



A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Some Visual Images in the Political Rally Discourse of 2011 Electioneering Campaigns in Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper presented a multimodal discourse analysis of some visual images in the political rally discourse of 2011 electioneering campaigns in Southwestern Nigeria. The data comprised purposively selected political visual artefacts from political rallies across the six Southwestern States in Nigeria (Osun, Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti, Ogun, and Lagos). The data were analyzed using Halliday's (1985) systemic metafunctional principles and Barthes' (1977) concepts of anchorage and relay. The study noted that, vests are the commonest type of semiotic artifact while caps, *Ankara*, and surrogate languages complement the use of vests for visual signification and meaning potentials in the discourse environment. The study also noted that, various political party colors reflect in almost all the visual images and they are suggestive of the ideology or level of commitment and political leanings of discourse participants. The study concluded that, semiotic resources or artefacts are an important aspect of political rallies because of the inherent political, cultural, and social communication that are revealed through them.

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1. Introduction

Communication in the modern world has assumed a new dimension as the over-reliance on verbal expression of the past is being jettisoned for multimodal communication. One major cause of this change is globalization and the wide access to the digital space, which has impacted greatly on how human beings communicate. The digital space and all the forms of technology in use have undermined the supremacy of verbal language in the conception of literacy, as diverse aspects of visuality have been incorporated into literacy. Another major reason for this reality is the fact that verbal and non-verbal language cannot actually be separated. Communication is thus increasingly becoming multimodal across different contexts as text producers draw on a wide range of semiotic resources for the projection of meaning. Moreover, “in human history, the visual image has never been more dominant than it is now” (Natharius, 2004, p. 2).

The popularity of visuality in contemporary human communication has contributed to the growth of scholarship in visual communication. According to Machin and Mayr (2012), the entrenchment of visuality as a subject of scholarly enquiry can be traced to the “late 1980s and 1990s when a number of authors who had been working in linguistics began to realize that meaning is generally communicated not only through language but also through other semiotic modes” (p. 6). The argument of scholars in visual analysis is that images can be analyzed the way words are analyzed using theories of language use and analysis such as systemic functional linguistics.

Although multimodal texts are used in diverse contexts such as advertising, service delivery, classroom discourse, and sports among others; they are becoming increasingly popular for discourses of public engagements such as political discourse, protest discourse, and discourse of civic engagements, among many others (see Kulikova & Detinko, 2014; Onanuga & Ademilokun, 2014; Tehseem & Bokhari, 2015). The growth in the use of multimodal resources in the latter contexts is connected with the public’s awareness of the potentiality of multimodal texts to convey clearly important meanings of public

relevance. For the present purpose, our focus is on the use of multimodality in the political context.

Visuality is an important feature of political expression. All over the world, politicians employ visual resources for their popularization preparatory to elections. Similarly, visual images are used in media representations or constructions of politicians, political parties, their attitudes to the public, or the effects of their actions and inactions on the public. This politics of visualization is rooted in the thinking of text producers about the ability of visual images to provoke deeper feelings in people than spoken or written language. Therefore, there is the general belief that visual resources can stir more the people to certain required actions than verbal language. The Nigerian political environment manifests the deployment of visuality for political purposes even though there has not been much scholarly engagement with the subject matter. In fact, one aspect of the political process in the country which witnesses tremendous use of visuality is political rally campaigns.

Since political campaigns are tied to elections, which determine the individuals who lead people, they attract a lot of attention as politicians seeking elective positions invest enormous financial resources, energy and time into them in order to appeal positively to the electorate. It is common to see posters, billboards, and banners being used to project certain politicians or political parties for public acceptance. This aspect of political communication has received considerable attention (see Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013; Awonusi, 1996; Opeibi, 2006). Political rallies which constitute an important part of political campaigns are also characterized by a compelling use of multimodal resources for persuasive political communication. In Nigeria, just as it is in many other countries, politicians use visual resources such as vests, head wears, dance, and surrogate language among others to communicate meanings in the discourse with the central theme of seeking political support for certain politicians or political parties. However, not much has been done on the semiotic implications of the multimodal resources highlighted above in the Nigerian context. This study, therefore, seeks

to examine and analyze some of such multimodal resources used in political rally discourse in Nigeria focusing on the political rallies for the 2011 elections in Southwestern Nigeria.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Political Campaigns in Nigeria

Since the independence of Nigeria in 1960, political campaigns in the country have reflected the tense nature of the nation's politics. Shortly after the independence of Nigeria, there were electoral crises and ethnic violence which caused the military's seizure of power from the civilians. However, the crises that greeted the nation's independence continued in the politics of the nation's second republic, third republic and in the current fourth republic; as politicians engage different kinds of means whether legal or illegal to prosecute their political ambitions. Whereas Bratton (2008) writes, "an election is supposed to be a peaceful and open discourse of persuasion" (2008, p. 1), which is based on logical presentation of arguments justifying the candidature of a particular politician, in Nigeria just as it is in many other countries, it is seen as a ticket to ostentatious lifestyle and access to unending wealth and power. Therefore, political violence becomes inevitable as individuals struggle to control state power willy-nilly.

One major factor responsible for political violence in Nigeria is the nature of political communication in the country. Political communication in Nigeria is often marked by the use of harsh words, abusive words, and character defamation. Ademilokun and Taiwo (2013) capture this trend when they remark that "most platforms for debate and other political communication are often turned to platforms for verbal threats, insults, intimidation, coercion, blackmail, and hate speech" (p. 438). Ademilokun (2015) further comments on negative political campaigning in Nigeria when he says, "Nigerian politicians usually consider campaigns appropriate avenues for them to attack their opponents" (p. 121). The consequence of this trend in the nation's politics is that politicians often heat up the polity with their remarks, causing conflicts between political followers and at

times ethnic groups, given the fact that ethnic affiliations still hold in the political arrangements of the country.

However, beyond the uninhibited discursive nature of Nigerian political campaign discourse, one realizes that, the discourse is often characterized by a great deal of creativity and resourcefulness. Posters, banners, and billboards are imbued with different semiotic resources such as color, graphology, gaze, and posture among others to project politicians and their plans for the people in order to enlist the people's support for such politicians in preparation for elections. In this sense, Nigerian political campaign discourse is characterized by the use of people described by van Dijk (1989) as 'symbolic elites' who are professional journalists, copywriters, or creative artists who are knowledgeable in public knowledge, ideologies, norms, and beliefs and use them in creating compelling adverts and images for the projection of certain politicians over and above others in electoral campaigns.

It is, however, arguable that, the hub of political campaign discourse in Nigeria is political rally discourse. Whereas according to Opeibi (2006), political advertising had strongly emerged in Nigeria in the 1990s when politicians realized its immense impact on political communication and mobilization, political rallies had been organized as far back as the first republic during the era of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, and Alhaji Tafawa Balewa amongst others. Therefore, the political rally genre of political campaign discourse in Nigeria has a rich history even though much of it was not subjected to rigorous linguistic and discourse analysis until recently.

The political campaign rally in Nigeria is greatly patronized by the people owing to the fact that it brings them close to their political leaders and offers some spectacle. The discourse enables the electorate to listen to their political leaders and candidates on their plans for the people within the same physical space. The political rallies are usually colorful with people appearing in colorful attire and radiating enthusiasm for their political leaders. In fact, of all the forms of political discourse, it is political campaign rally discourse that

manifests most conspicuously the feasting involved in politics, as it involves a lot of feasting and merry-making which makes it to have wide participation as the attention of the public is drawn to it. The political rally is usually planned as a carnival characterized by a lot of entertaining activities which, however, do not undermine the political messages to be delivered.

One communicative phenomenon that becomes popular in political rally discourse due to the flamboyant nature of political rallies is *visuality*. The discourse is characterized by a wide array of artifacts such as costume, dance, color, and surrogate languages which are used for communicative effects. This paper focuses on this aspect of political rally discourse with the intention to critically analyze some of the visual resources in order to espouse their semiotic imports and impact on political communication and mobilization in Southwestern Nigeria.

2.2. Perspectives on Visuality and Politics

The literature on visual communication generally suggests that, visuals are effective in reinforcing the details provided in oral language and even provide additional details to oral communication. Domke, Perlmutter, and Spratt (2002) assert that, the theorized effects of visual images are:

- (a) Mnemonic power, that is, - can be easily recalled in their general details;
- (b) the ability to become icons that serve as metonyms or exemplars of particular events or issues;
- (c) great aesthetic impact, such as striking juxtapositions, or riveting happenings (typically human suffering);
- (d) affective or emotional power, that is the ability to 'move' us into an emotional reaction such as outrage, sympathy or pity; and finally,
- (e) potentially significant political power, such as the ability to create, alter, or reinforce elite or popular beliefs about causes and or issues of the day and further affect government policy. (pp. 133-134)

A close look at the above effects of visual images convinces one regarding the need for the growing popularity of the visual medium

in the dissemination of information in the modern times. More particularly, the highlighted positive effects of *visuality* rationalize the growing relationship between politics or political discourse and *visuality* in contemporary times. Politicians, for instance, require that their political followers or the electorate retain the general details of the information provided by them about their political ideologies, plans, and vision, and, therefore, would appeal to the mnemonic power of the visual. Similarly, since politics, especially political communication including political rallies, is constructed to be vivacious and aesthetically appealing, the aesthetic imports of visuals make them attractive to political actors. The affective and political power of visual images serve the core purpose of political campaign discourse which is geared towards making the electorate accept and support particular politicians towards elections.

Even when we appreciate the fact that a visual image with all of the above potentialities might not always achieve the persuasive purpose for which it was produced due to the fact that personal preferences, biases and, using Domke et al. (2002) words, "individuals' existing understanding of the world" (pp. 133-134), influence meaning reception from visuals, visuals still perform diverse communicative, and aesthetic purposes in the discourse. For instance, Hayes (2011) examined the impact of visual images on the struggle against the political construction known as apartheid which ravaged South Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries. Focusing on Omar Badsha's photography between 1960 and 1980, Hayes (2011) submits that, visual images were used in "local venues and solidarity networks abroad to muster support for the struggle" (p. 544). In the paper, it is made clear that, through art, especially visual art, a society can be revolutionized, given the fact that, in addition to the apartheid struggles pursued through images, there were also agitations for labor conditions which were prosecuted through visual images. According to Hayes (2011), to achieve success in many of the revolutionary activities of the time in South Africa, "pictures were immersed in a complex field of communication and mobilization" as "Badsha's photographic work is rooted in the everyday, the everyday of a

man deeply immersed in politics” (p. 553). Badsha’s photography reported by Hayes (2011) depicted the interiors of the homes and factories of racialized South Africans and other subjects of discrimination in order to give a vivid account of the awkward experiences of the people and to draw attention of the world to such realities as a process of struggle. The paper clearly shows and in fact concludes that, *visuality* was a marker of the possible in South Africa during Badsha’s era as new forms of knowledge and literacies were established just as the political system was affected by the visual productions of the time.

In fact, as far back as 1989, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) had confirmed the potency of visual images in shaping public opinions particularly in relation to the discourse on nuclear power. Although the authors focused more globally on media discourse, the data were primarily visual as they were television coverages, magazine reports, editorial cartoons, and syndicated opinion columns. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) assert that, the discourse “is an essential context for understanding the formation of public opinion on nuclear power” (p. 1). Elebute (2013) also examined the functionality of visual images in political communication in Nigeria from 1963, but his analytical coverage is limited to television visuals, vehicle branding, billboard advertising, and body painting. Elebute (2013), however, remarks that, creative artists do contribute to the political process through their packaging of politicians using visual agency.

Beyond the studies above which underscore the importance of *visuality* in politics and public engagements generally, there are also a few works in which descriptive multimodal analyses of multimodal texts for political purposes are carried out. Tehseem and Bokhari (2015) carried out a multimodal discourse analysis of political cartoons in Pakistan from two Pakistani newspapers. Drawing on a total of twelve political cartoons, six from each of the two newspapers, the authors show through their multimodal analysis that the newspapers had different attitudes toward the government of Pakistan and the leader of opposition party in the country. The analysis reveals that, the cartoons are reflective of the political

affiliations of the respective media groups which own the two newspapers. According to Tehseem and Bokhari (2015), “the political cartoons in Pakistani newspapers serve as face spoilers for one political party or leader and face saviors for another” (p. 11). Therefore, political cartoons are shown in the paper to reflect and project pro-government and anti-government stances depending on the political inclination of the media groups publishing the cartoons.

Kulikova and Detinko (2014) also undertook a multimodal analysis of some political cartoons in British press, showing the construction of political ‘others’ in the multimodal texts. This paper which shares some similarity with Tehseem and Bokhari (2015) on the ground that it emphasizes that political cartoons are hardly neutral but ideologically skewed, further establishes that the projection of ‘political others’ varies both conceptually and in multimodal expression. The authors recognize intracultural and intercultural representation of ‘otherness’ in British political cartooning. According to Tehseem and Bokhari (2015), “intracultural perspective presents the relationship between political parties within one culture ... while intercultural perspective presents the attitude of a particular culture’s politicians towards their counterparts or political groups outside this culture” (p. 1381). The authors note that, the mechanism for representing the ‘others’ in the two perspectives is different. According to Tehseem and Bokhari (2015), “in the intercultural perspective, the authors of multimodal texts use generalized visual images characterizing the situation in general through well-known metaphors, symbols and well known politicians”, while “in the intercultural perspective, the accent is put on the detail, the cartoon is more emotional through facial expressions and postures of the characters” (p. 1390). The authors further note that, multimodal construction of intracultural ‘otherness’ is characterized by more interdiscursive means while author’s intention is made more manifest in intercultural construction of ‘otherness’.

Abdullahi-Idiagbon (2013) examined the relevance of multimodal discourse analysis to the interpretation of meanings embedded in political campaign adverts. Drawing on the

popular political advertisement of former Nigerian President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, in his bid for re-election in 2011, the paper argues that the multimodal resources in political adverts often do not communicate factual information but are meant to appeal to the electorate with a view to creating a large following for the politicians projected in the political advertisements.

Poggi and Vincze (2009) also studied the use of aspects of multimodality such as gesture and gaze in political discourse, analyzing their persuasive import. In the paper, the authors demonstrate that, social influence is enacted in political communication through gaze and gesture used for persuasion, in which the persuadee is made to believe that the goal of the persuasion is in his or her interest. The data for the study comprised electoral debates of three politicians from Italy and France and gazes and gestures recorded from fragments of political discourse which were analyzed in relation to their literal and indirect meanings and also classified into the persuasive strategies that they manifest such as ethos, logos and pathos. The paper revealed that, the patterns of persuasive strategies in the meanings of gazes and gestures of each politician aligned with the politician's political strategy or the specific fragment analyzed.

The review of literature above shows that, aspects of multimodal discourse such as cartoons, gazes, and gestures have received scholarly attention regarding their role in political discourses. However, there is little or nothing that we know of any multimodal study that engages the use of vests, surrogate languages, *ànkàrá* and head wears, which the present study focuses on. This is so especially for Nigerian political discourse literature because most works on the language of politics in Nigeria have focused on verbal language in different political contexts, generally neglecting non-verbal political communication. This, therefore, underscores the importance of the present research agenda.

This study adopts a systemic functional approach to multimodal discourse analysis. According to Connolly and Phillips (2002, p. 1), "multimodal discourse analysis in itself involves the investigation of texts constructed through diverse modes of communication",

i.e., multimodal discourses or texts. According to O'Halloran, Tan, Smith, and Podlasov (2009), multimodal discourse is "a form of communication involving multiple semiotic resources such as language (spoken and written), gesture, dress, architecture, [...] gaze, camera angle, etc." (p. 2). Citing Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), O'Halloran et al. (2009) remarked that, among others, advances in technology, especially with regard to data visualization resources, have contributed immensely to the growth of multimodal semiotics. The resultant effect of this development is that, there is now a shift from monomodality to multimodality in semiotic research. Lirola (2006) confirms this shift to multimodality when she remarks that, "our society is influenced by the presence of new texts which are clearly characterized by the increasing dominance of the visual mode" (p. 1). This new reality has brought about a new thought about literacy, which can be termed critical literacy. Critical literacy, according to Lirola (2006), will be concerned with the relationship of verbal and visual signifiers in discourses or texts that will show using Kress's (2003), words "how the modes of image and writing appear together, how they are designed to appear together, and how they are to be read together" (p. 61).

Systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis is rooted in Halliday's (1985) systemic functional linguistics (SFL). SFL accounts for the meanings that language users make in context-bound communication through the choices that they make in the systems of the language being used, and it defines such meanings in the three metafunctions of language (ideational, interpersonal, and textual). According to O'Halloran (2008), "the major strength of SF theory for multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) is Halliday's metafunctional principle which provides an integrating platform for theorizing how semiotic resources interact to create meaning" (p. 445). Thus, the concern in a multimodal analysis from the perspective of SFL is to explicate aspects of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings in visual or multimodal texts. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), however, refer to the three metafunctional meanings as representational, interactive, and compositional meanings,

while Lemke (1998) calls them presentational, orientational, and organizational meanings.

Although the leading scholars in multimodal discourse such as Lemke (1998) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2003) have labelled the concepts differently, there are no significant differences in their meanings. However, in this paper, we tilt more towards the systemic linguistics account of the metafunctional meanings while bringing in Barthes' (1977) concepts of *anchorage* and *relay* on the analysis in order to demonstrate clearly the syntagmatic relationship between the verbal and the non-verbal in the discourse being studied. Barthes' concepts of *anchorage* and *relay* are particularly useful in explaining the syntagmatic relationship existing between or among the semiotic resources in the data for the study. According to Barthes (1977), *anchorage* refers to the linguistic message used to direct the readers of an image to a particular meaning as being central to a semiotic orchestration among a diverse range of signifieds produced by the signifiers in a semiotic ensemble. Barthes (1977) asserts that, "anchorage is the most frequent function of the linguistic message and is commonly found in press photographs and advertisements" (pp. 40-41). It is the most meaning-delimiting element, as it serves as the semiotic/discursive limitation of the possible meanings of another element, usually of the image by the text.

Relay, on the other hand, according to Adegoju and Ademilokun (in press), refers to accenting relations between signifiers in a semiotic construction in which a linguistic message interacts with other signifiers in a complementary manner to produce a holistic meaning. According to Barthes (1977), with *relay*, "text and image stand in a complementary relationship" (p. 41). Barthes (1977), however, posits relay-text is rare in adverts and more often seen in films. Thus, we will describe the interactions of verbal and non-verbal signifiers in the data, showing the *anchorage* or *relay* functions of the linguistic messages in the selected adverts.

3. Methodology

The data for this study were obtained purposively across the six Southwestern states of Nigeria (Osun, Oyo, Ondo, Èkìtì, Ogun, and

Lagos) in 2011 from twelve political rallies. The political rallies were the Action Congress of Nigeria rally (ACN) in Ilé-Ifè, People's Democratic Party (PDP) rally in Osogbo, ACN rally in Ìbàdàn, PDP rally in Ìbàdàn, ACN rally in Abẹ̀òkúta, PDP rally in Abẹ̀òkúta, Labour Party rally in Ondo, PDP rally in Ondo, ACN rally in Lagos, PDP rally in Lagos, PDP rally in Èkìtì, and ACN rally in Èkìtì. The researchers focused on the listed political rallies because they were those of the strongest political parties in the Southwestern part of Nigeria prior to the elections and sufficiently represented the contemporary political rally culture in the region in Nigeria. The political rallies were mainly organized at the state levels for political aspirants at the local, state, and federal levels to reach out to the electorate. In each of the states, data were obtained from one political rally from each of the two leading political parties. The visual discourse of the rallies was recorded and reputable television stations were visited for data collection to complement data personally gathered.

4. Results

In this section of the study, we attempt to interpret selected semiotic resources in the discourse. We focus on the communicative imports of the visual resources toward the goals of the discourse, which is to present certain politicians and political parties to the electorate for acceptance. However, we first attempt a categorization of the overriding semiotic artefacts within which the actual data are subsumed. We identify vests, head wears, *àńkára*, and surrogate languages as signifiers.

4.1. Vests as Signifiers

Vests can be said to be the commonest type of semiotic artefact in the discourse environment (Ademilokun, 2014). The proliferation of vests in the discourse environment can be attributed to its smartness on the bodies of its wearers, perhaps its immense capacity for conveying graphical information and its relatively cheap cost. Vest or t-shirt as it is also called originally was a hidden undergarment worn by people before they put on shirts. However, in recent times, according to Kpolugbo and Ogbobor (2009), the t-shirt has become a work of art or a tool for political expression or a

comfortable outfit to wear. In modern times, the t-shirt is used to make statements in the domain of sports, religion, and politics, among many others. In political rally discourse in Southwestern Nigeria, it can also be discerned that, vests are common because they are affordable for the parties who would prefer to

give out souvenirs and other materials to as many people as they can appeal to in order to secure their chances of winning elections. The texts below offer a good illustration of the use of customized vests in the discourse environment:

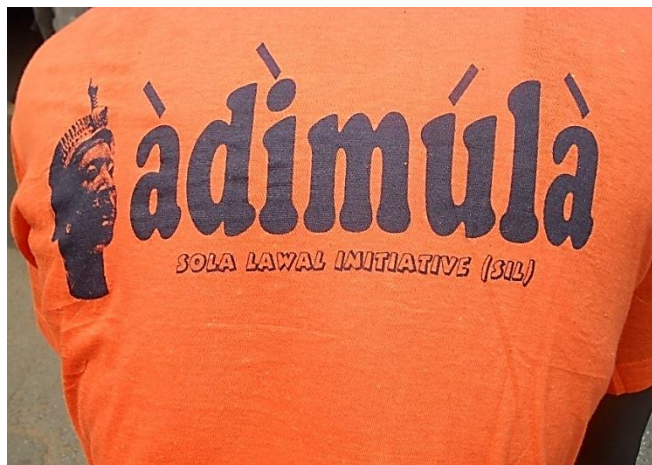


Figure 1
ACN Rally in Ile-Ife



Figure 2
ACN Rally in Ile-Ife

As can be seen from the texts above, the discourse participant captured appears in a customized vest produced by the Action Congress of Nigeria, one of the two strongest political parties in Nigeria. Once one sees the discourse participant in the discourse environment, it is easy to tell his political alliance. The broom imprinted on the vest, the name of the party (ACN) boldly inscribed on the vest, among others, clearly portray the political leaning of the wearer. The color of the vest is suggestive of the commitment of the discourse the participant photographed and in fact the entire political group to the location being made. The orange color generally symbolizes energy, enthusiasm, creativity, and determination, implying that, the Action Congress and its political followers are parading themselves as the party with the right amount of energy, determination, creativity, and enthusiasm required to steer the affairs of the Nigerian nation, and thus the party to be voted for by the people. It is even interesting that most of the wearers of the vest were youths, a group which symbolizes energy, virility, activity, and strength. These meanings were given force in the discourse as the environment was filled with 'orangeness' to

accentuate the amount of features of 'orangeness' possessed by the political party represented to the extent that an average onlooker is forced to ponder on the choice of the color orange for the vests.

Other indexical signs that convey similar meanings as the orange color in the text are the tick in vote, the broom and the firmness of the hand holding the broom. The mark substituting 'v' in the text is generally used among the youths in Nigeria to give approval to things. In other words, it is a sign of correctness and endorsement. One can also say that, the symbol signifies victory. For the political party to have victory in the elections, it needs the votes of its supporters and other members of the electorate. That explains why the political party plays on the sign on the vest. The broom, as a symbol of purification, is essentially a tool for cleaning the rot in the society, a commitment the party offers itself as dedicated to, and which the public would want in any emerging government.

Barthes' concepts of *anchorage* and *relay* manifest quite clearly in the visual texts above. The imperative 'Vote CAN' on the vest is a written reinforcement of the meaning

conveyed by the other semiotic features in the discourse act. It is the anchorage of the entire visual communication, as it conveys the central signified in the image. The linguistic message tells everything that the visual image is all about. The other two texts on the back side of the vest 'Sola Lawal Initiative' and 'adimula' serve as the relay on the semiotic ensemble as they both provide complementary information about the signification in the ensemble. The cognomen of 'Àdìmulà' which is a marker of valiancy of the party, the information on the visual text that the party involved is ACN, the broom logo of the party,

which indicates creation of a new and just society and the information on the sponsor of the semiotic artefact, all provide complementary information which enables one to interpret the text wholly. The reference to 'Adimula' in the image is used to associate the political party with the valorous exploits of 'Adimula' who was a famous Ijesa war leader in the past that commanded tremendous respect for his power while 'Sola Lawal Initiative' provides information on the sponsor of the vest. The image below further illustrates how vests are used to mean in the discourse:



Figure 3
PDP Rally in Osogbo, 2011

Through the vest in the image above, a particular political aspirant is offered to the public to be voted for. The attitude of the political follower is also manifest in the confidence and pride he exudes putting on the vest. The interesting thing about the visual text is that, the verbal language accompaniment of the semiotic artefact is creatively presented. The verbal expression which serves as the anchorage in the text is used to present Fajoriji to the electorate as the best choice. The tone of the text is assertive as the political aspirant is imposed on the electorate. The producers of the text are not begging the audience to vote for the candidate, but they seem to be saying that, if you want the best for yourself, you would rather vote for Fajoriji. The exclamation mark at the end of the text reflects the passion and emotion with which the speaker made the declaration. Exclamation marks are used at the end of vigorous

questions, statements, and commands. Furthermore, the orthographical presentation of 'is your' is significant, as it is foregrounded specially to make the electorate note that Fajoriji is the best for them.

The lettering of the text, the colors and the symbol of the PDP constitute the relay of the visual text as they interact with the verbal language for meaning production. The mark of correctness or approval on the vest is a reinforcement of the declarative 'Fajoriji is your best choice'. The choice of colors for the vest is also remarkable. The colors white and blue are indexical of tranquility, peace, and nobility. Apart from giving an aesthetic appeal worthy of beholding, the colors portray the party and the candidate, that is, Fajoriji, as believing in the ideals of peace, integrity, and nobility.

4.2. Semiosis of Head Wears in the Discourse

Caps are another items of costume used for visual communication in Nigerian political rally discourse. Perhaps, one can rationalize the preponderant use of the items in the discourse as a result of its fashionability. Caps usually appear beautiful on wearers and complement their dressing. In addition to this, a cap is greatly used in the discourse due to the

foregrounded message they present when worn by people. A cap attracts immediate attention from people, especially when messages are conveyed through it. Caps, especially in the discourse in focus, are indexical as well. This reality is so because the act of wearing a political party's customized cap reflects the wearer's political leaning in the discourse environment. Below is a cap with utilitarian and aesthetic significance in the discourse:



Figure 4
PDP Rally in Lagos, 2011

The indexical semiotic artifact is used to present the PDP to the public as the political party to vote for while the wearer himself reveals his alliance with the party. The wearer portrays himself as someone that is sophisticated by his folding of the sides of the hat. The hat could have been worn in a manner that shows that the wearer is not self-conscious. But this hat is worn with style in the discourse, showing that the wearer is indeed excited identifying with the PDP and appearing in the brand of the party. Furthermore, the hat is similar to the kind of

cap worn by 'cow boys', fun seekers who go on holidays during which they ride horses and enjoy themselves. Therefore, through his appearance, the discourse participant identifies with the youth culture, being a youth himself, while injecting fun into the discourse. The text offers a good example of the use of verbal language as a *relay* as the names 'Good luck' and 'Sambo' interact with the color of the People's Democratic Party, the cowboy cap to project the party and the aspirants of the party to the public. Below is another kind of cap used in the discourse:



Figure 5
PDP Rally in Lagos, 2011

The cap in the image above is no doubt aesthetically compelling. It convinces one that the producers of the semiotic artefact not only were conscious of the utility of a cap while producing the text, but also its aesthetic appeal. Through the use of the cap, the producers and wearer identify strongly with the *Eyo* Festival in Lagos, as caps of this nature are actually part of the paraphernalia of *Eyo* worshippers in Lagos during the *Eyo* Festival. The *Eyo* festival is an important festival which Lagosians use to celebrate the heroic and valorous deeds of their ancestors. Therefore, since the party was going to Lagos for a rally, they decided to make caps that would look like what Lagosians cherish and are quite familiar with in order to appeal positively to the people and gain their acceptance. The aesthetic sense of the text producers and the party further reflects in the simple but colorful nature of the cap, as there are no verbal inscriptions or labels of the party that produced the item on it. The colors on the cap which signify the political party represented thus functions as the most significant signifier in the text interacting with its resemblance with the *Eyo* festival cap.

4.3. Ànkàrá for Political Communication

There can be no meaningful description of political rally discourse in Nigeria in the Southwestern part of the country without an

exhaustive discussion of the use of *ànkàrá* for political communication. *Ànkàrá* is a popular textile especially among the Yorùbá marked for class and taste. Although this textile material has long been in use to communicate political messages in Nigeria, it can be said that, there has never been a time that political parties and politicians have pervasively deployed the textile material for costume and consequently political communication as the present time. Hardly can one attend a political rally especially in the Southwestern part of Nigeria which is our focus without noticing the large use of *ànkàrá* fabrics. It is now the Yorùbá *aṣo èbí* (a cloth worn by family members on special occasions, which has been extended to mean a cloth worn by friends or even political friends and followers to occasions) for political parties. In this vein, the symbol ankara portrays the members of a particular party as socially belonging to a family.

Apart from the remarkable aesthetic quality of the costume, it serves a tremendous amount of utilitarian purpose just as the other items of costume examined earlier. The use of *ànkàrá* at political campaign rallies engenders some feeling of oneness and commitment in political leaders and their followers. This exactly is a major constituent of the philosophy behind *aṣo èbí* in the Yorùbá culture. It helps the Yorùbá to perpetuate their communal essence. This

explains why the Yorùbá, up till the present time, select *aso-ebi* for ceremonies such as funeral, wedding, naming, coronation, and others. This idea of community is probably rooted in the Yorùbá idea that, ‘*èniyàn laso mi*’ (people are one’s clothes or coverage). This principle is what manifests when *aso-ebi* is worn by politicians of different hierarchies at political campaign rallies in Nigeria. In fact, the use of *àńkára* at the rallies is a people-oriented approach that politicians, especially political leaders use to get close to the people they are leading or whom they hope to lead by looking or appearing the way those people also appear, even though they have superior affluence, influence, and fame. *Àńkára*, in Nigerian political rally discourse, also bears party colors, logo, manifesto, pictures of candidates, etc. Therefore, it functions as a mode of advertisement just as a billboard, newspaper, or television advertisement. It, however, surpasses all these other modes because it is mobile. Wherever the cloth is worn, the advert performs its function. Moreover, it is utilitarian. Even those who do not like the party would be glad to have a piece of the cloth gratis! At least, if they decide not to wear it to public places, they can use it as bedspread, table cover, pillow slip, etc.

It should be stated that, *àńkára* is offered to party members by political parties or politicians in certain instances as a way of mobilizing them. As our data will subsequently reveal, sponsors of *àńkára* or any other attire used at political rallies, e.g., t-shirts are indicated for the people to know, and in most cases, they are people seeking one form of political office or the other. This indeed is an aspect of Nigerian politics which critics have condemned on the grounds that it is a manifestation of the prevalent culture of political corruption in Nigeria.

Earlier, it was remarked that, the use of *àńkára* at political campaign rallies in Nigeria creates some aesthetic effects. The use of *àńkára* at Nigerian political rallies gives a great deal of color to the political rallies. It is usually the case at political rallies that one sees a mammoth crowd of people in a particular color that is associated with the party. The condition is usually remarkable as the visual resonance and appeal is always immense. Below is a text in which *àńkára* is used for communication at a political rally:



Figure 6
PDP Rally in Osogbo, 2011

Apart from the visual appeal of the *àńkára* in the image above, the material also serves a communicative purpose. Through the attire, the individuals whose pictures appear on it are

presented to the electorate as the persons to vote into power. Also, the logo of the party gives the visual device some certification as a tool for political communication by the party

and its followers. It performs a similar function to a signature. The choice of green as the background color for the attire is also significant as it is a major component of the logo of the party. The color depicts renewal or recrudescence, reinforcing the commitment of the political party to the consistent growth of all aspects of the Nigerian nation. A close look at the fabric also shows that, it is fairly inexpensive, a condition which makes it possible for every politician to wear the attire. The lame and even all manner of physically-challenged people appear in the clothing, underscoring the fact that the attire is for everybody – the high and the low. The written texts on the fabric (SAI PDP, SAI JONATHAN, SAI BUKOLA) constitute the

anchorage emphasizing that through the text, the message was being conveyed that the electorate should vote for the party and the political aspirants of the party inscribed on the fabric. The word ‘sai’ is of Hausa origin which means ‘vote’. The color of the party and the umbrella symbol of the party thus interact with the written language.

Furthermore, women add elegance to the discourse and gain tremendous visibility through their use of *àńkára*. The women use the fabric tastefully by making different styles with their *àńkára* materials such that it is almost impossible for one not to notice them especially when they appear in multitudes in the discourse environment. Let us consider the text below:



Figure 7
PDP Women's Rally in Lagos, 2011

The text above reveals women of Southwest Nigeria in *àńkára* at a political rally. The beauty of *àńkára* is enhanced in the text through its different uses by the women. While some use it as a wrapper, some make flowing gowns from it, and some women made skirt

and blouse from it. When the women appear at the rally in this manner, they usually command attention as they become the cynosure of all eyes while adding color and grandeur to the discourse. Let us consider another image of the use of *àńkára* in the discourse:



Figure 8
ACN Rally in Abẹ̀òkúta, 2011

The appearance of the persons in the image in the *àńkára* portrays them as avowed people or members of the ACN. One is not left to wonder as to their political leaning upon sighting them as the acronym ‘CAN’ is inscribed on the flowing gown (*agbádá*) made of the *àńkára* material. Furthermore, the persons in the image brand themselves in a way in tandem with the philosophy of their party which is ‘Omoluabi’ (the well-behaved Yorùbá person) by appearing in an attire of an elderly comported and distinguished Yorùbá man. The *agbáda* is marked for taste and respect and is not expected to be worn just by anybody but people of means, dignity, honor, and some advanced age.

The particular pattern of *àńkára* can also be said to be emblematic of the party both in its color and design patterns, as the politicians in the party had been wearing such *àńkára* to different political outings. The apparel makes the persons appear like persons worthy of being voted for as they command respect in their appearance, which is a typical quality of a real Yorùbá man.

4.4. Surrogate Languages as Signifiers

Another prominent aspect of non-verbal communication in the discourse is the use of surrogate languages. According to Stern (1957), surrogate languages allow for the

conversion of human speech into equivalent sounds for transmission, achievable through certain signaling systems. Also, Olatéjù (1990) remarks that, for any communication to be classified as surrogate, “it must be produced by an instrument rather than by man’s speech organs” (p. 39). Surrogates often have traditional utility as they are usually products of certain cultures outside of which meanings made through them cannot be understood. Some of the famous surrogate instruments are drums, flutes, etc. Essentially, it has been established that surrogate communication is most established in Africa owing to the continent’s rich cultural heritage. Political communication in Nigeria reflects this African cultural endowment, as politicians, political followers, and supporters use and appreciate surrogate languages such as talking drums, flutes, and gongs at political campaign rally centers.

In the discourse in focus, however, drums constitute the most visible object of surrogate communication. The prevalence of drums in the discourse can be attributed to the fact that drums are the most popular surrogate objects in Southwestern Nigeria, which constitutes the scope of the study. According to Ajayi (2004), “the Yorùbá drums perform both rhythmic and communicative functions” (p. 577). Below is an image of talking drums and their drummers in the discourse environment:



Figure 9
PDP Rally in Osogbo, 2011

The drums were used to produce various sounds in the discourse environment. Mainly, the sounds were eulogistic in nature as the party that organized the rally and its political stalwarts were duly praised by the drummers. Below is a lyric rendered by the drum surrogate:

Extract:

Chairman, Chairman;
Bí wọn bá lówó, wọn ò le lówó tó o
Bí wọn bá bímọ, wọn ò le bímọ tó o
Chief Òjó ní ki gbogbo yin o, Òdòfin, Òdòfin.

Translation:

Chairman, Chairman;
Even if they have money; they won't be as rich as you are
If they have children; they won't have as many as you have
Chief Òjó is greeting all of you; Òdòfin, Òdòfin.

In the extract above, the discourse producer eulogizes the chairman of the PDP in Osogbo in an elaborate and convincing manner. The chairman is presented as towering over and above all others including his political foes by the person who uses the speech surrogate. To achieve this, the text producers used two indices of opulence, wealth, or perhaps comfort among the Yorùbá, which are money and children. In the Yorùbá worldview, money is considered important as through it, it is believed that, so many things can be accomplished. However, no matter how rich one is, if he or she does not have a child or

children, the wealth is considered meaningless by the Yorùbá because it will eventually end with the demise of the wealthy person. It is the belief that whoever you endow with your material possessions other than your child will not take care of it. Furthermore, to the Yorùbá, children themselves are a source of wealth as they will eventually grow to become rich and take care of their parents. So, it can be seen that using a traditional African medium of communication, the text producers drew greatly on the knowledge of the Yorùbá worldview to compose the surrogate text for the chairman.

It should be noted that, no form of esoterism was required of the audience to discern what was being communicated through the drum surrogate, as the sounds were clear. The message could be easily understood by anybody who understood the language used in the surrogate communication which is Yorùbá. However, in addition to the clarity of the sounds, the text was also verbally rendered intermittently with the surrogate production. As has been already noted, political rally discourse in Southwestern Nigeria contains a lot of feasting, and this quality of the discourse is also enhanced by the surrogate communication in the discourse. Usually, when the performer of the surrogate speeches function in a typical Yorùbá setting, they expect to get money from the beneficiaries of their skills and expertise, that is, the persons whom they praise-sing through the surrogate objects. This manifests in the discourse as the chairman and his

friends rose to give the text producers money while dancing appreciably to the sounds from the surrogate. Therefore, surrogate communication serves both the function of communication and entertainment at political rallies, thereby making the discourse lively

and making the audience to enjoy the event and discourse more. Below is another image of producers of surrogate communication in the discourse and their objects of surrogate speech:



Figure 10
PDP Rally in Lagos, 2011

In the image above, there is evident multimodal information that the individuals were creating some song texts through their drums. The hand of the man on the right side betrays that, he was producing some surrogate sounds just as the man on the left side was also hitting the drum with its stick. The interesting thing, however, from this image is that, these persons were mobilized to attend the political rally for the production of political meanings through surrogate communication. The men appear in the *Àńkára* apparel worn by the generality of the politicians – political leaders and followers of the PDP at the political rally. Since it is almost impossible for one to say that they were especially given the attires at the rally ground, it then means that, the men were hired by the party or were themselves members of the party. However, no matter how they got to the political rally, it is evident that, the major actors in political rally discourse in Southwestern Nigeria– the political leaders and followers believe strongly in the use of surrogate communication in the discourse as the producers of the surrogate texts were identified with, through the gift of *àńkára* fabrics to them which they wore to the rally venue. Therefore, it can be concluded that, while some drummers who produce surrogate speeches at political rallies go to the

rally venues on their own volition without due invitations but with an assurance that they would get attention, some actually are duly expected and prepared for by the political parties, making surrogate communication an intrinsic part of political rally discourse in Southwestern Nigeria.

5. Concluding Remarks

This paper has tried to explore aspects of visibility in Nigerian political rally discourse, analyzing the meanings that are expressed through some semiotic artefacts deployed for political communication in the discourse. The paper attempted to show that, politicians in Southwestern Nigeria consciously use visibility to appeal to the electorate in view of its positive effects. To achieve this, the study focused on the use of vests, head wears, *agbádá*, *àńkára*, and surrogate languages which are all aspects of the culture of the people of Southwestern Nigeria where the rallies were held.

The paper shows that through the multimodal political texts used at political rallies in Nigeria, politicians are able to inscribe their plans, ideologies (if any), vision in the minds of their audience through the mnemonic power of the visual (Domke et al., 2002), which is

enacted in the political rally participation space through semiotic artefacts such as caps, vests and *ankara*. Furthermore, the paper shows the ability of the semiotic resources in the participation space to give aesthetic appeal to the discourse thus glamourizing it. Similarly, the aesthetic appeal generated through the semiotic artefacts creates and sustains the interest of the public in the political rallies. The colorful nature of the participation space, the general appearance of political followers in uniform, whether *ankara* or vests, and the melody of the surrogate communicative resources in the discourse all enliven the discourse for the participants, making the politicians to achieve their goal of mobilizing large crowds for their political rallies and political ambitions. Therefore, just as Elebute (2013) notes that creative artists do contribute to the political process through their packaging of politicians using visual agency, the producers of the various semiotic artefacts used for political communication at political rallies strategically present political contestants for acceptance by the general public through the semiotic resources of the artefacts.

The multimodal analysis of the semiotic resources revealed that, the semiotic codes drawn upon in the discourse interacted in various ways for the projection of meaning in the discourse. Even though verbal language consistently served as anchorage in most of the texts, there were times that it functioned as relay, showing creative composition of signifiers in the discourse. The paper shows that, semiotic resources in the discourse potentially communicate political meanings while highlighting peculiar cultural and social factors in the Nigerian environment.

The paper also shows that, the semiotic artefacts in the discourse, the semiotic resources and their meanings reflect and project certain aspects of the lives of the people of Southwestern Nigeria and the reality of the Nigerian nation, thus serving as a vista into the Nigerian situation. The surrogate languages for instance as well as some meanings in some of the semiotic artefacts such as vests and caps project the Yoruba culture, which has its roots in Southwestern Nigeria. Therefore, the paper highlights the semiotic-cultural and social factors which had

a bearing on political rally communication in southwestern Nigeria.

The findings in the paper reinforce the commitment in earlier studies on the place of multimodality in political discourse, as the paper clearly shows that semiotic resources effectively communicate various political meanings directly and indirectly. However, while some of the previous studies focused on political cartoons as multimodal elements, this paper was committed to the investigation of meanings projected by semiotic artefacts at political rallies which is no doubt an under-explored area in political discourse research in Nigeria. Similarly, while the studies on political cartoons focused more on the positive representation of the 'self' and the negative representation of the 'other' by the cartoon producers or publishers, the present paper showed that the use of the semiotic artefacts at political rallies extended beyond the construction of positive or negative representation as the visual resources were used for different kinds of mobilization and purposes such as material empowerment (gift of vests and *ankara*), entertainment and reinforcement of oral information provided. The present paper also differs from the earlier studies considering the fact that the theoretical framework employed in the study which is a combination of systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis and Barthes' conception of signifiers as 'anchorage' and 'relay' brought some fresh and different perspective into the analysis of multimodal political discourse.

The implication of this study is that, multimodality is an important aspect of political expression globally and in Nigeria in particular, considering the fact that the semiotic artefacts deployed at political rallies communicate compelling and significant political meanings and messages about politicians, political contestants, political parties as well as the attitudes of the electorate or some segments of the general public to their political leaders and parties. Therefore, visuality should be given as much attention in political discourse research as verbal language. The paper also underscores the importance of the array of semiotic resources in motivating the public to be interested in political rallies through the aesthetic appeals of the resources.

This study cannot, however, be said to be exhaustive on the role and composition of multimodal resources in Nigerian political discourse. Due to financial constraints and time factor, the study could not explore the multimodal features of the political discourses of the other parts of Nigeria such as Southeastern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria. Similarly, the study only focused on political campaign discourse of only the two major political parties that contested the 2011 elections in Nigeria. Therefore, future research efforts can be directed at an analysis of the political discourses of major and minor political parties across Nigeria while a multimodal critical discourse approach as opposed to the multimodal approach to data analysis adopted in this study can be employed for the analysis of such political discourses.

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