

## **A LEXICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF ELLA FORTE'S SPOKEN WORD IN THE 2023 NIGERIA'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

This work, a lexico-semantic analysis of Ella Forte's spoken word in the 2023 Nigeria's Presidential Election, examined the lexical and semantic elements of Forte's performance, focusing on how her choices of words, literary devices, and semantic features contribute to the overall meaning and impact of her message. Scholars have devoted efforts to the study of words and their deployment in several contexts to achieve certain aims. In continuation with the existing scholarship, this research explored the manner of words deployment as well as the meaning(s) generated from such usage in the data under study. Data for this study comprised of both media and transcribed content of Ella Forte's spoken word in the 2023 Nigeria's Presidential Election. Lexico-semantic, with focused on Alan Cruse's (2000) Approach, which stipulates that words play a significant role in the interpretation of meaning of utterances and provide credence for the nuances and refinement that accompany language use, served as the theoretical framework for this study. The paper discovered that through the artist's conceptual framework, the deployment of context-informed lexical choices and lexico-semantic features, like idiomatic expressions, allusions, personification, oxymoron, metaphors, alliteration and assonance, code mixing and switching, the artist passed her message with both

emotional connection and a thought provoking tempo. The paper concluded that these lexical choices and semantic features together form a formula which offers her the line of least resistance in communicating specifically with the Nigerian audience on such a peculiar socio-political issue, yet also addressing the societal concerns of the people.

**Keywords:** Ella Forte, Spoken Word, Lexico-Semantic, Media and Transcribed Content

## Introduction

Movements are most closely linked to critical communities and they are best channel for the translation of critical values into topics of public discourse (Rochon 1998 p.41). Simon Teune (2005, p.3) added that "societal movements find ways to communicate the visions of critical communities to a broad public." Referring to protest via the internet, Rolfe (2005, pp.70-72) introduces the idea of "innovative hothouses" - small and specialized pioneering communities which aim at exploiting opportunities of that medium. These hothouses provide means such as mail-booming or strike programmes and spread them via the internet. Simon Teune, on describing artists as critical communities, named artists as small groups or networks that frame the perception of a problem in a new way or principally define specific phenomena as a problem. These groups are labeled Critical Communities.

On art and protest, Chaffe (1993), Steinberg (2004), Wickie (1992), in Simon Teune (2005), noted that art has particularly attracted attention of movements scholars in many cases where the use of arguments is restricted, for instance because of limits to freedom of speech. Simon Teune emphasized historically how art can affect and address socio-political issues.

The Swedish province for instance staged a confrontation of two groups in the city of Stockholm in 1966. One was dressed in red and one in blue; both carried horrifying paper-maché bombs. Finally, both bombs exploded and all actors collapsed. The purpose of this performance was to show or illustrate the consequences of the arms race and start a debate with the passer-by on the street.

This implies that art is a medium to convince others not by words but by straightforward images and emotions...art appears at the surface of protest activities. Art can be considered as a conceptual basis for the re-orientation of collective action. Art influences political protest - it can depict protest or can structure it.

Spoken word performance amongst other forms of art, have been deployed as one of the strategies of protest against non-democratic political climate; bad governance and corrupt legal systems. Sparks and Gruchowski (2002), view spoken word poetry as a language for youth to define themselves and serve as testimonies of their own realities and experiences they live through. It allows youth to not only be critical in shaping their own identities but by manipulating language and making it customizable to encourage self-expression.

Edem (2022) views spoken word artists, through their unique and evocative use of language, often reflect the pulse of the society, providing commentary on critical issues and challenging existing power structures. In political discourses as captured in Edem (2020), language serve as an essential tool for conveying ideologies, influencing opinions, and mobilizing societal action. In a politically pumped energy like the 2023 Nigeria's Presidential Election, the use of language, particularly through artistic expressions such as spoken word poetry can be a tool for political expression.

Language is the thing with which we can best imagine, create, aspire, desire, feel and express our soul, enlarge our mental horizon and fulfill all that man is capable of (Essien 1983, p.11). According to Edem (2023a), language provides the individual with a tool for the exploration and analysis of his conceptual ideas and this is what distinguishes and gives humans a unique position in the world. Edem (2005) maintains that

one of the most important roles of human language is its role as a means of communication or interaction between members of the society. The source further notes that language helps man to establish social relations and other forms of network (Edem 2022; Oyeleye 2005).

Communication through an effective use of language is a tool that a good human beings are considered higher animals due to their ability to communicate effectively through the use of language (Adedimeji, 2005). In an attempt to communicate to a group of people, individuals make recourse to a wide range of vocabulary items. On this note, Malgwi (2009) posits that anyone who uses a language knows the importance of vocabulary for effective communication. The idea of choice of words presupposes the inevitability of selection (Malgwi, 2009, p. 84). Good choices of words and the meanings the lexical items connote are key aspect to spoken art. Every spoken word artists attempt to purposively blend stylistic effects and to expose the ills in their environment (Osakwe, 2005; Enang and Edem 2022 and Edem 2016b).

Wales (2001) in Urujzian and Etuk (2018) states that a language user is free to select features from available resources of language at his/her disposal and the choice is partly conditioned by the demands of genre, form or theme (or discourse). On that note we see how important it is for spoken word artists to make lexical choices with great care in order to achieve the delicate goal of conveying the intended meaning in a given context in the best creative way. In fact, an artistic effort must fuse words, meaning and imaginativeness in language use (Edet and Edem, 2024).

According to Beaugrande (1997, p.21), “the engine of language is to generate or convey meaning”. Lexical semantics is very critical to language or textual analysis in the sense that it encapsulates various shades of meaning which include denotation and connotation, that is, emotive, social, figurative or transferred and contextual meanings, among others. However, it is imperative to underline the fact that lexical choices become meaningful only in concrete or pragmatic situations or contexts. According to Malinowski (1926) in Urujzian and Etuk (2018), the text is extremely important but without the context, it remains lifeless. Alabi (2008, p.254) noted that:

...textual selection is largely constrained by context. Context in this regard is both a theoretical and socio-physical or non-physical or circumstances surrounding a discourse. The choices a language user makes become meaningful and distinctive only when they are used under ‘unique’ and ‘appropriate’ situations.

This study aims to examine the lexical and semantic elements of Forte’s performance, focusing on how her choice of words, literary devices, and semantic features contribute to the overall meaning and impact of her message. It further seeks to examine the relationship that exists between lexical items in the text (i.e spoken word), and identify lexico-semantic features created by the artist through her conceptual framework.

### **Theoretical Framework: Lexico-semantics**

Lexico-semantics is another term for lexical semantics. Lexical semantics examines how the meaning of the lexical unit creates an acceptable relationship with the structure of the language or syntax, a process known as syntax-semantic interface. Lexico-semantic level is the level at which a stylistician appraises the authors deployment of words and their meaning (Ogunsiji, 2013 and Edem 2023b). According to Cruse (2000, p.90) in Urujzian and Etuk (2018), "lexical semantics is by and large the study of the meanings of content words, and is oriented principally to the contribution that open-set items make to these". The units of analysis in lexical semantics are words but also sub-words or subunits such as affixes and even compound words and phrases. Lexical units make up the catalogue of words in a language, the lexicon (Ajulo, 1994 and Edem 2016b).

According to Alujo (1994) in Urujzian and Etuk (2018), Many linguists have started to develop interest in lexical studies in English perhaps as a result of the realisation that there is a need for a separate level of linguistic analysis to cater for certain linguistic patterns and regularities which the grammatical level alone

cannot take care of. Malmkjaer (2002) sees the study of lexis as the study of vocabulary of a language in all its aspects. This paper is a deviation from the common core of lexical semantics but is in line with the observation below:

The nature of lexico-semantics has changed markedly for twenty to thirty years since classic texts like Lyons (1977) and Cruse (1986) were published. Such texts were written at the same time when structuralist, lexical semantics essentially carried on separately from major (Generative) theories of Grammar. During and since the 1980's however theories of Grammar have become much more lexically driven necessitating much deeper attention to issues of lexical meanings (Malmkjaer, 2002, p.339).

Whereas some lexical semantic works can still present lexical semantics in the way it was about 30 years ago, basically concern with polysemy, homonymy, and the 'nym' relations (synonyms, antonyms etcetera); this study takes a broader definition of the field (Edem 2023c). According to Toolans (1998) in Urujzian and Etuk (2018), language could easily lend itself to being a manipulative tool that could be used to condition peoples' thought (see Udofot and Edem 2018 for details). Language use include creating new words to express our values, control others, decry the imperfection in our society and the decay in the living condition of citizens as in Ella Forte's spoken word poetry. This work is in line with the current trend of approaching lexical semantics from other angles (artistic field).

This level of analysis and reviews the stylistic significance of choice of words and intended meanings, connotative and denotative meanings, and the nature or types of words. There are different types and forms of words: simple, difficult, concrete, abstract, archaic, modern, specific or general. The manners of word formation (morphology): compound words, blends, acronyms, coinages, clippings etcetera all communicate meaning. This study establishes words as the basis of lexico-semantic analyses. On this backdrop this paper analysis the data to examine the lexical and semantic elements of Forte's performance, focusing on how her choice of words, literary devices, and semantic features contribute to the overall meaning and impact of her message.

### **About Ella Forte**

Ella Forte, whose real name is Emmanuella Alile, is a talented Nigerian spoken word artist. She began her journey with poetry at a young age, which eventually evolved into spoken word performances. She gained significant recognition after winning the 5th season of Dare2Dream, a platform that showcases young talents. Currently based in Lagos, Ella continues to captivate audiences with her compelling performances. Her work is known for its powerful and expressive nature, often addressing social issues and personal experiences or mundane issues.

On commenting on spoken word poetry as a tool to effect change, she noted that:

"No matter how unflattering or raw the truth in poetry is, sometimes it just has to be served that way because that's when people would feel it, feel something enough to cause and effect change. When people in power do not listen to the voices of the people or the one who were elected to be their voices don't necessarily speak for the people, the people will start to speak for themselves." - BBCNEWSAFRICA

Ella Forte's spoken word piece performed in 2023, in the climax of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria addresses socio-political issues. It comments on the '*survivalism*' of being a Nigerian, the impacts of bad governance in Nigeria and how it reduces the quality of life of the people.

This piece, calls out the deaths and insecurities that have plagued the country from inception to the freshest in the people's memory very importantly, at such a time like the 2023 presidential election. The artist positively speaks on her confidence and hope in Peter Obi to be the 'biblical peter' that will chop off the ears of allege corrupt politicians at the helm of national affairs; she is urging her audience to embrace this political ideology - The national pie.

### Pragmatic Analysis

This section is concerned with the context of the performance, the artist's intention and audience interpretation.

**Context:** The context of this piece is contemporary Nigeria, specifically, during the peak of the 2023 presidential election and campaigns in Nigeria. The piece highlights the socio-political realities of the country and the economic impact it has on the livelihood of most Nigerians; characterized by hardship, suffering, insecurity and poor living condition as a resultant effect of bad governance. The 2023 presidential election serves as the socio-political context to the appreciation of this piece. However, given that it was performed at such a poetic festival, the piece is also that of artistic expression as much as it is a political commentary.

**Artist intention:** The artist aims to tell the experiences of Nigerians, painting pictures of what such experience is like, provoking emotional responses as it were just like (Edem 2022, 2023a and 2024; Utin 2024, Utin 2024b). This work serves as a critique of the socio-political and economic issues in Nigeria, such as hardship, low livelihood, unemployment and insecurities etc. By her artistic and poetic choice of words, decked with figurative devices, Ella Forte seeks to stir a holy anger in her audience; calling for solidarity 'electoral protest' against bad governance which is the voting out of 'grandpas' in the 2023 presidential election. Her choice of words, literary devices and intonation is intended to evoke strong emotional responses from her audience - causing them to reflect deeply on the pains and suffering they have been through on their collective Nigerian experience.

**Audience interpretation:** While the interpretation and understanding of the piece by the audience can vary, there are some common responses that are expected to be consistent with them. Nigerians could find the piece practically relatable to their daily experiences in Nigeria. Finding their own stories and struggles of survival captured in between lines in Ella Forte's performance, thereby connecting with their emotions.

The spoken word art may 'jerk' the audience to the awareness of the good that could be from the bad that has stayed as a norm. This is to say that, Nigerians could be challenged to reflect on the fact that Nigeria can be better and thus, the protest by suffrage. Which is to say that, this piece could inspire the audience to take action, whether through political involvement or initiate platforms possible to advocate for change.

### Lexical Field

**Lexical choices:** Lexical choices is the selection of words and phrases in a given context, considering their meanings and relationships within the language. It is concerned with the meanings of words and how they relate to each other.

Lexical items like 'water,' 'oceans,' 'deep,' 'struggling,' are used to convey the overwhelming pressure of Nigerians face in their daily livelihood. The artist uses words like 'Pressure,' 'depression,' 'worse,' to tell the impact the economic crash on Nigerians. Economic crash because she mentioned "the naira is getting lesser." Also, 'talent,' 'name,' 'personality,' are used to itemize what a person living in a country should be judged by as opposed to the Nigerian scenario.

- 2 'Promises,' speaks of campaign manifestos.
- 2 'Kryptonite,' speaks of an Achilles heel such that makes vulnerable. It stands for that one thing that makes one vulnerable.
- 'Obidient,' refers in context to the tagged of the campaign support group for Peter Obi during the 2023 presidential election. It was a coinage from his name (as in 'Obi' and 'dients') (meaning believers of Obi).

Adjectives like "patriotic green" and "red negativity" are observed in the piece. It should be noted that the artist uses both nouns and adjectives simultaneously to describe ideas, illustrate her messages in her performance. For instance:

- "Superman's flight" describes shoulders like a cape in contrast to "one made of kryptonite."

It is observed that, if nouns do not directly serve as adjectives, they go with adjectives. Which is to say that her style is not to name but to describe.

- "Geriatric Zobo," is the match of two word. Geriatric is a branch of medicine that focuses on health promotion and the prevention and treatment of disease and disability in later life. Adding it as an adjective to 'zobo' (an hibiscus tea) a nutritious drink; is the artist style of describing the foolish ideology hold by Nigerian (as electorate).

Ella Forte is taunting while rebuking the mindset that they can immune themselves from the uglies that will come later on as effect of their bad choice on their preferred presidential candidate, who will in turn sit as President.

- "Presidential fling," describes a superficial involvement in presidential politics, implying that such involvement is not serious nor long lasting. Also, it also implies a casual or nonchalant approach to presidential duties by a sitting president.

Ella Forte is saying that it is better we hope to have a sinner as president than a 'president fling.'

Pronouns like 'them,' 'they,' are used to refer to the government of the day in the performance. Demonstrative pronouns like 'this,' and 'that,' are used to talk about specific time or state a time for action.

### Themes

Ella Forte's spoken word poetry consists of a number of themes, each having a distinctive set of lexical items. Some of the lexical items relating to major themes discussed in the spoken art piece are shown below:

| Themes                  | Lexical items                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Survival                | "Fish drowning" "struggling to breathe" "To stand tall even though fear stands up on your shoulder..."<br>" ...In this nation, what doesn't kill you hibernate years, mutates and tries again" |
| Bad governance          | Not jobs nor money, nor good jobs, not good roads, proper education, or sanity..."                                                                                                             |
| Death & insecurity      | "fighting for the heroes we have lost, we have not forgotten, we have not move on"<br>"Where bullets finds final rest in the bodies of citizens"                                               |
| Politics and corruption | "To their false promise of protection for our lives and properties"<br>"Since national cake no reach our hands"                                                                                |

From the above, we can observe that the lexical items help to point to the themes and subject matter which the artist seeks to establish with the spoken word piece and also made significant contributions to the semantic quality of Ella Forte's Spoken Word as a whole.

### Semantic Field

**Figures of speech:** These are literary modes of expression whereby words are consciously used in a special way either in speech or in writing. They are used in extraordinary senses to lay emphasis on a statement and how to achieve special meanings, or its effects on its audience (Edem, 2023b, 2024; Enang & Utin 2021, Utin

2023). Ella Forte's spoken word piece brings some perspectives on this subject with some examples shown below:

### A. Idiomatic Expressions

Idiomatic expressions are expressions whose meaning is not decipherable through knowledge of the individual meanings of the constituent words, but lies subtly beyond the words and within depth of the expression. It has a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own. Some of the examples of idioms observed in the piece are shown below:

| Idiomatic expressions             | Semantic meaning                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Catch cruise ( <i>slang</i> )     | Carefree and attitude where the goal is simply to enjoy oneself, regardless of the outcome.                                                                             |
| Wave of depression                | A sudden and intense onset of depressive feelings or episodes, much like how a wave in the ocean can unexpectedly rise and overwhelm.                                   |
| Patriotic green                   | Implies a pride in Nigeria's land and national identity, such that is accompanied with a sense of national loyalty and patriotism.                                      |
| Red negativity                    | Often use to describe an atmosphere that is charged with negative emotions like anger, rage and frustration                                                             |
| Break the ribs off the pressure   | Pushing back against a stressful situation into a glimpse of joy and freedom                                                                                            |
| At the helm                       | Being in position of leadership, control or command. To be responsible for making decisions and management.                                                             |
| National cake                     | The collective wealth of a nation, meant to be shared among its citizens. In context, it refers to the unequal distribution of resources fuel by greed and nepotism etc |
| National pie                      | A share of a country's wealth or resources. Often used in discussions about economic policies, wealth distribution, and social equity.                                  |
| Laid in with the truth            | Being confronted or presented directly and firmly with an undeniable fact or reality.                                                                                   |
| Running this land into the ground | To ruin, or degrade a place, organisation, or system through mismanagement, neglect and poor decision making.                                                           |

Those are some of the ways the artist uses Idiomatic expressions to paint a deeper picture of his message in the mind of her audience, while staying creative and entertaining.

### B. Allusions

Allusion is a figure of speech, in which an object or circumstance from an unrelated context is referred to covertly or indirectly. It is left to the audience to make a direct connection. Where the connection is directly and explicitly stated (as opposed to indirectly implied) by the author, it is instead usually termed a reference. In the arts, a literary allusion puts the alluded text in a new context under which it assumes new meanings and denotations. An allusion is a passing or casually short statement indicating broader meaning. It is an incidental mention of something, either directly or by implication (Wikipedia).

Ella Forte's spoken word piece uses allusions to create a broader meaning to subject matters. Some examples of allusions observed are:

| Allusions                                                                                            | Alluding to                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Superman's flight. (Literary allusion)                                                               | The comic character, Superman, who possesses the ability to fly. Superman flight suggest exceptional skill and extraordinary strength to overcome obstacles and rise above challenges seemingly effortlessly. |
| A land of milk and honey. (Biblical allusion)                                                        | Referring to the promised land in scriptures. It conveys the idea of a place of abundance, wealth and ideal living conditions.                                                                                |
| Bullets finds rest in the bodies of citizens now screaming in forever silence. (Historical allusion) | In context of Nigeria's history, it could refer recently to the deaths during the ENDSARS protest and Bolo Haram massacres.                                                                                   |
| Agbado, beans, and dodo. (Political allusion)                                                        | Tinubu's promise of food supply during his campaign promises and manifestoes.                                                                                                                                 |
| Biblical Peter (Biblical allusion)                                                                   | Referring to the disciple of Jesus, named Peter. It draws reference on Peter zeal to save Jesus from the soldiers and they mandate Christ gave him to feed the flock, referring the leadership of the church. |
| Chopping off ears. (Biblical allusion)                                                               | Peter confronting the soldiers that came to arrest Jesus, to cutting someone ear. The artist is apparently using this allusion to paint what Peter Obi will do to corrupt leaders.                            |
| To hope against hope. (Biblical allusion)                                                            | Abraham total faith in God to give him a child despite obvious impossibility biologically (Romans 4:18). The hope of Nigerians for a better nation should be as that of Abraham.                              |
| We have not forgotten, have not move on. (Historical allusion)                                       | The pain and anguish that character the massacre of Nigerian youths at the ENDSARS protest. The artist is referring to this event.                                                                            |
| Fighting for the heroes we lost. (Historical allusion)                                               | The artist is seeing the 'electoral protest' as a continuous fight for a better Nigeria, which many Nigerian youths lost their lives at the ENDSARS protest. The artist is referring to people as heroes.     |

### C. Personification

Personification is used to give human attributes to non-human or non-living entities. Perrine (1969, p. 67) defines personification as 'giving the quality of a human being to an animal, an object or an idea, as where inanimate and non-human objects, ideas or concepts are endowed with human feelings, actions, etc. Some of the examples in the piece are:

1. "Fear stands up"
2. "Drive away the waves"

### D. Oxymoron

According to Wikipedia, oxymoron is a figure of speech that juxtaposes concepts with opposite meanings within a word or in a phrase that is a self-contradiction. As a rhetorical device, an oxymoron illustrates a point to communicate and reveal a paradox. A general meaning of "contradiction in terms." (The Oxford English Dictionary. 1902 edition).

In the piece, oxymoron is observed to be one of the ways the artist blends her creativity with the message. Here are some instances:

- "Screaming in forever silence"

In this case, 'Screaming' and 'silence,' are opposite, and their combination emphasizes the intensity of the silence, suggesting a powerful, almost deafening quietness.

- "To hope against hope"

'Hoping' is positive and so it's contradictory to "hoping against hope."

Here the artist uses this to emphasize the doggedness and great faith Nigerians give in to believing in a better Nigeria. Ella Forte is suggesting the psychological make up one must assume to survive being a Nigerian. The artist is insinuating that hope for the Nigerian is not optimism in a possible future, but a psychological conditioning he must assume in order to have the mental strength to cope with the ills of being a Nigerian.

- "Fish drowning in water"

Fish is an aquatic animal and its habitat is the ocean. Drowning is a contradiction on its nature.

#### **E. Alliteration and Assonance:**

Alliteration is the repetition of the initial consonant sounds in multiple words that are close together. This is often used to create rhythm, mood, or emphasis in poetry. Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds within words that are close to each other, regardless of the consonant sound that follows.

Below are some of them observed in the piece:

1. ...Your personality, but your nationality...red negativity.
2. It is hope against hope, while hoping for more hope just to cope.
3. Hope just to cope - (Assonance)

#### **F. Metaphor**

A metaphor directly compares two unlike things by stating that one is the other, without using 'like' or 'as.' An instance of metaphor is the lexical item 'Fish' in the phrase, "To be Nigerian is to be Fish." The artist comparing being a Nigerian to being a fish, also implying some inherent qualities and similar aquatic experiences shared between the two. See excerpt below:

"To be a Nigerian is to be Fish.

Fish drowning in water, ocean, deep

Struggling to breathe even though equipped with gills and fins"

Another example of metaphor observed in the piece is below:

"...the pressure is getting worse

And worse almost as the naira is getting lesser and lesser"

"Pressure/naira" is used to connect the suffering and economic fallout of Nigerians as a reflection of the state of the Naira. "Worse/Lesser" adds to compliment the artist's belief that the better the naira in value, the better the lives of the citizens and vice versa.

The following phrase excerpts below are some of the lexical units the artist uses to metaphorically depict what it means to be Nigerian:

- "...is to hope against hope"
- "...is to be constantly be devalued"

The lexical item 'devalued,' suggests the condescending state being a Nigerian conditions a person.

- "Judged not by your name, talent, or your personality, but your nationality..."

In what follows, the artist added that a Nigerian is not regarded by his/her individuality but on merely being a Nigerian.

- "Lift the middle finger to posterity"

This is also colloquialism. However, it is a metaphor that symbolise disregard against the consequence following one's action in the future. The artist is urging, or say, employing the audience to be defiant to the false promises of politicians, and instead stand hopefully with Peter Obi.

- "Chopping off ears"

This symbolise extreme punishment or harsh consequences. In context, the artist believes that Peter Obi like the Biblical Peter will punish the corrupt government officials at the helm of affairs once he is in power.

- "Laid in with truth"

This metaphor suggest that the truth is embedded or incorporated into something and this context, the national pie.

### **Code Mixing and Code Switching:**

Ella Forte switches and mixes codes in her performance. In a few instances, she mixes Yoruba, and English words or switches from English to Pidgin in order to identify with the audience (the Nigerians), basically on a language style they could best relate with as it concerns the idea and picture he seeks to create in their mind. The excerpts below from the spoken word piece portrays this:

"Them no actually send, so they do what they will, while we do what I can must."

As shown above, code switching is how the artist identify with the Nigerian audience she is performing to, the best. "Them no actually send" conveys a deeper sense of meaning with the emotion of abandonment that evokes, better than the standard version, "they do not actually care." Another instance is:

"And since national cake no reach our hands,  
United we have baked national pie."

The Nigerian pidgin is largely use in most daily conversations of the people. The artist makes use of them to drive home issues in a Nigerian way to a Nigerian audience. Also, specific lexemes like 'zobo,' 'agbado,' 'dodo,' are used directly from Yoruba instead of needless complex English transliterations that might come out not so accurately, complicating the performance.

### **Conclusion**

This work examined lexical items and semantic devices that makes up for meaning in "Ella Forte's Spoken Word in 2023 Nigeria's Presidential Election" taking note of how the artist through her conceptual/mental framework uses some lexical and semantic features to communicate and achieve desired meaning in a context. The artist achieved this through the use of suitable lexical choices, which convey and create emotional connection with the audience, allowing her communicate her message with the least mental resistance among her audience.

We can also conclude that the author's lexical wealth and her proper usage facilitate meaning sharing, understanding and the artistic quality of the performance, which gives the audience the thought flow to deduce and relate with the core themes of survival, bad governance, death and insecurity as well as issues of politics and corruption which were traced to incompetent leaders in Nigeria. This paper however, re-ignites the quest for political sensitization of the populace against bad governance and the twin evils in the country.

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