

A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE STUDY OF #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS CAMPAIGN PROTEST VIDEO CLIPS (2014-2015)

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Abstract

This study identified and analysed the visual elements used as communicative strategies in BrinGBackOurGirls campaign video clips. It also interpreted the underlying ideologies embedded in the visual elements. These were done with a view to showing how messages are passed or communicated in protest discourse through a critical analysis of multimodal resources. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source comprise video clips of #BringBackOurGirls campaign that took place between 2014 and 2015. Five video clips were downloaded from www.YouTube.com. Five visual elements were extracted from each of the video clip. The secondary source included textbooks, journal articles and the Internet. The data were analysed and interpreted using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach by Machin and Mayr (2012). The results showed that visual elements such as image, dressing and colour were used to elicit sympathy and create both national and global awareness. The study also revealed the preservation of the abducted Chibok girls lives by the protesters through the use of red colour saturation on their clothes. The study, therefore, concluded that analysis of ideologies embedded in visual elements of any form of protest or media discourse is best understood through the application of multimodal critical discourse analysis approach.

Keywords: Multimodality; Protest; Campaign; Videos; Multimodal critical discourse

Introduction

Since 2008, the Nigerian government has been trying to crack down on Boko Haram activism. This culminated in a five day face off in July 2009 between the Boko Haram sect and the Nigerian military, which left hundreds of people dead, including Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of the sect. After Yusuf's death, the activities of the sect created insecurity, instability, and increased crime in Nigeria. The Nigerian militant Islamist group sought the imposition of Sharia Law in the northern states of Nigeria. According to Ekanem, Dada and Ejue (2012), the group is ideologically opposed not only to western education but western

culture and modern science. The activities of Boko Haram were mainly in the north eastern states of Nigeria and this led to the abduction of Chibok Secondary School Girls by the Boko Haram sects in 2014. Few weeks after the abduction of the Chibok Secondary School girls, a group of Nigerians, organised under the platform of #BringBackOurGirls campaign (BBOGC) led by the former Nigerian education minister, Oby Ezekwesili, and activist, Aisha Yesufu began a peaceful social protest, demanding government's prompt action in ensuring the release of the abducted school girls. The protest is classified as a social protest aimed at pressurizing the Nigerian

government to be quick and intentional in ensuring the speedy recovery of the kidnapped Chibok School Girls.

Social protest is a form of action taken by a group of organised persons aimed at fighting the socio-political and economic structures within the society. It comes in the form of demonstrations, riots and even strike actions as the case may be with the intention of influencing the decisions taken by the constituted authority which are perceived to be unfavourable to the people. Protesters rely heavily on language which comes in different forms such as visuals and linguistic expressions. Social protests can be violent and nonviolent. In some cases, protesters usually adopt blockades and provocative methods like abusive images which have in recent times be regarded as provocative mode of communication.

Several linguistic studies on #BringBackOurGirls campaign have been carried out and these studies employed the frameworks of Systemic Functional Grammar, Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal critical discourse analysis. For instance, Nwabuzor and Gever (2015) and Chiluwa and Ifukor (2015) explored the significance of visual elements and linguistic elements used by protesters in expressing their perspectives and displeasures in the way they are being treated in the society. Some of the studies also focused on the linguistic expressions used in placards, effigies and name calling on newspapers and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Blog post.

In spite of the plethora of literature on #BringBackOurGirls campaign, scholars have not sufficiently explored the complexity of meaning-making visual modes in #BringBackOurGirls Campaign protest. Therefore, undertaking a multimodal discourse study of this social protest gives insights into the underlying ideological issues through the analysis of visual elements of Nigerian media-political discourse and the application of MCDA as an approach in interpreting social protest videos. This study fills this gap.

Media Discourse and Social Media Platforms

Media discourse is one of the evolving aspects of discourse and one of the ways in which

the world is understood (Talbot, 2004, p. 3). It is mainly concerned with the expression of statements that, at least traditionally, are supposed to fall into two folds. First is information or opinion, which is the one providing the necessary information for us to interpret the world ourselves, and the other is the one that offers the newspaper's point of view of the issue (Rodriguez, 2008, p. 50). Media discourse refers to the use of multiple interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written. It can as well be seen as the parameters within which a particular issue is generally discussed or framed by the media.

One thing that is very important or foregrounded in media discourse is interaction. People in different production communities interact with one another in a highly complex manner through joint production of texts. Audience in this case are seen in terms of demographics, not as interants/interlocutors. Also, in media texts, audience are considered as commodities sold to advertisers. Talbot (2004) identified three different sites in media discourse: interactions in production communities, interactions in audience communities and 'interactivity' between producers and audiences. The emergence of social media on the other hand, is largely to provide information about what is happening in the world and link people from different locations. It also allows people to share information, pictures, videos, and files. The major network sites where people share information include: Facebook, WhatsApp, Blackberry Messenger, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. Very crucial to this study is the YouTube platform.

YouTube

YouTube is one of the largest social media sites and recent products of development in broadcasting and information technology that does not produce media content but relies on users to upload both content and comments since it was launched in 2005. In March 2013, YouTube attracted about one billion followers which represent an increase in the 20 million followers it recorded in 2006. YouTube has its own video page which allows one to upload and download videos for leisure and research purposes. It is now one of

the most used sites on the internet by online users. New media users usually make choices about what they watch or listen to that previous generation of users were not privileged to have.

YouTube as a media platform allows people to watch and share videos online. Other important features of YouTube are the capacity for users to promote videos by sharing them on social media, rating them and engaging in media conversations through comments and social media posts. This means that most YouTube users see and treat it not just as a media player but as a resource or platform for higher participatory involvement with media cultures.

Ideology

Ideology is a concept that is widely used by people in the humanities, media and social sciences. It has been widely criticised by many, most especially cultural critics, as a concept that is being too abstract and rigid without modern flavour that is suitable for the new social setting and formations across the globe. van Dijk (2003, p.15) defines ideology as a “basic systems” of beliefs because there are more specific beliefs which may depend on them or well organised by them. Ideologies can also be seen as social representations. van Dijk defines ideologies from the perspective of social representation as that which form the basic social representation of the beliefs shared by a group and precisely functions as the framework that defines the overall coherence of these beliefs (van Dijk, 2003, p.15). This shows that ideologies allow for new social opinions to be easily inferred, acquired and distributed in a group when the group and its members are confronted with new events, happenings and situations. It is a social cognition, beliefs that explain or define the social representations of a group in the society.

Macdonald (2003, p. 28) defines ideology as “a systematic framework of social understanding, motivated by a will to power, or a desire to be accepted as the “right” way of thinking, which has wide support within a particular society, or substantial social group”. This definition by Macdonald is in consonance with van Dijk’s definition of dominant ideologies which is usually exercised through power. Olaosun

and Ayoola (2013) define ideologies as “the fundamental beliefs, values and perceptions upon which the actions and opinions of individuals and groups are based”. The study explains that ideology gives room for diverse opinions, struggle, and conflict which form the ground for social representations of shared beliefs by a group and equally functions as a framework that explains the overall beliefs of that group.

van Dijk (2005, p. 61-63) further explains that ideological analysis of any text, must be observed in the following ways:

examines the context of the discourse paying close attention to some knowledge about the facts of history, political and social backgrounds of conflicts. It also analyses which groups; power relations and conflicts are involved. It looks for positive and negative opinions about Us and Them; it spells out the presupposed and implied ideological opinions and thus examines all formal structures that (de) emphasize polarised group opinions

It is obvious that ideologies involve the representation of “self” and “others”, “Us” and “Them” which lead to different ideological groups.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal discourse involves the interaction of multiple semiotic resources such as (spoken and written) language, gesture, dress, architecture, proximity lighting, movement, gaze, camera and angle (O’ Halloran *et al.*, 2009, p.1). van Leeuwen (2001) explains that the “key” to explaining the mysteries of visual semiotics is developing an understanding of the different layers of meaning. The first layer is the layer of denotation. van Leeuwen (2001, p. 95) explains that denotation is usually accepted in most cases “where the producers of the text have an interest in trying to get a particular message across to a particular audience and in such cases, there will be signs to show the preferred level of generality”. The second layer of meaning is the connotational processes. These processes conceptualise much wider socio-cultural ideas and values, where the represented participants “stand for” or “are signs of” something else (van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 96). As cited in Bell (2001, p. 30), Kress and van Leeuwen

(1996) define the theory as “the represented realism i.e. participants are seen as representing certain ideas and values or standing in for something.

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in Protest Discourse

Communication is not only restricted to vocalisation or speech but involves other forms of semiotic modes such as dress, gestures, etc. Macneil (1992) views communication as consisting of coordinated ensembles of coherent verbal and non-verbal actions, cited in Goudt (2010). Goudt (2010) define nonverbal communication as actions dealing with communication, distinct from speech, like facial expression, gesture, and posture and leg movement. Some scholars such as Tortoriello,

1. Facial Expression

Face is one of the important parts of the human body. It is a set of modal resources expressed with notions of embodiment and modes. It is one of the significant sources of non-verbal communication that expresses moods and emotions. Ekman (1971), cited in Goudt (2010), group emotions into the following forms as happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust and surprise.

2. Gesture

Gesture is one of the divisions of kinesics and sources of non-verbal communication. This is usually realised through the movement of some parts of the body. Gesture can be understood as a mode; that is, it is a set of semiotic resources which draws on both temporal and spatial resources, the use of which is socially and culturally regulated in relationships to the context of communication (Godwin, 2003). Gesture describes the use of hands and other parts of the human body for the aim of communication. It is classified into symbolic gestures (emblems), iconic gestures, and motor gestures. Symbolic gestures are “thumbs up” kind of gestures usually found in campaign posters and other forms of advertisement posters. Iconic gestures are visual representations of meanings. Motor gestures are largely associated with beats and rhythm mainly used to mark a process of initiation of a new talk exchange. Deitic gestures are sometimes referred to as “pointing gestures”. Godwin (2003) further classifies

gestures along with other communicative modes such as body posture, gaze, talk, etc. as integral part of action established in human interaction.

3. Posture

Goudt, (2010, p. 2) defines posture as an intentionally or habitually attained position of the body. Goudt proceeds further with an illustration on the significance of posture: if someone is standing in front of an audience, he will have a totally different body position when he is nervous compared to his posture when he is confident. In the former, he will make his body a bit smaller by pressing his arms to his side and stomach and he will hardly look to the audience, while in the latter he stands relaxed trying to engage the audience into the subject. This illustration is striking because it clearly explains how significant and defining posture is when used rightly or wrongly.

4. Gaze

Gaze is an eye or head movement deployed for the purpose of communication. The notion of gaze has been extensively analysed using multimodal discourse analysis approach (Kidwell, 2005). Gaze covers all the communication and actions within a conversation that are performed by the eyes and has several functions (Kendon, 1967), cited in Goudt, (2010, p. 2). When eye contact is used to start or begin a conversation or take turns in a conversation, such a gaze can be referred to as being regulatory. Gaze can also be used to monitor someone’s behaviour by showing or expressing some concern. It can also be used to elicit feelings, emotions, and sustain someone’s attention in a talk exchange.

5. Placard

Placard used in a demonstration is constructed so that it can physically be held by one or more people. There are various linguistic and other semiotic resources that may be used to create the message of the placard. The placard designer’s major aim is to ensure that all the necessary information needed will be included in an economical way that the message the protesters want to pass across will be plain and easily understood.

Image

An image is a mental picture of something used to mean or represent different things such as

photograph, films, drawings and paintings. Images are basically used to communicate given set of ideas. There are two major types of images: Demand and Offer images. Demand image involves the actors represented in a given text looking directly at the viewer. It recognises the viewer, creates a relationship between social actor and the viewer and at the same time requires or demands an emotional response or reaction from him or her. In offer image, the represented social actors' distance themselves with their gaze from the viewer. In this kind of image representation, no response or reaction is expected from the viewer (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

Images are representational and have multiple meanings when used. Stocchetti and Kukkonen (2011, p. 1) define images as tools merely used in political media discourse and society's negotiation of values. This means that images have power and the power of one image is worth a thousand words. This is to say that visual communication is richer than oral communication because the former is more ambiguous. This further suggests that visual communication is highly associated with an unbalanced communicative relationship in which communicative agents may resort to images when their goal is to align with dependent agent (see Tufte 2006) as cited in Stocchetti and Kukkonen, 2011, p. 30). Images when used appeal to human emotions, feelings and make readers to interpret them differently due to their ambiguous nature.

Colour

From the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis, colour can be seen as a mode in visual communication. This is because it has elements and features or semiotic resources like saturation, modulation, purity and differentiation. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, p. 27), colour is a mode of signs. It can be used to explain ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. The resources of colour are often combined with other modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 351). It is mainly used to represent ideas and create cohesiveness. Colour is a visual mode and a technique which many of us are exposed to throughout our waking lives. It is basically used to motivate, excite people and draw

attention to certain things. Colour is commonly used in a pie chart, graph or highlight a phrase in a text. In this case yellow and red are more catching for emphasis. Colour also helps in explaining complex information.

Theoretical Framework: Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

Multimodal critical discourse analysis is a relatively new research approach that can be seen as an extension of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Grammar of Visual Design which broadened the notion of critical discourse analysis of texts to include non-linguistic semiotic elements. In doing multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) according to Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 9), attention is usually paid to images, photographs, diagrams and graphics to create meanings. The approach focuses on the three metafunctions of language outlined by Halliday and Mathiessen (2004) as experiential, interpersonal and textual. These metafunctions formed the basis for Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design and by extension Machin and Mayr's (2012) multimodal critical discourse analysis.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p.50), the experiential metafunction is basically concerned with "the representation of interactions and conceptual relations between the people, places and things depicted in images, that is how the relationship between objects are realised. These relationships are realised by vectors formed by movements such as "Action processes" or vectors formed by the movement in which the eyes of a particular object is looking "reaction processes". Participants involved in action processes are referred to as "goal". Participants involved in reaction processes on the other hand, are known as "reaction" while the recipient of their look are known as phenomenon. In classifying participants and processes, the nature of circumstances involved in the action is crucial. According to Kress and van Leeuwen's model (2006), three types of circumstance were identified: circumstance of means (concerns object with which an action is carried out). This form of circumstance is realised by parts of the body such as finger or hand. The next type of circumstance is

circumstance of accompaniment. This focuses on who is present during the action but not directly involved which means that both participants involved and those not involved do not have “vectorial relation with other participants” while the last circumstance is setting (Kress & van Leeuwen, p. 25).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) further add that interpersonal metafunction in visual communication focuses on the complex set of relations that can exist between images and their viewers while textual function is the nexus or relationship between linguistic and visual elements. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), there are three ways meanings are communicated under this function. First, is through what they call contact. Contact involves process where a participant is either looking or staring at the viewer (demand) or not looking at the viewer (offer). A demand action is one that combines gestures such as smiling, frowning, eye contact with the viewer and raising of hands. The second way through which meanings are communicated interpersonally is the system of social distance (short, medium and long). The last way meanings are made in visual communication is through the system of ATTITUDE (subjective or objective).

Studies on Bring Back our Girls Campaign

Nwabuzor and Gever (2015) discuss a textual analysis of #BringBackOurGirls campaign through the instrumentality of the social media for mobilising global response to terrorism. The study adopts Berkowitz (1969) frustration aggression and the technological determinism theories as theoretical frameworks. Also, critical discourse analysis was used as the parameter for measuring different campaign texts posted on the social media aimed at global mobilisation and support against terrorism while others showed dissatisfaction on government response. In addition, Chiluwa and Ifukor (2015) review different affects used at the vocabulary level which include moods, feelings and emotional language in #BringBackOurGirls campaign discourse on Twitter and Facebook. The study applied appraisal framework and critical discourse analysis to examine the discursive features of the campaign.

Abdullahi and Umar (2018) analyse different news reports of BBOGC pressurizing the Nigerian government to intensify effort in ensuring the speedy recovery of the kidnapped Chibok secondary school girls. The study further analyse the discursive strategies and context of the news reports using Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis method. Findings reveal that narration and criticism were dominant discursive strategies in the news reports. Also, strategies such as rationalisation and argumentation were deployed. The study, therefore, concludes that criticism and rationalisation as strategies contributed to government’s quick attention given to the plight of the kidnapped girls.

Methodology

The data for this study were obtained primarily from the Internet. The data comprise five video clips of BringBackOurGirls campaign sourced from www.YouTube.com that took place in selected major cities across Nigeria between 2014 and 2015. The choice of YouTube is based on the fact that the site allows one to watch and download different kinds of videos and it is one of the widely used sites worldwide. The duration of each video clip ranges from 10-15 minutes. The videos were watched after which relevant visual elements were captured and presented as texts for analysis. One visual element was extracted from each of the five video clips. The choice of five visual elements is to carry out an in-depth analysis of the selected data. The protest was covered by the following media outfit: Channels TV, Proshare WTV, and Pilot Africa Network (PAN) and were uploaded on YouTube. The selected data were analysed using Machin and Mayr’s multimodal critical discourse analysis approach with emphasis on the interpersonal metafunction of visual communication. The choice of MCDA is based on its ability to account for visual elements embedded in a discourse and their underlying ideological implication. In analysing the data, attention was paid to gesture, dress and colour as communicative strategies.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Interpersonal Metafunction in Visual Communication

Interpersonal metafunction in visual communication focuses on the interaction between participants represented visually in a discourse. There are basically two types of participants: represented participants and interactive participants. The former is the type of participants who are mainly the people, places and things represented in the discourse (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 48). The focus in this study is on the participants represented here. In the course of capturing the visual data, it is observed that the represented participants are real human beings. The represented participants are used as offer images to the viewer; for solidarity and as news in demanding quick response from the global

community, and creating awareness. Therefore, this study examines and interprets the significance of these shots and how they are used communicatively by the protesters in #BringBackOurGirls campaign videos.

Gesture of Participants as Demand and Offer Acts

Meanings in visual communication are made through the system of contact. This contact can be through either demand or offer. Demand action is an action that is done to the viewer through an image. It involves gestures realised through smiling, frowning, raising of hands and even pointing at the viewer. Gesture has symbolic meanings. When it is used, it demands a response from viewers either by forcing viewers or engaging them in some kind of imaginary relations.

VISUAL A1



(Shot captured from BBOG campaign video downloaded from www.YouTube.com)

VISUAL A2



(Shot captured from #BBOG campaign video downloaded from www.YouTube.com)

VISUAL A3



(Shot taken from fuel subsidy removal protest video downloaded from YouTube.com)

The image in visual A1 is a demand image which simply involves a direct eye contact maintenance with the viewers. This is what Goudt, (2010, p. 2) describes as regulatory gaze. A closer look at

visual A1 also shows a child crying with her two hands placed on a table. The image creates a sense of involvement between her (the young girl) and the viewers. It also demands that viewers look at

her present condition which suggests sadness and worry. The child's despondent look also invites viewers to share in her sadness and worry over the missing Chibok girls. This is what Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 124) describe as "demand image". The setting of this image has a dark background with a shining light on the face of the child. The gloomy look of the girl corresponds with the dark background of the image which depicts tiredness, worry and sadness.

Another important feature used in the data is salience. Salience is achieved when some features are made to stand out to draw readers' or viewers' attention (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p. 54). Some of the noticeable features in the visual A1 include: children bangle and the dark skin colour of the image. These features show the image as a typical African child.

The represented participant in visual A2 is a woman. She is seen wailing with the opening of her mouth. The image is shot from a close range and vertical angle which are used to foreground her facial expression. This close range shot invites the viewer to identify with the represented participant and feel her pain over the missing

VISUAL A4 (Dressing)

Chibok Secondary School girls. Though the wailing woman is not the biological mother to the abducted girls, her posture shows the physical and psychological state of mothers of the abducted girls. Her appearance and posture is also an expression of pain, disappointment and helplessness.

Visual A3 contains faces of represented participants of #BringBackOurGirls campaign protesters. The fair lady at the middle is Malala Yousafzai, a pakistani activist who visited Nigeria in solidarity with Nigerians over the abducted Chibok Secondary School girls. She represents hope and encouragement to Nigerian protesters. This is line with the thought of Coskun (2015, p. 43) that images are usually used to say things that we cannot say in language. The joining and raising of their hands is that of courage and togetherness in the struggle despite 364 days gone as seen on Channels Television news track.

Dressing and Colour as Communicative Strategies/Identity Markers

Dressing is one of the communicative strategies used by protesters in #BringBackOurGirls campaign video clips.



(shot taken from #BBOG campaign video downloaded from www.YouTube)

In visual A4, the two ladies at the middle appear to represent muslim women due to their dressings which are typical of islamic religion whilst the other two ladies beside them at the right and left

sides represent their christian counterpart. The reason for the appearance of these represented participants is to appeal to the religious sense of the people in Nigeria and the global community to

see the protest as a collective struggle irrespective
VISUAL A5 (colour

of religious affiliations.



(shot taken from #BBOG campaign protest video downloaded from www.YouTube.com)

In visual A5, there is an extensive use of red as colour coordination on the apron worn by the #BringBackOurGirls campaigners which is achieved through salience. Also foregrounded in the visual is the sealing of the mouth of the protesters with red plasters. The producer of the banner that contains the faces of the alleged abducted Chibok Secondary School girls uses red and white colours to saturate it. Globally, the two colours are used to show life, freedom and hope (Rebecca, 2015). “Red” in this context connotes life, freedom the abducted girls need whilst “white” represents the hope that the protesters yearn for. Also, the dominance of red in the campaign attire reflects not only the urgency of rescuing the abducted girls but also echoes the colour’s cultural association with sacrifice and martyrdom in Nigerian contexts, thereby intensifying the emotional force of the protest.

Discussion of Findings

Some of the visual modes discussed are: gesture as demand and offer acts, dressing as communicative strategies, and colour as visual element. All the gestures used as demand and offer acts in the Nigerian social protest videos depict one form of ideology and the other and are used as communicative strategies by protesters to express their disenchantment or dissatisfaction, bare their minds on certain issues in the Nigerian society. This is done with the aim of appealing to the

Nigerian government, creating both national and international awareness for their demands. For instance, the crying child in visual A1, functions ideologically to frame the government as negligent. The use of gaze as regulatory demand (Goudt, 2010) is evident in Visual A1, yet unlike Goudt’s virtual environment examples, here the gaze operates within a political crisis, making the call for empathy more urgent. Also, dressing is used as communicative strategies in Nigerian social protest. First, it is used for unification irrespective of religious affiliations and cultural background of the protesters. It is also a persuasive strategy to appeal to many Muslim and Christian women to be part of the solidarity protest. Second, dressing is also used in Nigerian social protest videos as an identity marker which is also used in creating public awareness. In addition, colours are used as visual element for depicting peace and hope. Also, it is used to show value of life and freedom, its cultural association with sacrifice and the need to intensify government’s effort in ensuring the speedy recovery of the kidnapped Chibok Secondary School Girls.

Conclusion

It has been observed from the analysis so far that Nigerian social protest videos are embellished with different multimodal resources that are crucial to media discourse study. Through the application of MCDA, the data used in this

study were subjected to critical analysis. Also, through the application of MCDA, we realise that to account for the message(s) embedded in the data

used in this study objectively, there is needs for a careful analysis of all the significant visual modes deployed in the protest videos.

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