

Constructing Political Accountability through Digital Satire: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis of Selected Dan Bello TikTok Skits

Halima Samaila Muhammed & Tajudeen Yakub Surakat
Department of English and Literary Studies, Ahmadu Bello University,
Zaria

Abstract

Digital media have become important spaces where citizens discuss governance and hold political leaders accountable. In Nigeria, content creators increasingly use satire on social media to draw attention to corruption, poor leadership, and social problems. Although many studies have examined political satire from stylistic, pragmatic, and critical discourse perspectives, few have explored how language functions to construct political meaning in digital satirical discourse. This study examines how selected TikTok skits by Dan Bello construct political accountability using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). A qualitative research design was adopted, and five purposively selected TikTok skits focusing on governance, corruption, poverty, education, and public service delivery were analysed. The analysis was based on the three metafunctions of language, with particular attention to transitivity, mood, modality, appraisal, and Theme-Rheme structure. The findings show that material processes are mainly used to assign responsibility for governance failures to political actors, while relational processes present poverty, poor education, and institutional neglect as persistent social conditions. The interpersonal analysis reveals that declarative statements, rhetorical questions, modality, and evaluative expressions encourage viewers to question political leadership and identify with the satirist's views. In addition, thematic choices consistently place citizens' experiences before political evaluation, making the message more persuasive. The study concludes that Dan Bello's TikTok skits use language not only to entertain but also to expose governance challenges, promote public awareness, and encourage democratic participation. The study contributes to research on digital political discourse by demonstrating how Systemic Functional Linguistics can be used to explain the linguistic construction of political accountability in Nigerian social media discourse.

Keywords: Systemic Functional Linguistics, political discourse, digital satire, political accountability, TikTok, Dan Bello, Nigeria.

Introduction

Language is central to political communication because it shapes how governments, political leaders, and citizens express ideas, negotiate power, and influence public opinion. Through language, political actors explain policies, defend their decisions, persuade the public, and respond to criticism. Citizens also use language to question authority, express dissatisfaction, and demand accountability. As a result, political discourse has become an important area of linguistic research because it shows how language reflects social realities, power relations, and ideological positions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Fairclough, 2015).

The rapid growth of digital communication has changed the way political messages are created and shared. Unlike traditional media, social media platforms allow ordinary citizens to participate directly in public debates by creating and distributing political content. Platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and Instagram have become important spaces where political issues are discussed, challenged, and interpreted. These platforms have also encouraged the growth of digital satire, where humour, irony, and exaggeration are used to criticise political leaders, expose corruption, and draw attention to issues affecting society (Highfield, 2016; Chadwick, 2017). In Nigeria, digital satire has become an increasingly influential form of political communication. Many content creators use social media to discuss issues such as corruption, insecurity, poor governance, unemployment, inadequate healthcare, and declining educational standards. By presenting these issues in humorous but thought-provoking ways, they attract large audiences while encouraging public discussion about governance and accountability. Their work demonstrates that satire can serve not only as entertainment but also as a means of civic education and democratic participation.

One of the most prominent digital satirists in Nigeria is Dan Bello, whose TikTok videos regularly address governance, public accountability, corruption, poverty, education, and social justice. His videos combine humour with investigative commentary, allowing him to present complex political issues in a way that is accessible to a wide audience. Although these videos are often entertaining, they also perform important social functions by exposing governance failures, questioning

political decisions, and encouraging citizens to reflect on issues that affect their daily lives.

Existing studies on political satire have mainly examined humour, stylistic devices, pragmatics, critical discourse analysis, or audience engagement (Simpson, 2003; Milner, 2016). While these studies have improved our understanding of satire as a communicative practice, they pay less attention to the functional role of language in constructing political meanings. Similarly, studies on Nigerian digital political discourse have focused largely on ideology, multimodal communication, and social media activism, with limited attention to how language simultaneously represents experience, negotiates interpersonal relationships, and organises discourse through Halliday's three metafunctions.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday, provides a suitable framework for examining these linguistic choices because it views language as a social semiotic resource for making meaning. According to SFL, language performs three interconnected metafunctions: the ideational metafunction, which represents experience through systems such as transitivity; the interpersonal metafunction, which expresses attitudes and social relationships through mood, modality, and appraisal; and the textual metafunction, which organises information through Theme–Rheme structure and cohesion (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin & White, 2005). These metafunctions make it possible to explain how linguistic choices shape political meanings and influence audience interpretation. Despite the growing popularity of Dan Bello's digital satire, there is limited research that applies Systemic Functional Linguistics to analyse how his language constructs political accountability. Most existing studies focus on the social or political effects of digital satire without examining the grammatical resources through which these meanings are created. This gap limits our understanding of how language functions within contemporary Nigerian digital political discourse.

Against this background, this study analyses selected Dan Bello TikTok skits using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. It investigates how transitivity, mood, modality, appraisal, and thematic organisation work together to represent governance issues, evaluate political actors, and encourage civic engagement. By doing so, the study contributes to research on political discourse, digital communication, and functional linguistics while demonstrating the relevance of Systemic

Literature Review

Political Discourse

Political discourse refers to the use of language in political activities and interactions. It includes speeches, debates, interviews, policy statements, campaign messages, and other forms of communication through which political actors share ideas, justify decisions, persuade citizens, and respond to public concerns. Political discourse is not only concerned with what is said but also with how language is used to shape public opinion, exercise power, and promote particular ideologies (Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 2008).

Language is central to political discourse because political leaders rely on it to explain policies, gain public support, defend their actions, and influence people's perceptions of political events. At the same time, citizens also use language to question authority, express dissatisfaction, and demand accountability. This interaction makes political discourse an important area of linguistic inquiry, as it reveals the relationship between language, power, and society (Fairclough, 2015).

Scholars have shown that political language is rarely neutral. Instead, it reflects the beliefs, interests, and intentions of those who use it. According to van Dijk (1998), political discourse often represents ideological positions by highlighting positive information about one group while presenting opposing groups negatively. Similarly, Fairclough (2015) argues that political language helps maintain or challenge existing power structures by influencing how social issues are understood. These perspectives demonstrate that language is an active participant in political processes rather than simply a medium for communication.

With the expansion of digital technology, political discourse has moved beyond traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television. Social media platforms now provide opportunities for ordinary citizens to participate directly in political discussions by creating, sharing, and commenting on political content. As a result, digital political discourse has become an important area of research because it reflects changing patterns of political participation and public engagement (Chadwick, 2017; Highfield, 2016). This shift has also contributed to the increasing popularity of digital political satire as a means of promoting accountability and encouraging civic participation.

Digital Political Satire

Satire is a form of communication that uses humour, irony, exaggeration, ridicule, and parody to expose weaknesses, challenge authority, and criticise social or political problems. Rather than entertaining audiences alone, satire encourages critical thinking by presenting serious issues in humorous and accessible ways. Simpson (2003) describes satire as a discourse that combines humour with criticism in order to expose contradictions and stimulate reflection. Digital political satire refers to satirical content produced and shared through online platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). These platforms have changed political communication by allowing content creators to produce political messages outside traditional media institutions. As a result, satire has become an effective tool for discussing governance, corruption, elections, insecurity, and other public issues in contemporary societies (Milner, 2016).

Unlike conventional political commentary, digital satire combines spoken language with visual images, music, gestures, editing techniques, and audience interaction. These multimodal features make satirical messages more engaging and easier to understand, especially among younger audiences who consume political information through social media. Highfield (2016) observes that digital platforms encourage greater public participation because audiences are not only consumers of political content but also active contributors through comments, reactions, and content sharing. In Nigeria, digital political satire has grown rapidly in recent years. Social media content creators use humour to draw attention to poor governance, corruption, insecurity, poverty, and other challenges affecting citizens. Through irony and exaggeration, they present political issues in ways that encourage public discussion and increase awareness of government performance. Among these creators, Dan Bello has become one of the most recognised voices for using satirical videos to question political leadership and advocate greater accountability.

Although many studies have examined digital satire from stylistic, pragmatic, and critical discourse perspectives, relatively few have investigated how language itself constructs political meaning in satirical discourse. This study addresses this gap by applying Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics to explain how linguistic choices contribute to the representation of governance and political accountability.

Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language developed by Halliday that views language as a resource for making meaning in social contexts. Unlike approaches that focus mainly on grammatical structure, SFL explains how speakers and writers choose linguistic forms to achieve particular communicative purposes. Halliday (1978) argues that language develops because it enables people to interact, represent experience, and organise information within society. A central principle of SFL is that every language performs three interconnected metafunctions: the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). These metafunctions operate simultaneously whenever language is used.

The ideational metafunction enables speakers to represent experiences, events, actions, thoughts, and relationships. This meaning is mainly realised through the transitivity system, which classifies processes into material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural, and existential types. Through these process types, language identifies who performs actions, who is affected, and how experiences are represented.

The interpersonal metafunction explains how language establishes relationships between speakers and listeners. It includes grammatical systems such as mood and modality, which allow speakers to make statements, ask questions, give commands, express opinions, and indicate degrees of certainty. Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory further expands interpersonal meaning by explaining how language expresses emotions, moral judgement, and evaluation.

The textual metafunction concerns the organisation of information within a text. Through Theme-Rheme structure, cohesion, and information flow, speakers organise messages so that ideas develop logically and coherently. This metafunction ensures that texts are meaningful and accessible to their intended audience (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Systemic Functional Linguistics has been widely applied to studies of political speeches, media discourse, education, advertising, literary texts, and institutional communication because it explains how grammatical choices contribute to social meaning. In political discourse, SFL enables researchers to examine how language assigns responsibility, evaluates political actors, and organises ideological messages. These features make the framework particularly suitable for analysing Dan Bello's TikTok skits, where language is strategically used to represent governance, criticise political leaders, and encourage public engagement.

The concepts discussed above demonstrate that political discourse, digital satire, and Systemic Functional Linguistics are closely connected in explaining how language functions within contemporary political communication. While political discourse provides the social context, digital satire offers a communicative strategy through which political issues are presented, and Systemic Functional Linguistics provides the analytical tools for examining how meanings are constructed. The next section reviews previous empirical studies to identify existing knowledge, highlight methodological and theoretical trends, and establish the gap that this study seeks to address.

Empirical Review

Research on political discourse, satire, and digital communication has expanded considerably over the last two decades. Scholars have examined how language is used to construct political identities, express ideological positions, promote civic engagement, and hold leaders accountable. Although these studies have employed different theoretical perspectives, there is growing recognition that language is central to political communication and public participation. This section reviews relevant international and Nigerian studies and identifies the gap addressed by the present study.

One of the earliest comprehensive studies on satire was conducted by Simpson (2003), who developed a stylistic model for analysing satirical discourse. The study showed that satire combines humour, irony, exaggeration, and parody to expose contradictions in society and challenge political authority. Simpson argued that the effectiveness of satire lies in the relationship between its literal meaning and its intended critical message. While this work remains influential in satire studies, it pays little attention to how grammatical choices create meaning. Consequently, it provides limited explanation of how linguistic structures contribute to political criticism. The present study extends Simpson's work by applying Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which explains how language represents experience, expresses evaluation, and organises meaning.

Within the SFL tradition, Martin and White (2005) introduced the Appraisal framework to explain how speakers and writers express attitudes, make judgements, and position audiences. Their work demonstrates that evaluation is a central feature of communication because language reflects the speaker's beliefs and attempts to influence the audience. Although the framework has been widely applied to media

and political discourse, it is largely theoretical and does not specifically examine digital political satire. This study applies appraisal analysis to explain how Dan Bello evaluates political actors and governance through satirical language.

The rise of digital media has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Highfield (2016) examined the role of social media in contemporary political communication and found that digital platforms have transformed political participation by allowing ordinary citizens to create and circulate political content. Similarly, Milner (2016) argued that memes, humour, and online satire have become important tools for political engagement because they simplify complex political issues and encourage public discussion. These studies demonstrate the importance of digital media in modern politics, but they focus mainly on patterns of participation rather than on the linguistic organisation of satirical discourse. The present study therefore investigates how language itself contributes to political meaning within digital satire.

Recent international research has also explored political humour in online environments. Maronikoulakis, Sanchez Villegas, Preoțiu-Pietro, and Aletras (2020) analysed political parody on social media using computational linguistic techniques. Their findings showed that parody possesses distinctive linguistic characteristics that differentiate it from authentic political communication. Although the study contributes to understanding online political humour, its computational approach does not explain how linguistic choices function to construct experiential, interpersonal, and textual meanings. This limitation further supports the need for a systemic functional analysis.

In Nigeria, political discourse has received increasing scholarly attention. Adegoju (2009) examined language use in Nigerian politics from a functional linguistic perspective and found that political actors use language strategically to promote ideology, exercise power, and influence public opinion. The study established that linguistic choices reflect political interests and social relationships. However, the research focused on traditional political communication and did not consider the growing influence of digital media or citizen-generated political satire.

Recent Nigerian scholarship has shifted attention towards digital political communication. Ganaah, Chigbu, and Aboh (2025) investigated political othering and polarisation in online discussions during Nigeria's 2023 general elections. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, they found that Facebook users frequently employed language that reinforced political divisions and ideological differences. The study demonstrated

that digital communication shapes political identity and public perception. However, it concentrated on online comments rather than satirical videos and did not examine the grammatical resources through which political meanings are constructed.

Similarly, Adebomi and Oyeboade (2026) analysed internet memes created during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis. Their findings revealed that visual and verbal resources were combined to construct political identities and persuade audiences. While the study contributes to understanding multimodal political communication, its emphasis is on campaign memes rather than independent political satire produced by digital content creators.

Using a pragmatic perspective, Ude, Chukwu, and Ugwu (2025) examined selected Nigerian social media skits to determine how humour represents socio-political issues. The researchers found that speech acts such as assertives, directives, and expressives were frequently used to criticise corruption, poor governance, insecurity, and economic hardship. The study concluded that humorous skits serve important social and political functions beyond entertainment. Nevertheless, because the analysis was based on Speech Act Theory, it did not explain how grammatical systems such as transitivity, mood, and thematic structure contribute to these meanings.

More recently, Abdul (2026) investigated AI-generated political satire in Nigeria through Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis. The study demonstrated that AI-generated satirical videos combine language, visuals, and sound to challenge political authority and shape public opinion. Although the study expands knowledge of digital political communication, it focuses on AI-generated content rather than satire produced by human content creators. In addition, its analytical framework differs from the systemic functional approach adopted in the present study.

In summary, these studies show that political discourse, digital satire, and social media have become important areas of linguistic research. They also demonstrate that satire is increasingly recognised as a means of promoting political awareness, encouraging public participation, and demanding accountability. However, most previous studies have relied on stylistics, pragmatics, Critical Discourse Analysis, multimodal analysis, or computational approaches. Only a limited number have applied Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics to Nigerian digital

political satire, particularly within the rapidly expanding TikTok environment.

Furthermore, existing Nigerian studies have concentrated on political speeches, newspaper reports, election campaigns, online comments, and internet memes, while giving little attention to independent digital satirists such as Dan Bello. More importantly, previous research has rarely integrated the three metafunctions of language, ideational, interpersonal, and textual to explain how linguistic choices jointly construct political accountability. Therefore, this study is important by applying Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics to selected Dan Bello TikTok skits. Through an integrated analysis of transitivity, mood, modality, appraisal, and Theme-Rheme structure, the study explains how language functions as a resource for representing governance challenges, evaluating political actors, and encouraging civic engagement in contemporary Nigerian digital discourse.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design because it seeks to explain how language is used to construct political accountability in selected Dan Bello TikTok skits. A qualitative approach is appropriate for discourse studies because it allows for an in-depth examination of linguistic features within their social and communicative contexts. Rather than measuring language statistically, the study interprets how linguistic choices contribute to meaning and how these meanings reflect issues of governance, power, and public accountability. The data for this study consist of five TikTok skits produced by Dan Bello, a Nigerian digital content creator known for using satire to discuss governance and socio-political issues. The skits were obtained from his verified TikTok account because they are publicly available and represent authentic examples of contemporary digital political discourse.

The selected skits focus on major national concerns, including corruption, poor governance, poverty, education, healthcare, and public service delivery. These themes are central to the study because they directly relate to political accountability in Nigeria. The study employed purposive sampling to select five TikTok skits that best address issues of governance and political accountability. Purposive sampling was considered suitable because it enabled the researcher to select texts that were directly relevant to the objectives of the study rather than choosing materials randomly. The selected TikTok videos were downloaded from Dan Bello's official TikTok page. The spoken content of each skit was

carefully transcribed to produce textual data for analysis. The transcripts were reviewed several times alongside the original videos to ensure accuracy. Where necessary, relevant visual and contextual information was considered to support the interpretation of the linguistic data. The data were analysed using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the three metafunctions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The ideational analysis examined the transitivity system to determine how actions, events, participants, and circumstances are represented. Particular attention was given to the six process types, material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural, and existential and how they construct political accountability in the selected skits.

The interpersonal analysis examined mood, modality, and appraisal resources to explain how the content creator expresses opinions, evaluates political actors, negotiates relationships with viewers, and positions audiences towards governance issues. Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory complemented Halliday's interpersonal metafunction by providing a framework for analysing evaluation and attitude, and the textual analysis focused on Theme-Rheme structure and cohesive devices to explain how information is organised throughout the discourse. This aspect of the analysis examined how thematic choices guide audience interpretation and maintain coherence across the selected skits.

The findings from these three metafunctions were interpreted in relation to the study's objective of explaining how language functions as a resource for constructing political accountability in Nigerian digital satire. The study analysed publicly available TikTok videos produced by Dan Bello. Since the data are already in the public domain, no direct interaction with human participants was involved. The videos were used solely for academic purposes, and all excerpts were properly acknowledged. Care was taken to present the findings objectively and to avoid misrepresenting the content or intended meaning of the selected skits.

Data Presentation and Analysis

1. Ideational Meaning: Transitivity Analysis

The ideational metafunction explains how speakers represent experience through the transitivity system. Analysis of the selected Dan Bello skits indicates that material processes occur most frequently, followed by relational, mental, and verbal processes. This distribution demonstrates

that the discourse primarily represents governance as a series of actions performed by identifiable political actors whose decisions directly influence citizens' socio-economic conditions.

Table 1: Distribution of Process Types

Process Type	Illustration	Discursive Function
Material	"I have made life so expensive."	Assigns agency and political responsibility.
Relational	"Most classrooms are dilapidated."	Represents institutional decay as a persistent condition.
Mental	"They did not know..."	Encodes awareness and political consciousness.
Verbal	"He said..."	Represents political communication and public interaction.

The predominance of material processes indicates that political actors are represented as active agents responsible for governance outcomes. Rather than depicting poverty, unemployment, and educational decline as abstract social problems, the discourse grammatically assigns responsibility to political office holders. This linguistic pattern reinforces the satirical objective of demanding political accountability.

Relational processes attribute enduring characteristics to governance outcomes by portraying poverty, deteriorating infrastructure, and poor public services as persistent social realities. Mental processes, though less frequent, represent the cognitive states of citizens, particularly their awareness of political manipulation and socio-economic inequality. Verbal processes reproduce political exchanges and expose contradictions between political promises and lived realities. These process types construct governance as a human-centred issue in which political actions produce tangible consequences for ordinary citizens.

2. Interpersonal Meaning: Mood and Modality

The interpersonal metafunction concerns the ways language establishes relationships between speakers and listeners while expressing attitudes, evaluations, and degrees of commitment (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In the selected Dan Bello TikTok skits, interpersonal meanings are primarily realised through declarative clauses, rhetorical interrogatives,

modal expressions, and evaluative language. These linguistic resources position audiences to critically assess political leadership and align with the satirist's ideological stance. The analysis indicates that declarative clauses predominate throughout the selected data. Rather than merely presenting factual information, these declaratives perform evaluative and persuasive functions by portraying governance failures as observable realities. Their repeated use projects certainty and authority, thereby strengthening the credibility of the satirical message.

Table 2: Mood Analysis of Selected Clauses

Clause	Mood Type	Interpersonal Function
"Life is so expensive."	Declarative	Presents economic hardship as an established reality.
"Most classrooms are dilapidated."	Declarative	Evaluates the condition of public education.
"Didn't they share food?"	Interrogative	Invites critical reflection rather than requesting information.
"Then they must love you."	Declarative with modality	Employs irony to expose political manipulation.

The rhetorical interrogatives found in the discourse are particularly significant because they do not seek information. Instead, they encourage audiences to question political behaviour and recognise contradictions between political rhetoric and governance outcomes. Through this interactional strategy, viewers become active participants in the construction of meaning rather than passive recipients of political commentary. Modal expressions also contribute significantly to interpersonal meaning. High-value modality, represented by lexical items such as *must*, projects strong evaluative commitment and frequently functions ironically. Rather than expressing objective certainty, modal choices expose the absurdity of political practices and encourage audiences to interpret political actions critically. Consequently, mood and modality work together to transform humorous dialogue into persuasive political discourse.

Interpersonal Meaning: Appraisal Analysis

To provide a more detailed explanation of interpersonal meaning, this study employs Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, which

extends Halliday's interpersonal metafunction by examining how speakers express evaluation, negotiate positions, and amplify meanings. The analysis reveals that judgement and appreciation are the dominant appraisal resources in the selected skits.

Table 3: Appraisal Resources

Linguistic Expression	Appraisal Category	Interpretation
"Expensive"	Appreciation	Negative evaluation of economic conditions.
"Unbearable"	Appreciation	Intensifies the severity of hardship.
"Dilapidated"	Appreciation	Condemns the condition of educational infrastructure.
"They did not know..."	Judgement	Criticises political manipulation and citizens' lack of awareness.
"Must love you."	Judgement	Ironically questions politicians' motives.

The repeated use of negative appreciation demonstrates that Dan Bello's satire evaluates institutions rather than merely describing them. Economic conditions, educational facilities, and public services are consistently represented as unacceptable outcomes of governance. Judgement resources simultaneously evaluate political actors by implying irresponsibility, insensitivity, and manipulation. Graduation further strengthens these evaluations through lexical intensification. Expressions such as *so expensive*, *unbearable*, and *most classrooms* amplify the force of criticism, increasing the emotional and persuasive impact of the discourse. These appraisal patterns demonstrate that humour functions as a vehicle for ideological evaluation rather than simple entertainment.

3. Textual Meaning: Theme-Rheme Organisation

The textual metafunction explains how language organises information into coherent discourse through Theme-Rheme structure (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The analysis demonstrates that Dan Bello consistently foregrounds citizens' lived experiences before evaluating political leadership. This thematic organisation directs audience attention toward governance outcomes rather than political personalities.

Table 4: Theme-Rheme Analysis

Clause	Theme	Rheme	Discursive Function
Most classrooms are dilapidated.	Most classrooms	are dilapidated	Foregrounds educational infrastructure before evaluating its condition.
The northerners are now awakening.	The northerners	are now awakening	Emphasises citizens' growing political awareness.
They did not know that the food was from their money.	They	did not know that the food was from their money	Highlights citizens' lack of awareness before exposing political manipulation.

The thematic choices observed across the corpus reveal a consistent communicative strategy. Instead of foregrounding politicians, Dan Bello frequently places citizens, schools, poverty, or public resources in thematic position. This organisation encourages audiences to evaluate political leadership through its consequences for ordinary people rather than through official political narratives. The progression of themes across the selected skits also demonstrates a movement from social problems to political responsibility and ultimately to citizens' awareness. This progression reflects the broader communicative purpose of the satire: to stimulate political consciousness while encouraging public accountability.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that Dan Bello's digital satire functions as a discourse of political accountability realised through the interaction of Halliday's three metafunctions. At the ideational level, material and relational processes assign responsibility to political actors and represent governance failures as socially significant experiences. Interpersonally, mood structures, modality, and appraisal resources position audiences to evaluate political leadership critically while aligning with the satirist's ideological perspective. Textually, thematic organisation foregrounds citizens' experiences and structures political criticism in a coherent and persuasive manner.

The findings reveal that Dan Bello employs a wide range of linguistic resources to transform satire into a meaningful form of political communication. At the ideational level, the predominance of material processes assigns responsibility for governance failures to identifiable political actors, while relational processes describe the persistent social conditions resulting from poor governance. Mental and verbal processes further reveal citizens' perceptions and expose the gap between political promises and lived realities.

The interpersonal analysis demonstrates that declarative clauses, rhetorical questions, modality, and appraisal resources are carefully employed to evaluate political leaders, express dissatisfaction with governance, and encourage viewers to reflect on issues of accountability. These linguistic choices establish a strong relationship between the content creator and the audience by presenting political criticism as a shared social concern rather than an individual opinion.

The textual analysis also shows that thematic organisation and cohesive devices contribute significantly to the effectiveness of the satirical messages. By consistently foregrounding themes such as government, citizens, education, healthcare, and public institutions, the skits maintain coherence while directing audience attention to issues of national importance. These textual choices strengthen the persuasive force of the discourse and reinforce its social message.

The study confirms Halliday's view, that language functions as a social semiotic resource, through which speakers represent experience, negotiate interpersonal relationships, and organise meaning. The analysis demonstrates that Dan Bello's TikTok skits are not merely humorous performances but carefully constructed linguistic texts that expose governance challenges, question political authority, and promote public accountability. Through satire, the content creator encourages citizens to engage critically with political issues and participate more actively in democratic processes.

These findings extend previous studies that have primarily interpreted Dan Bello's satire through stylistic or pragmatic frameworks. By adopting Systemic Functional Linguistics, this study demonstrates that the persuasive power of digital satire lies not simply in humour or irony but in the systematic organisation of linguistic meaning. Language functions simultaneously to represent political realities, negotiate evaluation, and organise discourse in ways that promote civic engagement and democratic accountability.

The study therefore supports Halliday's (1978) conception of language as a social semiotic resource. Within the context of Nigerian digital media, satire emerges as an important form of civic discourse that challenges dominant political narratives, exposes institutional failures, and encourages citizens to participate more actively in democratic processes.

Conclusion

This study examined how selected Dan Bello TikTok skits construct political accountability through the analytical framework of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Drawing on the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions, the study analysed how language is used to represent governance issues, evaluate political actors, and organise political messages in contemporary Nigerian digital discourse.

This study contributes to existing scholarship by extending the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics to Nigerian digital political satire, an area that has received limited scholarly attention. While previous studies have largely examined political satire from stylistic, pragmatic, critical discourse, or multimodal perspectives, this study demonstrates that SFL provides a comprehensive framework for explaining how experiential, interpersonal, and textual meanings work together to construct political accountability in digital media. In doing so, it broadens the scope of functional linguistic research and contributes to the growing body of literature on digital political discourse in Nigeria.

Even though the study provides valuable insights into the linguistic construction of political accountability, it is limited to five purposively selected TikTok skits produced by a single content creator. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalised to all forms of Nigerian digital political communication. Future studies may examine a larger corpus of digital satirical content across different social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). Comparative studies involving multiple Nigerian content creators or cross-cultural analyses of African digital political satire would also enrich understanding of how language functions in emerging forms of political engagement.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that digital satire has become an important medium for political participation in Nigeria. By combining humour with strategic linguistic choices, Dan Bello's TikTok skits challenge poor governance, amplify citizens' concerns, and encourage

public accountability. The study therefore underscores the continuing relevance of Systemic Functional Linguistics as a robust analytical framework for investigating contemporary digital discourse and its role in promoting democratic engagement and social change.

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