

Functions of Hausa Proverbs in Political Discourse²

Abstract

Karìn màgàná is a form of traditional cultural expression which has the status of a genre in Hausa oral literature. It is equivalent to a *proverb*. This paper presents examples of Hausa proverb usage in political discourse. The data were extracted from press articles published during the period of the Nigerian general election (February 2019). The research focuses on analysing discursive features of *karìn màgàná* and aspects of its contextual understanding and translation. In contemporary Hausa discourses proverbs perform textual and pragmatic functions. Each function in which a proverb is used changes its interpretation (representational meaning).

Keywords: Hausa Proverbs, Cultural Expressions, Political Discourse, Written Media, Hausa Press.

Introduction

Hausa proverbs (*karìn màgàná*, pl. *karìn màgàngànū*³) are cultural expressions in the form of short linguistic devices that have their origin in oral tradition. They are highly valued in Hausa culture and play an important role in the society due to their communicative and didactic properties.⁴ *Karìn màgàná*

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 - 3 I use Standard Hausa Latin script orthography (*bōkō*) when quoting the samples of articles extracted from newspapers. When referring to a particular term, word or proverb I use scientific notation (marking length of vowels, tones and two “r” variants). From now on I use terms *karìn màgàná* and (Hausa) proverb interchangeably.
 - 4 Sergio Baldi, ‘Proverbs as an Educational Factor in Hausa Society,’ in *Selected Proceedings of the Symposium on West African Languages*, Gian Claudio Batic and Sergio Baldi (eds), Napoli: Università Degli Studi Di Napoli “L’Orientale” Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo, 2015, pp. 249–250; Sergio Baldi, ‘Body Parts in Hausa Proverbs,’ *Studies of the Department of African Languages and Cultures*, No. 46, 2012, pp. 7–8; Tae-Sang Jang, ‘A Poetic Structure in Hausa Proverbs,’ *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1999, pp. 83–115.

is an open collection of durable set sayings which cover various sub-types of folk texts with fixed meanings. *Karìn màgànà* is considered the equivalent of the English term *proverb* and its counterparts in other languages⁵.

“What we generally call proverbs are recurrent, pithy, often formulaic and/or figurative, fairly stable and generally recognisable units used to form a complete utterance, make a complete conversational contribution and/or to perform a speech act in a speech event.”⁶

A quite enigmatic, and thus semantically broad expression, *karìn màgànà* literary meaning of ‘folded speech,’ in contrast to the notion of a *proverb*, covers several types of sayings known to the Western paremiographic and folkloristic tradition, differences between which are only nuances in definition such as, i.a. maxims, aphorisms, wellerisms. For balance, Hausa tradition is rich in short oral forms specific to the Hausa culture and not having direct functional equivalents in European languages, i.a. *kirārì*, *tākē*, *habaicī*, *zàmbō*.⁷ Despite the aforementioned regional differences in dicta classification, *karìn màgànà* is a *proverb* in the universal sense of this notion, which is foregrounded in paremiological studies. It has the same features⁸ while their stylistic and pragmatic aspects predominantly overlap as well.⁹

1. *Karìn Màgànà* as a Genre

From the point of view of discourse research, all *karìn màgànà* combined can be interpreted as a macro-speech act (global speech act), i.e. the general structure of communicative interaction realised by uttering a sequence of various micro-speech acts.¹⁰ On the formal level, *karìn màgànà* – as with

5 See definitions of Hausa *karìn màgànà* (Graham Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture in Hausa*, London: Edinburgh University Press, 1996, pp. 70–71; Stanisław Piłaszewicz, *Historia literatur afrykańskich w językach rodzimych. Literatura hausa* [The History of African Literatures in Indigenous Languages. Hausa Literature], Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1983, p. 13.) and culture-neutral but European-coined literary term *proverb* (Neal R. Norrick, ‘Subject Area, Terminology, Proverb Definitions, Proverb Features,’ *Introduction to Paremiology: A Comprehensive Guide to Proverb Studies*, H. Hrisztova-Gotthardt and M. A. Varga (eds), Warsaw and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015, pp. 6–27.; Paweł Zakrzewski, ‘Definicja przysłowia w wybranych opracowaniach francuskich, niemieckich i polskich oraz próba konfrontatywnej analizy problemu’ [Definition of proverb in selected French, German and Polish papers and an attempt of contrastive analysis of the issue], *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Linguistica*, No. 42, 2002, pp. 3–18.

6 Norrick, ‘Subject Area, Terminology...’, p. 14.

7 Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture...*, p. 70.

8 Norrick, ‘Subject Area, Terminology...’, pp. 6–27.

9 Vida Jesenšek, ‘Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects of Proverbs,’ in *Introduction to Paremiology: A Comprehensive Guide to Proverb Studies*, Hrisztova-Gotthardt, Varga (eds)..., pp. 137–161.

10 Teun Adrianus van Dijk, *Text and Context; Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse*, London – New York: Longman, 1992 [1977], pp. 232–233.

proverbs in other languages – is a textual unit, a minimal text complete in itself (a text that can form a complete utterance on its own)¹¹ often incorporated into a longer text as a ready-made set phrase, a quotation.¹² Proverbs in many aspects resemble a literary (poetic) mini-text that carries context-independent meaning.¹³ *Karìn m̀aganã* has an artistic and poetic dimension which is realised by the means of rhythm, rhyme, words play,¹⁴ e.g.

- (1) *Dũtsẽ cikin ruwã bâ ruwa-nsà dà rãnã*¹⁵
stone.M in water PTCL.NEG issue-3SG.M.POSS PTCL sun

lit. '[The heat of] the sun is not an issue for a stone in the water'
'The one whose situation is good does not care about anyone else'

and alliteration, e.g.

- (2) *Bakì-n bũnũ ɓātà bàibayã*
black-GEN thatch spoil thatched_cover

lit. 'Old thatch destroys the roof'
'A black sheep can destroy the family.'¹⁶

Usually a proverb has the form of a single sentence or an equivalent syntactic formation with an internally balanced bipartite structure (elements of which are sometimes labelled as "topic" and "comment"),¹⁷ e.g.

- (3) *Kõmẽ nĩsa-n dãjĩ | dà gārĩ gãba-nsà*
any distance-GEN bush.M | there_is city in_front_of-3SG.M.POSS

lit. 'No matter how extensive the forest | there is a town at the end of it.'¹⁸

11 Norrick, 'Subject Area, Terminology...', pp. 7–8.

12 Anna Konstantinova, 'Proverbs in Mass Media,' in *Introduction to Paremiology: A Comprehensive Guide to Proverb Studies*, Hrisztova-Gotthardt, Varga (eds)..., p. 278.

13 Grzegorz Szpila, 'Przysłowie – semantyka tekstu jednozdaniowego' [The proverb – semantics of a single-sentence text], *Język polski*, Vol. 79, No. 5, 1999, p. 371.

14 Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture*..., pp. 71–72; Anthony Hamilton Millard Kirk-Greene, *Hausa ba dabo ba ne* [Hausa is not Black Magic], Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. xi–xiii; Piłaszewicz, *Historia literatur*..., pp. 34–36.

15 Each underlined token of *ruwã* has a different denotation. First carries a meaning of 'water,' the second one 'issue.'

16 Cf. Paul Newman, *A Hausa-English Dictionary*, Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 2007, p. 24.

17 Alan Dundes, 'On the Structure of the Proverb,' *Proverbium*, No. 25, 1975, pp. 963–965; Katarzyna Kłosińska, *Słownik przysłów. Przysłownik* [Dictionary of Proverbs. Proverbary], Poznań: Publicat, 2011, pp. 10–11; Tae-Sang Jang, 'Aspects of Poetic Balance and Cohesion in Hausa Proverbs,' *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2002, pp. 215–236; Jang, 'A Poetic Structure...', pp. 83–115.

18 Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture*..., p. 72.

Some proverbs are elliptic (in most of the cases *nē/cē* copula is omitted), e.g.

- (4) *Kwàdāyī mabūdi-n wàhalà* [*nē*]¹⁹
 greed.M key -GEN trouble [COP.M]

‘Greed [is] a key to trouble’.

Karìn màganà can also have form of a complex sentence, e.g.

- (5) *Kōwā ya yi sàmmakō*
yà hūtà dà- rānā
 everybody.M 3SG.M.CPL.REL do to_start_early_in_the_morning
 3SG.M.SBJV relax during_sunny_time

‘He who starts [work] early will relax during the day [away from the sun that will be severely heating]’

or have form of a rhetorical question, e.g.

- (6) *Ìnā àmfàni-n kyāu-n dākì bā kōfà?*
 where usefulness-GEN beauty-GEN hut without entrance

‘What is the benefit of a hut’s beauty [if it does] not have an entrance?’

They might as well be quoted in the form of a question and the answer to it, e.g.

- (7) *Mè kumā akè jirā? Bāgwārī yà yi tōshī.*
 what PTCL IMPRS.CONT.REL wait Gwari_man 2SG.M.SBJV do present

‘Thus, what are you waiting for? For a Gwari man to bring a present [for a girl].’

Karìn màganà just like its counterparts in other languages is constructed using function expressions that in Hausa cover, e.g. *abin dà* ‘the thing which,’ *ìdan* ‘if,’ *in ji* ‘he said’ and explicit universal quantifiers²⁰ such as *kōwā* ‘everybody,’ *kōmē* ‘everything’ to name but a few.²¹

It is reported that “[s]peakers generally set proverbs off from the surrounding discourse in various ways.”²² Hausa proverbs for that matter (similarly to their counterparts in other languages²³) are often bracketed by the means of framing devices such as: *Hàusàwā dai nà cēwā*... ‘Hausas, they are saying...,’ *Hàusàwā sun cē*... ‘Hausas say...,’ *hàkīkà*... ‘truly...’.²⁴

19 The omitted element is given in square brackets.

20 Jesenšek, ‘Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects...,’ p. 145.

21 Kirk-Greene, *Hausa ba dabo ba ne*, p. xii; Piłaszewicz, *Historia literatur...*, p. 34.

22 Norrick, ‘Subject Area, Terminology...,’ p. 24.

23 Norrick, ‘Subject Area, Terminology...,’ pp. 23–24.

24 These examples were extracted from articles published in Hausa newspapers (Aliyu Umar,

Karɪn m̀agaǹa is a traditional cultural expression that links together a concise content and an expressive message. It has didactic and educational potential.²⁵ Proverbs encapsulate Hausa folk philosophy and moral code.²⁶ Similarly to proverbs in other languages, Hausa paremiyas “encode social knowledge in its popular variant”²⁷ and consist of “a medium for the expression of commonly held views and wisdom.”²⁸ The main property of their semantics is a two-grade meaning²⁹ which requires the receiver to interpret the proverb. Clever use of this property is reckoned in Hausa culture as a sign of intelligence and knowledge of rhetorical figures use. This skill is called *azancɪ* ‘eloquence’.³⁰

Particular proverbs can refer to folk tales, stories, fables and intentionally recall their contents and plots in discourse.³¹ Proverbs have their own context-neutral meanings but their interpretation can differ depending on the context of usage (linguistic and non-linguistic). Only the account of all contexts could be considered a finite comprehensive explanation of the meaning of a proverb.³² Some Hausa proverbs convey a universal message that can be found also in proverbs of other languages and thus, it is possible to identify semantic and pragmatic equivalents of such Hausa proverbs in other languages,³³ e.g.

- (8) *Rig̀akafi t̄a fi m̀agaǹi*
prevention.F 3SG.F.CPL exceed cure

The above ought to be translated almost word by word into English as a proverb ‘prevention is better than cure,’ and consequently into Polish as:

- (9) *Lepiej zapobiegać niż leczyć.*
better to_prevent than to_cure

“Yan kinibibin siyasa kun yi sake, ɗan zaki ya girma’ [Political barrators, you have changed, a lion’s cub has grown], *Albishir*, No. 29, 25–31 January 2019, p. 16.; Sharafaddeen S. Umar, ‘Aski ya zo gaban goshi’ [It’s within an ace of completion], *Leadership A Yau*, 15 February 2019, p. 5.; Mohammed Yaba, ‘Zaɓen 2019: Ya kamata mu dage da addu’a – Sheikh Bala Lau’ [Elections 2019: We have to pray more – Sheikh Bala Lau], *Aminiya*, 1–7 February 2019, p. 9).

25 Baldi, ‘Proverbs as an Educational Factor...,’ pp. 249–265; Jang, ‘A Poetic Structure...,’ p. 83.

26 Piłaszewicz, *Historia literatur...*, p. 29.

27 Jerzy Barmiński, *Językowe podstawy obrazu świata* [Linguistic foundations of the View of the World], Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1977 [2012], p. 160.

28 Jang, ‘A Poetic Structure...,’ p. 83.

29 Kłosińska, *Słownik przysłów...*, p. 10.

30 Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture...*, p. 70.

31 Piłaszewicz, *Historia literatur...*, pp. 33–34.

32 Szpila, ‘Przysłowie...,’ pp. 371–372.

33 Patryk Zając, ‘O przekazie uniwersalnym tekstów kultury na podstawie przysłów w języku hausa i polskim’ [Universal message of culture texts. Example of Hausa and Polish proverbs], *Afryka*, No. 47, 2018, pp. 11–27.

On the other hand, Hausa proverbs have their own unique imagery and represent the values of a specific culture, thus operating within its own Linguistic View of the World.³⁴ Due to this, it is often not possible to translate them literally into other languages in a sufficiently understandable way. That is to say, transferring all semantic content into the target language without adding comments (in the footnote) by the translator.³⁵

In contrast to the situation of many European nations the usage of proverbs is still embedded in Hausa society.³⁶ Proverbs are part of contemporary Hausa popular culture and are commonly appreciated when uttered by poets, writers, singers, and also politicians. Moreover, proverbs used in literature are a canonical part of Hausa literary tradition. It is an indicator of its value and signals the erudition of the author.³⁷ Therefore, *karin màgana* as a socio-linguistic phenomena is not only the subject of discussion among the linguists, folklorists and other scholars.

“It would not be an overestimation to say that newspaper journalists are keen on applying proverbs in their writings.”³⁸ Hausa journalists in particular specialise in using proverbs. Below I present a reflection on *karin màgana*'s usage found in a regular Hausa newspaper *Albishir*³⁹:

*Masu nazari kan adabin Hausa sun bayyana cewa, karin magana na nufin takaita labari, ma'ana idan labari ya yi tsawo kuma zai amfani jama'a, sai a kawo karin magana domin a takaita shi kowa ya amfana.*⁴⁰

“Researchers in Hausa literature explain that the purpose of a proverb is to shorten a message. It means [that] if a message is long but the society could benefit from it, [it is ought to] just use a proverb [so it is] shortened. And then everybody will benefit from it.”

34 Barmiński, *Językowe podstawy...*, p. 160.

35 Various techniques of Hausa proverbs translation into English and their challenges can be found in: Auwal Amba Ibrahim, *An assessment of the Problems and Prospects of Translating Hausa Proverbs into English*, unpublished MA Thesis, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University, 2011. The techniques he proposed correspond to idioms translation methods that can be found in general translational works such as a study referring mainly to examples from English and Polish by Krzysztof Hejwowski (ed.), ‘Tłumaczenie idiomów’ [Translating Idioms], in *Iluzja przekładu. Przekładoznawstwo w ujęciu konstruktywnym*, K. Hejwowski (ed.), Katowice: Śląsk, 2015, pp. 245–274.

36 Baldi, ‘Body parts...’, pp. 7–8; Jang, ‘A Poetic Structure...’, pp. 83–84.

37 Piłaszewicz, *Historia literatur...*, pp. 28–29.

38 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...’, p. 290.

39 Not only Nigerian journalists are willing to share their views on the role of proverbs. Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...’, pp. 291–292 provided similar examples from English-language newspapers.

40 Umar, ‘Yan kinibibin siyasa...’, p. 16.

The usage of proverbs is a prominent feature of written media discourse and press language in particular.⁴¹ This phenomenon was spotted by researchers in Hausa at least 20 years ago.⁴² Hausa press is a written medium which shapes political discourse. A written record of the public political debate in Nigeria consists of salient data for Political Discourse Analysis⁴³ – an independent offspring of Critical Discourse Analysis⁴⁴ – that covers interactions and confrontations among participants in a political event.

Discourse is a “vague” term defined in various ways. To put it in a nutshell, *discourse* is “a message that comes into being in a context.”⁴⁵ “Discourse covers [...] the whole act of communication therefore, both a specified verbalisation (a text) as well as non-linguistic factors that accompany it, i.e. most importantly, a specified situation of use and its participants.”⁴⁶

According to Fairclough, there are at least three common ways of understanding *discourse*.⁴⁷ In the current article I will use the term *discourse* mostly in the sense of *political discourse*. Therefore, I will define it as “the language associated with a particular social field or practice” due to the fact that the texts that are analysed share a topic (the socio-semantic domain of *politics*). However, my data consist of samples of press articles that contribute also to *written media discourse*. *Media discourse* in turn, is “public, manufactured, on-record” and consists of “interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer.”⁴⁸ This allows us to understand *media discourse* in accordance with the second definition of *discourse* given by Fairclough: “meaning-making as an element of the social process.”⁴⁹

Almost every analysis of *media discourse* must deal in fact with many overlapping discourses at the same time.⁵⁰ Proverbs are traditional expressions

41 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...,’ pp. 277, 291.

42 Jang, ‘A Poetic Structure...,’ p. 84.

43 Teun Adrianus van Dijk, ‘What is Political Discourse Analysis,’ *Belgian Journal of Linguistics*, No.11, 1997, pp. 11–52.

44 Norman Fairclough, *Critical discourse analysis* (Second Edition), London: Longman, 2010.

45 All translations of non-English texts are done by the author. Maciej Czerwiński, ‘Semiotyczna analiza dyskursu’ [Semiotic discourse analysis], in *Jak analizować dyskurs? Perspektywy dydaktyczne*, W. Czachur, A. Kulczyńska and Ł. Kumięga (eds), Kraków: Universitas, 2016, p. 43.

46 Anna Duszak, *Tekst, dyskurs, komunikacja międzykulturowa* [Text, Discourse, Intercultural Communication], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1998, p. 19.

47 Norman Fairclough, ‘Critical Discourse Analysis,’ in *The Rutledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, J. P. Gee and M. Handford (eds), London and New York: Routledge, 2012, p. 11.

48 Anne O’Keeffe, ‘Media and discourse analysis,’ in *The Rutledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Gee, Handford (eds)..., p. 441.

49 Fairclough, ‘Critical discourse...,’ p. 11.

50 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...,’ p. 276.

which contribute to contemporary Hausa popular culture. “In modern mass media the proverb proves to be a tool of choice for conveying different attitudes and views.”⁵¹ I will demonstrate that Hausa proverbs in the press relate to non-linguistic events and discourse participants use them to comment on and influence political reality. Referring to van Dijk’s view, I state that what makes such opinions a part of political discourse is their public nature.⁵² Therefore, they are contributing to both *media* and *political discourse* interpreted as “a way of constructing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective.”⁵³

1.1. Aim and Goals

The aim of the current article is to demonstrate various ways of using Hausa proverbs in political discourse. The analysis takes into account both linguistic and non-linguistic factors such as context, intentions of the speaker and intended interpretation of the recipient. A particular goal is to approach the question of how traditional cultural expressions such as proverbs are used to construct a given narration in press articles, i.e. I attempt to say what propositions do proverbs express by the means of updating their meanings in the discourse. Another goal is to indicate which textual and pragmatic functions do these proverbs serve.

1.2. Source Data and Methodology

The research main focus is on functions of Hausa proverbs in political discourse or in other words on how these cultural expressions are used in current popular debate. The qualitative analysis of Hausa proverbs used in political discourse will be conducted by the means of interpretation consisting of analysis of the linguistic data. The scope of the research covers contemporary Hausa popular culture, that is written political discourse in the sense of texts related to each other thematically. The analysis will focus on traditional cultural expressions of proverbs, which are structures considered to be relevant because of the frequency of their appearance and because they are different from standard forms.⁵⁴ Proverbs are “highly noticeable, because they are salient in context, frequently foregrounded, easily remembered, and

51 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...’, p. 276.

52 Van Dijk, ‘What is political...’, p. 26.

53 Fairclough, ‘Critical discourse...’, p. 11.

54 See methods of discourse interpretation in: Urszula Topczewska, ‘Interpretacja jako metoda analizy dyskursu’ [Interpretation as a method of discourse analysis], in *Wybrane zagadnienia lingwistyki tekstu, analizy dyskursu i komunikacji międzykulturowej – In memoriam Profesor Anny Duszak (1950–2015)*, U. Okulska, U. Topczewska and A. Jopek-Bosiacka (eds), Warszawa: Instytut Lingwistyki Stosowanej UW, 2018, pp. 181–184, 184.

so they can be varied and serve as templates but still remain recognisable.⁵⁵ They can be distinguished on the basis of formal properties such as, e.g. fixed recognisable syntactic structures⁵⁶ covered in Hausa by, e.g. *yā fi...* ‘it is better...’; *indā...nan...* ‘where...there...’ et al.⁵⁷ On top of this, the proverbs’ lexis is full of words encoding culture-specific notions (known also as culture key words or culturems), e.g. *ruwā* ‘water, rain,’ *Allāh* ‘God,’ *kūrā* ‘hyena.’⁵⁸

The source data is limited but representative and covers selected press articles published within a period of one month (February 2019) in popular Hausa-language Nigerian newspapers commenting on politics. February 2019 was the time of a boisterous general election campaign in Nigeria⁵⁹ and thus the main topic in political debate. The collection of newspapers used in the research covers such titles as: *Leadership A Yau* (5 issues were analysed), *Aminya* (4 issues), *Albishir* (4 issues), *al-Mizan* (2 issues) and *al-Fiḡi*⁶⁰ (4 issues). The last one is a newspaper published only in *àjàmi* script in which

55 Norrick, ‘Subject Area, Terminology...,’ p. 24.

56 Norrick, ‘Subject Area, Terminology...,’ pp. 21–22.

57 Furniss, *Poetry, Prose and Popular Culture...*, p. 71; Piłaszewicz, *Historia literatur...*, p. 34.

58 Zając, ‘O przekazie uniwersalnym...,’ p. 15; Patryk Zając, ‘Słowa-kłucze kultury w przysłowiaach hausa’ [Culture key words in Hausa proverbs], *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, Vols. 265–266, No. 1–2, 2018, pp. 155–181.

59 There were 73 candidates running for president. Gen. Muhamadu Buhari representing the ruling party *All People’s Congress* was re-elected with 56% of votes. His main opponent, a candidate of opposing *People’s Democratic Party*, Abubakar Atiku got 41% of the votes (Independent National Electoral Commission, *Presidential Election 23rd February 2019. Declaration Of Results*, February 2019, <https://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2019-GE-PRESIDENTIAL-ELECTION-RESULTS.pdf> (accessed 6 May 2020); ‘Presidential Election Results,’ *Steers*, 2019, <https://nigeriaelections.steersng.com> (accessed 6 May 2020). The elections were in general evaluated “positive” and called “democratic” by foreign observation missions. However some critical remarks were included in the reports (i.a. African Union Election Observation Mission (Aueom) to The Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Presidential and National Assembly Elections*, 23 February 2019, <https://www.eisa.org.za/pdf/nig2019au.pdf> (accessed 26 April 2019); Ecowas Commission Nigeria 2019, *General Elections. Preliminary Declaration*, <https://www.eisa.org.za/pdf/nig2019ecowas.pdf> (accessed 26 April 2019). The elections were postponed last minute due to numerous technical and logistical obstacles which occurred during their organisation (Rotimi Oyekanmi, ‘Decision To Re-Schedule General Elections Painful But Necessary, Says INEC Chairman,’ *INEC News*, 17 February 2019, <https://inecnews.com/decision-to-re-schedule-general-elections-painful-but-necessary-says-inec-chairman/> (accessed 6 May 2020). Moreover, extending time for voting was needed in some places. Media reported local outbreaks of violence (relatively small for Nigeria) that were related to the election (Abiose Adelaja Adams, ‘Situation Room: 16 were killed on election day violence,’ *The Cable*, 24 February 2019, <https://www.thecable.ng/situation-room-16-were-killed-on-election-day-violence> (accessed 27 April 2019).

60 For Arabic I use scientific transcription.

I did not spot the proverbs used.⁶¹ I performed identification and recognition of proverbs in texts using observant reading methods with an intention to find proverbs. Paremiology spotted by the use of my knowledge of Hausa proverbs and their semantic and syntactic properties were verified as such in Hausa proverb collections written by native speakers,⁶² those providing English translations⁶³ and dictionaries.⁶⁴

“Proverbs are text units – we do not construct sentences using them because they are already sentences themselves, minimal texts. They appear in utterances in the form of quotations, ready-made texts in a text...”⁶⁵ In this article the Hausa proverbs are interpreted as speech acts within another speech act, that is a press text. They are an example of the “circulation of the utterance in communication” which is a salient phenomena in respect to discourse analysis.⁶⁶ Hence, proverbs in media discourse can be considered quotations of *folk speech*.⁶⁷ This type of speech is vigorous and commonly understandable in African societies. For this reason in Hausa political discourse the aforementioned phenomena occurs frequently and political affairs are often commented on by the means of the traditional, mainly pre-industrial imagery encoded in proverbs.

As stated earlier, while analysing linguistic data we are almost never dealing with one discourse but rather with many overlapping discourses. A very frequent “companion” of political discourse is media discourse in which proverbs “help to focus the attention of the audience on the information necessary to interpret the meaning of the events and, thus, deduce the message.”⁶⁸ The “message” here is roughly the same as the non-propositional part of a proverb’s meaning

61 I suppose the lack of proverbs in these particular issues is accidental or results from the fact I simply did not spot them (because of my insufficient search and recognition skills).

62 Aliyu Muhammad ‘Danhausa, *Hausa mai dubun hikima* [One thousand Hausa wisdoms], Malumfashi, Katsina State: Century Research and Publishing Ltd., 2012; Bello Muhammad ‘Danyaya, *Karin maganar Hausa* [Hausa proverbs], Sokoto: Makarantar Hausa, 2007; *Karin magana. ‘Iya magana ma da ranarsa!’* [Hausa proverbs. Knowing how to speak out brings luck!], (no author), Zaria: Northern Nigerian Publishing Company, 1950; Yusufu Yunusa, *Hausa a dunkule na daya* [Hausa in a nutshell. Vol I], Kano: Government Printer, 1977.

63 Among many works I used the most Kirk-Greene’s *Hausa ba dabo ba ne*.

64 Roy Clive Abraham, *Dictionary of the Hausa Language*, London: University of London Press, 1962; George Percy Bargery, *A Hausa-English Dictionary and English-Hausa Vocabulary*, London: Oxford University Press, 1934.

65 Kłosińska, *Słownik przysłów...*, pp. 10–11.

66 Anna Dutka-Mańkowska, ‘Mowa przytoczona w analizie dyskursu – propozycje dydaktyczne dla II etapu studiów’ [Quoted speech in discourse analysis – didactic proposals for the 2nd stage of studies], in *Jak analizować dyskurs? Perspektywy dydaktyczne*, Waldemar Czachur, Agnieszka Kulczyńska and Łukasz Kumięga (eds), Kraków: Universitas, 2016, p. 62.

67 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...’, p. 278.

68 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...’, p. 288.

which can be analysed as a type of signal called a Pragmatic Marker.⁶⁹ In this approach proverbs are *pragmatic idioms*, markers that convey basic message with “no plausible inferential path leading from literal, direct meaning to the accepted basic pragmatic signal.”⁷⁰

Proverbs while serving as Pragmatic Markers carry representational meaning, i.e. “they contribute conceptual information over and above that of the propositional meaning [of the utterance]”⁷¹ in contrast to Discourse Markers which carry only procedural meaning that provides cues on how the utterance should be interpreted.⁷² When analysing *karin m̀aganà* in political discourse I will refer to its propositional (literal) and representational (pragmatic) meaning (i.e. the message).

2. The Analysis of Hausa Proverbs Use in Political Discourse

The following analysis will demonstrate the variety of Hausa proverbs functioning in political discourse. The interpretative methodological approach applied in this paper allows us to observe that a proverb usually serves multiple functions at the same time, however some of them dominate over others.⁷³ For clarity of elaboration I will demonstrate the examples in two groups: in section 2.1. I will discuss proverbs with a dominant textual function and in the next section 2.2. I will deal with those with a dominant pragmatic function.

2.1. Textual Functions of Hausa Proverbs

According to Norrick, “proverbs occur in prominent discourse positions”⁷⁴ in which they serve evaluation functions. Proverbs play a salient role in structuring and organising the text, especially in journalistic opinion-based texts. This process is related to the manner in which proverbs are positioned. They can be used at the beginning, at the end of a text or its segment or as an element of their frame. They can serve as titles, subtitles, headlines and summaries.⁷⁵

Until recently there were no works devoted to African proverbs’ use in discourse. This has changed due to a Nigerian language example. Ehineni presented “A discourse-structural analysis of Yorùbá proverbs in interaction.”⁷⁶

69 Bruce Fraser, ‘Pragmatic Markers,’ *Pragmatics*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1996, pp. 167–168.

70 Fraser, ‘Pragmatic...,’ p. 174.

71 Fraser, ‘Pragmatic...,’ p. 171.

72 Fraser, ‘Pragmatic...,’ p. 186.

73 Jesenšek, ‘Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects...,’ p. 152.

74 Norrick, ‘Subject Area, Terminology...,’ p. 23.

75 Jesenšek, ‘Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects...,’ pp. 153–156; Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...,’ p. 286.

76 Taiwo Oluwaseun Ehineni, ‘A Discourse-Structural Analysis of Yorùbá Proverbs in Interaction,’ *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2016, pp. 71–83.

Jang conducted the first (although very brief) Critical Discourse Analysis of Hausa proverb use in a newspaper text (as a digression in a paper on other issues). His main conclusions were that *karin māganā* serves to convey hidden messages and how journalists frame described events to be interpreted by the reader in a certain way or ways. When it comes to textual functions, he demonstrated that in journalistic texts, paremias usually appear at the beginning or as a part of the closing remarks.⁷⁷

2.1.1. Proverbial Titles

The title (headline) is “a type of magnet for the receiver, a guide that brings the main idea of the text to the daylight.”⁷⁸ The usage of proverbs as titles and headlines of media texts is a common practice with a long tradition as they are efficient tools to fulfill the main tasks of attention grabbing, conveying a meaning, or summarising the subsequent text.⁷⁹ Moreover, proverbs as headlines of media texts perform attention-directing pragmatic-stylistic functions.⁸⁰ Formal features of Hausa proverbs (such as shortness, rhythm and rhyme, bi-partial structure, fixed figurative (hidden) meaning that might be interpreted differently depending on linguistic and non-linguistic context) make them good material for press titles (headlines), which also perform symbolic functions and due to this fact require the reader to possess a set of cultural competences to decode them.⁸¹ Proverbs as press titles perform an endoforic function when they refer to the content of the same text. However, proverbs have their foundations in experience and thus are anchored in extra-linguistic reality. Thus, proverbial titles are often egzoforic i.e. refer to other texts, typically folkloristic such as fables (*tàtsūniyōyī*) and stories (*lābāṛai*)⁸² and to the situations known to the reader from extra-linguistic reality. Titles moderate the way a text is received (they have contextualisational and macrotextual functions).⁸³

In *Leadership A Yau* a standard form of proverb was used as a title of the article about general elections that were about to be held the next day⁸⁴:

77 Jang, ‘A Poetic Structure...’, pp. 84–86.

78 Marta Wójcicka, ‘O tytule tekstu z perspektywy semiotyki’ [Text title in the semiotic perspective], in *Wybrane zagadnienia lingwistyki tekstu, analizy dyskursu i komunikacji międzykulturowej – In memoriam Profesor Anny Duszak (1950-2015)*, Okulska, Topczewska and Jopek-Bosiacka (eds)..., pp. 152.

79 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...’, pp. 286–287.

80 Jesenšek, ‘Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects...’, p. 154.

81 Wójcicka, ‘O tytule tekstu...’, p. 170.

82 Piłaszewicz, *Historia literatur...*, pp. 33–34.

83 Wójcicka, ‘O tytule tekstu...’, pp. 150–151, pp. 165–168.

84 Umar, ‘Aski ya zo...’, p. 1.

makes the author of the letter “feel safe” as he relies on the common knowledge that is shared with its recipients.⁹³ Dictum (11) consists of a symbol used as a hint that there is a hidden reason for suspending judge Walter Onnoghen as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria by the president Muhammadu Buhari just before the general elections. It was termed a political act by a part of public opinion due to the fact that the Chief Justice was the official in the position to state the validity of elections.

2.1.2. Proverbial Summaries

An important function of proverbs in press articles is summarising the text contents and thesis. Usually such proverbs are used at the end of a text. It is not uncommon to see even two paremias in a row used to express the main points of the media text. Such a phenomenon is known in paremiology as *proverb clustering*, e.g. in article “Aski ya zo gaban goshi” [It’s within an ace of completion]:

Hausawa dai na cewa (12) rana ba ta karya sai dai uwar dīya ta jī kunya, haka ma (13) ba a san maci tuwo ba sai miya ta kare, zaben 2019 ya riga ya zo, makomar shugabancin kasar nan tana a hannun ‘yan Nijeriya wadanda za su yi alkalanɓi a akwatunan zabe kan ‘yan siyasar da suke muradin su shugabance su...⁹⁴

“As for Hausas, they say: (12) **occasions arrive but people are dilatory** and also: (13) **it takes a long time to know a person’s character**. The 2019 elections have already come and the future of the country’s leadership is in the hands of Nigerians who will chose the politicians they want to govern them.”

(12) *Rānā bā- tā̄ karyā sai dai uwa-ř̄ dīyā tā̄ jī kunyā̄*
day 3SG.F.CONT.NEG lie PTCL PTCL mother-GEN girl 3SG.F.CPL feel
sense_of_propriety

lit. ‘Day [of the wedding] is not a lie as long as the girl’s mother feels appropriate [about it]’

‘Occasions arrive but people are dilatory.’⁹⁵

(13) *Bā- à̄ san macì tuwō ba sai miyā̄ tā̄ kārē̄*
IMPERS.CPL.NEG know-DO eater tuwō PTCL.NEG PTCL miyā̄.F 3SG.F.CPL
be_finished

93 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...’, p. 280.

94 Umar, ‘Aski ya zo...’, p. 5.

95 Abraham, *Dictionary...*, p. 721; Yunusa, *Hausa a dunkule...*, p. 41.

lit. 'One does not [truly] know a *tuwō* eater until [all] the *miyā* is finished'⁹⁶

'It takes a long time to know a person's character.'⁹⁷

The thesis of the exemplary article is encoded in the proverbs and can be defined as follows: it is not possible to say whether the candidates who are going to be elected will serve the country as they had promised. This is yet to be found out.

2.2. Pragmatic Functions of Hausa Proverbs

Hausa proverbs have multiple pragmatic functions that vary depending on the situational context of their use. First of all, like proverbs in other languages of the world, they serve to make one's speech (spoken or written) more attractive for the receivers. Secondly, proverbs are speech acts that have the illocutionary force of an argument. By the virtue of this force, Hausa proverbs shape certain dimensions of the extralinguistic reality such as politics.

2.2.1. Proverb as an Element of Political Rhetoric

In classical rhetoric, proverbs are part of *ornatus*, i.e. an 'ornament' of speech as their properties make them suitable to be used as rhetorical figures.⁹⁸ The next two samples consider the person of Olusegun Obasanjo.⁹⁹ From 1999 to 2007 he served as a president of Nigeria on behalf of the *People's Democratic Party*. He failed to get elected for a third term. He still tries to be a figure in Nigerian politics but has been pushed to the margins. Below I provide two examples of creating his negative public image in written political discourse. The negativity is direct and expressed even in press headlines.

The first sample is taken from the article titled '*Yan Nijeriya ku yi watsi da Obasanjo, shi ba komai ba ne* [Nigerians, get rid of Obasanjo, he is nothing]' in which the author points out that the effort of the politician to get elected did not pay off:

*Wai wannan shi [Obasanjo] ne mutumin da yanzu zargin wasu da shirya magudin zabe. Ya manta cewa, (14) abin da ya shuka a zaben 2007 shi ya girba a lokacin da ya sake neman tazarce a karo na uku...*¹⁰⁰

96 *Tuwō* and *miyā* are the most popular meals of Hausa cuisine. They are a symbol of food in general along with a whole set of related cultural norms and beliefs. *Tuwō* is a kind of compact mass made of various types of overcooked cereals, e.g. rice, millet, semolina, sorghum, etc., which can be torn off by hands and formed into balls that are eaten with a thick (often spicy) *miyā* sauce containing vegetables and usually also meat (mutton, goat or beef).

97 Abraham, *Dictionary...*, p. 907; Yunusa, *Hausa a dunkule...*, p. 171.

98 Jesenšek, 'Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects...', p. 138.

99 Here I use standardised Yoruba orthography.

100 Sani Anwar, 'Yan Nijeriya ku yi watsi da Obasanjo, shi ba komai ba ne' [Nigerians, get rid of Obasanjo, he is nothing], *Leadership A Yau*, 1 February 2019, p. 3.

“It happened that he [Obasanjo] is the man who accuses some people of organising rigged elections. He forgot that (14) **what he sowed during 2007 elections, he later reaped** when he was running for a third-term re-election...”

In mass media the creative usage of proverbs (modifying proverbs) is a more frequent phenomenon than the use of standard forms, as newly coined expressions grab the attention of the audience. In the sample above (14) we see a pseudo-proverb. It is an example of modification of a proverb (15) that creates a stylistic effect as well as expresses the journalist’s evaluation of reported events.¹⁰¹

(14) *Ābī-n* *dà* *yā shūkà (à zāben 2007)* *shī*
yā gīrbā
 thing.M-DEF that 3SG.M.CPL SOW (in election-GEN 2007) it.M3SG.M.CPL
 reap

‘What he sowed (in the 2007 elections), this he reaped’

And its unmodified version (standard form):

(15) *Ābī-n* *dà mùtùm* *yā shūkà shī* *zāi gīrbā*
 thing.M-DEF that man 3SG.M.CPL SOW it.M3SG.M.FUT reap

lit. ‘What a man sow, that he will reap’

‘As you sow, so shall you reap.’¹⁰²

Modifications of this proverb were found particularly often in Hausa press articles (see examples (17) and (18)).

The second sample was drawn from the article entitled *Obasanjo dan adawa da Nijeriya* [Obasanjo, the enemy of Nigeria]:¹⁰³

*Aika-aikar da Obasanjo ya tabka, kuma yake ganin ya yi bajinta wadda zai faranta wa Yarabawa da ita, (16) **kwaliya ba ta biya kudīn sabulu ba**, har kwanan gobe ba shi da karbuwa a kasar Yarabawa, domin ya riga ya yi masu laifi babba...*

“Obasanjo did many things as well as he showed his impressive qualities, all to make Yorubas happy, but (16) **It was not worth the effort**. Even in the future he will not be received [well] in Yorubaland because of his earlier wrongdoings against them...”

101 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...’, pp. 281, 283.

102 Yunusa, *Hausa a dunkule...*, p. 2.

103 Lawal S. Ibrahim, ‘Obasanjo dan adawa da Nijeriya’ [Obasanjo, the enemy of Nigeria], *Albahir*, Nos. 29, 25–31 January 2019, p. 16.

- (16) *Kwalliyā* *bà- tà biyā kudī-n sàbulū ba*
 bathing.F 3SG.F.CPL.NEG pay price-GEN soap PTCL.NEG
 lit. ‘[The effect of] bathing was not worth the price of soap’
 ‘It was not worth the effort’.

This proverb is a rhetorical figure with an evaluative pragmatic function, namely to show that Qbasanjo’s failure in elections is a consequence of his own acts. In other words: he deserved not to be elected for the third term.

2.2.2. Proverb as an Argument in Political Discourse

Proverbs play a role in forming argumentative structures. This property of paremias was known to classical rhetoric and is still vividly exploited in contemporary media texts. Proverbs express generalising statements, generalised advice, justifications and explanations of actions. Lack of concrete formulating of thought in favour of ambiguous imagery gives them a persuasive power of argument in relevant context.¹⁰⁴

In the following example a proverb is used in written media discourse as a counter-argument to accusations of poor governance against Kano State Governor Abdullahi Ganduje (affiliated to the ruling *All Progressives Congress* party). The article in question was published in *Albishir* – a newspaper with an apparent pro-government orientation:

*...ana so a yi Ganduje adalci, maimakon a rinka sauraron gaza-gani, masu soki-burutsu a cikin gidajen redio tamkar gaskiya suke fada wa jama’ a. Hakika, (16) gani ya kori ji gwamna Ganduje ya bai wa marada kunya game da takun tafiyar da mulkinsa, inda ya yi taka-tsantsan wajen aiwatar da aikace-aikacen da ya tsara yin wa jama’ ar Kano...*¹⁰⁵

“...they wanted to bring Ganduje to justice but instead they keep listening to meddling people who talk about irrelevant things on the radio as if they were speaking the truth to society. Honestly, (16) **seeing is believing**. Ganduje humiliated those who spread lies about his way of governing when he thoughtfully took actions such as ordering numerous works on behalf of Kano people...”

- (17) *Ganī* *yā kōri jī*
 seeing.M 3SG.M.CPL drive_out hearing
 lit. ‘Seeing drives out hearing’
 ‘Seeing is believing.’¹⁰⁶

104 Jesenšek, ‘Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects...’, p. 145.

105 Umar, ‘Yan kinibibin siyasa...’, p. 16.

106 Newman, *A Hausa-English...*, p. 69.

2.2.3. Proverbs as an Element of Political Appeal

In a traditional stylistic approach, proverbs are stylistic devices which serve, i.a. for stylistic colouring (humorous, euphemistic, pejorative etc.)¹⁰⁷ In the following two samples of texts, the proverb (15) *Ābīn dā mùtūm yā shūkà shī zāi girbā* ‘As you sow, so shall you reap’ and its modifications serve as rhetorical figures in political appeal with a pragmatic function of creating a stylistic effect to strengthen the message and direct it to common people (who are considered to be familiar with folk texts and traditional cultural expressions such as proverbs). In the first article we can see an appeal to citizens of Nigeria to be engaged in the electoral process and pay attention to its fair conduct:

Ashe ke nan abin lamarin ya zama na hannun karba hannun mayarwa ke nan kuma (17) *abin da ka shuka shi za ka girba, domin idan har talaka bai sayar da nasa ikon da kundin tsarin mulki ya ba shi ba, to babu yadda za a yi duk wanda ka za ba bai kulla masa abin a zo a gani ba ya sake zarcewa.*¹⁰⁸

“So that which the situation has become, what goes around comes around and also (17) **as ye sow, so shall ye reap**, because only if the average citizen does not sell his legally enforced strength, which is given to him in the constitution, it will not happen [again] that any of those you have elected have not done anything tangible will not be seeking re-election.”

(18) *Ābī-n* *dà* *kā shūkà shī* *zā- kà girbā*
thing.M-DEF that 2SG.M.CPL SOW IT.M 2SG.M.FUT reap

‘As you sow, so shall you reap.’

The journalist used a modified proverb (using second person singular masculine pronouns *kā* and *zā kà*) to achieve intimacy with the audience. He expressed his attitude to the wisdom encoded in the proverb, reinforcing it¹⁰⁹ by the means of the expression *zama na hannun karba hannun mayarwa* ‘what goes around comes around’ and argumentation introduced by the marker *domin* ‘because’ (underlined in the text above).

The second sample is taken from a short report on the Civic Forum 2019 that took place in Lagos.¹¹⁰ Fragments of the speech of Nigerian Nobel Prize

107 Jesenšek, ‘Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects...’, pp. 138, 141, 142.

108 ‘2019: Sai a yanzu ne ikon alkalanci zai dawo hannun talakan Nijeriya!’ [2019: Now the power to judge will be passed to the hands of Nigerian commoners!], *Leadership A Yau*, 12 February 2019, p. 3.

109 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...’, p. 280.

110 Hunkuyi, Umar A., ‘APC da PDP ba su cancanci sake hawa mulki ba – Soyinka’ [APC and PDP are not suitable for ruling again – Soyinka], *Leadership A Yau*, 1 February 2019, p. 4.

winner, the writer Professor Wole Soyinka, were cited in Hausa translation. We find an emotional appeal for a fair and democratic election process. In his speech, Soyinka used a rhetorical device. He referred to the universal message¹¹¹ of the above mentioned proverb (15) *Ábîn dà mùtùm yā shūkà shī zāi gīrbā* ‘As you sow, so shall you reap’ by applying proverb imagery and allusion to create a pseudo-proverb:¹¹²

Ban yarda da abin da ake kira bata kuri'a ba, wanda hakan ke nufin jefar da kuri'a a cikin kwandon shara, amma ni na yarda da (18) shuka kuri'a, ba zubar da kuri'a ba, shuka kuri'a! Shuka kuri'a yana nufin, hanyar shuka irin da zai nuna ya fito a girba ta hanyar kuri'a, sannu a hankali.

“I do not agree to what is called ‘spoiling the votes’. This would mean to throw the votes into a dust bin. As for me, I agree on (18) **sowing the votes** – not throwing them away – **sowing votes! Sowing votes** is aimed at **sowing** them in a way that will show how to **reap** the votes in calm and peace.”

The standard form of the proverb (15) in this fragment was modified as follows:

(19) *shūkà kùrī' à... à gīrbā*
sowing vote... IMPERS.SBJV reap
‘sowing votes... in order to reap.’

By the means of evoking constituent lexical elements of the proverb Soyinka referred to the topoi (argumentative resource) of *consequence*. Such reference contributes to the argumentative function of proverbs.¹¹³

In political press texts related to the topic of elections, a frequently used proverb is (15) *Ábîn dà mùtùm yā shūkà shī zāi gīrbā* ‘As you sow, so shall you reap’ and its modifications. This paremia includes a conceptual metaphor SUCCESS DEPENDS ON ACTION, which is an extension of the LIFE IS SUCCESS metaphor in Hausa.¹¹⁴ This indicates that in the Hausa View of the World the notion of ELECTIONS (and POLITICS in general) is interpreted in categories of consequence of human actions or in other words it is located in the topoi of *consequence*.¹¹⁵

111 Zajac, ‘O przekazie uniwersalnym...’, p. 15; Zajac, ‘O przekazie uniwersalnym...’, p. 22. Compare also discussion on the examples (8) and (9) in this article.

112 Konstantinova, ‘Proverbs...’, pp. 283, 287.

113 Vide Jesenšek, ‘Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects...’, p. 148.

114 Patryk Zajac, ‘Metaphorical Mapping of LIFE in the Hausa Proverbs with Regard to their Cross-Linguistic Equivalents,’ in *Linguistic evidence of cultural distance. Hausa in cross-cultural Communications*, Nina Pawlak (ed.), Warszawa: Elipsa, 2019, pp. 181–193.

115 Jesenšek, ‘Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects...’, p. 190.

2.2.4. Proverb as a Element of Political Satire

The Shi'a organisation *Hakar Muslumi (Islamic Movement of Nigeria)* publishes a critically oriented newspaper with a significant title *Al-Mizan* (Arabic: 'a weight'). Shi'a Muslims' at times difficult relations with the central Nigerian authorities (among other things, resulting from alleged police mass killings of Shi'a demonstrators as well as imprisonment of their leader Shaikh el-Zakzaky) are reflected in political discourse to which the press saliently contributes, i.a. by posting political satire drawings like this one below:¹¹⁶



The man's whole body is inside a big plastic shopping bag. Only his head is visible. Nevertheless, a characteristic hat and glasses as well as realistic face features allow one to identify the person depicted. It is Nasir El-Rufa'i, the governor of Kaduna State on behalf of the *All Progressives Congress* ruling party. The drawing is a biting commentary to Rufa'i's threat: "all who will meddle in our elections will go home in body bags." His words are cited in Hausa in the right upper corner¹¹⁷ of the illustration and signed as *Gwamnã*

116 'Satire drawing,' *Al-Mizan*, No. 1380, p. 3.

117 In the left upper corner of the satirical drawing we can read a mixed Hausa-Arabic phrase which can be translated as follows: 'May God have mercy on a wise man of backward opinions.' It includes a word play on the Arabic: *hakeem (hakīm)* 'a wise man' and Hausa: *hākimi* 'the head of a town or district' (Newman, *A Hausa-English...*, p. 83), originally a loanword from Arabic.

‘governor.’ The caricaturist’s drawing is explained to the readers by the means of a proverb that was used as a caption to add humorous and ironic stylistic colouring. At the same time, the drawing illustrates its particular context and this leads to accurate interpretation.¹¹⁸ See the example:

(20) *Kōwā ya dēbō dà- zafi, bàki-nsà*
 everybody.M3 SG.M.CPL.REL scoop_out hot.ADV mouth-his

lit. ‘All who scoop [food] hot, [will feel it on] their lips’

‘As you sow, so shall you reap’¹¹⁹ = ‘What you do to the others, will be done to you.’

3. Conclusions

Karìn màganā is a traditional cultural expression, a speech act and a mini-text complete in itself, which can be a part of longer texts. Hausa proverbs have particular formal properties that allow them to be incorporated into other texts in various ways. The propositional contents of proverbs are fixed and can be interpreted without context. In political discourse they are updated and lead to instantiated interpretation (particular ways of understanding them by the readers). Thus, in written media texts belonging to political discourse, proverbs give signals that can be interpreted as Pragmatic Markers. In addition to their propositional (literal) meaning they carry representational meaning which contributes to the conceptual dimension of the utterance. The analysis demonstrated that Hausa proverbs in the press by the virtue of their representational meanings have textual and pragmatic functions. They appear as titles, headlines and summaries, and serve as rhetoric devices, arguments and stylistic figures.

Hausa proverbs are a part of Hausa popular culture. In media texts they are often used creatively and can appear in clusters. They are anchored in extra-linguistic situations and events in the political arena. They are arguments in political discourse, elements of political appeal and political satire. They can also serve to call for electoral honesty (this is a specific manifestation of their didactic function in political discourse).

118 Jesenšek, ‘Pragmatic and Stylistic Aspects...’, pp. 142, 155.

119 Abraham, *Dictionary...*, p. 960.