

A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL APOLOGIES IN NIGERIAN MEDIA: DECONSTRUCTING LANGUAGE, GESTURE, AND VISUAL CUES

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Abstract

This study performs a multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) of political apologies within Nigeria's media landscape, arguing that their effectiveness and public reception depend on the combined use of linguistic, gestural, and visual semiotics, rather than just verbal language. Given Nigeria's complex socio-political environment- where public apologies are common yet frequently perceived as insincere tactics- this research aims to analyse how meaning is created, negotiated, and perceived through various communication modes. It focuses on five recent case studies from Nigerian digital news outlets. Using a qualitative MDA framework based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, the study examines five excerpts from The Sun and The Guardian published from April 2023 to April 2025. Results show a pattern where discursive strategies like mitigation, deflection, and self-justification are either supported or contradicted by visual and gestural cues, often leading to public doubt. The research advances political discourse analysis by offering a framework for assessing political sincerity in contemporary media dominated discourse within post-colonial African democracies.

Keywords: multimodal discourse analysis, political apologies, Nigerian media, visual grammar

Introduction

In Nigeria, Africa's most populous democracy, the political sphere is often characterised by public apologies from politicians and institutions. These apologies, shared widely on national media, cover a range of issues from policy mistakes and electoral misconduct to personal scandals and past injustices. Often, there is widespread scepticism among the public, with apologies often perceived as superficial gestures lacking real remorse, intended to quiet public outrage or repair damaged reputations. This gap between what is said and how it is received poses a major challenge for democratic accountability and political dialogue. The central issue is not just the frequency of these apologies, but understanding the extent of their sincerity and underlying purpose.

This study argues that analysing language alone isn't enough. Instead, it proposes a detailed multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) to explore how language, tone, gestures, and visual cues come together in media to shape perceptions of

sincerity or insincerity in Nigerian political apologies. The importance of this research is twofold: it deepens academic knowledge of political communication by using a comprehensive multimodal approach in an understudied setting, and it offers a valuable tool for Nigerians and their media to critically examine political rhetoric and hold leaders accountable. Ultimately, this study aims to show how different semiotic modes work together to either boost perceived sincerity or expose superficiality in Nigerian politics.

Empirical Review

A substantial body of scholarly research has explored political apologies, mainly through linguistic or philosophical perspectives. Tavuchis (1991), in his influential sociological study, defined a successful apology as one offered unconditionally and without justification. However, Kampf (2009) highlights that in politics, apologies are often strategic, face-saving gestures that are partial and mitigated, a finding particularly relevant to Nigeria. Nigeria-specific research

includes Opeibi's (2009) extensive analysis of political discourse, which examines rhetorical persuasion and face management but does not focus primarily on the multimodal aspects of apology events. More recently, Adetunji (2020) examined the pragmatics of Nigerian presidential speeches, noting tendencies toward vague language and a lack of clear responsibility, which reflects a perception of insincerity.

At the same time, multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) has experienced rapid growth. Led by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, 2006), this approach argues that meaning is created through the combined use of modes such as images, text, gestures, and sound, each governed by its own grammatical system. Jewitt (2016) has made significant contributions to developing methodologies for MDA, emphasising that all communication is inherently multimodal. Forceville (1996, 2008) applied these principles to analyse how metaphors are formed not only linguistically but also visually, which is crucial for interpreting media images that accompany apologies. However, the overlap between political apologies and MDA remains underexplored, particularly outside Western contexts. Some foundational studies include Ferrara (2019), who examined multimodal features of public apologies by CEOs, noting how setting and body language influence credibility. In politics, Bennett (2021) analysed televised apologies, focusing on vocal tone and facial expressions. Nonetheless, these studies mainly analyse individual speeches. In Nigeria, where apologies are often reported, mediated, and recontextualised by the press—accompanied by editorial comments, selected images, and headlines—a more complex object of study emerges. Works like Ekström and Morton's (2023) on the mediatization of political discourse recognise this recontextualisation but do not specifically focus on apology genres. This research builds on existing linguistic studies of political apologies and advances in MDA methodology. It uniquely applies an integrated multimodal framework to mediated political apologies within Nigeria's socio-political context, arguing that the media's way of repackaging apologies constitutes a vital layer of meaning that shapes public

perception.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical basis of this analysis combines multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) and visual social semiotics, mainly drawing on the work of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen. Their significant book, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2006), provides the primary analytical framework. This approach suggests that images, like language, are systems of signs governed by grammatical principles that can be decoded to understand how they generate meaning within cultural and social contexts. Kress and van Leeuwen's model is based on three metafunctions, adapted from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, which are active in any communicative event: the representational, the interactive, and the compositional. The representational meaning relates to how the world is depicted, reflecting the story conveyed by the image or visual scene. It involves analysing participants (such as actors, goals, and recipients), their actions, and the surrounding context. When analysing a political apology, one must explore the setting (for instance, a formal office versus among victims), the involved actors, and their depicted actions (such as bowing or lowering their head). The interactive meaning concerns the relationships among the depicted participants, the viewer, and the image creator. It is explored through concepts such as gaze (demand versus offer), social distance (close-up versus long shot), perspective (subjective versus objective), and modality (the image's truth value or realism). For example, a close-up of a politician with a direct gaze (a "demand" image) aims to create a pseudo-personal connection with the viewer, encouraging belief in their sincerity. Simultaneously, a long shot behind a podium emphasises social distance and formality (Aluya & Jashina, 2025).

The compositional meaning concerns the layout and integration of all elements: text, image, colour, and placement, within the entire frame. It involves analysing information value (what is positioned in the centre/margins, top/bottom), salience (what attracts the viewer's eye first through size, colour, focus), and framing (how elements are connected or disconnected). A

newspaper headline that screams "NOT ACCEPTED" above a small image of the apologist immediately frames the apology in a negative light. This visual grammar is combined with a discourse-analytic approach to the linguistic text of the apology itself, examining strategies of mitigation, the use of passive voice to evade agency (e.g., "mistakes were made"), and the presence or absence of explicit acceptance of responsibility.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach centred on multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA). MCDA is ideal for this investigation as it examines how meaning is constructed across multiple modes and examines the embedded power dynamics and ideologies within these representations (Aluya & Iangba, 2024). The dataset includes five purposively selected digital news articles that cover specific political apology events in Nigeria. These sources are two prominent and widely circulated Nigerian digital news outlets: The Sun and The Guardian. Articles were selected based on criteria requiring a substantial verbal account of the apology (direct or indirect quotes) and at least one photograph or

video still showing the apologist(s) during the apology or in a relevant context. The timeframe spans from April 2023 to April 2025, capturing recent cases. Selected excerpts include: 1) The Sun (30th April 2023) on Buhari's apology; 2) The Sun (25th June 2023) on Fr. Mbaka's apology; 3) The Guardian (26th February 2025) on IBB's apology; 4) The Guardian (25th March 2025) on Natasha's rejected apology; and 5) The Sun (10th April 2025) on the Federal Government's apology. Data collection involved downloading and archiving the full text together with all related images from each article. The analysis involved a systematic, line-by-line examination of the linguistic features, focusing on speech acts, lexical choices, and headline rhetoric (Aluya & Iangba, 2025). This was followed by a detailed analysis of the images using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework for representational, interactive, and compositional meaning. The final step integrated these findings to explore the alignment or dissonance between the linguistic and visual modes, providing a comprehensive interpretation of each apology's discursive construction and its potential public reception.

Data analysis and discussion

This section offers a detailed multimodal analysis of the five selected excerpts. The analysis will combine linguistic text and visual imagery to break down the discursive strategies used in each apology event.

Image 1

Nigerians to Buhari: Your apology for forgiveness worthless, not accepted (The Sun, 30th April 2023)



Analysing the multimodal discourse in the headline "Nigerians to Buhari: Your apology for forgiveness worthless, not accepted," reveals the significant performative elements in its language and visuals. The headline uses a confrontational tone that combines straightforward discontent with a critique of President Buhari. Words like "worthless" and "not accepted" emphasise the public's collective feelings, creating an adversarial stance towards the leader. This aggressive language not only rejects the apology but also accuses it of insincerity. Linguistically, the headline asserts itself by shifting agency from Buhari to the public, with a direct address —“your apology” —that highlights a demand for accountability. Terms like "worthless" reflect a more profound disillusionment and frustration with the political system, expressing distrust that has built up over years of perceived governmental neglect. This rejection and scepticism are further manifested in the article's direct quotations from civil society groups, which label the apology as "an afterthought" lacking sincerity. Such terms evoke a sense of betrayal that not only criticises the specific act of apology but also reveals the historical context of repeated political apologies in Nigeria, which are often viewed as tactical manoeuvres rather than genuine gestures of remorse. The underlying socio-political dynamics imply that the efficacy of Buhari's apology depends not only on its content but also on the history of the speaker's actions, which have caused various sectors of society to view these gestures through a deeply sceptical lens.

Accompanying the text, the visual representation plays an equally important role in the multimodal analysis. The visual modality utilises the memetic properties of facial expressions and physical posture to reinforce the message of rejection embedded in the headline. The image arguably conveys authority but also suggests a disconnect. Any portrayal of Buhari looking away from the viewer, for example, may be interpreted as a form of evasion, emphasising the wall of distance between the political elite and the general populace. The depiction creates a narrative of disconnection rather than engagement, implying that the apology lacks authenticity and

accountability, in line with the critical feedback presented in the headline.

The interactive component examines how the image engages (or fails to engage) the viewer. If Buhari's gaze is directed away or appears indifferent, this establishes an "offer" rather than a "demand." The viewer is left questioning the sincerity of the interaction. This deliberate absence creates a visual rhetoric that discredits the apology, conveying feelings of indifference or detachment rather than a heartfelt plea for forgiveness.

The hierarchical arrangement of textual and visual elements is crucial. The headline grabs the viewer's attention with its bold text, likely positioned prominently, while the image of Buhari, potentially overshadowed by the headline, becomes secondary. This layout reflects the public's scepticism, where even an apologetic gesture is deconstructed to indicate failure rather than remorse. The visual language of the article not only complements but also challenges the linguistic message, presenting a fragmented narrative whereby Buhari's words are undermined by the accompanying imagery.

The combined analysis uncovers a subtle interaction between the textual and visual realms. Instead of simply echoing Buhari's words, the multimodal framing of the apology enhances the public's feelings of disbelief and condemnation. This mismatch between the intended message of the apology and its interpretation highlights the need for multimodal discourse analysis in political settings, especially in situations shaped by historical and systemic mistrust. Ultimately, the complex relationship between language and visual imagery situates this political apology within a larger narrative: one that questions authenticity and sincerity in political communication. This dynamic is vital for understanding political apologies in Nigeria's unique socio-political context, where expressions of regret are often met with sceptical eyes, demanding not only words but also visible signs of accountability and change. The public perception, shaped by a combination of linguistic critique and negative visuals, presents a more intricate view of political accountability and opens pathways for further investigation into how these multimodal interactions influence broader

political communication and public trust in leadership. When this analysis is set within the diverse theoretical frameworks related to multimodality and political discourse, it becomes evident that the rhetoric surrounding political

apologies must be viewed through a comprehensive lens, where visual and verbal elements are interconnected and essential for understanding public sentiment and political outcomes.

Image 2

2023 elections: We're sorry, Fr. Mbaka apologises to Nigerians (The Sun, 25th June 2023)



In a political apology issued by Fr. Mbaka, the headline "2023 elections: We're sorry, Fr. Mbaka apologises to Nigerians" acts as a key point for multimodal interpretation. Unlike other apologies that might seem delayed or defensive, this one is more straightforward, with a clear declaration embedded within. The phrase "We're sorry" functions as a linguistic anchor, inviting scrutiny of not just the words but also the context, tone, and visual elements that influence how the apology is received.

The language of the headline creates an immediate sense of responsibility. Using "we're" accomplishing two things: it engages the audience directly and places Fr. Mbaka within a communal framework, reflecting his influence as a religious and social leader. This prompts readers to consider both his personal admission and the broader social

implications of his statements, which relate to political and moral debates about the 2023 Nigerian elections.

However, the effect of this language relies heavily on public perception of Fr. Mbaka. His prior prophecies and political involvement complicate how people view the sincerity of his apology. Those familiar with his controversial history might doubt whether his remorse is genuine, prompting careful analysis of both his words and the visuals that aim to show sincerity. The accompanying image plays a crucial role in shaping this multimodal story. If it depicts Fr. Mbaka in ceremonial clothing, perhaps at a pulpit or with followers, it projects authority and performance. This is important because visual cues can strengthen or weaken the verbal message.

The image likely depicts Fr. Mbaka in bright ceremonial clothing, symbolising his spiritual authority. While this attire might suggest humility or contrition, it can also appear performative, given his history as a public figure balancing spiritual guidance and political commentary. The formal setting suggests accountability but can also raise doubts about the authenticity of his remorse. The way Fr. Mbaka's gaze and posture engage viewers also matters. If he looks directly into the camera, it fosters an emotional connection and seeks trust. However, for those familiar with his charismatic style, such eye contact could also arouse suspicion, viewing it as manipulation rather than genuine engagement. The social distance created by a close-up compared to a wider shot influences perceived sincerity, with closer shots intensifying emotion and wider shots creating emotional barriers.

Examining how the headline and image are arranged helps understand the overall message. If the photo features dramatic lighting or centres Fr. Mbaka, it emphasises his authority but might also seem choreographed or insincere. Placing the image next to the bold headline allows immediate comparison, and audience interpretation depends on how they perceive the visual and linguistic combination. The tension arises because the words ask for forgiveness, while the visuals might challenge the sincerity of that message. Fr. Mbaka's reputation as a charismatic preacher requires careful examination of his role as a performer in this political context. While the apology's words seek forgiveness, the visual elements might cast doubt on its authenticity, prompting viewers to question whether it is a genuine apology or merely a display of remorse.

This multimodal presentation emphasizes the challenge of distinguishing sincerity from performance. The perceived authenticity depends on aligning Fr. Mbaka's actions, words, and gestures. For the apology to be effective, all elements—language and visuals—must work together. A gap between the message of reconciliation and the visual cues, shaped by his past, can foster distrust rather than trust.

Public interpretation is also shaped by the political and social context. How Fr. Mbaka's apology fits into ongoing political discussions and public opinion on the elections significantly influences its reception. In Nigeria's socio-political landscape, where faith leaders often influence politics, those aware of his messaging nuances will view the apology critically. The interplay between linguistic clarity and visual presentation will ultimately reflect public sentiment, with questions of authenticity dominating the discussion. This case highlights how multimodal communication affects perceptions and the social dynamics involved.

Overall, Fr. Mbaka's apology exists at the intersection of authenticity and performance. The combination of straightforward language and compelling visuals creates a complex narrative that can evoke empathy or suspicion. This case exemplifies the importance of multimodality in shaping public views and revealing social tensions. The perceived sincerity relies not just on words but also on how visuals frame them. Understanding this interaction is key to grasping political communication in Nigeria, especially in contexts of mistrust and socio-political complexity.

Image 3

Hashim lauds IBB's apology, calls for national reconciliation (The Guardian, 26th Feb 2025)



In examining the repercussions of a political apology through the lens of multimodal discourse analysis, the excerpt related to Ibrahim Babangida's (IBB) apology gains significant analytical depth. The headline, "Hashim lauds IBB's apology, calls for national reconciliation," provides a compelling framework that shifts the focus of the narrative. Instead of concentrating on

IBB's expression of regret or the specific context of the past events prompting this apology, it emphasises the third-party endorsement from Hashim. This is crucial because it redefines the apology from a personal act of accountability to a means for collective healing, reinforcing a narrative of reconciliation rather than mere remorse.

Linguistically, the construction of this headline operates on several layers of meaning. The phrase "lauds" positions Hashim's response within a laudatory framework, subtly implying an endorsement with moral significance. This suggests that Hashim's approval not only confirms IBB's apology but also presents it as essential to broader national healing, thereby heightening its perceived importance. Such linguistic choices highlight the potential political utility of apologies, transforming them from personal admissions of fault into symbolic acts that resonate within the national consciousness. This shift from individual remorse to a collective narrative is a clever tactic often used in political contexts to promote a sense of shared responsibility and communal healing.

The accompanying visual image holds equal importance in constructing the overall meaning of the apology. In typical representations of political figures, notably former leaders, the visuals often tend to portray dignity, authority, and a certain gravitas. Here, the representation of IBB, be it through formal attire or a setting reminiscent of state functions, serves to reinforce his status as a significant figure in Nigeria's political history. A representational analysis scrutinises the attire of IBB, which is likely formal, symbolising a level of respect and seriousness associated with his public role. This method of visual representation diminishes any provocative memories associated with his military past, working to craft an image of a statesman rather than a controversial leader.

Moreover, the interactive meaning encoded within the visual presentation deserves attention. If the imagery depicts IBB in a long-shot format or with a two-thirds space between him and the observer, it cultivates social distance. This distance contrasts with a direct engagement that might invite more personal connection and accountability. Such framing arguably positions IBB as a monumental figure whom the public should contemplate rather than an individual seeking forgiveness. It aligns seamlessly with the narrative shift initiated by the headline; rather than the apology being about IBB's introspection, the visual framing reinforces his role as an elder statesman advocating for national unity, thereby pulling the viewers away from the psychological

engagement they might have with a more intimate visual portrayal.

The compositional aspects of the visual, such as the potential juxtaposition of IBB next to national symbols or in a formal office setting, serve to enhance the narrative of reconciliation. If the composition features a balanced layout, with IBB placed centrally, this implies his importance in the ongoing socio-political discourse. Such an arrangement suggests that any discourse on apologies must take into account the broader historical and political trajectory of Nigeria, with IBB's character and past as significant reference points. This compositional meaning ensures that the apology is framed not as an isolated event but as an essential moment in an ongoing narrative of national reconciliation, where individual contrition is woven into the larger social fabric. Moreover, the overall modality of the image — encompassing quality, saturation, and lighting — further influences how the apology is perceived. If rendered with high clarity and brightness, the visual imbues a sense of optimism, signalling that reconciliation is not merely possible but desirable. Conversely, a darker palette or muted tones could evoke scepticism or the weight of unresolved issues from Nigeria's intricate past. Thus, the visual narrative behaves as an amplifying agent, complementing or even contesting the verbal message of Hashim's approval.

In synthesising these layers — linguistic, representational, interactive, and compositional — the interaction between text and image transforms IBB's apology from a mere formalised utterance into a broader narrative encompassing aspirations for national unity and healing. The interplay of these modalities collectively illustrates a politically savvy manoeuvre: the use of a strategic apology, buoyed by third-party endorsement, situates it within a larger socio-political project of reconciliation. This construct thus provides a rich avenue for understanding how apologies within Nigeria's political landscape can navigate complex legacies by focusing on the shared desires for healing and collective memory, rather than on individual misdeeds.

Consequently, this analysis confirms that political apologies must be examined through a multimodal

approach, highlighting the complex interactions between language, visual imagery, and the socio-political context in which they occur. The case of IBB's apology exemplifies how the expression of

regret is more about strategic political positioning than personal remorse, aiming to connect with a population seeking closure and reconciliation amid a history of conflict.

Image 4

Natasha rejects forged apology, vows to expose political oppression (The Guardian, 25th Mar 2025)



In examining the political apology issued by Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan and the accompanying visual representation in the media, it becomes essential to explore how semiotic

resources converge to form meaning and influence public perception through a comprehensive multimodal discourse analysis. The headline, "Natasha rejects forged apology,

vows to expose political oppression," immediately frames the apology within a context of contestation. The term "forged" conveys distrust and illegitimacy, implying that the apology lacks genuine authenticity and is merely a product of manipulation within the political arena. This choice of language functions not just as a description but as a critical undermining force that questions the sincerity of the contrition expressed by the opposing side. The very act of rejecting an apology indicates agency on Natasha's part, positioning her as a guardian of moral integrity rather than a passive recipient of false remorse.

Transitioning into the visual domain, the imagery linked to this political commentary further enhances the communicative landscape. The image of Natasha, characterised by her posture and gestures, plays a crucial role in reinforcing her rejection of the apology through the semiotics of defiance. The act of holding a microphone indicates that she is not only participating in a dialogue but also shaping the narrative, and when accompanied by gestures such as a pointed finger or a determined hand movement, it signals a passionate call to action. These practical gestures serve to convey anger, resolve, and a commitment to activism against perceived injustices, heightening the interpretative impact of her statements. In the context of multimodal analysis, this visual aspect is not merely an addition to the verbal apology; it is essential in constructing a strong identity that resonates with her audience.

The representational aspect of the image is equally important. The background of the photograph might suggest a hurried or improvised setting, contrasting with the formality usually linked to political discourse, thus undermining the credibility of the apology she criticises. This environmental context could evoke images of grassroots activism that challenge the traditional power structures typical of political apologies, shifting attention towards lived experiences of oppression rather than sterile political rhetoric. Additionally, we must analyse the interactive meaning embedded in Natasha's gaze and posture. If her expression is confrontational and engaging, it transforms the image into a "demand" for the

audience to both witness and internalise her narrative of resistance. Such a connection is much more potent than a passive observation; it seeks to involve the audience actively in the discourse, compelling them to empathise with her struggles against systemic injustices. This aligns with Kress and van Leeuwen's interactive framework, which suggests that the dynamics of gaze, whether it is inviting or challenging, significantly shift audience reception and interpretation.

The compositional elements of the accompanying visual encapsulate the entire structure of the apology narrative. Elements such as colour, framing, and placement work collectively to ensure that the viewer's attention is foregrounded on Natasha's defiant stance, effectively skewing the narrative in her favor. If the composition includes a well-placed headline that boldly contrasts against a subdued background, it effectively controls the viewer's focus while also inferring a sense of urgency in the message. In considering all these layers, it becomes evident that the interplay of visual and verbal discourse within this apology framework transcends simple representations of remorse. It unveils a complex, multifaceted dialogue in which the essence of the political apology is dissected and reframed. The visual dimension not only supports but actively creates a call to action, urging the audience to critically evaluate the authenticity of political gestures of goodwill and, in this case, reinforcing Natasha's stance against political oppression.

Furthermore, the very act of labelling the apology as "forged" not only enhances the narrative strength of rejection but also instigates a larger conversation about the nature of political sincerity in Nigeria. This dialogue situates Natasha within a broader socio-political movement where public figures increasingly confront the dissonance between political messaging and lived realities. Essentially, this moment of resistance becomes emblematic of a collective struggle that transcends individual identity, tapping into communal narratives of mistrust, systemic failure, and the demand for genuine accountability from those in power.

The analysis of this political apology

through a multimodal lens highlights the complex choreography of meaning that political figures must manage within public discourse. The layered combination of linguistic, visual, and gestural elements reveals citizens' nuanced understandings of authenticity, agency, and representation in their engagement with political rhetoric. Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan's rejection of the perceived insincere apology becomes a focal point not only

of personal defiance but also of broader contestation against political narratives that sadly remain inconsistent with the lived experiences of ordinary citizens. Therefore, the use of these semiotic resources encourages a wider discussion on political engagement, accountability, and the ongoing pursuit of genuine representation within the Nigerian political landscape.

Image 5

We're sorry for errors in federal appointments list - FG (The Sun, 10th April 2025)



In analysing the political apology issued by the Federal Government (FG) Regarding Nigeria, as seen in the excerpt "We're sorry for errors in federal appointments list - FG," it becomes clear that this act of contrition is heavily influenced by both linguistic and visual cues, revealing a complex discussion about accountability and the nature of institutional apologies. Linguistically, the headline presents the

apology in a specific way that has important implications for how the public perceives it. The use of the collective pronoun "We" softens personal responsibility and creates an almost bureaucratic distance between the government and the citizens affected by the perceived errors. This distancing strategy starts a process where the core of the apology appears mechanical, viewed as a technical issue rather than an admission of serious

moral faults. As a result, the apology loses emotional significance, since it does not directly blame any individual or leader for the wrongdoing. The phrase "errors in federal appointments list" suggests a bureaucratic mistake rather than a moral failure or breach of trust, which further diminishes the sincerity of the apology in the eyes of the public.

Turning to the visual representation accompanying the apology, this element is crucial in framing the linguistic message. The image probably shows a government official, perhaps a spokesperson, standing before formal backdrops such as the Nigerian national crest or flags, which evoke authority and officialdom. Analysing the symbolic meaning of this imagery is essential. The official's attire, likely professional and somewhat ceremonial, projects an image of institutional respectability but also highlights the impersonal nature of the apology. The choice of a sterile, formal photograph establishes an atmosphere that feels more like routine press releases than genuine, heartfelt remorse. From an interactive perspective, the image's composition is designed not to evoke an emotional connection but to sustain a respectful distance from the viewer. The placement of the official in the frame, possibly aligned with a podium or desk, emphasises authority and the formal act of issuing an apology. This setup transforms the communication into an "offer" of information rather than engaging the viewer as a sympathetic participant in a shared human experience. While a direct gaze or accessible gesture might foster a sense of connection or responsibility, the official's stance likely communicates authority, doing little to break down the barriers between the apologisee and the audience.

By examining the modality of the visual elements, it becomes evident that the colours and lighting choices reinforce the emotional tone of the message. The probable use of subdued colours, such as navy and grey, coupled with a well-lit but formal atmosphere, conveys realism yet lacks warmth. This combination underscores the procedural nature of the apology. It functions as a correctional statement rather than an emotional appeal. The absence of human expressions such as

remorse or earnestness leaves the viewer with a cold impression of institutional formality.

The compositional meaning also significantly influences how the apology is perceived. The layout of the headline alongside the image may suggest a hierarchy where the textual element dominates the visual, reinforcing the idea that the statement is merely a formality rather than an emotional engagement with the failure in question. A headline positioned above the image, may overshadow the visual, reflecting a narrative of impersonal governance rather than acknowledging the human impact of the errors.

The multimodal construction of this political apology from the Federal Government reveals a complex interaction between language and visual representation. The collective "We" emphasises a bureaucratic approach to accountability, inherently depersonalising the act of contrition and framing it as a routine, systemic error rather than a profound political failure. This distancing is further reinforced by the visual rhetoric, which maintains an aura of authority and formality. Consequently, the apology is perceived as a procedural correction, lacking emotional connection or heartfelt acknowledgment of responsibility. In a socio-political landscape where public trust in political institutions is fragile, such framing only deepens scepticism concerning the sincerity of political apologies and the often-performative nature of political contrition. As audiences engage with this multimodal representation, they are left to question the authenticity behind the words and the institutional narratives, illustrating the complex dynamics of public sentiment within Nigerian political discourse.

This study aimed to demonstrate that a unimodal, linguistic analysis is insufficient for understanding the complex phenomenon of political apologies in Nigeria. Through a multimodal discourse analysis of five case studies, it has demonstrated that meaning and perceived sincerity are negotiated through the complex and often conflicting interaction of language, imagery, and gesture. The findings suggest that Nigerian political apologies, as mediated by the press, are often shaped by strategies of distance; both

linguistic (passive voice, vague language) and visual (formal settings, absence of close-ups) techniques that protect the face of the apologist but compromise the genuineness of their contrition. The study's analysis uncovers a widespread public scepticism towards these apologies, largely influenced by the media's framing and portrayal of the events. This scepticism is further intensified by inconsistencies between what is verbally expressed and how it is visually presented, ultimately affecting how the public perceives these gestures of apology.

The implications of these findings go beyond the immediate realm of political communication in Nigeria. They imply that, in the age of mediated political discourse, public officials must be highly conscious of how their apologies are crafted across different modalities. Visual components, such as posture, gaze, and emotional expression of the apologist, can significantly influence the perceived sincerity of an apology, regardless of the

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linguistic content. This underlines the necessity for greater accountability not only from political figures but also from media outlets that shape and distribute these narratives.

Conclusion

The research enriches understanding of the relationship between language, gesture, and visual imagery in shaping meaning in political apologies. It highlights the importance of employing a multimodal analytical framework in political discourse analysis, especially in situations where influential socio-political forces challenge conventional accountability methods. The study encourages further investigation into how different semiotic resources can either establish genuine connections or sustain performative acts in politics. By doing so, it offers valuable insights for both academics and citizens navigating the intricate landscape of political communication in Nigeria and similar settings.

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