a different set of meanings based on the context. It emphasises the different realisations of meaning by language use in different contexts. Therefore, within the context of election defeat some understanding would be provided on how losing aspirants use language in the realisation of their experiential meanings. Within the discourse of election defeat, a politician can deliver either a concession or non-concession speech, depending how they choose to respond to their loss. Defeated aspirants deliver concession speeches if they choose to accept the loss and yield power; but if they opt to condemn or even reject the election results, they deliver non-concession speeches, instead. However, this study is only concerned with the concession speech because of its peaceful closure to a usually heated election campaign, and its significance in promoting and sustaining democratisation, especially in Africa (and Nigeria, in particular).

Previous works on election matters and speeches (Opeibi 2007; Osisanwo 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017; Oyeleye and Osisanwo 2013a, 2013b) have focused on different aspects of election and election defeat, other than the experiential meanings construable through the transitivity processes in election defeat. Related studies by Weaver (1982), Corcoran (1994, 1998), Lakoff (2001), and Mirer and Bode (2015) have discussed the themes, generic structure and rhetorical style of victory and concession speeches. Okoye and Mmadike (2016) and Koussouhon and Dajjo (2016), relying on speech acts and pragmatics, identify the illocutionary acts and the impacts of context in concession speeches. On their part, Anurudu and Oduola (2017) and Adedara (2018) research into some hidden meanings in the genre, using critical discourse analysis. The speech has also been subjected to discourse analysis, like the work of Ademilokun (2016) that investigates use of appraisal resources in concession speeches, and Osisanwo and Chinaguh's (2018) study which explores the discourse relations and intentions in the speeches through rhetorical structure theory.

The most related study to the present one is Ademilokun's because of its discourse analytic orientation, particularly within SFG, and its pre-occupation with the circumstance of politicians' electoral defeat. More precisely, Ademilokun (2016, p. 184) investigates how aspirants use appraisal resources to depict "maturity and positivity in their attitudes and stances to their electoral defeats." However, while his work tilts more towards interpersonal metafunction, which pertains to language choices that give account of speakers' positions towards propositions or social relations between interlocutors; this paper is more ideational in nature and it

reviews candidates' experiences of election defeat as they are linguistically encoded and represented through the descriptive potential of the transitivity system. This attempt is able to symbolise the changing realities of election defeat as embodied by the variant themes, associated realities that represent face-saving measures for justifying their condescension, value re-orientation among the campaign team, and re-contextualisation of the election defeat for re-building tarnished image, among other experiential functions.

Transitivity System

The Transitivity system embodies the ideational/experiential meanings of a field of discourse. It reflects the capacity of language as a tool for understanding and how the clause functions and represents the experiential world. As an ideational token of meaning, Transitivity forms part of the three metafunctions of SFG. The other two are interpersonal and textual meanings: while the interpersonal meaning focuses on clause functions as "a form of exchange between speaker and listener" (Halliday, 1985, p. 101), the textual meaning is the interpretation of the clause as message with its two-part structure of theme and rheme; and the making of any stretch of discourse into a coherent and unified text. All the three metafunctions work harmoniously to provide lexico-grammatical patterns in the construal of the world. The Transitivity system shows how the clause, as a grammatical unit, expresses experiential meaning through these (three) semantic categories: the process, realised by a verbal group; the participants, realised by nominal or pronominal elements and they bring about or are affected by the process; and the circumstances that are associated with the process, realised by adverbial or prepositional phrase. The key element here is therefore the process, which is needed to construe the participants' role and the circumstance—this is an optional meaning element. These semantic categories combine to represent the inner and outer experiences of interlocutors. The processes are material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal and existential processes (Halliday, 1994) as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Transitivity Processes

S/N	Process Type	Category Meaning	Participants
1.	Material: Action Event	Doing Doing Happening	Actor, Goal
2.	Mental: Perception Affection Cognition	Sensing Seeing Feeling Thinking	Senser, Phenomenon
3.	Behavioural	Behaving	Behaver
4.	Verbal	Saying	Sayer, Target
5.	Relational: Attribution Identification	Being Attributing Identifying	Token, Value Carrier, Attribute Identified, Identifier
6.	Existential	Existing	Existent

Source: Halliday (1985, p. 131)

Methodology

The purposively selected data for this paper are Romney's Concession Speech (RCS), Jonathan's Concession Speech (JCS), and Clinton's Concession Speech (CCS), which all together comprise 2,145 words and 209 Elementary Discourse Units (EDUs) or clauses. JCS was selected from Nigeria, while RCS and CCS were selected from the United States. The choice of only one sample from Nigeria as against two from the United States is indicative of the non-prevalence of this genre in the country (Nigeria). The data were segmented into numbered clauses, which formed the units of the analyses, and using the framework of the Transitivity system of SFG the processes, participants and circumstances were identified and classified to construe the defeat experiences of political aspirants as projected through their linguistic constructions.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data are analysed and discussed starting with the thematic description of the data, in which case each speech is divided into sections based on its main themes in relation to the speaker's admittance of defeat. Thereafter, the distribution of the transitivity processes in the data is presented containing the frequency of each process across the data and the percentage. The functions of these processes are also discussed in relation to the major themes of the data, so as to symbolically represent the inner and outer experience of election defeat.

Thematic Structures of Defeat Concession

The thematic structures of the three presidential concession speeches sampled for the study are presented and harmonised as generic structure. In RCS, the following themes were identified and their inherent discourse structure.

Thematic Structure of Romney's Defeat Concession

The thematic structure of Romney's defeat concession, in Table 2, starts with an *Opening Appreciation*, from clauses 1–5, that marks the moment the speaker comes on stage and appreciates the audience's applause by repeatedly saying "thank you" or "thank you, my friends"; and the appreciation may also be for the support he got during the election. Thus, it may not really be regarded as a component of the speech; nevertheless, it is included in the transcript. The next theme is *Concession and Good Wishes* that spans 8 clauses (6–13), and encrypts both the notification by the speaker that he has congratulated the winner and the extending of his best wishes to the winning camp—including the winning candidate, his family, campaign team and supporters. Romney did not directly admit to defeat, he only reported congratulating the winner, which may be regarded as a way of evading defeat. Furthermore, he wished him well, and extended his best regards to the winner's (President Obama's) supporters, campaign team, and family—an act which demonstrates his political maturity.

The following theme is the candidate's *Appreciation* of the running mate, family, the campaign team and supporters, which occupies a large part of the speech (from 14–32). The appreciation contains additional information that details why the speaker is thanking each referent. Then there is the theme of *Deferring to Democratic Principles* in clauses 33–57, whereby Romney calls upon party leaders and the electorate to put aside partisanship to do the people's work; and, thus, admonished them to put the people before politics, anchored on American principles seen to endure beyond an election. He closes with the themes of *Benediction* and (*Closing*) *Appreciation* in clauses 58–63, where he invokes divine blessing on America and appreciates his supporters, again.

Table 2. Thematic Structure of Romney's Defeat Concession

S/N	Themes	Discourse Structure (Clauses)
1.	Opening appreciation	1–5
2.	Concession and good wishes	6–13
3.	Appreciation to running mates, family, campaign team and supporters	14–32
4.	Deferring to democratic principles	33–57
5.	Benediction and closing appreciation	58–63

Thematic Structure of Clinton's Defeat Concession

The thematic structure of Clinton's defeat discourse similarly starts with an *Opening Appreciation* in segment 1–5, with each clause serving as a response to the audience's cheers to the candidate as she prepares to deliver the speech. The body of the speech kicks off with its general theme, *Concession*, and one clause *Good Wish* for the winner to succeed as American president (within clauses 6–8). In the theme that follows, *Recalling Defeat* and *Closing Ranks*, in units 9–42, Clinton reflects on the defeat experience, identifies the shared disappointment everyone in the losing camp feels, and she apologises for the loss. She urges her supporters to accept the election result regardless of their contrary opinion, mainly because of their constitutional democracy.

In the next few clauses, 43–57, the thematic preoccupation of the politician is to get her followers to remain politically involved after the election to advance their democratic values; and in clauses 58–82 she appreciates her campaign team, family and supporters for their contribution to the campaign. The thematic structure in 83–118, as Table 3 demonstrates, shows the aspirant as rationalising the defeat as a setback that should not deter any of her supporters from fighting for what they believe in. From addressing a general audience, she goes on to specify a group among her followers—the women and little girls—urging them to fight on in spite of the yet to be attained dream for a female American president. The last theme is *Closing Appreciation* and *Benediction* in 119–121, which marks the candidate's closing gratitude and invocation of divine blessing on her supporters and the United States of America.

Table 3. Thematic Structure of Clinton's Defeat Concession

S/N	Themes	Discourse Structure (Clauses)
1.	Opening appreciation	1–5
2.	Concession and good wishes	6–8
3.	Recalling defeat and closing ranks	9–42
4.	Inclining to democracy	43–57
5.	Appreciation to the campaign team and supporters	58–82
6.	Framing/rationalising defeat and charging supporters to keep fighting	83–118
7.	Closing appreciation and benediction	119–121

Thematic Structure of Jonathan's Defeat Concession

Table 4 gives a summary of the thematic structure of Jonathan's concession speech. JCS, like other speeches, takes off with an *Opening Appreciation*; but, contrary to what obtains in RCS and CCS, this theme opens up the real body of the speech. However, it is worth noting that the pre-textual engagement of the speaker with the audience is not captured in the transcript. This is possibly so because the speech was not delivered in the manner of an American concession speech, usually delivered before a standing audience. JCS continues with the thematic preoccupation, *Inclination to Democracy*, (in units 3–10) where Jonathan affirms that the election was free and fair as he had promised, and he perceives it as a legacy he "will like to see endure" (clause 6). Further demonstrating his inclination to democratic ideals, the speaker admonishes his supporters not to involve with any unconstitutional act in expressing their grievance about the election.

In the next thematic structure in units 11–13, he appreciates the electorate, the security agencies and his party colleagues for their respective roles during the election; and later in 21–22, he thanked Nigerians for the opportunity of leadership. Then with the theme of *Framing* the defeat discourse in clauses 14–20, the speaker backgrounds the defeat experience and instead foregrounds the achievements of the party in a bid to convince his party colleagues to accept his concession. In unit 23, he disclosed he had conveyed his best wishes to the winner, General Muhammadu Buhari, and in the concluding clauses (24–24) he gave his *Benediction* to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and *Closing Appreciation*.

Table 4. Summary of Thematic Structure of Jonathan's Defeat Concession

S/N	Themes	Discourse Structure (Clauses)
1.	Opening appreciation	1–2
2.	Inclination to democracy	3–10
3.	Appreciation of the electorate, party faithful, and others	11–13; 21–22
4.	Framing–foregrounding achievements	14–20
5.	Best wishes	23
6.	Benediction and closing appreciation	24–25

Constructing a Generic Structure for Defeat Concession

In this part of the paper, the thematic organisations of the speeches are harmonised to derive a generic structure, and this is compared to similar others by Weaver (1982) and Corcoran (1994). Table 5 presents a generic structure for defeat concession, which is constructed by harmonising the thematic structures of RCS, CCS and JCS. The first theme is *Appreciation*, inclusive of the Opening, Mid-text and Closing Appreciation. It encapsulates all forms of gratitude expressed towards the campaign team, family, supporters and the like. While the Opening Appreciation covers the initial thanks, the Mid-text Appreciation includes all the gratitude extended to different referents in the other parts of the text, with the exception of the Concluding Appreciation that is usually the text-ender along with the *Benediction*.

Table 5. Generic Structure of Defeat Concession

S/N	Themes	
1.	Appreciation	Opening
		Mid-text
		Closing
2.	Concession	
3	Good Wishes	
4.	Recalling Defeat	
5.	Closing Ranks	
6.	Inclining/Deferring to democracy	
7.	Framing	
8.	A Plea to Fight on	
9.	Benediction	

This is followed by *Concession* and *Good Wishes*, where the aspirant is expected to concede or admit to defeat, and extend good wishes to the winning camp. However, it has been established by studies that losing candidates often do not directly accept defeat, but rather evade it, an act which Corcoran (1994, p. 115) regards as the "periphrasis of defeat"—"a congratulatory declaration of the winner and an acceptance of the electoral verdict." This plays out in all the speeches, especially in RCS and CCS; but in the case of JCS, there is no linguistic element that marks concession, only implicated by the other thematic acts in the speech, particularly the speaker's best wishes to the winner.

Then we have *Recalling Defeat* and *Closing Ranks*. Under these topics, the aspirants may recall their experiences of defeat, including the pain and disappointment they feel as a result of it. In some instances, they also remark on the defeat experience of their supporters as a way of identifying with them. However, this does not seem to be a common theme; thus, it can only be found in CCS in clausal units 18–32 as below:

I know how disappointed you feel because I feel it too, and so do tens of millions of Americans who invested their hopes and dreams in this effort. This is painful and it will be for a long time...

Clinton uniquely takes her supporters through the defeat experience, and identifies with them at such a distressed period, deepened by their thwarted high expectations, especially given overwhelming forecast polls that had tipped her to win the election. This theme veers from dwelling unduly on defeat to dealing with it, as aspirants close ranks among their supporters, appealing to them to accept the election result and support the opposing candidate, declared the winner.

In the next theme, the aspirants incline or defer to democracy to remind their supporters of democratic principles—putting the people and country before personal ambitions and politics—and as well justifying their seeming condescension. In RCS, Romney demonstrates how he submits to the democratic will of the nation in units 55–57, as below:

I so wish—I so wish that I had been able to fulfill your hopes to lead the country in a different direction, but the nation chose another leader. And so, Ann and I join with you to earnestly pray for him and for this great nation.

He directly identifies the choice by the majority as that by the nation, and re-groups behind the winner to wish his country well. He inherently shows the contest is not all about him, but the belief of the people in his ability to fulfil their "hopes to lead the country in a different direction" (55–57). Similarly, Jonathan rests his ambition for the people in his concession speech when he affirms that "nobody's ambition is worth the blood of any Nigerian."

Thus, this generic structure is a vital part of defeat concession, as it serves as a tool for value re-orientation and it is imperative in driving home the message of concession. It can indeed be regarded as the prop of concession. *Framing/Rationalising Defeat* is another major theme in election defeat discourse. It entails the artful deployment of language to re-contextualise defeat experience toward some positive political ends. Mirer and Bode (2015, p. 454) note that concession speech provides the "first opportunity to shape the interpretation of the election as they chart a course forward, or start to rebuild an image tarnished by defeat." In that light, framing is used in this genre as an image management device or a tool for crisis communication, aimed at stemming the negative impact of the election defeat and building a positive political image. In JCS, the candidate framed his concession as a moment to appreciate his achievements in text span 14–20, as below:

Today, the PDP should be celebrating rather than mourning. We have established a legacy of democratic freedom, transparency, economic growth and free and fair elections. For the past 16 years, we have steered the country away from ethnic and regional politics. We created a Pan-Nigerian political party and brought home to our people the realities of economic development and social transformation. Through patriotism and diligence, we have built the biggest and most patriotic party in Nigerian history. We must stand together as a party and look to the future with renewed optimism.

He tries to change his party colleagues' interpretation of the election defeat from "an occasion to mourn" to "a moment to celebrate" the party's achievements. By that, he implores his party, the PDP, to put the defeat behind and work to reclaim power in the future, building on their past achievements. The generic structure

ends with *Benediction*, whereby the candidates invoke divine blessing on their country as in RCS and JCS, or both the country and the citizens as in CCS. In JCS, the benediction is "May God Almighty continue to bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria." In CCS, it is "May God bless you and may God bless the United States of America."

The generic structure of the study shares some semblance with earlier ones, like Weaver's (1982) and Corcoran's (1994). Weaver (1982) identifies substantive themes as type of the conventions of concession; and the themes are to declare result formally, call for unity, make a tribute to democracy, give an affirmation of the campaign, acknowledge role transformation, and thank the supporters. The first of Weaver's themes is "Declare result formally" which is embedded in the themes of *Concession* and *Good Wishes* in this paper. The second and third are "Call for unity" and "Tribute to Democracy" which both form part of the theme of *Inclining/Deferring to Democracy* in this paper, but Weaver's second theme—Call for unity—can also function as a subtheme of *Closing Ranks* depending on the discourse structure. Weaver's other themes, except "Thank supporters" are accounted for differently in this work.

Mirer and Bode (2015) recycle some of Weaver's themes in their paper on the US 2010 congressional, senatorial and gubernatorial elections. They identify themes like declare result formally, give an affirmation of the campaign, acknowledge role transformation, and thank the supporters. Corcoran (1994, 1998), on his part, classifies four elements of a concession speech to be the periphrasis of defeat, a call to unite behind the winner, the paeon to democracy, and a plea to continue the fight. These themes are equally similar to the generic structure constructed in this study. However, some themes are noticeably omitted in Corcoran's work, like *Appreciation*, *Closing Ranks* and *Benediction*; but he acknowledges there are common subthemes, like an appeal to the young ones and remarks about the gruelling campaign. These subthemes are related to the theme of *Closing Ranks*. Furthermore, framing is only perceived by Corcoran as a strategy, rather than as a theme.

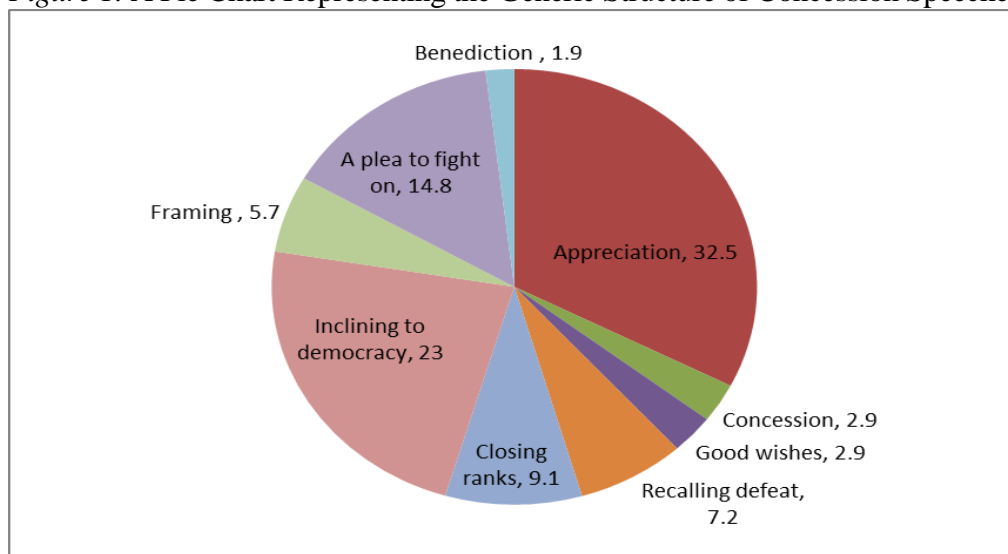
Generic Structure and Transitivity Processes in Defeat Concession

Table 6 illustrates the number of clauses in the generic structures of defeat concession, and the distribution of transitivity processes in each structure and the entire data. This is also represented in Figure 1. *Appreciation* takes the largest share of the discourse units, 68 out of a total of 209, which is 32.5%, as pictorially represented with the pie chart in Figure 1. This is followed by *Inclining to Democracy*, with a frequency of 48 and taking the second largest share of the genre at 23%. The themes with the least clauses are *Concession* and *Best Wishes* each with a distribution of 2.9%, and *Benediction*, at the lowest rung both in order and frequency, with 1.9%. Thus, these findings illustrate that defeated aspirants devote very intangible space to concession, and rather refocus the speech as a medium of thanking their supporters, family, party colleagues and the electorate; and deferring to democratic principles to remind supporters and party faithful that the people come first before political ambitions.

Table 6. Frequency of Clauses in the Generic Structure of Defeat Concession

S/N	Themes	Mat.	Mental				Relational		Verb.	Exist.	Beh.	Total
			Cog.	Emot.	Des.	Perc.	Attrib.	Ident.				
1.	Appreciation	15:22.1%	3:4.4%	2:2.9%	7:10.3%	0	10:14.7%	5:7.4%	26:8.2%	0	0	68:32.5%
			12:17.6%				15:22.1%					
2.	Concession	2:33.3%	0	0	0	0	2:33.3%	0	2:33.3%	0	0	6:2.9%
			0				33.3%					
3.	Good wishes	1:16.7%	0	0	3:50%	0	0	1:16.7%	1:16.7%	0	0	6:2.9%
			3:50%				1:16.7%					
4.	Recalling defeat	4:26.6%	1:6.7%	2:13.3%	0	0	6:40%	1:6.7%	0	0	1:6.7%	15:7.2%
			3:20%				7:46.7%					
5.	Closing ranks	5:26.3%	4:21%	3:15.8%	0	1:5.3%	4:21%	1:5.3%	0	0	1:5.3%	19:9.1%
			8:42.1%				5:26.3%					
6.	Inclining to democracy	20:41.7%	7:14.6%	1:2.1%	1:2.1%	0	5:10.4%	3:6.2%	7:14.6%	1:2.1%	3:6.2%	48:23%
			9:18.8%				8:16.6%					
7.	Framing	7:58.3%	0	0	0	0	4:33.3%	1:8.3%	0	0	0	12:5.7%
			0				5:41.6%					
8.	A plea to fight on	9:29%	6:19.4%	2:6.5%	1:3.2%	0	9:29%	0	1:3.2%	2:6.5%	1:3.2%	31:14.8%
			9:29%				9:29%					
9.	Benediction	4:100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4:1.9%
			0				0					
Total		67:32.1%	21:10.1%	10:4.8%	12:5.7%	1:0.5%	40:19.1%	12:5.7%	37:17.7%	3:1.4%	6:2.9%	209
			44:21.1%				52:24.8%					

Figure 1. A Pie Chart Representing the Generic Structure of Concession Speeches



Within each thematic constituent, some transitivity processes feature prominently to symbolically represent the candidates’ inner and outer experience of defeat, as in Figure 2. For instance, the aspirants appreciated their supporters mostly through verbal, material and relational attributive processes, with 38.2%, 22.1% and 14.7% distribution, respectively (see Figure 3). Also, politicians incline to democratic tenets significantly through actions/events (material processes) which featured in 41.7% of the discourse units. For the Concession theme, the clauses are equally shared by material, relational attributive and verbal processes (at 33.3% each); while it is all material under *Benediction* (100%)—although, the units are very small (just 4 clauses).

Figure 2. A Histogram Showing the Distribution of Transitivity Processes within Concession Themes

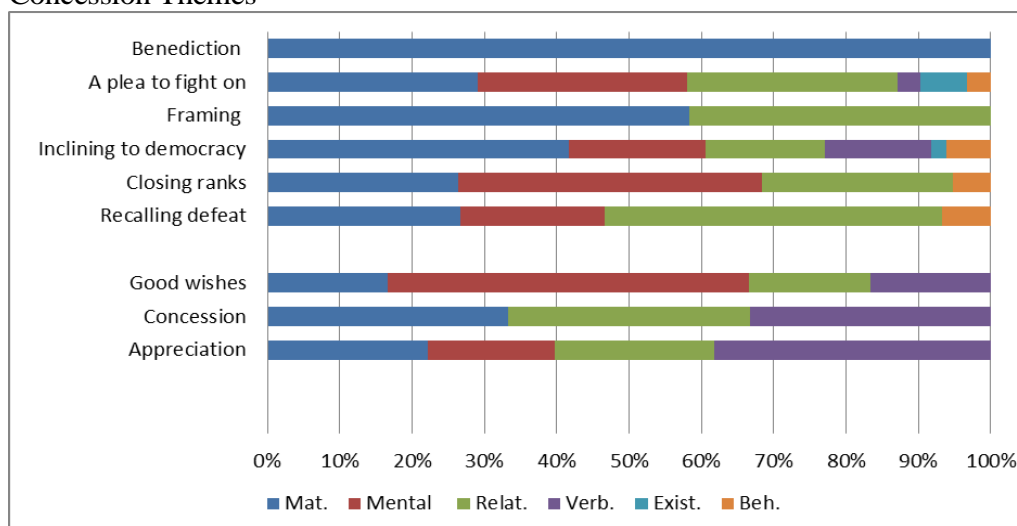
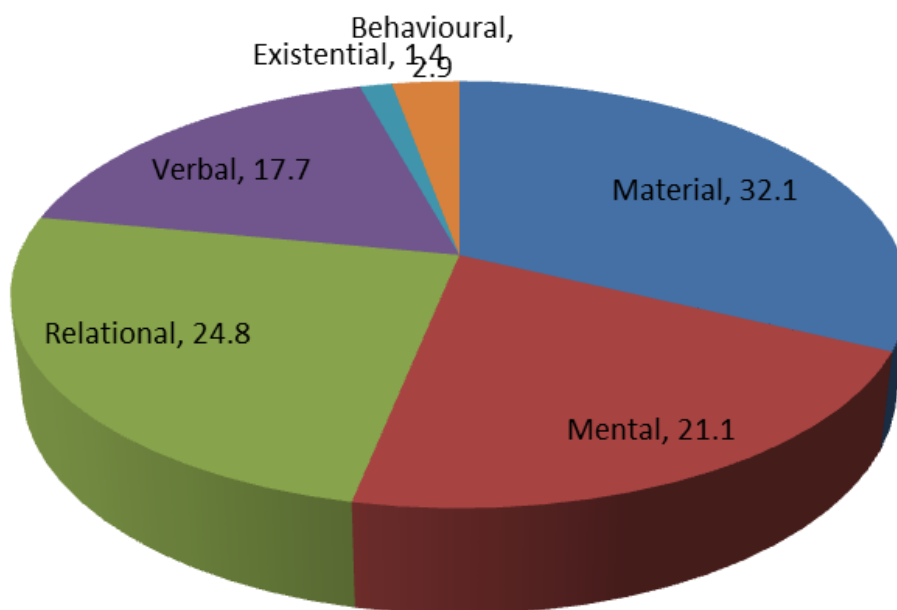


Figure 3. A Pie Chart of Transitivity Processes in Concession Speeches

In the entire data, four processes are mostly distributed, as presented in Figure 3. These processes are material (32.1%), relational (24.8%), largely attributive, mental (20.1%), half cognitive, and verbal (17.7%). The other two are behavioural and existential processes with very low distribution of 2.9% and 1.4% respectively. The finding aligns with earlier works that acknowledge material, mental and relational processes as major transitivity processes, but this study adds verbal processes to the list, especially in regard to political concession speeches. In the subsequent part of the analysis, the functions of the transitivity processes are examined and discussed within the generic structures, motivated by their distinctive usage in the genre of (admitted) election defeat discourse.

Experiential Functions of Transitivity Processes in Election Defeat Discourse

Transitivity Processes in Appreciating Supporters during Concession

As losing aspirants, by their concession, give a closure to their intense electoral contest, they devote most content to appreciating their supporters and others involved in their campaign. Hence their actual concession is glossed over to (at least) satisfy the media's demand (especially with the American speeches); the speech is rather exploited as a moment to acknowledge the dedication of their followers, regardless of the defeat. Their gratitude is mostly verbalised (verbal processes: 38.2%), echoing the actions/events (material processes: 21.1%) motivating the gesture, and how it is differently characterised and identified (relational processes: 21.1%), and mentally projected (17.6%). These are illustrated in the following segments.

Verbalisation of Appreciation in Defeat Concession

The aspirants express their gratefulness towards their campaign team through the verb *thank* used both in the US and Nigerian speeches, and other verbs like *congratulate*, *commend* and *assure*, each used singly, in the Nigerian speech only. Thus, JCS (the Nigerian Speech) extends the appreciation theme to accommodate expression of good wishes to the citizens, and guarantee them of his willingness to keep doing his best (in spite of his loss), and as well laud the security services. The instances of this usage are presented in Table 7. These instances affirm the ubiquity of the verb *thank* in the aspirants' attempt at verbalising their appreciation to the citizens, families and supporters. In the first example, Romney verbalises his gratitude through the verb *thank* to signal his appreciation towards his supporters, represented with the pronoun *you*, the Target of the verbalisation, who were verbally acted upon. The Circumstance "so very much" signifies the Extent of the symbolised meaning. In unit 20 of RCS, Romney indicates the Sayer, *I*, of the verbal process that encodes the signal source through the same verb *thank*, but narrows down the Target to "my sons" in consideration (Circumstance: Reason) that they have worked tirelessly on behalf of the campaign. Similar trend can be found in examples 3–5, all signalling similar meaning through the verb *thank*, and denoting the Circumstance of Reason, Extent or both.

The exception is Example 6 in JCS, where the Sayer *I* clearly encodes a congratulatory remark towards the Target, Nigerians, "for successfully going through the process of the March 28th General Elections..." Jonathan takes his *Appreciation* beyond being thankful to applauding the political participation of the citizens, an act which portrays the candidate as stately. It can, therefore, be deduced that verbal transitivity processes within the theme of *Appreciation*, present politicians who concede as handling their defeat well in the interest of the nation.

Table 7. Verbalisation of Appreciation in Defeat Concession

S/N	Sayer	Verbal Process	Target	Verbiage	Circumstance
1.		Thank	You	–	so very much ₂ RCS (Extent)
2.	I	Thank	my sons	–	for their tireless work on behalf of the campaign ₂₀ RCS (Reason)
3.	–	Thank	You	–	so very much for being here ₄ CCS (Extent, Reason)
4.	We–we	Thank	You	–	for your graceful, determined leadership ₆₃ CCS (Reason)
5.	I	Thank	you all	–	for turning out en-masse for the March 28 General Elections ₂ JCS (Reason)
6	I	Congratulate	Nigerians		for successfully going through the process of the March 28th General Elections with the commendable enthusiasm and commitment that was demonstrated nationwide ₁₁ JCS (Reason)

Representing Actions and Events of Appreciation in Concession

While the *Appreciation* of conceding aspirants is mostly verbalised, it is largely demonstrated with actions and events that chronicle the activities of their supporters and party colleagues, deserving gratitude. This refers to the supporters' concrete and abstract actions and events associated with them, which contributed to the campaign; although, the campaign ends in defeat, the politicians reckon their supporters' efforts should be acknowledged and applauded.

As illustrated in Table 8, the aspirants deploy material processes to detail the contributions of their families, running mates, and supporters towards the election, despite their loss. So, Example 7 provides additional information to explain why Romney had thanked his daughters-in-law and their children in the preceding clause. Similarly, the material clause in Example 9 (unit 66) buttresses Clinton's prior expression of her loving gratitude to her family in unit 65. Same applies with the other examples, which are mostly instanced by Range to delineate the scope of the illustrative material processes. In addition, not all the processes are concrete actions; there are abstract actions like in Example 11 where the Actor *I* is described as having "poured out" their hearts into the campaign. Thus, conceding politicians by their use of material processes in their *Appreciation* of supporters, fully identify with their camp and do not abandon them, as responsible leaders undaunted by defeat.

Table 8. Representation of Actions and Events of Appreciation in Concession

S/N	Actor	Material Process	Goal	Range	Beneficiary	Circumstance
7.	...as their husbands and dads	have spent	—	so many weeks	—	away from home ²² RCS (Place)
8.	They	have made		an extraordinary effort	not just for me but for the country that we love ²⁴ RCS	
9.	You	crisscrossed		this country		On our behalf ⁶⁶ CCS (Behalf)
10.	...	and gives	Me	great hope and comfort		to know that Tim will remain on the front lines of our democracy ⁶¹ CCS (Matter)
11.	You	poured out	your hearts			into this campaign ⁷⁰ CCS (Place)

Attributive and Identifying Elements in the Appreciative Remarks of Conceding Politicians

There are processes that characterise and identify politicians' theme of Appreciation in the genre of concession. They are the relational processes that index thankful attributes like acknowledgement of joyous feeling and expression

of gratitude towards followers, and identifying properties like the kind of First Lady an aspirant's wife would have been and whether the campaign was the first or one among many to some supporters. This is further illustrated in Table 9. Example 12 is an identifying relational process in RCS, where the identified "She"—who is Romney's wife—is presumed "would have been" (the identifying process) "a wonderful first lady" (the Identifier), if Romney had won the election. The speaker made the expression just after thanking his wife in unit 16. The last two examples are attributive relational processes in CCS, which are the speaker's attribution of her gratitude towards her team in Example 13, and the joy she feels getting to know his campaign partners better in Example 14. These processes represent how the aspirants further engage with their campaign team and supporters as they appreciate them for their efforts.

Table 9. Attributive and Identifying Elements in the Appreciative Remarks

S/N	Participant	Relational Process	Participant	Circumstance
12.	She (Identified)	would have been (Identifying)	a wonderful first lady ¹⁷ RCS (Identifier)	—
13.	I (Carrier)	am (Attributive)	so grateful (Attribute)	To stand with all of you ⁵⁸ CCS
14.	It (Carrier)	has been (Attributive)	a joy (Attribute)	getting to know them better ⁶⁰ CCS

Transitivity Indices of Concession as a Discourse Unit

As earlier mentioned, aspirants devote minimal discourse units to concession, although the global coherence of the speech remains Concession as affirmed by Osisanwo and Chinaguh (2018). It is thus plausible to construe how the discursive construction of the aspirants' concession reflects their experience of defeat; and premium is particularly given to how transitivity processes are eked out in these core discourse units, to encode equal distribution of action, verbal and relational (attributive) processes—each featuring in two clauses. The nucleus of the processes, which symbolically signal the concession, is the verbal processes, realised either through independent clause/event as in Example 15, or infinitive clause/dependent event as in Example 16.

Table 10 presents verbal process in concession. Thought functionally as an independent meaning token, the verbal process in Example 15a is not subordinated to the material process; rather the material process is another independent process that encrypts the aspirant's offer to support the opponent's administration—so, she moved past the defeat in the interest of the country. In addition, the encoding of the verbal process in Example 15a can be construed as an autonomous entity, and it gives subtle ideation about the attitude of the speaker to defeat—which may be interpreted as directly dwelling on the defeat discourse, and not evading it as has been previously observed in concession genre.

Table 10. Verbal Process in Concession

S/N	Material/Verbal Processes		Material/Verbal Processes
15a	[Circumstance] [Sayer] [Verbal] [Target] Last night, I congratulated Donald Trump ₆	15b.	[material] and offered to work with him on behalf of our country ₇ CCS
16a	[Actor] [Material] [Goal] I have just called President Obama ₆	16b.	[Verbal] [Target] [Circumstance] to congratulate him on his victory ₇ RCS

Table 11. Relational Process in Concession

S/N	Carrier	Relational Process (Attributive)	Attribute
17.	His supporters and his campaign	also deserve	congratulations
18.	His supporters and his campaign	also deserve	congratulations

On the contrary, the verbal process in Example 16b is an infinitive clause whose meaning is dependent on the material process in Example 16a. The speaker first reports calling his opponent, President Obama, who is the Goal. Although, that action itself is an implied concession based on the contextual knowledge that "making the call" to an opponent after the declaration of election results is accepting defeat. Nevertheless, the purpose for the call is specified through the verbalisation of the concession, with the verb *congratulate*—as the enactment of a public speech act of concession. In other words, even though the verbalisation of concession is subordinated here, as a discourse strategy for prevaricating defeat, it is still the key act of the concession speech, especially in the US; otherwise, merely saying "I have called President Obama" should suffice as an implied concession. The relational processes that follow in Examples 17 and 18, as represented in Table 11, are one repeated clause to state that the opponent's supporters also deserve congratulations. Such maturity marks how Romney transforms his election defeat to a different reality that stimulates dignity and grace.

Transitivity Functions in Recalling Defeat and Closing Ranks in Concession Genre

The themes of *Recalling Defeat* and *Closing Ranks* only appear in CCS to reminisce about the campaign and the outcome, acknowledge the pain of defeat and apologise for it, and reorient the supporters to regroup behind the winner. These meanings were mainly symbolised by relational (especially attributive), mental (mostly cognitive and emotive) and material processes, as represented in Table 12. Through the relational processes, Clinton identifies the outcome of the election as being unfavourable in Example 19a, and apologises to her supporters for it in 19b, an uncommon act among conceding aspirants, who seldom admit defeat. The material clause in Example 19c merely states the event that prompted the speaker to offer an apology to the followers; and in other segments of the

theme it also acts as an illustrative process, similar to its ideational function within other themes. The mental processes construe the inner worlds of the losing camp, which mostly are their emotive and cognitive dispositions to the election defeat, like the feeling of disappointment, as represented in 19d and 19e.

Table 12. Transitivity Process in Concession

S/N	Themes	Transitivity Processes	Examples
19.	Recalling defeat	a. Relational(Identifying) b. (Attributive) c. Material d. Mental (Cognitive) e. (Emotive)	a. This is not the outcome we wanted or worked so hard for ₉ b. and I'm sorry ₁₀ c. that we did not win this election ₁₁ d. I know how disappointed you feel ₁₈ e. because I feel it too ₁₉ CCS
20.	Closing ranks	a. Relational (Identifying) b. (Attributive) c. Material d. Mental Cognitive	a. Donald Trump is going to be our president ₃₄ b. We owe him an open mind and the chance to lead ₃₅ c. Our constitutional democracy enshrines the peaceful transfer of power ₃₆ d. But I still believe in America ₂₉ CCS

The mental processes further reveal the concern and consciousness of the aspirant and her supporters about issues arising from the campaign, and their cognitive and emotive responses to these issues. One of the issues is the perceived deep division in America, which did not dissuade the aspirant from expressing belief in the nation in 20d, and mobilising the supporters to do the same. That mental disposition was informed by their yielding identification (through the relational process) in Example 20a that Donald Trump will be the president; and through another relational process, the aspirant reminds the supporters of their required allegiance to him (as the newly elected president) in 20b – this is premised on the following material process in 20c that illustrates the constitutional demand for peaceful transfer of power. So, the transitivity processes in this theme avail us of the inner experiences, including concerns, of defeat and the outer efforts taken to yield to it and getting supporters to realign, accordingly.

Transitivity Processes Activating Democratic Inclination in Political Concession

As politicians yield power after an election, they are preoccupied with seamless democratic transition and their articulation mostly comprises actions and events that lean towards democratic ideals. On one hand, this involves brief narratives of efforts and actions during the election; on the other hand, it entails implored actions to continue advancing core values and principles regardless of the defeat. This is besides the recurring illustrative and other accompanying actions and events to other transitivity processes that project the cognitive drive (mental processes) of these actions, characterise and identify (through relational processes) the democratic ideals spurring these actions, and affirm them (through

verbal processes) to symbolise the aspirants' inclination to democracy.

Table 13 presents ideational functions and transitivity processes in concession. Examples 21a-c are material processes that detail politicians' actions and efforts towards realising their ambitions, perhaps to convince supporters that they had done their best, in spite of their loss. While in 21a, the Actor *We* inclusively recount that the team had given their all to the campaign; in 21b-c, the Actor *We* also specify the length of time they had collectively spent in reaching out to people across the country. This ideational function correlates with another *metafunction*, where candidates implore supporters to take certain actions in the interest of the nation, looking past the electoral defeat. Through the material process in 22a, Romney wants his party colleagues to shirk partisanship to get past the challenges of the transition period; and through another material process in 22b, Clinton through a collective personal pronoun *us* in "let's" implores her supporters to join her in continuing to advance their "causes and values" by always participating in the affairs of the country.

Table 13. Ideational Functions and Transitivity Processes in Concession 1

S/N	Ideational Functions	Examples	Transitivity processes
21.	Projecting efforts during election	a. We have given our all to this campaign ⁵⁴ RCS b. We've spent a year and a half ⁴⁹ CCS c. Bringing together millions of people from every corner of our country ⁵⁰ CCS	Material Material Material
22.	Implored democratic actions after election	a. At a time like this, we can't risk partisan bickering and political posturing ³⁴ RCS b. So, let's do all we can to keep advancing the causes and values we hold dear ⁴⁵ CCS	Material Material
23.	Illustrative actions	a. I promised the country free and fair elections ³ JCS b. I have kept my word ⁴ JCS	Verbal Material
24.		a. So now, our responsibility as citizens is to keep doing our part ⁵⁵ CCS b. to build that better, stronger, fairer America we seek ⁵⁶ CCS	Relational Material

The predominance of action processes in advocating democratic tenets is further reflected in the illustrative/accompanying function of these processes with others. As in Example 23, Jonathan did not only give a verbal signal (to promise) "free and fair" election, he also evidenced it by an action (that he has kept the promise). Similarly, in 24, while Clinton identifies the civil responsibility of her supporters to continue doing their part, she deploys a material action to illustrate what that entails to be "build(ing) that better, stronger, fairer America we seek." Altogether, losing aspirants do not only incline to democratic ideals but mobilise towards democratic actions in deference to the constitution.

Deployment of Action and Attribution Processes in Framing Defeat

The candidates engage material and relational processes in framing their defeat discourse, depending whether their goal is to deflect attention to some positive political events, like their achievements, or rationalise their defeat. In redirecting focus to achievements, action processes are deployed to etch these positive political moments so as to push back the thought of defeat. This is prevalent in JCS, a difficult speech delivered by an incumbent president who lost re-election in a country where concession was hitherto unknown; and the speaker decides to use the moment to celebrate past accomplishments rather than focusing on present defeat. This is represented in Examples 25a-c (see Table 14).

In the second instance, defeat is rationalised as one of life's setbacks through the successive use of relational (attributive) processes as demonstrated in CCS. In Examples 26a-c, Clinton gets by her election defeat by diminishing its importance. More specifically in 26a and 26b, the speaker as the Carrier *I* characterise respectively that she has had successes and so are setbacks (as the Attributes). She perceives it as normal life's experience as she in 23c informs the supporters that they "will have successes and setbacks too" just like she has had. The strategic goal is to circumvent defeat.

Table 14. Ideational Functions and Transitivity Processes in Concession 2

S/N	Ideational Functions	Examples	Transitivity processes
25.	Celebrating achievements	a. Today, the PDP should be celebrating rather than mourning ₁₄ JCS	Material
		b. We have established a legacy of democratic freedom, transparency, economic growth and free and fair elections ₁₅ JCS	Material
		c. For the past 16 years, we have steered the country away from ethnic and regional politics ₁₆ JCS	Material
26.	Rationalising defeat	a. I have had successes ₈₄ CCS b. and I've had setbacks ₈₅ CCS c. You will have successes and setbacks too ₈₈ CCS	Relational Relational Relational

Experiential Meanings in Aspirants' Plea to Continue Fighting

The significant distribution of material, mental and relational processes within aspirants' plea to supporters to continue fighting purveys their experiential meanings, as found largely in CCS and, only once, in JCS. Through mental processes, Clinton acknowledges the hurtfulness of their election loss, and further seeks to sustain supporters' belief in continuing the fight (for their values and ideals); and she expresses hope in a woman presidency, while inspiring little girls' aspirations. These are represented in Example 27 (see Table 15).

The experiential function of these mental processes is therefore to maintain the supporters' belief in continuing the fight as a mark of buoyancy. This ideation

carries on in the experiential meaning of relational processes as Examples 28a and 28b manifest. In these examples, the speaker wants the supporters to remain upbeat on the heel of their loss and not to be weak because of it; and the intention is to encourage her backers to continue fighting.

The material processes crown the experiential meanings through obligated actions required to weather the storm of election defeat. These actions like the ones in 29a and 29b "and we will go forward together," and "We must stand together..." are a charge to party faithful to keep striving and not allow the experience to divide them; but rather to keep working to entrench their principles in the people and hope to regain power in future elections.

Table 15. Ideational Functions and Transitivity Processes in Concession 3

S/N	Ideational Functions	Examples	Transitivity processes
27.	Sustaining the belief to continue fighting	a. This loss hurts ₈₉ CCS b. but please never stop believing that fighting for what's right is worth it ₉₀ CCS	Mental Mental
28.	Encouraging backers to fight on	a. Our best days are still ahead of us ₁₀₆ CCS b. Let us not grow weary ₁₁₅ CCS	Relational Relational
29.	Charging to keep striving	a. and we will go forward together ₁₀₈ b. We must stand together as a party and look to the future with renewed optimism ₂₀ JCS	Material Material

Abstract Actions of Closing Benediction

Like many political speeches, defeat concession closes with a benediction. It entails the invocation of divine blessing on the people and the country as an active entity. In concession speeches, this is put forward as a prayer for a divine action towards certain referents. It is allotted the least space in the discourse, but the sole use of a transitivity process in enacting it evokes the attention given to it. The common occurrences are:

30. May God bless you₁₂₀ (CCS)
31. and may God bless the United States of America₁₂₁ (CCS)
32. May God Almighty continue to bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria₂₄ (JCS)

These are all material processes, enacted as a prayer (in a subjunctive mood) each with the modal *may* placed before the Actor *God*, who is implored to perform the material process *bless* towards the Goal *you* (in this case, the supporters)—which is *the United States of America*, or *the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Such implored action, especially towards the country, without any projected ill feeling, shows the gracious manner aspirants sign off their concession speech and handle their election loss.

Findings and Conclusion

Political aspirants, by their concession speech, encode their election loss to reflect its divergent realities within the chosen themes that define the generic structure of the speech. This is symbolised in this study through the experiential functions of their language, as represented through the transitivity framework. The study identifies the nine themes constituting the generic structure of political concession to be Appreciation, Concession, Good Wishes, Recalling Defeat, Closing Ranks, Inclining to Democracy, Framing, A Plea to Fight on, and Benediction. *Appreciation* takes the largest share of the discourse units, 32.5%, with only *Inclination to Democracy* having lesser with 23%. On the contrary, the actual *Concession* in the speech falls among the themes with the least discursive density, with a distribution of 2.9%; a finding which illustrates that defeated aspirants devote very intangible discursive space to the act of concession, and rather exploit the medium to thank their supporters, family, party colleagues and the electorate; and to change the post-election narrative, as a first momentous occasion for rebuilding their public image.

Four transitivity processes feature most prominently in the data, and they are material (with 32.1% distribution), relational, especially, attributive (24.8%), mental (21.1%) and verbal (17.7%) processes. These are spread across the themes to encrypt varying defeat realities by their distinctive use. Under *Appreciation*, the aspirants' gratitude is mostly verbalised (verbal processes: 38.2%), echoing the actions/events (material processes: 21.1%) motivating the thankful gesture, and indexing the appreciative attributes (relational processes: 21.1%) that prop the thematic act. In regard to the infinitesimal but core *Concession* act, verbal, material and relational processes are evenly eked out to respectively prelude the concession (by "making the call"), enact the speech act (of concession), and coat it with maturity and grace. Notably, the actual act of concession is a verbalisation in a clause.

In the themes of *Recalling Defeat* and *Closing Ranks*, which only appear in CCS, we are availed, through the mental processes, of the inner experiences of the losing camp, like the feeling of disappointment, and their cognitive response towards it; as informed (through the relational processes) by their yielding identification of the opponent as the winner, and ascribed allegiance to him; which necessitate the outer efforts taken to succumb to the election defeat (as construed through material processes). As a face-saving measure (to justify their condescension) and image re-building strategy, aspirants switch to *Inclination of Democracy* to change their identity from a loser to a democrat as they (through the mental and relational processes) incline their supporters towards democratic ideals by entrenching the cognitive basis, attributes and identifying properties for them to continue advancing these core values; and further (through the material processes) mobilise them (their supporters) towards democratic actions, in deference to the constitution.

With *Framing*, material processes are abundantly engaged to deflect attention to more positive political events, like past party achievements; and relational processes are used to rationalise the loss as just one of life's setbacks, in order to

diminish its import psychologically, and easily get by the defeat. *A Plea to Fight on* follows with balanced use of mental (mostly, cognitive) and relational (all attributive) processes to imbue resilience in the apologists; and this is complemented by material processes, which construe obligated actions arising from optimism for future success. The concession genre ends with *Benediction*, comprising implored divine actions (only material processes) of blessings towards followers and the country, thus manifesting the gracious manner aspirants sign off their concession speech.

In conclusion, the ideational reading of election defeat speech has revealed that it transcends bringing a closure to an election, and includes resetting post-election narrative away from defeat, transforming identity from a loser to a democrat and achiever, renewing tarnished image, and keeping the fold together, all as political postures for future elections. This is why it is recommended that politicians should not see an election loss as an end to their political career, and so their post-election discursive engagement should chart a course forward.

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