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**SECTION C: SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES****Multimodal Discourse Analysis Of Selected Political Campaign Posters And Slogans In Port Harcourt, Rivers State****Chinwe Godwin Udom**

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**Abstract**

Posters are very important forms of visual communication that commercial and political advertisers use to persuade target audience. During election campaign periods all over the world, posters are used to familiarize candidates to the electorates and entice them to vote for candidates. Multimodal Discourse Analysis has been adopted by different researchers to study such issues as the significance of campaign posters to the outcome of election processes. This study analyses selected campaign posters in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State of Nigeria. Crystal and Davy's Linguistic stylistic model of analysis was used as method of analysis. Three (3) political posters were purposively selected and analysed using the analytical tools of Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Crystal and Davy's Linguistic stylistic model. The study concluded that political campaign posters carry inscriptions that are mostly ambiguous since they are open to more than one interpretation. They are personal, idiosyncratic and subjective as they vary in their consideration by the audience. This study contributed to knowledge theoretically, in the sense that the use of Multimodal Discourse Analysis reveals that meanings can be conveyed to the electorate through other semiotic modes such as images, texts, symbols and designs; and practically, it reveals that there is a connection between real life and elements in an imaginative work of art, and this goes a long way in influencing the decisions people make.

**Keywords:** Posters, slogans, multimodal, discourse analysis

## Introduction

Language is basically a medium of communication. It is a social instrument that is collectively owned but individually used for communal cohesion. De Saussure, (1986) in describing language distinguished among *Langue*, *La-langue* and *La-parole*. According to him, while *Langue* refers to the general human linguistic activity, *La-langue* involves language activity as used within a speech community. Furthermore, *La-parole* refers to an individual's activity involving the use of language. For instance, while English, French, Igbo etc. belong to *La-langue*, the way an individual uses any of these belongs to *La-parole*. No doubt, De Saussure distinctions confirm modern discourses under dialect and idiolect. He suggested that no language remains the same in the hands of different users and under different contexts. Communication as a means of transmission of ideas, thoughts or feelings is in two major categories-the verbal and non-verbal communication. The most common one used for interaction in human societies is the non-verbal. Poster is one of the leading non-verbal means of communication in the society today especially the commercial and political posters. While commercial posters are commonly designed to appeal to customers to patronize a particular product, the political campaign posters are designed primarily to familiarize a candidate to the electorate. Technically put, posters are very important forms of visual communication. It presents picture(s) with meaning lying behind it. Emmanuel and Ibrahim, (2013).. Multimodal discourse analysis essentially is a combination between language and other semiotic resources in which the study of linguistic codes involves the existence of other resources such as images, graphs, gestures, actions and music. The combination of those different modes facilitates the understanding of electoral posters with their messages and meanings. According to some researchers such as Liu (2014), multimodal discourse analysis focuses more on both visual images and grammar in conducting analysis of different modalities. To achieve this, the combination of the two visual (images and grammar) is required in the analysis. This method mainly presents a comprehensive understanding of images.

In Nigeria, competing posters of various sizes and shapes on walls or billboards at strategic locations in cities, towns and villages announce that election campaign is going on. It is a tradition in politics during election campaigns for politicians to combine images with words in order to persuade the electorates to accept their political ideologies, thereby winning their votes. In addition to the beautifully designed photographs of the candidates, there are inscriptions such as the candidates name and the position they are vying for. Above all, campaign slogans are inscribed to sell the candidates political mission or ideology. Political campaign posters are made aggressive since they are always pasted on the wall or billboards in competition with others. Investigating the relationships between linguistic text (written text) and non- linguistic text (photograph) motivated the researcher to analyse those different posters. Moreover, knowing whether the electoral posters persuade the citizens to vote for a particular party motivated the researcher to conduct the present study.

## Election campaign posters and slogans

The term election campaign or partisan political activity refers to an act designed to promote the election or defeat of a particular candidate or candidates to a public office and shall include any of the following: Forming organizations, associations, clubs, committees or other groups of persons for the purpose of soliciting votes and/or undertaking any campaign for or against a candidate; Holding political caucuses, conferences, meetings, rallies, parades or other similar assemblies for the purpose of soliciting votes and/or undertaking any campaign or propaganda for or against a candidate; Making speeches, announcements or commentaries, or holding interviews for or against the election of any candidate for public office; Publishing or distributing campaign literature or materials designed to support or oppose the election of any candidate; or directly or indirectly soliciting votes, pledges or support for or against any candidate.

Emmanuel and Ibrahim (2013). A poster in general sense, is any piece of printed paper designed to be attached to a wall or vertical surface. Typically posters include both textual and graphic elements, although a poster may be either wholly graphical or wholly text. Posters are designed to be both eye-catching and informative. Posters may be used for many purposes. They are a frequent tool of advertisers (particularly of events, musicians and films), propagandists, protestors and other groups trying to communicate a message. Posters are also used for reproduction of artworks, particularly famous works and are generally low-cost compared to original artwork. Emmanuel and Ibrahim, (2013). This study concentrates on political posters. These are posters commonly seen during the period of elections. They are meant to persuade, motivate, entice the voters and grab their attention.

### **Discourse analysis (DA)**

Discourse analysis (DA) or discourse studies is an approach to the analysis of written, vocal, or sign language use, or any significant semiotic event. The objects of discourse analysis (discourse, writing, conversation, communicative event) are variously defined in terms of coherent sequences of sentences, propositions, speech, or turns-at-talk. Contrary to much of traditional linguistics, discourse analysts not only study language use 'beyond the sentence boundary' but also prefer to analyze 'naturally occurring' language use, not invented examples, Wikipedia, (2020). Text linguistics is a closely related field. The essential difference between discourse analysis and text linguistics is that discourse analysis aims at revealing socio-psychological characteristics of a person/persons rather than text structure. Jewitt (2009).. Discourse analysis has been taken up in a variety of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, including linguistics, education, sociology, anthropology, social work, cognitive psychology, social psychology, area studies, cultural studies, international relations, human geography, environmental science, communication studies, biblical studies, public relations and translation studies, each of which is subject to its own assumptions, dimensions of analysis, and methodologies.

### **Multimodal discourse analysis**

Multimodal discourse analysis goes back to Halliday's (1978, 1989) "Social Semiotic approach to language". This semiotic approach enables people to communicate through semiotic resources, (gesture, image and music) in order to transmit meaning with each other; hence, language operates to describe the social situations that contribute in creating meaning. Paltridge, (2012). Halliday, (2009) describes three types of social meanings that deal with the use of language:

- Ideational meaning which is the whole idea of the text.
- Interpersonal meaning which pertains to the relationship between the participants.
- Textual meaning that relies on how the message is organized.

Multimodal texts imply these aspects to achieve visual meaning. Images carry these three aspects ideational which represents the meaning of image, interpersonal which means the engagement of the image with the viewer and textual meaning depends on how the component of the images are organized to achieve its impact. The widespread use of multimodal resources depends on the public's awareness of the potentiality of multimodal texts to carry explicit meaning. Overall, multimodal discourse analysis is pertained to the different modes of communication. In case of political posters; images with written text are combined, meaning that multimodal texts need to be understood as the combination of different modes which serves the purposes of creating meaning in an effective way. O.Hollaran and Smith (2011). In multimodal discourse analysis, the image contains different figures such as diagram, photographs (person) and maps. Images also contain written text like slogan, emblems and banners. This means that multimodal discourse analysis depends on the link between the portrayed element and written text, specifically the combination between verbal and non-verbal communication. The essence of multimodal discourse analysis is shown in the use of visual elements (depicted element) with written language.

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It is important to note that visual analysis is very significant to provide the reader or viewer with sufficient detail of what is depicted or exhibited (images, video, photography). Multimodal analysis theory is based on Visual Analysis Theory and Visual Rhetoric Theory.

### **Theoretical framework**

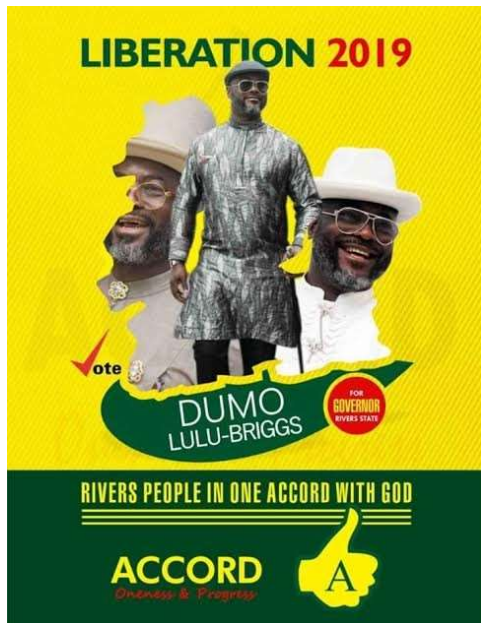
The theoretical framework of this work is anchored on the Visual Analysis Theory and Visual Rhetoric Theory. Visual analysis is typically based on visual semiotic and iconography which is associated with the art of representation of pictures and description of images. Visual analysis introduces a clear method for analysing the meaning and the element presented in images in relation to people and things. In this way, the meaning is described not only for representational sake, but also for the interactional side in order to catch the attention of the viewers to the image. The rhetorical theory exceeds the area of the analysis of linguistics artefacts, in which it is concerned with uncovering ideologies and the hegemonic power that are offered in images. A rhetoric schema for the evaluation of visual imagery, visual rhetoric is used to mean both a visual object or artefact and perspective on the study of visual data. It means that visual rhetoric use the visual symbols for the sake of communication.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the Purposive sampling techniques in selecting three (3) election campaign posters out of the 10 campaign posters of registered political parties for the 2019 elections in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State which is the target population of the study. The political parties' posters that were used for this study are: Accord Party (AP), All Progressives Congress (APC) and The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). In collecting the data, personal information about the candidates like their names and photographs were included. Thus, ensuring that all relevant sections of the posters to the study were used. This study adopts Crystal and Davy's linguistic model of analysis. The model is centred on investigating linguistic features of a text at every level of linguistic description. These levels include phonetics and phonology, graphetic and graphological, lexis, syntax and semantics. This approach entails identifying from the general mass any linguistic feature that can be isolated and discussed.

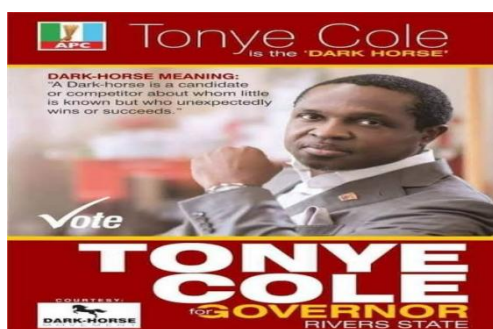
### **Findings**

## 1. ACCORD party campaign poster



This poster draws the viewers' attention as it presents the candidate's three images in form of a movement in a deep sea or river. On top of the poster we can read his intention "Liberation 2019". The word "Liberation" is a noun which means the act of freeing someone of something from another's control. This implies that the candidate wants to redeem his people out of the present government. The candidate is wearing ash, black and white native outfits with hat and fez cap. The central image of the candidate shows that he is moving with a black walking stick, a symbolism to leading a people out of captivity. Below the boat structure we can read the text "Rivers People in one Accord with God". This signifies a Godly mandate that is generally accepted by all. The poster also portrays the images of the candidates within a foregrounded map of the state. The candidate smiles in all of his pictures, portraying a confident man with an assurance of victory. The name of the candidate is boldly written and the position he is vying for written in red background with yellow ink. The background contains the symbol of the party which the candidate represents with two noticeable colours, yellow and green and scanty red at four different points. Beneath the slogan is the name of the party "Accord" and thumbs up sign with the letter "A" written within. The party motto "oneness and Progress" is written in a small print. Overall, the dominant colours in the poster are green and yellow with touches of red. Yellow symbolizes sunshine/brightness, a ray of hope; green represents fertility, freshness, new birth and red presents a touch of passion.

## 2. APC campaign poster



The poster has a long text and the image of the candidate in the forefront. The party logo is at the top left corner of the poster, followed by the name of the candidate and the phrase, the “Dark Horse” written beneath. The word dark horse refers to an enigma, an unknown entity. The candidate considers himself to be a mysterious or little known personality. He wears a humorous look on his face, with his left fist clenched and ready to battle his rivals. In terms of body language, clenched fists represent resolve and determination, but in the case of this particular political candidate the message enforced has a slightly aggressive undertone. The background of the poster is to an extent scenic, with the images behind being blurred. The written message defines the term Dark horse and expresses the true nature of the candidate. The candidate is wearing an ash coloured suit with a white shirt inside. Close to left fist hand of the candidate, we read “Vote” with the combination letter “v” with a tick sign followed by the candidate's name and the position he is contesting for boldly inscribed under. The poster is powered by the dark horse group with the image of a horse inscribed. The poster is beautifully designed with the predominate colours of red and white. Red symbolizes passion, strength and danger while white represents peace and purity. This poster is designed to appeal to the elite, educated class as it carries a touch of elegance.

### 3. PDP campaign poster



The candidate is sitting slightly bent with his fist clinched, the index finger and the thumb placed on his jowl and displaying a tight-lipped smile for viewers. In the left upper-corner is the candidate picture boldly portrayed. At the right we can see the party's logo resting on the slogan "Consolidation 2019" written in yellow and red ink, followed by the candidate's name which is marked by a tick sign. The candidate is wearing a light brown cloth and hat outfit against the half white, half red backdrop. The prevalence of white and red creates the illusion of passion, honesty and purity, with this being the most prominent feature of the poster. At the bottom part of the poster, viewers can see the name of the candidate with the name of the position he is vying for boldly written, followed by a courtesy which reads in part, PDP Voice –Worldwide which is an imprint of the organisation that powered the advert.

### Discussions

#### Graphetic features.

From the graphetic/ graph logical point of view, it can be deduced that political campaign posters and slogans are very important tools that politicians use for campaign communication. The campaign posters are in different sizes and shapes. They are beautifully designed to attract the attention of the electorates or any passers-by. The photographs were designed with attractive colours. Even the inscriptions on them which are mostly campaign slogans are also coloured and written artistically. All the campaign posters and slogans analysed showed that the photographs are well coloured and attractive. The font sizes are large enough to catch the attention of the electorates or any passers-by. The names of the candidates and their slogans are all presented in bold print.

The aim of such stylistic presentation is to enhance easy reading and attention catching and also the names are written in onomastic consonance of first (personal) name occurring first and the

surname occurring last. Any further reference to the names contrary to this published order is to be considered incorrect.

### **Lexical features**

Lexis in linguistics refers to the entire vocabulary of a given language. In multimedia discourse analysis, how the words are selected from the language user's linguistic repertoire to meet communication ends is the major concern. The lexis of political language generally are subject specific and abstract nouns are quite common since decisions are often theoretical even though they may be directly linked to a proposed plan of action Van. Leeuwem (2009). The analysis of the texts in the corpus has revealed that the key words are mostly descriptive and emotive. Most of them are presented in metaphors which embody the political mission of the candidate. They are carefully selected in order to entice the electorate to abandon their opinion and hold on to the candidate's. Like language of advertisement and propaganda, the words selected by the candidates aim at making the electorates change by moving to their side. For it to be retained and remembered easily, the slogans on the posters are mostly in single word or phrase. The slogan for campaign poster (1) is a noun, "Liberation 2019". Liberation can be defined as a process of freeing someone from another's control. The candidate has portrayed himself as a messiah, coming to liberate the people from the shackles of oppression. The word 'the dark horse' linked with campaign poster (2) as the candidate's slogan for instance is a single but powerful metaphor. It carries the central aim of presently a mysterious and little known individual into the political arena, thereby stirring up curiosity in the minds of the viewers to unravel the mystery implied. The slogan of campaign poster (3) is in a word form "Consolidation 2019". This phrase obviously presents a candidate that wants to make his position stronger or more secure. The slogan is meant to remind the electorates of all the positive things that the candidate has done for them which may convince them to elect him again. The analysis carried out on the syntactic features has uncovered that the syntax of political campaign slogans are generally simple. There is no instance of complex clauses noted. This means that the slogans are intentionally made short, concise or precise so that the electorates can memorize or retain them. The concise nature of the syntax also enables the electorates to easily analyse the sensitive ideologies and campaign missions of the candidates with ease.

### **Semantic features**

Political campaign posters and slogans carry meaning beyond the conceptual and denotation level. Almost all the inscriptions in words, phrases and sentences carry connotations. The words/ phrases "Liberation", "Dark Horse" and "consolidation" in poster 1,2 and 3 are highly emotive but can hardly be interpreted objectively. Liberation literary means freedom from oppression and subjection, it can also mean a mental emancipation. Dark Horse connotatively implies an enigma or a little known person or ideology. It can also mean a dark complexion horse, while "consolidation" denotatively means a process of unifying or combining two properties. It can also imply a state of improving on an already existing structure to make it more solid.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussions, conclusion can be drawn that political campaign posters carry inscriptions that are mostly ambiguous since they are open to more than one interpretation. It has been observed that Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as well as Crystal and Davy Linguistic Model are theories that can be used to discuss meaning and power relations as conveyed through other semiotic modes such as images, attires, text, symbols and slogans in the study of campaign posters. Posters do not only contribute to discourse analysis but also to linguistics and in a broader sense to the humanities.

Practically, this study reveals that there is an inter-relationship between real life and elements in an imaginative work of art as this goes a long way to influence the decision making process of an individual.

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