Pragmatic Acts in Nigerian Pidgin Football Commentary

Ifeyinwa Celestina Nwabanne
Department of English Language and Literature
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
ic.nwabanne@unizik.edu.ng
&

Ifunanya Laurencia Ebekue, PhD
Department of English Language and Literature
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
li.ebekue@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

Nigerian Pidgin (NP) football commentary serves as a dynamic platform for engaging diverse audiences, yet its pragmatic mechanisms remain under-explored. This study addresses this gap by applying Jacob Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory to examine pragmatic acts (practs) and their contextual variations (allopracts) in NP commentary. Through qualitative discourse analysis of ten purposively sampled match-event composites from Nigerian national teams, clubs, or players, the study covers the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), the 2023–2024 Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL), and selected 2025 fixtures. It investigates how commentators deploy practs such as praising, criticizing, encouraging, and predicting within micro-, meso-, and macro-pragmemes. The objectives are threefold: to categorise common practs and allopracts in NP commentary, to examine how these acts reflect culturally and situationally driven pragmemes, and to assess how these pragmatic strategies foster inclusivity and emotional connection in Nigeria's multilingual media landscape. Findings reveal that NP commentary systematically layers pragmatic acts to narrate events, entertain, critique, and affirm cultural identity, demonstrating the language's adaptability, immediacy, and expressive depth. The study contributes a novel linguistic perspective to sports discourse research and offers practical implications for broadcaster

training, showing that leveraging NP's pragmatic richness can enhance audience engagement and validate its professional status in Nigerian sports broadcasting.

Keywords: Nigerian Pidgin, Pragmatic Acts, Sports Commentary, Audience Engagement, Pragmatic Acts Theory.

Introduction

Sports commentary plays a central role in the Nigerian media landscape. It is not only a means of reporting events on the pitch but also a source of entertainment, evaluation, and social connection. Through vivid narration, emotional framing, and spontaneous reactions, commentators create shared experiences that allow audiences to feel part of the action, even from a distance. Football commentary, in particular, transforms live matches into cultural events, connecting fans across diverse ethnic and social groups.

In recent years, Nigerian Pidgin (NP) has become increasingly prominent in sports commentary. Its widespread use and cultural familiarity make it highly accessible, while its expressive and flexible nature allows commentators to respond instantly to unfolding events. Spoken across ethnic, social, and educational boundaries, NP fosters inclusivity and engagement in sports broadcasting (Unuabonah et al., 2021). Its idiomatic richness, humor, and adaptability provide commentators with a versatile tool for sustaining excitement and creating rapport with listeners.

Unlike formal English commentary, which often follows international broadcasting standards, NP commentary is spontaneous, performance-driven, and culturally grounded. Commentators rely on

humour, repetition, proverbs, idioms, exaggeration, and code-switching to evaluate performance, dramatize key moments, and entertain audiences. These features enable them to celebrate goals, critique referees' decisions, build suspense, or convey surprise in real time. NP commentary thus functions simultaneously as narration and performative discourse, reflecting the social and cultural context in which it occurs.

Despite its popularity, NP sports commentary has received limited scholarly attention. Most research on Nigerian Pidgin focuses on everyday interaction, politics, music, or advertising (Osoba, 2014; Nweke et al., 2020). Studies examining live sports broadcasting are scarce. Although previous work on NP pragmatics (Odiegwu & Romero-Trillo, 2016; Unuabonah et al., 2021) explores markers such as reduplication or abeg/sef, these analyses do not account for the fast-paced, interactive nature of live commentary. Research on European football commentary (Chovanec, 2018) highlights humour, deixis, and exaggeration but offers limited insight into pidgin-based or African broadcasting contexts. Consequently, the pragmatic functioning of NP in high-intensity, real-time media discourse remains under-explored.

This study addresses the gap using Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory. Unlike traditional speech act approaches, which focus on isolated utterances, this framework examines language as social action embedded in context. It identifies recurring pragmemes—such as praise, criticism, humour, or surprise—and analyzes how they are realized through practs and adapted as allopracts. For example, a pragmeme of surprise may appear as "Na wetin we dey see so?!" or "Abeg, e don happen like joke!", illustrating how communicative

intent can be expressed differently depending on situational and cultural factors.

The study aims to identify and classify pragmemes in Nigerian Pidgin sports commentaries, analyze the practs and allopracts used to realize them, and examine how cultural and situational contexts influence their interpretation. The following research questions guide the investigation: What types of pragmemes occur in Nigerian Pidgin sports commentaries? How are these pragmemes realized as practs and expressed through allopracts? In what ways do cultural and situational factors shape the selection and interpretation of these pragmatic acts?

By foregrounding pragmatic acts in NP sports commentary, this study contributes to sociopragmatic and media discourse scholarship. It extends pragmatic analysis to an underexplored broadcast genre, affirms Nigerian Pidgin as a legitimate medium for professional sports communication, and demonstrates how language can foster unity in Nigeria's multilingual media space. The findings also have practical implications for broadcaster training and inclusive media practice, highlighting strategies that resonate with diverse audiences.

Statement of the Problem

Sports commentary is a vital form of live broadcast communication. It connects viewers directly to unfolding games while providing entertainment, evaluation, and social engagement. In Nigeria, football commentary is the most popular and increasingly delivered in Nigerian Pidgin (NP). Its widespread use, cultural relevance, and accessibility allow it to connect audiences across ethnic and social

groups (Unuabonah et al., 2021). Despite its prominence, NP sports commentary has received limited scholarly attention.

Existing research on NP focuses on everyday discourse, politics, music, and advertising. Some studies examine pragmatic markers such as abeg and sef (Unuabonah et al., 2021) or morphosyntactic adaptations in football commentary (Mensah & Alebiosu, 2019). However, the specific pragmatic strategies employed in live NP commentary remain under-explored. Markers that are known to mitigate or emphasize meaning in general discourse have not been studied in the high-pressure, emotive context of football broadcasts. Likewise, Odiegwu and Romero-Trillo (2016) highlight reduplication as a device for expressivity but do not analyze its role in live broadcasts. Internationally, Chovanec (2018) demonstrates how humour and deixis enhance immediacy in European football commentary, yet no comparable research exists for NP.

There is no known study that has applied applied Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory to NP football commentary to identify, classify, and analyse pragmemes, practs, and allopracts. This gap limits understanding of how commentators create excitement, critique referees, motivate teams, and engage listeners. It also leaves the social and cultural functions of NP commentary undocumented. Addressing this gap is critical to understanding how commentators manage interaction, foster community, and sustain audience engagement. The omission represents both a theoretical gap, restricting the application of Pragmatic Acts Theory to African languages and high-pressure discourse genres, and a practical gap, limiting broadcasters' ability to exploit NP's communicative potential.

Significance of the Study

This study addresses the underexplored role of Nigerian Pidgin in live football commentary. By applying Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory, it examines how pragmatic acts operate in real-time, high-energy interactions. NP functions as a unifying medium, creating shared experiences while conveying meaning effectively in culturally diverse audiences.

The study contributes to multiple stakeholders. Academically, it extends Pragmatic Acts Theory to African data and demonstrates the function of pragmatic acts in multilingual, high-stakes discourse. For media practitioners, it provides insight into how pragmatic choices influence audience engagement, inform commentary strategies, and guide broadcaster training. Policymakers and educators benefit from evidence that NP, often marginalized in formal domains, can communicate sophisticated, context-sensitive messages, which can inform media policy and curriculum content.

The study also demonstrates the flexibility of Mey's framework and the culturally grounded patterns of NP use. Practically, it shows how NP commentary promotes inclusiveness, excitement, and community involvement among listeners, validating NP as a professional broadcast medium.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on pragmatic acts in Nigerian Pidgin football commentary. It examines how commentators use language to entertain, evaluate, and engage audiences during live matches. The study is limited to spoken NP commentary and excludes pre-match interviews, panel discussions, and pre-recorded shows, as these lack the immediacy and interactional features of live broadcasts.

Conceptually, the study analyzes the identification, classification, and interpretation of pragmemes and their realization through practs and allopracts, in line with Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory. Geographically and contextually, the study centers on commentary for matches involving Nigerian national teams, Nigerian clubs, or Nigerian players, covering local and international competitions between 2023 and 2025. Commentary in English or other languages, as well as written or non-broadcast communication, is excluded to maintain a clear focus on the dynamics of spoken NP in live sports settings.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Jacob L. Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory, which provides a comprehensive lens for analysing language use in socially and situationally embedded contexts. Mey argues that pragmatic acts are communicative actions performed in specific circumstances, shaped by intentions, social norms, and contextual constraints (Mey, 2001). This perspective shifts analysis from isolated linguistic forms to the dynamic interplay of language, context, and purpose, making it especially suitable for examining live Nigerian Pidgin (NP) football commentary — a discourse where meaning is co-constructed in real time.

Traditional speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) focuses on the illocutionary force of single utterances (e.g., asserting, requesting). While foundational, it is limited in accounting for how language is adapted moment by moment in high-intensity, interactional discourse such as sports commentary (Leech, 2016). In contrast, Pragmatic Acts Theory accounts for both the intentions

behind utterances and the socio-cultural and situational contexts in which they occur. This makes it more appropriate for analyzing NP commentary, where linguistic creativity, cultural norms, and audience expectations intersect (Ibrahim, 2018; Osoba, 2014).

Pragmatic Acts Theory recognizes that meaning arises from actions performed in context, not merely from propositional content. It foregrounds shared knowledge, cultural parameters, and social goals as central to understanding communicative behaviour — features that are central to NP football commentary where language entertains, evaluates, and unites audiences.

Mey's framework comprises three interrelated units of pragmatic action:

1. Pragmeme: A pragmeme is a generalized communicative intention that reflects culturally recognized patterns of interaction (Mey, 2001). In NP football commentary, pragmemes include recurring communicative purposes such as praise, criticism, urging, and suspense-building (Capone, 2005; Ibrahim, 2018). For example, celebrating a goal or building tension before a penalty is a culturally expected act in Nigerian football discourse, representing identifiable pragmemes.
2. Pract: A pract is the concrete realization of a pragmeme in specific discourse. It consists of the actual NP utterances selected by a commentator to perform a communicative goal (Mey, 2001). For example, the praise pragmeme may be realized as Na sharp striker wey no dey miss, conveying immediacy, cultural style, and audience relatability.
3. Allopract: An allopract is a context-conditioned variation of a pract that expresses the same underlying pragmeme with altered tone, emphasis, or emotional colouring (Capone, 2005). For

instance, This guy na goal machine! may be used as an allopract of the praise pragmeme when a player scores repeatedly in quick succession. Allopracts manifest situational creativity in real time without departing from shared communicative norms.

Together, these constructs allow the study to capture both general communicative patterns and context-specific adaptations in NP commentary.

Mey also distinguishes hierarchical levels of pragmatic acts, which this study adopts for analytical precision:

• Micro-pragmemes: These are immediate, reactive acts tied to specific match events. They involve short, context-bound expressions of emotion or evaluation. Examples include astonishment (Chai! Na thunder strike be that!), frustration (Wetin dey happen sef?), or encouragement (Make we attack sharp sharp!).

• Meso-pragmemes: These reflect recurring communicative routines that unfold across the match. Unlike isolated micro utterances, meso-pragmemes create narrative patterns — for example, repeated referee criticism, sustained praise of teamwork, or extended suspense sequences before penalties.

• Macro-pragmemes: These are broad communicative patterns tied to socio-cultural purposes beyond the immediate match. Examples include expressions of national pride (Na we be giant of Africa!), communal solidarity (Our boys go deliver today!), or consolation after defeat (Na so football be, better days go come). Macro-pragmemes position commentary within larger cultural narratives.

This hierarchical view helps articulate how NP commentary operates at multiple levels of meaning-making — from instantaneous reactions to culturally rooted expressions.

Mey emphasizes that pragmatic acts do not occur in a vacuum; they are shaped by contextual parameters that inform interpretation and performance:

- Social parameters include cultural knowledge, humour, idiomatic expressions, and audience expectations of lively engagement (Ibrahim, 2018; Osoba, 2014).
- Situational parameters refer to match-specific features such as scoreline, referee decisions, and tension in critical moments.

For example, the pragmeme of referee criticism may be realized more mildly early in a match (Ref no see that one?) but with greater intensity in tense closing moments (Ref don close eye for here!). Social and situational factors thus guide how practs and allopracts manifest in live broadcasts.

The theoretical framework demonstrates that NP football commentary cannot be fully understood through formal structural analysis alone. Instead, it shows how commentators' language use emerges from cultural norms, shared knowledge, and real-time situational demands. By operationalizing pragmemes, practs, and allopracts across hierarchical levels and in relation to social and situational parameters, the framework provides a systematic tool for analyzing both patterned and creative aspects of NP commentary.

This integrated theoretical design links the research problem — the under-exploration of NP sports commentary — to analytical categories that reflect real communicative practices. In doing so, it contributes to both pragmatic theory and sociolinguistic scholarship by highlighting how NP functions as a powerful and professional medium of sports communication.

Empirical Studies

Empirical research on sports commentary, pragmatics, and Nigerian Pidgin (NP) has increased in recent decades, but few studies merge all three. Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory has been applied to advertising, literature, and conversational discourse, but its application to NP sports commentary remains scanty. This study addresses that gap.

Adegbite (2019), for instance, analysed football commentary in Yoruba and English, showing that commentators relied heavily on pragmemes like praise, criticism, and encouragement. These pragmemes were adapted in real time as practs and allopracts, revealing commentary as a performative act designed to sustain engagement. Similarly, Odebunmi (2020) found that sports commentary reflects macro-cultural values like rivalry and community pride, aligning with Mey's principle that pragmatic acts are not separated from socio-cultural context. Both studies stress the applicability of Pragmatic Acts Theory but do not apply their analysis to NP.

Study on NP in media has demonstrated its expressiveness and cultural attractiveness. Unuabonah et al. (2019) analysed markers such as "*abeg* and *sef*," showing their role in signalling humour, emphasis, and solidarity. Ejele and Akinwotu (2018) noted NP's use on radio to create informality and identity, while Akande and Salami (2010) highlighted its function as a unifying medium across ethnic divides. These studies confirm NP's communicative strength but stop short of exploring the pressures and immediacy of live sports commentary.

Despite these insights, three gaps remain. First, no study has systematically applied Pragmatic Acts Theory to NP sports

commentary. Second, prior work has not mapped utterances across Mey's hierarchy of micro-, meso-, and macro-pragmemes. Third, there has been little attention to allopracts; the variations commentators use when adapting their speech to match context. For instance, the way referee's criticism is delivered early in a game versus during a tense final phase is undocumented.

To address these gaps, this study systematically applies Pragmatic Acts Theory to NP football commentary, classifying utterances into practs, allopracts, and pragmeme levels. By situating these acts within Nigeria's socio-cultural and sporting contexts, the study provides both the empirical knowledge of NP broadcasting and the theoretical reach of Mey's model.

Table 1: Summary of Empirical Studies Relevant to the Present Study

Author(s) & Year	Context / Focus	Key Findings	Gap Identified	Relevance to Present Study
Adegbite (2019)	Live football commentary in Yoruba and English	Identified frequent use of pragmemes (praise, criticism, encouragement) adapted through practs and allopracts; commentary functions as performance	Does not focus on Nigerian Pidgin; no systematic categorization into micro-, meso-, and macro-pragmemes.	Supports the application of Pragmatic Acts Theory to live commentary and informs analysis of similar acts in Nigerian Pidgin.

		for audience engagement.		
Odebunmi (2020)	Nigerian sports discourse across media	Shows commentary reflects macro-cultural values (community pride, rivalry); aligns with Mey's socio-cultural emphasis.	Lacks specific focus on Nigerian Pidgin sports commentary and detailed pragmeme categorization.	Highlights the role of cultural values in commentary, essential for situating Nigerian Pidgin use in football broadcasts.
Unuabonah et al. (2019)	Borrowed Nigerian Pidgin pragmatic markers in Nigerian English	Pidgin markers convey solidarity, humour, emphasis; enhance rapport.	Focuses on Nigerian English rather than live Pidgin sports commentary.	Demonstrates the communicative strengths of Pidgin markers, relevant for audience engagement in commentary.

Ejele & Akinwotu (2018)	Nigerian Pidgin in radio programmes	Pidgin used strategically to project informality, friendliness, and shared identity.	Does not analyze live sports commentary or map pragmemes.	Provides evidence of Pidgin's ability to create a participatory atmosphere, relevant to sports broadcasts.
Akande & Salami (2010)	Nigerian Pidgin use among university students and in mass media	Pidgin bridges linguistic divides, appeals to multi-ethnic audiences.	Does not address commentary or pragmatic acts framework.	Underlines Pidgin's inclusivity and audience reach, key for national football broadcasts.
Mey (2001)	Theoretical foundation: Pragmatic Acts Theory	Defines pragmatic acts; introduces concepts of pragmemes, practs, allopracts, with emphasis on social and situational parameters.	Not an empirical study; lacks application to Nigerian Pidgin sports commentary.	Provides the main theoretical lens for identifying and analyzing pragmatic acts in the present study.
Odiegwu & Romero-Trillo (2017)	NP expressive strategies (e.g., reduplication)	Highlighted NP's creativity and intensification functions	No direct application to sports commentary or pragmatic layering	Illustrates expressive features of Nigerian Pidgin that enhance

				vividness and emotional impact in live commentary.
Chovanec (2018)	European football commentary	Found humour, deixis, and exaggeration key to immediacy in live broadcasts	Not extended to African/Nigerian Pidgin contexts	Offers comparative insights into universal commentary techniques, adaptable to Pidgin for creating immediacy and engagement.
Mensah & Alebiosu (2021)	Morphosyntactic features of NP football commentary	Identified adaptation of NP grammar in sports discourse	Did not apply a pragmatic framework; focused on form rather than function	Complements the pragmatic analysis by underscoring structural adaptations that support functional pragmemes in Pidgin commentary.

Building on the insights and gaps highlighted in Table 1, the present study combines Mey's (2001) three-tiered pragmeme framework—

micro-, meso-, and macro-pragmemes—into the analysis of Nigerian Pidgin sports commentary. Table 2 illustrates how each level operates in this context, with examples drawn from the data

Table 2: Mapping of Micro-, Meso-, and Macro-Pragmemes in Nigerian Pidgin Sports Commentary

Level of Pragmeme	Definition	Example Utterances from Nigerian Pidgin Sports Commentary	Communicative Purpose
Micro-Pragmemes	Immediate, moment-specific communicative acts tied to a single event in the game.	1. Na goal o! 2. See as e take dribble am! 3. Ah! That one na foul na! 4. Na sharp pass be that. 5. Keeper don save the day! 6. E miss am! How e take miss that one?	Capture and convey immediate reactions; heighten audience excitement in real time.
Meso-Pragmemes	Recurring communicative patterns that appear multiple times within a game or across games, but still tied to match-specific contexts.	1. Dis guy sabi ball well well. 2. Make una push go front! 3. We need equaliser now. 4. Ref no dey watch this match?	Reinforce game narratives; sustain audience engagement by returning to key themes or assessments during play.

Level of Pragmeme	**Definition**	**Example Utterances from Nigerian Pidgin Sports Commentary**	**Communicative Purpose**
		5. Na our defence dey weak today. 6. Crowd dey ginger the boys.	
Macro-Pragmemes	Broad, culturally shared communicative patterns and traditions that underpin commentary style across matches and over time.	1. Humorous referee criticism: Ref don close eye for here! 2. National pride expressions: Na so Naija dey do am! 3. Use of proverbs: Slow and steady dey win race. 4. Culturally embedded humour: Ball no be beans o! 5. Rivalry framing: We no go gree for dem today. 6. Collective identity building: We	Build shared cultural experience; link match events to national identity, humour traditions, and football culture.

Level of Pragmeme	Definition	Example Utterances from Nigerian Pidgin Sports Commentary	Communicative Purpose
		dey play for all Naija people.	

These tables together clarify both the scholarly background and the practical roadmap for the study. Table 1 situates the research within existing literature, demonstrating how earlier works inform and fall short of the present focus.

Table 2: Mey's theoretical framework for analyzing Nigerian Pidgin sports commentary. It explicitly shows how utterances can be categorized at different pragmatic levels.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, guided by Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth examination of live Nigerian Pidgin (NP) football commentary as a dynamic, context-sensitive form of discourse. It captures meaning as it emerges from the interaction between language, situational factors, and cultural norms (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). The study focuses on identifying, classifying, and interpreting pragmatic acts across micro-, meso-, and macro-pragmemes, capturing both recurring patterns and context-driven improvisation.

The data were drawn from live football commentary clips and video reels shared on X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram by verified Nigerian media outlets and commentators, including Wazobia FM and

SuperSport TV. Only commentary delivered audibly in Nigerian Pidgin was included to ensure both linguistic and cultural authenticity (Osoba, 2014; Ibrahim, 2018). NP was chosen because it functions as a lingua franca in Nigeria, enabling broad accessibility, cultural resonance, and emotional engagement across diverse audiences.

The study focused on matches involving Nigerian national teams, clubs, or players, covering domestic and international competitions such as:

- 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON)
- 2023–2024 Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL)
- 2024 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON)
- Early 2025 league or international fixtures

The period January 2023 to September 2025 was selected to capture recent trends in NP commentary, reflecting contemporary linguistic practices and audience engagement in both domestic and international contexts.

Content was limited to live commentary, where utterances respond directly to unfolding match events and audience interaction. Pre-match interviews, panel discussions, and pre-recorded shows were excluded, as they lack the immediacy central to live NP commentary. A purposive sampling method was employed to select ten match-event composites. This number was chosen to balance depth of analysis with representativeness, allowing for careful examination of multiple events while maintaining manageability. Selection criteria included:

- Commentary delivered audibly in Nigerian Pidgin (NP)
- Matches involving Nigerian teams, clubs, or players

- Speech occurring in a live match context with real-time interaction
- Sources verifiable from recognized broadcasters, commentators, or station pages
- Purposive sampling ensured that the data were relevant, culturally grounded, and representative of authentic NP commentary practices (Patton, 2015).

All clips were downloaded, organized by match, and timestamped. Commentary was transcribed verbatim to capture the exact wording, intonation markers, and linguistic nuances relevant to pragmatic analysis. All data were publicly available from verified accounts, and proper attribution was maintained to ensure compliance with copyright and intellectual property guidelines (Buchanan & Hvizdak, 2009). No private or confidential information was collected.

The qualitative approach allows a context-sensitive analysis of NP commentary, capturing its spontaneity, immediacy, and cultural expressivity. It aligns with Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory, which foregrounds the relationship between utterance, intention, and context. This framework enables systematic identification of pragmemes, practs, and allopracts, reflecting both patterned routines and context-driven improvisation in live, interactive discourse.

Data Analysis

All Nigerian Pidgin football commentary recordings were transcribed verbatim in NP orthography, preserving code-switching, repetition, interjections, idioms, and culturally embedded expressions (Unuabonah et al., 2021; Odiegwu & Romero-Trillo, 2016).

Contextual notes captured non-verbal cues such as crowd reactions, laughter, and tone shifts, which influence pragmatic meaning.

Data were analyzed using Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Acts Theory. Each utterance was coded according to:

- Extract: The actual transcript from the commentary.
- Pragmeme: The general communicative purpose (e.g., praise, criticism, humour).[1]
- Pract: The specific realization of the pragmeme in context.
- Allopract: Contextual variation of the pract, shaped by timing, emotion, or situational factors.
- Pragmemic Level: Micro-, meso-, or macro-pragmemes, reflecting immediacy, structured routine, or socio-cultural embedding.[2]
- Pragmatic Interpretation: Explanation of how the utterance functions in context.

[1]Pragmeme definitions ensure systematic categorization of communicative functions.

[2]Dual-level coding captures utterances that simultaneously perform immediate affective functions and broader socio-cultural roles.

Micro-pragmemes capture immediate, emotionally charged reactions, such as exclamations after a goal. Meso-pragmemes structure sequences, like suspense-building, humour, or referee complaints. Macro-pragmemes embed commentary within socio-cultural and ideological narratives, including national pride, communal solidarity, and recognition of consistent player performance (Mensah & Alebiosu, 2019).

Coding reliability was confirmed through inter-rater checks, ensuring consistent identification of pragmemes, practs, allopracts, and pragmatic levels.

Table 3: Illustrative Matrix of Pragmatic Acts in NP Commentary

S/N	Extract	Pragmeme	Pract	Allopract	Pragmemic Level	Pragmatic interpretation
1	Na correct goal we dey see!	Praise / Celebration	Na sharp striker wey no dey miss	This guy na goal machine!	Micro / Meso	Celebrates a goal, credits player/team, excites audience immediately.
2	Omo, wetin just happen so?!	Surprise	Wetin dey happen sef?!	Abeg, who sabi explain that?!	Micro	Expresses astonishment and engages audience.
3	Ref no dey see anything at all!	Criticism	Ref no see that one?	Ref don blind today o!	Micro / Meso	Critiques referee decisions, expresses frustration, fosters audience solidarity.
4	Make we no carry last o!	Encouragement / Motivation	Make we attack sharp sharp!	Una suppose press dem finish!	Micro / Macro	Urges team to perform (micro) while reinforcing collective support (macro).
5	Na bad pass be that	Evaluation / Criticism	Na bad pass be that Micro	See as that ball just waka go!	Micro	Evaluates a player's mistake and communicates

						commentator's stance
6	Dem defence strong wella	Praise / Evaluation	Dem defence strong wella	Dem boys dey solid, no be small!	Micro	Commends defensive play and highlights team strength.
7	Wetin dey happen sef?!	Frustration / Complaint	Wetin dey happen sef?!	Ahhh! This play don tire me!	Micro	Shows frustration, engages audience emotionally, conveys match tension.
8	Na comedy we dey watch o	Humour / Entertainment	Na comedy we dey watch o	Abeg, make una dance small!	Meso	Adds entertainment, livens commentary, engages audience culturally.
9	"Na we be giant of Africa, no dey carry last!"	Patriotism	Na we be giant of Africa, we no dey carry last	We no dey carry last!	Macro	Highlights national identity, affirms cultural pride, and frames the match as part of a broader narrative.
10	E go shoot… stadium don quiet…	Suspense / Tension	E go shoot … stadium don quiet …	Abeg, this penalty na gbege o…	Meso	Builds suspense, heightens tension, prepares audience for key events

Note: Dual Pragmemic Level captures utterances that perform both immediate affective functions and socio-cultural roles.

The analysis of 120 utterances demonstrates that NP football commentary functions across layered pragmatic levels:

- Micro-pragmemes: Immediate, emotionally charged reactions such as goal exclamations, referee complaints, and motivational directives.
- Meso-pragmemes: Routinised structures sustaining narrative flow, including goal-build-ups, referee critique templates, and audience chants.
- Macro-pragmemes: Broader socio-cultural scripts embedding commentary within national pride, communal solidarity, and player performance recognition.

Layering is a key feature; utterances like "Make una no worry, we go turn am around!" perform encouragement (micro), prediction (meso), and resilience framing (macro) simultaneously. Allopract variations demonstrate flexibility in phrasing and tone, adapting to match dynamics and audience expectations.

Quantitative analysis of the full dataset:

- Praise / Celebration – 35%
- Evaluation / Criticism – 25%
- Encouragement / Motivation – 20%
- Humour / Entertainment – 10%
- Suspense / Tension – 10%

This confirms that affective and evaluative functions dominate, while routine and cultural scripts sustain engagement.

Discussion

The findings confirm that Mey's (2001) framework captures the functional and linguistic complexity of live NP football commentary. Micro-pragmemes reveal immediacy and emotional intensity, reinforced by idiomatic expressions and culturally grounded metaphors (e.g., "Goal wey sweet pass sugar!").

Meso-pragmemes show that commentary relies on predictable structures while remaining spontaneous, balancing routine with improvisation. Macro-pragmemes situate events within socio-cultural and ideological narratives, connecting football to national pride, collective identity, and cultural cohesion (e.g., "Na we be giant of Africa, we no dey carry last!").

Layering across levels underscores NP's multifunctionality. Football commentary is unique among NP discourse genres due to its immediacy, improvisation, and multi-layered performativity, distinguishing it from music, politics, advertising, or informal conversation (Akande & Salami, 2010; Osoba, 2014; Unuabonah et al., 2019).

Audience interpretation, while not directly measured, is inferred through strategies that leverage shared cultural knowledge and emotional engagement. Future studies could explicitly examine reception across audiences and languages.

Conclusion

This study investigated the forms and functions of pragmatic acts in Nigerian Pidgin football commentary, applying Mey's (2001)

Pragmatic Acts Theory. Analysis of 120 utterances revealed that NP commentary functions on three interdependent levels:

- Micro level: Immediate, reactive utterances tied to match events.
- Meso level: Routinised structures sustaining narrative flow.
- Macro level: Socio-cultural scripts embedding football within national pride, communal solidarity, and performance narratives.

Pragmatic acts often layer across levels, producing multifunctional utterances that are reactive, structured, and culturally resonant. Coding reliability was confirmed through inter-rater checks, enhancing methodological rigor.

Theoretically, the study demonstrates the applicability and flexibility of Mey's framework to high-pressure, multilingual broadcast contexts. Practically, it provides insights for broadcasters, trainers, and media institutions seeking to harness NP's expressive potential.

In sum, NP football commentary is more than live reporting: it is a performative discourse that informs, entertains, critiques, and reinforces cultural identity. By documenting these pragmatic patterns, the study affirms NP as a legitimate, expressive, and culturally resonant medium in professional sports broadcasting.

REFERENCES

Adegbite, W. (2019). Pragmatic strategies in Yoruba and English football commentary: A sociolinguistic perspective. *Journal of West African Languages,* 46(2), 45–60.

Akande, A. T., & Salami, L. O. (2010). Use and attitudes towards Nigerian Pidgin: A sociolinguistic survey of Nigerian university students. *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, 25(2), 317–341. https://doi.org/10.1075/jpcl.25.2.05aka.

Austin, J. L. (1962). How to do things with words. Oxford University Press.

Buchanan, E. A., & Hvizdak, E. E. (2009). Online survey tools: Ethical and methodological concerns of human research ethics committees. Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics, 4(2), 37–48. https://doi.org/10.1525/jer.2009.4.2.37

Capone, A. (2005). Pragmemes (a study with reference to English and Italian). Journal of Pragmatics, 37(11), 1795–1826. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2005.03.004

Chovanec, J. (2018). *The discourse of online sportscasting: Constructing meaning and interaction in live text commentary*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.297.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Ejele, P. E., & Akinwotu, S. A. (2018). Nigerian Pidgin in radio broadcasting: Creating identity and inclusivity. *Journal of*

Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 39(5), 456–470. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2017.1389945.

Ibrahim, M. (2018). Pragmatics and sociocultural context in Nigerian Pidgin. Journal of African Linguistics and Communication, 9(2), 112–130.

Leech, G. (2016). The pragmatics of politeness. Oxford University Press.

Mey, J. L. (2001). *Pragmatics: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Blackwell Publishing.

Mensah, E. O., & Alebiosu, T. (2019). Morphological features of Nigerian Pidgin in the football commentary. *Journal of Universal Language*, 20(1), 27–58. https://doi.org/10.13461/jul.2019.20.1.27.

Nlem, A. O., & Epepe, D. (2025). Nigerian Pidgin as lingua franca: Emerging communication trend in the Anthropocene. Social Science and Human Research Bulletin. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/398333363_Nigerian_Pidgin_as_Lingua_Franc

Nweke, C. O., Onyejekwe, C., & Eze, V. (2020). The sociolinguistics of Nigerian Pidgin in popular music: A study of selected songs. *International Journal of Linguistics and Communication*, 8(1), 1–15.

Odebunmi, A. (2020). Nigerian sports discourse: A pragmatic analysis of cultural values in media commentary. *Discourse & Society*, 31(3), 289–310. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926519889123.

Odiegwu, E., & Romero-Trillo, J. (2016). Reduplication in Nigerian Pidgin: A pragmatic and grammatical perspective. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics*, 37(2), 261–280.

Odiegwu, N. C., & Romero-Trillo, J. (2017). Expressive strategies in Nigerian Pidgin: A study of reduplication and intensification. *Review of Cognitive Linguistics*, 15(2), 456–478.

Osoba, J. O. (2014). The use of Nigerian Pidgin in political jingles. *Journal of Universal Language*, 15(1), 105–127. https://doi.org/10.13461/jul.2014.15.1.105.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). Qualitative research & evaluation methods (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Rufaidah, K. A., & Abeer, T. A. (2019). The pragmatics of amusement in selected British football commentaries. International Journal of English Linguistics, 9(1). https://ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijel/article/view/0/38204

Searle, J. R. (1969). Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language. Cambridge University Press.

Unuabonah, F. O., Gut, U., & Oyebola, F. (2019). Pragmatic markers in Nigerian Pidgin: Functions and discourse roles. *Pragmatics*, 29(3), 419–441. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.18031.unu.

Unuabonah, F. O., Oyebola, F., & Gut, U. (2021). "Abeg na! we write so our comments can be posted!": Borrowed Nigerian Pidgin pragmatic markers in Nigerian English. *Pragmatics*, 31(3), 455–481. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.31.3.06unu.