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A Critical Discourse Analyses of the Campaign Manifesto of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka, one of the 2026 Academic Staff Association (ASA) Presidential Candidates at the Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone

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Abstract: This study investigated pragma-discourse features of the 2026 presidential election manifesto of the Academic Staff Association (ASA) presidential candidate, Mr Jonathan Kpaka. The research examined how linguistic and pragmatic resources were strategically employed to construct political identity, communicate policy intentions, and influence voters' perceptions.

Specifically, the study sort to: (i) analyses the pragma-discourse features employed in the manifesto to portray the candidate positively while implicitly presenting his political opponent negatively; (ii) examine the speech acts through which the candidate articulated his political agenda and campaign promises; (iii) identify the ideological orientations underpinning the candidate's policy proposals; and (iv) reveal the implicit and covert meanings embedded in the manifesto. The study adopted a qualitative research design within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), integrating insights from pragmatics and discourse analysis. The analysis revealed that the manifesto extensively employed transitivity processes particularly material, mental, and verbal processes to assign agency, responsibility, and competence to the candidate while subtly attributing inadequacies to his political opponent. The candidate further exploited simple and complex sentence structures, cohesive devices (including reference, additive, and adversative conjunctions), temporal and spatial deixis, inversion, and thematisation to establish textual coherence, foreground ideological positions, and reinforce persuasive political messages. The findings further indicated that commissive and assertive speech acts dominated the manifesto. Commissive speech acts were strategically utilised to express commitments, campaign promises, and future developmental programmes, thereby projecting credibility and leadership. Assertive speech acts were employed to present factual claims, evaluate institutional conditions, justify proposed reforms, and implicitly expose the perceived shortcomings and failures of rival political actors. Ideologically, the manifesto reflected themes of democratic governance, economic transformation, institutional accountability, unity, social justice, staff empowerment, and sustainable development. Additionally, the study revealed that the candidate relied heavily on implicit meanings, presuppositions, strategic lexical choices, and indirect evaluative expressions to criticise political opponents without overt confrontation, thereby maintaining a persuasive and statesmanlike rhetorical stance. The study concluded that political manifestos are not merely policy documents but sophisticated persuasive discourse through which political actors construct favourable public identities, negotiate ideological positions, and shape electoral perceptions. The strategic deployment of pragma-discourse features demonstrated the candidate's deliberate attempt to influence voter cognition while simultaneously legitimising his political agenda and delegitimising opposing candidate through subtle linguistic mechanisms. It is recommended that future political communication should prioritise issue-based and policy-orientated discourse while maintaining linguistic transparency and ethical persuasion. It further recommended that political discourse analysts should continue to integrate pragmatic and critical discourse approaches in analysing electoral texts to uncover hidden ideological meanings and persuasive strategies. Finally, political teams/parties should recognise the importance of carefully crafted linguistic choices in enhancing democratic participation, informed voting, and effective political communication.

KEY WORDS: Pragma-Discourse Analysis, Political Manifesto, Speech Acts, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Political Ideology

INTRODUCTION

The concept of pragma-discourse is primarily employed by linguists whose research lies at the intersection of pragmatics and discourse analysis. It provides an integrated framework for examining language in use by combining the study of utterance meaning with the analysis of discourse within its social and communicative context. Rather than focusing exclusively on the phonological, lexical, or grammatical properties of language, pragma-discourse investigates how speakers communicate intended meanings and how hearers interpret those meanings within specific contextual circumstances. Consequently, the interpretation of an utterance depends not only on its linguistic form but also on factors such as the speaker's intentions, beliefs, identity, the relationship between interlocutors, and the temporal and spatial context in which the utterance occurs. The central concern of pragma-discourse is the relationship between language, context, and meaning. It recognises that meaning is not inherent in linguistic expressions alone but is co-constructed through interaction between speakers, listeners, and the social environment. In this regard, Wiltschko. (2025) argues that pragmatics and discourse analysis share significant common ground because both disciplines investigate the relationship between text, context, and communicative function. This convergence has led to the emergence of pragma-discourse as a unified analytical perspective that accounts for how language functions in real communicative situations. It therefore examines not only what speakers explicitly say but also what they imply, presuppose, and strategically communicate within particular sociocultural and political contexts.

Pragma-discourse also extends beyond the analysis of isolated utterances to examine how stretches of discourse are organised to achieve communicative goals. It investigates the linguistic and rhetorical strategies through which speakers construct identities, negotiate power relations, express ideologies, and influence audiences. In this respect, pragma-discourse encompasses the study of discourse structure, coherence, cohesion, thematic organisation, speech acts, deixis, presupposition, implicature, and other pragmatic resources that contribute to meaning construction. Such an approach enables researchers to uncover both the explicit and implicit meanings embedded within texts and spoken interactions. Although pragmatics and discourse analysis are closely related, they differ in their primary analytical focus. Discourse analysis comprises a wide range of theoretical and

methodological approaches that examine how language is organised above the sentence level and how discourse reflects broader social, cultural, and institutional practices (Leilei, and Chunfang. 2023).

Discourse analysts are primarily concerned with identifying patterns of language use and explaining how texts construct social realities. Pragmatics, on the other hand, investigates how contextual factors influence the interpretation of utterances. It draws upon various aspects of human interaction including social conventions, shared knowledge, speaker intentions, and communicative purposes to explain how meaning is inferred beyond the literal interpretation of words (Wiltschko 2025). The integration of these two complementary disciplines into pragma-discourse therefore provides a comprehensive framework for analysing both the linguistic structures of discourse and the contextual processes through which meaning is negotiated. Furthermore, pragma-discourse incorporates a metalinguistic dimension by examining how language users consciously reflect upon communication itself. It considers how speakers make strategic choices regarding vocabulary, sentence structure, tone, style, audience, and rhetorical organisation to achieve particular communicative objectives. Consequently, pragma-discourse facilitates a deeper understanding of how texts and conversations are designed to persuade, legitimise, manipulate, criticise, or negotiate social relationships. This perspective is particularly valuable in the analysis of political discourse, where language is deliberately employed to construct positive self-representation, delegitimise opponents, promote ideological positions, and shape public opinion.

Pragmatics and discourse analysis have consequently become two of the most influential branches of applied linguistics for investigating language in its social context. While pragmatics initially emerged as a branch of formal linguistics concerned with utterance meaning, its scope has expanded considerably over the past three decades to encompass meaning across extended stretches of discourse (Ochulor and Onuoha 2025). Similarly, discourse analysis has evolved from the examination of textual organisation to include critical investigations of ideology, power, identity, and social practice. Together, these developments have strengthened the interdisciplinary nature of pragma-discourse, making it an effective analytical framework for exploring the interaction between language, communication, and society.

The increasing complexity of human communication underscores the importance of analysing both the meanings speakers intend to convey and the meanings hearers ultimately interpret. Effective communication depends on the successful negotiation of these two dimensions of meaning. As Wiltschko. (2025). observes, understanding language requires consideration of both the explicit linguistic message and the contextual factors that shape its interpretation. Accordingly, pragma-discourse provides a comprehensive approach to language analysis by integrating pragmatic interpretation with discourse analysis, thereby enabling researchers to examine how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and communicated in authentic contexts.

Discourse Analysis and Political Communication

Discourse analysis is fundamentally concerned with the study of language in use. Unlike traditional linguistics, which primarily examines the formal properties of language such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, discourse analysis investigates how language functions within specific social, cultural, and communicative contexts. While linguists focus on the structural organisation of language, discourse analysts are interested in how language is employed to perform communicative functions and construct social realities (Miyagawa. 2022). Consequently, discourse analysis extends beyond sentence-level analysis to examine the organisation, interpretation, and social significance of both spoken and written texts. Discourse may be understood as the actual manifestation of communicative action through language. However, contemporary scholars have broadened the concept to include any meaningful symbolic behaviour through which individuals communicate ideas, beliefs, identities, and social relationships (Leilei, and Chunfang. 2023). In this broader sense, communication is not restricted to verbal language but encompasses other semiotic resources such as photographs, clothing, music, architecture, gestures, visual images, and dance. These modes of communication contribute to meaning-making and often complement or reinforce linguistic messages (Stevens & Sheriff, 2025). Consequently, discourse analysts increasingly adopt a multimodal perspective that recognises the interconnectedness between language and other communicative resources in the production and interpretation of meaning.

The primary objective of discourse analysis is to explain how language constructs meaning within particular contexts and how communicative choices reflect broader social practices, cultural values, and ideological positions. Language is not merely a neutral instrument for conveying information; rather, it serves as a powerful social resource through which individuals establish identities, negotiate relationships, exercise authority, and influence the beliefs and behaviours of others. Through strategic linguistic choices, speakers and writers foreground certain perspectives while backgrounding or suppressing others, thereby shaping how audiences perceive events, individuals, and institutions (Stevens et al., 2025). One of the central concerns of discourse analysis is the relationship between language and power. Language functions as an instrument through which power is negotiated, exercised, legitimised, and sometimes resisted. Every communicative act involves deliberate linguistic choices

that reflect the speaker's intentions and ideological orientations. Speakers frequently manipulate lexical items, grammatical structures, rhetorical devices, and discursive strategies to advance their interests and achieve particular communicative objectives. In many instances, the implicit meanings embedded within discourse exert greater persuasive influence than explicitly stated propositions. Presuppositions, implicatures, metaphorical expressions, evaluative language, and rhetorical framing often shape audience interpretation more effectively than direct assertions. Consequently, discourse analysis seeks to uncover these hidden meanings and explain how they contribute to persuasion and ideological representation.

Political discourse provides one of the most significant contexts in which language, ideology, and power intersect. Political actors depend heavily on language to persuade, legitimise authority, mobilise public support, and construct favourable public identities. Ochulor and Onuoha. (2025) argue that the level of electoral support political candidates receive is determined not only by the content of their political programmes but also by the linguistic strategies through which these programmes are communicated. The effectiveness of political communication therefore depends upon both the substance of the message and the rhetorical techniques employed in its presentation. Persuasive political discourse enables candidates to establish credibility, inspire confidence, justify policy proposals, and distinguish themselves from political opponents.

Within democratic societies, the office of the President represents the highest level of political leadership and public accountability. As such, effective communication between the President and the electorate is indispensable for democratic governance. Although presidents communicate through multiple channels including speeches, interviews, debates, press conferences, policy documents, and media engagements the election manifesto remains one of the most important instruments of political communication. A political manifesto outlines a candidate's vision, ideological orientation, policy priorities, and proposed programmes of government. It simultaneously functions as a persuasive document intended to convince voters that the candidate possesses the competence, integrity, and leadership qualities necessary to govern effectively. The principal objective of political discourse is to persuade, inform, educate, mobilise, inspire, and influence public opinion (Ikeke, 2021). Throughout history, successful political leaders have relied on carefully constructed rhetoric to legitimise their authority, secure electoral support, and build consensus around their political agendas. Through the strategic use of language, politicians frame national issues, construct collective identities, evoke emotional responses, and legitimise particular courses of political action. Consequently, political communication is inherently persuasive and ideologically driven, reflecting both the aspirations of political actors and the socio-political realities within which they operate.

In democratic systems founded upon principles of representation, equality, and accountability, elected leaders are expected to communicate policies that reflect the aspirations and welfare of the citizenry. Political manifestoes and campaign speeches therefore perform multiple communicative functions. Beyond presenting policy proposals, they foster political participation, strengthen the relationship between political parties and the electorate, articulate ideological commitments, and establish a framework through which citizens evaluate political leadership. As Ochulor and Onuoha. (2025) observe, political documents constitute essential instruments for constructing national identity, promoting collective values, communicating developmental agendas, and mobilising public support for governance programmes.

From a pragma-discourse perspective, political manifestoes represent carefully designed persuasive texts in which linguistic choices are rarely accidental. Every lexical selection, grammatical construction, speech act, cohesive device, and rhetorical strategy contributes to the broader communicative objective of constructing positive self-representation while simultaneously delegitimising political opponents. The integration of discourse analysis and pragmatics therefore provides a robust analytical framework for examining how political candidates employ language to project ideological positions, negotiate power relations, influence voter cognition, and shape electoral outcomes. This integrated perspective is particularly relevant to the present study, which investigates the pragma-discourse features employed in the 2026 ASA presidential election manifesto of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka to uncover both its explicit political messages and its implicit ideological meanings. Manifestoes are widely embraced in many leadership settings and countries worldwide because politics is vital in human affairs. Campaign manifestoes are essential to the public as they serve as a primary platform for political leaders to communicate their goals, perspectives, emotions, and actions on national matters. These manifestoes have a significant impact on the public's opinions and decisions. According to Ochulor and Onuoha (2025), inaugural manifestoes are used not only for the content of the candidate's message but also for the manner and location in which it is delivered. Within such texts, the President and the political party aim not only to secure public votes but also to instill a sense of confidence among the people regarding the potential of the administration that may be established. Hence, using language in this context may be characterised as a manifestation of ideas and a means of persuasion, a weapon for upholding authority, and a means of acquiring authority.

Statement of the Problem

Manifestoes are the language of politics used for power acquisition purposes. It seems to be a mystery how the communicative ideologies conveyed through manifestoes can dramatically and strategically cause changes in the choice of electing presidents. Some studies on political manifestoes have placed much significance on examining presidential campaign manifestoes over time to reveal how presidential rhetoric shapes power and ideology (Ikeke, 2021; Ashraf et al., 2022 in Ochulor and Onuoha. (2025). Instead, these studies have focused on analysing individual manifestoes during a specific period. The problem of x-raying these manifestoes from a pragma-discourse point of view has created a compelling need to study election manifestoes through an acceptable theoretical framework to contribute meaningfully to the already existing body of knowledge. Aspirants manifesto enables them to provide insights into their political agenda. Hence, there is a need to aid the public in having a more profound meaning beyond the surface meaning in aspirants manifestoes. This is the problem that this study intends to solve. Manifestoes are predominantly words expressed via a condensed expression to motivate, inspire, instigate, or even condemn.

This study is geared towards unraveling the significance of manifestoes as they affect and influence the public during and after elections. Examining the broader socio-historical context provides a valuable understanding of how Presidential candidates have effectively reused and marketed their speeches, both through subtle and overt means, throughout history. Additionally, it aids in delineating the evolution of Presidential rhetoric using diachronic analysis, aiming to enhance the conventional synchronic findings found in studies by Adetunji (2009) & Ayeomini (2012) in Ochulor and Onuoha. (2025) and Wiltschko. (2025), Miyagawa. (2022), and others. It is crucial to examine how this history precisely demonstrates the varying approaches Presidential candidates have in conceptualising ideas and their intended methods of governing their countries or the Academic Staff Association at the Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study focuses on the pragma-discourse prism of campaign manifesto of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka, one of the 2026 ASA presidential election candidates. The following are the specific objectives:

a. analyse the pragma-discourse features in the election manifesto used by Mr. Jonathan Kpaka to present SELF positively and OTHERS negatively;

b. explores the speech acts in the election manifesto through which Mr. Jonathan Kpaka presented his political agenda;

c. examines the ideologies that influenced the policies expressed in the election manifesto of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka

d. analyse the meanings covertly expressed in the election manifesto of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka as ASA presidential candidate.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study uses the qualitative method of analysis. It adopts a descriptive research design in examining one of the presidential election manifestos of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka of 2026 ASA election at the Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone. Qualitative research design is any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at using statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Ochulor and Onuoha 2025). A qualitative research design is concerned with understanding the context in which behaviour occurs. The strength of a qualitative research technique is that it allows a broader view to be taken and, therefore, makes the research approach flexible. This design is justified because the study included studying the ideological underpinnings of Presidential election manifestos, for which the absolute result was not the target. This research again employed the qualitative approach because the qualitative approach does not only investigate what a problem is but also why, how, where and when the problem appeared. The method does not produce information in the particular case studies but also draws general conclusions on the informed assertion. It can also be used to seek empirical support for such research hypotheses (Ochulor and Onuoha 2025).

Population and Sampling Technique

The data for this study is the 2026 ETU-SL Academic Staff Association`s presidential election manifesto of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka. The manifesto was requested from the candidate Mr. Jonathan Kpaka. The election manifesto contains 16 pages. Forty (20) excerpts are sampled purposively for this investigation. The election manifesto belongs to the non-spontaneous category of oral speeches. In other words, it was formally prepared and written for oral delivery. The pragma discourse features, speech acts, ideologies and covert messages of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka.

Methods of Data Collection

The study employs a purposive sampling method to select 20 excerpts from the election manifesto of the Kpaka Team. The purposive sampling method was chosen because it enables the study to choose only those portions of texts that are relevant to the variables under scrutiny.

Methods of Data Analysis

The study employs van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to the Critical Discourse Model (CDA), supported by Searle's speech act and Grice's conversational implicature in examining the study's data for the pragma-discourse features and speech acts deployed about the political agenda and ideologies of the Kpaka Team presidential candidate as well as the covert meanings expressed in the election manifesto. The study draws insight from Ochulor and Onuoha (2025) citation of van Dijk's macro, micro and meso levels. The micro level focuses on language use, that is, the immediate lexical items, grammatical choices and rhetorical interrelations held within any text. Conversely, the macro is the higher level representing the text's topic, theme or gist. The level addresses concepts like dominance, power, and inequality within social groups. The macro has a relationship between language and all the meta-language features of communicative behaviour. Finally, the meso level acts as a bridge between the micro and macro levels and focuses mainly on the context of the text and how it is initially produced (Ochulor and Onuoha 2025).

This study combines the three levels simultaneously to analyse the data. The micro, macro, and meso levels are supported by van Dijk's notion of the ideological square, which discusses how political actors employ linguistic features in their texts to present themselves positively and negatively to others. While Grice's conversational implicature is deployed to reveal the hidden meanings in the utterances of the Kpaka Team presidential candidate, Seale's speech act serves to identify the unique characteristics of the election manifesto and how the APC presidential candidate uses language in a social context. The data analysis is divided into four sections. The first section examines the excerpts using van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to the CDA model. Insights from Dijk's macro, micro and meso levels and his notion of the ideological square are deployed here in identifying and describing the pragma-discourse features used in the election manifesto by the Kpaka Team candidate to present himself positively and others negatively. This stage is followed by the second stage of the analysis, which examines the selected excerpts and how speech acts have been used to relay the political agenda of the Kpaka Team presidential candidate. The third stage of the analysis focuses on the ideological underpinnings of the candidate, as evidenced in his manifesto. Finally, the fourth stage employs Grice's conversational maxims to uncover the covert meanings expressed in the election manifesto of the Kpaka Team candidate.

Result

This section examines the selected excerpts to answer the research questions. The data analysis and interpretation are structured in four sections, as discussed below.

Presentation of Self Positively and Others Negatively in the Election Manifestos Ochulor and Onuoha (2025) posit that "a socio-cognitive approach to discourse offers a unique and necessary interface between the macro aspects of society and the micro aspects of discourse and interpretation". The meeting point between the macro and micro is regarded as the 'meso', which informs the notion of context. In line with van Dijk's submission, Abaya (2019) as cited by Ochulor and Onuoha (2025) states that the macro level of analysis comprises issues such as positive self-presentation and negative other-representation. According to Ochulor and Onuoha (2025), the micro level of analysis covers aspects such as coherence, cohesive relations, lexical and topic selection, rhetorical figures, deictic expressions, speech acts, and proposition structures. Other elements of the micro level of analysis include lexical items, grammatical choices, and rhetorical interrelations in any text. This section employs insights from van Dijk's micro, macro and meso levels in analysing the pragma-discourse features used in the election manifesto of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka. The essence of the analysis is to describe how the Kpaka Team candidate used different pragma-discourse features to present himself positively and others negatively.

This analysis captures the pragma-discourse features used in Mr. Jonathan Kpaka's election manifesto to present himself positively and others negatively. The following excerpts from the Team Kpaka Campaign Speech (TKCS) illustrate this.

Excerpt 1.

I am not a politician parachuted into academic life, I am one of you. (TKCS, 2026, p.4)

Excerpt 2.

Vote for a vision in which your welfare and your integrity are not compromised for selfish individual gains. (TKCS, 2026, p.13)

Excerpt 3.

They will choose between a leadership that sleeps and a leadership that engages. (TKCS, 2026, P. 13).

Excerpt 4

Between a leadership that waits to be called and a leadership that walks into the room (TKCS, 2023, p. 13).

Excerpt 5.

Between the politics of convenience and the politics of conviction (TKCS, 2026, p. 13).

Analyses and Discussion

The excerpts (1-5) above illustrate the use of pragma-discourse features to positively present self and undesirably represent others in Mr. Jonathan Kpaka`s election manifesto. For example, Mr. Jonathan Kpaka speaks of one of the achievements he has made in excerpt one, using pragma-discourse features such as simple sentences, topicalisation, material verbs, and descriptive lexical words. The OTHERS in this objective is an indefinite pronoun which does not refer to any specific individual. The text begins with the nominal phrase "I am not". This nominal phrase is foregrounded as the topic of discourse because it carries the crux of the speaker's message. The nominal phrase is succeeded by the material verb "parachuted" and implicitly refers to what Mr. Raymond Musa (the Donkey), one of his predecessors' government has achieved. It implies that he was not just brought to academic life to contest but has gone through most of the stages of academic life experienced by his colleagues. The verbal item is immediately followed by the lexical word "into", a content word deployed to describe one of Donkey`s government's successes. The positive presentation of the Donkey`s government in this text by Jonathan Kpaka is achieved through the interactions between the nominal expression, the material verb and the content lexical items.

In excerpt two, Mr. Jonathan Kpaka alludes to the periods in which staff members empirically or inadvertently believed that their ASA leadership/presidents betrayed them in the fight for their welfare betterments and many other issues. the Kpaka Team assured and allied the fears of staff members worried about the challenges of insecurity. The text begins with the expression " Vote for a vision in which your welfare and your integrity are not compromised". This expression is fronted and serves as the topic of discourse. Apart from the utilisation of the topic sentence, temporal deixis is introduced with the adverb "which" is used to denote time/period. The dietic item alludes to the period that the Kpaka government will assume office. The pronominal reference "in" refers to the future government. Through the reference item, the reader understands the referent of the discourse. The fronted subordinate clause is succeeded by a main clause and two other subordinate clauses, which combine to form a complex sentence. The relationship that exists between these clauses is hypotaxis. This relationship is due to the unequal status accorded to these clauses.

Noteworthy is the fact that Mr. Jonathan Kpaka represents a predecessor's government in a negative light. The negative representation of other is aided through the use of the verb 'compromised", which has a negative connotation. This is supported by the material phrase "for selfish individual gain". The choice of these materials phrase serves to depict the atrocious nature of the assumed betrayers. The preceding statement and lexical items "vote for proper representation!" are dynamic lexical items deployed to indicate the future successes to be achieved by the Kpaka government in its combat against insecurity worrying members of the Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone. The two pronouns "your" refers to the Academic Staff Association and the university as a whole. The choice of this pronominal reference by the speaker is to show solidarity with the staff who believe have been victims of betrayal.

Excerpt three is another instance of the positive presentation of self in Jonathan Kpaka's manifesto. Here, he speaks positively of his government implicitly by referring to this government as "one who engages" and his opponents as "one who sleeps". The speaker foregrounds this expression because it is his topic of discourse and hence wants attention to be drawn to it. In excerpt four, Jonathan Kpaka comments on the cynics of the Kpaka Team. These are people who, circadian, are striving to discredit his leadership prowess. He speaks positively of his government by referring to his government as "a leadership that walks into the room" meaning an agile, proactive and preemptive government that seek the interest of the people instead of being called upon. He covertly negated his opponents as "a leadership that waits to be called" meaning they are less proactive, vague, intangible, elusive and subtle. Topicalisation, additive conjunction, and content lexical words with negative connotations are pragma-discourse features deployed in this text to negatively represent the Kpaka government's detractors negatively.

Excerpt five is a complex loaded sentence that topicalise the speaker's message as captured in the expression " the politics of convenience and the politics of conviction". Through tropicalizing his discourse subject, the speaker presents his government positively. The positive light in which his government has been presented is further buttressed by the following lexical items

with positive connotations: "politics of Conviction," meaning his government will stand for its members as required and demanded with waiting on the administration`s bottleneck bureaucratic approval as the case may be. Negative other representation is illustrated in the same excerpt using topicalization, focalization, additive conjunction, and content words with negative meanings. Topicalisation in this text features in the expression " politics of convenience". The speaker tropicalizes this expression by fronting it. The essence of the fronting is to foreground the subject of discourse.

Speech Acts in the Election Manifestos through which Mr. Jonathan Kpaka presented his political agenda;

The second phase of the data analysis focuses on the candidate's utilisation of speech acts to relay his political agenda. Speech acts involve the analysis of intended meaning in conversation and discourse analysis that investigates the election manifesto and choice of words by the Kpaka Team presidential aspirant during the electoral campaign. Mabaquiao, Jr. (2026) proposed five speech act classifications to analyse political discourse from a speaker's perspective. The five speech acts proposed by Mabaquiao, Jr. are assertive, commissive, expressive, declarative, and directives are applied to the election manifesto to describe how they have been used to relay the political agenda of this presidential candidate. The analysis under this section captures Jonathan Kpaka's use of speech acts in his election manifesto to present his political agenda. The following excerpts from his manifesto illustrate this use.

Excerpt 6

Negotiate for periodic, inflation-adjusted review of salaries and allowances in line with the condition of service as and when necessary. (TKCS, 2026, p. 8).

Excerpt 7

Respectfully advocate for prompt and full payment of salaries, arrears, and statutory entitlements. (TKCS, 2026, p. 8).

Excerpt 8

Push for improved retirement benefits, health insurance, life and disability cover for staff and dependents. (TKCS, 2026, p. 8).

Excerpt 9

Ensure transparent, harmonized conditions of service across ranks, campuses, and disciplines. (TKCS, 2026, p.8).

Excerpt 10

Establishment of a comfortable and dignified staff common room through several means e.g. Lobby with administration, stakeholders, voluntary contribution, well-wishers etc. – place where colleagues can relax, exchange ideas, and feel that they belong to the university. (TKCS, 2026, p. 8).

Analyses and Discussion

In excerpt six, Jonathan Kpaka speaks of the intention of his government to build a more robust and re-energized armed force. The locutionary act in this excerpt is the intention of his government to undertake a reform if voted into office. The illocutionary force of the excerpt is Kpaka's promise to the Association. The perlocutionary act is the hope and assurance the promise gives staff. The locutionary act in his utterance is informing. This claim is because he uses the utterance to provide staff members with information. The illocutionary act of the utterance is informing, which is classified as an assertive speech act.

Excerpt seven depicts the speaker`s reference to the staff members' economy The locutionary act in this excerpt is informing. This is so because Kpaka provides ASA members with information regarding their economy improvement. The illocutionary act of this utterance is informing. It is classified under the Assertive Speech Act. Since the utterance is made to the university populace, its perlocutionary effect in the university is preference, pleasure and happiness. This functions primarily as a directive and commissive speech act: it calls on actors to take action and simultaneously signals the speaker's commitment to press for payment. Its illocutionary force is a formal pledge and demand for compliance with legal and moral obligations. The intended perlocutionary effects are to create urgency, mobilize affected staff, allies, and build confidence among members/voters that the Kpaka Team prioritizes economic justice and institutional accountability. Implications for the audience include heightened expectations of follow, through which a successful delivery strengthens credibility and voter support, while failure risks cynicism and loss of trust.

Excerpt eight is chiefly a commissive/directive policy commitment: it promises advocacy for expanded welfare provisions and directs institutional actors toward reforms. Its illocutionary force frames the Jonathan Kpaka as a protector of staff welfare and

family security. Perlocutionarily, it seeks to reassure employees, attract voters concerned with social protection, and position the speaker as compassionate and responsible. The implications for audiences are both emotional (increased security and peace of mind) and instrumental (expectation of concrete policy changes); again, persuasive impact depends on the speaker's credibility and demonstrated capacity to implement benefits. The statement in excerpt nine operates as an assertive-directive. It asserts a problem of unequal treatment and directs corrective institutional reform. Its illocutionary force is a commitment to fairness, transparency, and standardization of conditions. The intended perlocutionary outcomes are to reduce perceptions of favoritism, foster institutional cohesion, and persuade diverse constituencies that he, Mr Jonathan Kpaka seeks equitable treatment. For the audience, this raises accountability standards and promises impartial governance. Failure to deliver harmonization would undermine trust, while success strengthens legitimacy across ranks and locations.

Excerpt ten places functions as a mixed speech act which include directive, commissive, and expressive. It commits to a tangible, symbolic improvement in workplace culture while expressing care for staff wellbeing. It`s illocutionary force is community building through the promotion of belongingness, morale, and informal collaboration. Perlocutionary aims include boosting staff morale, encouraging collegial networks, and generating positive word-of-mouth that can influence broader opinion. The implications for audiences are chiefly relational and symbolic. It is a low-cost and visible gestures that can yield high emotional returns. However, if presented as empty rhetoric without follow-through, such promises can be perceived as tokenistic.

Ideologies that influenced the policies expressed by Mr. Jonathan Kpaka in the election manifesto

The third phase of the data analysis focuses on Mr. Jonathan Kpaka's exploitation of speech acts, pragma-discourse and interlocutory gestures to relay his ideological agenda. The following excerpts from his manifesto illustrate this use.

Excerpt 11

'Together for welfare. Together for progress". (TKCS, 2026, p.2).

Excerpt 12

Remuneration, Benefits and Conditions of service (fair and competitive compensation- TKCS, 2026, p.8).

Excerpt 13

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy. (TKCS, 2026, p.9).

Excerpt 14

Research, funding and infrastructure- respectfully advocates for increased institutional and governmental funding for research grants, laboratories and libraries. (TKCS, 2026, p.10).

Excerpt 15

Equity, diversity and inclusion- promote gender equity in appointments, promotions and leardership positions. (TKCS, 2026, p11).

Analyses and Discussion

Excerpt eleven is a slogan that reflects the ideology of collectivism, solidarity, and inclusive leadership. It portrays the institution as a unified community in which the welfare and progress of all members are shared responsibilities. As an expressive and commissive speech act, it conveys the speaker's commitment to advancing the collective interests of academic staff rather than pursuing individual or sectional gains. The illocutionary force lies in presenting a vision of unity and shared development, while the perlocutionary effect is to create emotional attachment, trust, and a sense of belonging among staff members. Ideologically, the slogan encourages academic staff to identify with the speaker's vision of participatory governance and institutional harmony. By emphasizing collective welfare and progress, the speaker increases the likelihood that staff will perceive him as a leader capable of promoting their common interests, thereby influencing them to vote in his favour.

Excerpt twelve reflects the ideology of economic justice, employee welfare, and institutional equity. It demonstrates the belief that academic excellence depends on fair remuneration and improved working conditions. As a directive and commissive speech act, it calls for reforms while simultaneously committing the speaker to pursuing equitable compensation. The illocutionary force is a promise to improve staff welfare, whereas the perlocutionary effect is to reassure academic staff that their financial concerns will be addressed. Ideologically, the emphasis on fairness and competitive compensation appeals directly to the economic interests of lecturers and researchers, many of whom view improved salaries and benefits as indicators of institutional

respect and professional recognition. Consequently, the manifesto is likely to persuade academic staff to support the speaker because it aligns with their immediate material needs and long-term career aspirations.

Excerpt thirteen embodies the ideology of academic liberalism, institutional independence, and democratic governance. It emphasizes the importance of protecting universities from political interference while safeguarding the freedom of teaching, learning, and research. Functioning as both an assertive and commissive speech act, it declares the significance of academic freedom and commits Kpaka to preserving it. The illocutionary force is the affirmation of institutional independence, while the perlocutionary effect is to reassure academics that their professional autonomy will be protected. Ideologically, this position resonates strongly with academic staff, whose professional identity depends on intellectual freedom and independent scholarship. By promising to defend these core academic values, the speaker presents himself as a protector of higher education, thereby increasing the confidence of academic staff and motivating them to vote for his leadership.

In excerpt fourteen, the statement echoes the ideology of knowledge-driven development, educational investment, and institutional modernization. It recognizes research as the foundation of academic growth and national development. As a directive and commissive speech act, it advocates for increased funding while committing the Mr. Jonathan Kpaka to pursuing better research facilities and infrastructure. The illocutionary force is an appeal for strategic investment in higher education, whereas the perlocutionary effect is to inspire confidence among academic staff that their research productivity and professional development will receive greater institutional support. Ideologically, the proposal aligns with the aspirations of lecturers and researchers who depend on adequate funding, laboratories, and libraries to perform effectively. By presenting research investment as a priority, the speaker positions himself as a development-oriented leader, making academic staff more inclined to support his candidature because it promises tangible improvements to their academic environment.

This excerpt (fifteen) reflects the ideology of social justice, equality, inclusiveness, and gender equity. It promotes fair representation and equal opportunities in appointments, promotions, and leadership within the institution. As a directive, commissive, and expressive speech act, it proposes institutional reforms while expressing commitment to fairness and inclusive governance. The illocutionary force is a pledge to eliminate discriminatory practices, while the perlocutionary effect is to encourage confidence among underrepresented groups and reinforce perceptions of fairness across the institution. Ideologically, the statement appeals to academic staff who value meritocracy, equal opportunity, and transparent governance. Female academics and supporters of inclusive leadership may particularly perceive the speaker as committed to addressing systemic inequalities. This ideological positioning broadens the speaker's electoral appeal by portraying him as a progressive and equitable leader, thereby increasing the likelihood that academic staff will vote for him in anticipation of a more inclusive and fair institutional environment.

covertly expressed meanings in the election manifesto of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka as ASA presidential candidate.

The forth analyses focus on the embedded covert meaning in the manifesto of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka. Here the speaker creatively and ingeniously presented the ideologies of his team with and implied accretions of what might be affecting most of his colleagues. Some of the illustrations include excerpts 16-20 below;

Excerpt 16

Advocate for the fair treatment and inclusion of staff with disabilities. (TKCS, 2026, p.11).

Excerpt 17

Address discrimination based on ethnicity, region, gender, or political affiliation within the university. (TKCS, 2026, p.11)

Excerpt 18

Support policies that widen access to academic careers for underrepresented groups. (TKCS, 2026, p.12)

Excerpt 19

Under by presidency, ASA will run an open-door policy. (TKCS, 2026, p.12)

Excerpt 20

“We will be present at every meeting where our names are on the agenda. We will be present at all given time and in all corridors of power to negotiate and diligent decisions about out our future and we will report to you accordingly “.

Analyses and Discussion

Excerpt sixteen reflects the ideology of social justice, equality, inclusiveness, and human rights. Covertly, the statement implies that staff with disabilities have previously experienced exclusion, discrimination, or unequal treatment within the university. Rather than directly accusing the institution of marginalization, the speaker strategically frames the proposal as an advocacy initiative, thereby avoiding confrontation while acknowledging an existing institutional deficiency. From a pragma-discourse perspective, the lexical choices advocate, fair treatment, and inclusion construct the Jonathan Kpaka as compassionate, ethical, and committed to equitable governance. The use of positive evaluative language foregrounds the moral responsibility of university leadership to create an inclusive working environment. Pragmatically, the statement presupposes the existence of barriers affecting disabled staff and subtly positions the speaker as the leader capable of removing those barriers.

The excerpt primarily performs a commissive speech act, as the speaker commits himself to promoting policies that protect staff with disabilities. It also contains an expressive speech act, conveying empathy and concern for vulnerable members of the university community. The illocutionary force is a promise to promote equality and institutional inclusion, while the perlocutionary effect is to reassure disabled staff and demonstrate to the wider academic community that the speaker values fairness and equal opportunity. This commitment is likely to influence academic staff to vote for the speaker because it projects an image of inclusive leadership that protects the rights of all employees. Institutionally, implementing such policies could enhance staff morale, strengthen compliance with principles of equity, improve workplace diversity, and promote a more inclusive university culture. Excerpt seventeen embodies the ideology of equality, anti-discrimination, institutional neutrality, and democratic governance. Covertly, it suggests that discrimination based on identity and political affiliation already exists within the university, although this accusation is not explicitly stated. The wording indirectly criticizes previous administrations for allowing such practices while positioning the speaker as an agent of institutional reform. Within the pragma-discourse framework, the verb address is deliberately selected because it is less confrontational than words such as eliminate or condemn. This lexical choice enables the speaker to acknowledge institutional problems diplomatically while maintaining a conciliatory tone. The enumeration of ethnicity, region, gender, and political affiliation broadens the scope of inclusiveness and signals impartial leadership.

The statement performs both a directive and a commissive speech act. It directs attention toward institutional reforms while simultaneously committing the speaker to combating discriminatory practices. The illocutionary force is a pledge to establish fairness and equal treatment. Its perlocutionary effect is to reassure staff who may have experienced discrimination and to encourage confidence in a more transparent and merit-based university system. For the academic staff, the promise of impartiality is likely to encourage electoral support because it suggests that appointments, promotions, and professional opportunities will depend on competence rather than personal identity or political loyalty. For the university, such reforms could improve institutional cohesion, reduce workplace conflicts, and strengthen confidence in university governance.

Excerpt eighteen mirrors the ideology of inclusive development, equal opportunity, and social equity. The covert meaning embedded in the statement is that access to academic employment has historically favoured certain groups while excluding others. Rather than directly accusing the institution of unfair recruitment practices, the speaker subtly implies the need for corrective reforms. Pragma-discourse analysis reveals the strategic use of the verbs support and widen, which portray the speaker as collaborative rather than authoritarian. The phrase underrepresented groups deliberately avoids identifying particular categories, making the statement broadly inclusive and politically acceptable while allowing diverse audiences to identify themselves as potential beneficiaries. The statement functions primarily as a commissive speech act, committing the speaker to promoting equitable recruitment policies. It also performs an assertive speech act, recognizing unequal representation within the university. The illocutionary force is a commitment to expanding opportunities, while the perlocutionary effect is to inspire hope among early-career academics, women, minority groups, and other marginalized populations. Electorally, the statement broadens the speaker's support base because many staff members may perceive future opportunities for themselves or their colleagues. Institutionally, successful implementation could diversify academic staff, enhance institutional legitimacy, and promote a culture of fairness and equal opportunity.

Excerpt nineteen redirects the ideology of participatory leadership, transparency, accountability, and democratic governance. Covertly, it implies that previous administrations may have been inaccessible, secretive, or disconnected from academic staff. Rather than openly criticizing former leaders, the speaker contrasts his proposed leadership style with what is implicitly presented as inadequate governance. From a pragma-discourse perspective, the possessive expression my presidency personalizes responsibility and portrays the speaker as confident and accountable. The metaphor open-door policy symbolizes accessibility, consultation, responsiveness, and continuous communication between leadership and stakeholders. The metaphor also functions as a persuasive rhetorical device that simplifies complex governance principles into an easily understood image. The statement performs a commissive speech act, promising transparent leadership, and an expressive speech act, expressing openness and willingness to engage with staff. The illocutionary force is the commitment to accessible governance, while the

perlocutionary effect is to build trust, reduce perceptions of administrative distance, and encourage staff participation in institutional decision-making. Academic staff are likely to interpret this commitment as evidence that their concerns will be heard and respected, increasing their willingness to support the speaker. For the university, an open-door leadership style may strengthen communication, improve staff-management relations, encourage collaborative problem-solving, and foster institutional stability.

Excerpt twenty reveals the ideology of representation, accountability, participatory governance, advocacy, and responsible leadership. Covertly, it suggests that previous representatives may have failed to attend important meetings, inadequately defended staff interests, or neglected to provide feedback to their constituents. Without directly criticizing former leaders, the speaker implicitly contrasts his anticipated leadership with perceived past shortcomings. From a pragma-discourse perspective, the repeated use of the first-person plural pronoun "we" creates solidarity between the speaker and academic staff, portraying leadership as collective rather than individual. The repetition of "we will be present" serves as an instance of parallelism, reinforcing commitment and reliability. The metaphor "corridors of power" symbolizes institutional decision-making arenas where important negotiations occur, while "report to you accordingly" foregrounds transparency and accountability. These discourse strategies construct the speaker as an active representative who will consistently defend the interests of academic staff. The excerpt primarily performs a commissive speech act, containing multiple explicit promises concerning attendance, negotiation, representation, and accountability. It also contains an assertive element, presenting the speaker as capable of fulfilling these responsibilities. The illocutionary force is a strong commitment to responsible representation, while the perlocutionary effect is to reassure academic staff that their voices will not be ignored in university governance.

This promise is likely to influence academic staff to vote for the speaker because it addresses concerns about effective representation and transparent communication. Staff are encouraged to believe that their interests will be actively defended in institutional decision-making and that they will receive regular feedback on negotiated outcomes. For the university as a whole, such leadership could strengthen institutional accountability, improve communication between representatives and staff, increase confidence in governance processes, and promote collaborative decision-making. Overall, the repeated promises construct the speaker as a dependable, visible, and accountable leader whose leadership is based on continuous engagement with the academic community rather than administrative isolation.

Summary

This study examined the pragma-discourse prism of the 2026 Academic Staff Association (ASA) presidential election manifesto of Mr. Jonathan Kpaka. It analysed the linguistic and pragmatic strategies employed to persuade academic staff and shape their voting decisions. Specifically, the study investigated the pragma-discourse features used to construct a positive self-image and a comparatively negative image of others, explored the speech acts through which the candidate articulated his political agenda, examined the ideologies underpinning his proposed policies, and analysed the covert meanings embedded in the manifesto. The findings revealed that Mr. Jonathan Kpaka strategically employed a range of pragma-discourse features, including personal pronouns, lexical choices, repetition, parallelism, modality, presupposition, metaphor, positive evaluative expressions, and inclusive language to portray himself as a competent, transparent, accountable, and people-centred leader. While the manifesto rarely attacked opponents directly, it implicitly portrayed previous leadership as ineffective through references to unresolved institutional problems and promises of reform.

The speech act analysis demonstrated that commissive speech acts dominated the manifesto, reflecting numerous promises relating to staff welfare, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, research funding, inclusiveness, equitable remuneration, and participatory governance. These were complemented by assertive, directive, and expressive speech acts, which collectively projected the candidate's vision for institutional transformation. The study further established that the manifesto was shaped by ideologies of democratic governance, transparency, accountability, social justice, inclusiveness, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, equity, meritocracy, employee welfare, and participatory leadership. These ideologies were presented as guiding principles for addressing the concerns of academic staff and strengthening university governance. Finally, the analysis of covert meanings revealed that many policy statements implicitly suggested dissatisfaction with previous leadership, inadequate staff welfare, limited inclusiveness, insufficient research support, poor communication, and weak institutional representation. Rather than expressing these criticisms explicitly, the candidate employed indirect pragmatic strategies that enabled him to criticize existing conditions while maintaining a positive and professional campaign tone.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Mr. Jonathan Kpaka's election manifesto is not merely a political document but a carefully constructed pragma-discourse text designed to persuade academic staff through strategic linguistic choices. The manifesto combines persuasive discourse with pragmatic functions to present the candidate as a credible, competent, and reform-oriented leader

while subtly highlighting perceived shortcomings of previous leadership. The predominance of commissive speech acts demonstrates that electoral persuasion within university politics relies heavily on promises and commitments intended to influence voting behaviour. These commitments are reinforced by assertive, directive, and expressive speech acts that collectively construct an image of visionary leadership committed to institutional development.

The ideological analysis further indicates that the manifesto is rooted in democratic principles emphasizing transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, equity, academic freedom, staff welfare, and institutional autonomy. These ideological positions resonate strongly with the expectations and professional values of academic staff, thereby increasing the persuasive strength of the manifesto. Moreover, the study shows that political persuasion in academic elections is often achieved through covert rather than overt communication. By relying on presupposition, implication, metaphor, and positive framing, the candidate subtly communicates criticisms of existing governance while projecting optimism and reform. Consequently, the manifesto succeeds in appealing simultaneously to the emotional, professional, and institutional interests of academic staff. Overall, the study demonstrates that pragma-discourse analysis provides valuable insights into how political manifestos employ language strategically to construct identities, communicate ideologies, influence perceptions, and shape electoral decisions within higher education institutions. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that effective election manifestos within higher education depend not only on the policies they propose but also on the strategic use of language, pragmatic meaning, and ideological positioning to persuade academic staff and inspire confidence in prospective leadership.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

ASA presidential candidates should continue to employ clear, persuasive, and inclusive language in their manifestos while ensuring that campaign promises are realistic, measurable, and achievable in order to maintain credibility after elections. Academic Staff Association leaders should translate manifesto commitments into concrete policies and periodically report progress to members to strengthen accountability and institutional trust.

University administrators should promote transparent, participatory, and inclusive governance practices that reflect the democratic ideals consistently advocated in election manifestos. Future ASA candidates should complement persuasive campaign language with detailed implementation strategies, timelines, and monitoring mechanisms to demonstrate the feasibility of proposed policies.

Academic staff members should critically evaluate election manifestos beyond rhetorical promises by considering the practicality, consistency, and sustainability of the proposed policies before making electoral decisions.

Researchers in linguistics and discourse studies should undertake further pragma-discourse analyses of political communication in higher education, including campaign speeches, debates, social media discourse, and post-election leadership communication, to broaden understanding of institutional political discourse. Universities and professional associations should encourage discourse that promotes inclusiveness, academic freedom, equity, transparency, and accountability, as these principles contribute to effective institutional governance and sustainable academic development.

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