
A MULTIMODAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF DISCOURSE OF PROTEST: An Example of the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Nigeria Labour Congress Face Off

Abdullahi Idiagbon*

University of Ilorin

Abstract

Varied interests are inevitable issues between the working class and the State, and this often degenerates into labour conflicts between the government and the people. The subsidy removal by President Goodluck Jonathan in 2012, triggered off anger among millions of Nigerians and protesters all over the country expressed grievances against the policy through slogans, music, speeches, cartoons, placard inscriptions, images, internet/electronic outlets like Facebook comments, radio, television, and so on. Kress' (2004), *Fundamentals of Image Analysis* and Hall (2012)'s *Discourse of Protest* were harmonised as a framework for this work. This paper examines language and images and identifies the inter-semiotic and semantic coherence in this complementary multimodal mode.

Keywords: discourse, protest, conflict, multimodal, NLC

Introduction

Government policies and decisions are not, most often, welcomed by the Nigerian people. This is due to mutual distrust and lack of confidence in the government or due to other reasons associated with ideological sentiments rather than logical reasons. A case in point is the cash-for-vote syndrome, which characterises politicking in Nigeria, coupled with massive electoral fraud; it explains why the governors and the governed seem to have a little commitment and frail confidence in each other. National policies are viewed and analysed with bias, scepticism and sectarianism at the expense of long-term socioeconomic benefits.

As a way of showing disapproval to a government decision or policy, the public usually turns to street protests, often accompanied by the destruction of public property or even loss of lives. This is known as social protest. Social protest is a political expression resorted to so as to bring about social or political change. Protests can take the forms of petitions, boycotts and physical public displays like demonstrations and civil disobedience. Protest can be motivated by individual or collective incentives

* Abdullahi Idiagbon M.S. (PhD) is a reader and former lecturer at the University of Ilorin, in Nigeria.

and can be organised by unions or activists. However, an individual can also organise a street protest, although it is not common and is mostly ineffective. It is also often counter-productive, as people tend to turn a sole protester into an object of mockery. Protest in Nigeria is used for challenging policies and actions of the institutions with the aim of engineering social change; it is, unfortunately, a rare tool for making a new request.

During a protest, law enforcement agencies are ordered to ‘keep peace’ and ‘restore order’ by force. As the police and military *obey the last order*, some law enforcement agents at times show solidarity with the protesters by being ‘civil’ and less brutal thereby, ‘betraying’ the true position of these security agents. This paper examines street protest as an instrument of showing discontent and as a means of seeking a reversal of a government decision or enforcing individual and collective rights in Nigeria.

This paper generally highlights the centrality of communication in the success of any form of protest. Communication enhances exchange of information, mobilisation, integration and coordination of different people to act with common interest thereby carving out a unique identity for the crowd as ‘civil rights agitators’. All these are vital to any successful protest. Selected images, together with the accompanied texts shot and released by CNN during the 2012 FGN/NLC-TUC face-off in the wake of the increase in pump prices will be studied and analysed within the framework of Kress’ (2004) *Fundamentals of Image Analysis* and Hall’s (2012) *Discourse of Protest*. This discourse type essentially reveals how the fusion of linguistic expressions and the accompanying paralinguistic cues in forms of images (still and moving) and symbols can effectively be employed to pass a message.

Discourse, Media and Society

Discourse

The main goal of discourse is the exposition of communication in terms of what, how and why. Due to diversity in the purpose, desired result and audience, packaging of discourses varies. The encoder skillfully injects elements that can aid popularity and potency of his or her message; thus, communication is channelled simultaneously through multiple modes with each mode collectively and harmoniously contributing to the comprehensiveness of the overall message. The beauty and potency in the use of combined modes as opposed to a mono mode in encoding discourse are what multimodal discourse tries to explicate.

The multimodal analysis was immensely stimulated by the works of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996). Kress and Hodge (1988:7) recognise that ‘meaning is not restricted

only to the linguistic code but resides strongly and pervasively too in other systems of meaning. It embodies a multiplicity of visual, aural, behavioural and other codes aside words'. Modality creates an opening procedure through which meaning is achieved by both text and media. Until recently, research focus had been on discourse analysis of linguistic communication with less attention to other meaning-potential elements that accompany such text.

Although multimodal discourse analysis is simply understood as an extended component of the traditional discourse, the coincidence, complementarity and dependency of various modes used in generating and projecting meanings make a multimodal study of inter-semiotic relationship a rather necessary and comprehensive approach. Multimodality describes the potentials and limitations for meaning which are in different modes. Speech and writing use the material of sound and graphic substances, respectively.

In the multimodal landscape of communication, a plethora of choices and design become central issues that determine the communicator's best mode because social semiotics likens meanings to specific societies and their cultures. Social meanings are chosen or designed based on a specific rhetorical purpose and intent to persuade the people for whom the action is designed.

All modes of communication are co-dependent and each affects the nature of the content to convey and its overall rhetorical impacts on the communicative event itself. However, this assertion does not imply that each mode is not potentially eligible for a degree of self-sufficiency of communication capability. The multimodal approach has the potentials to acquire information and understand concepts through the study of a network of meaning-making systems like textual, oral and visual channels. This paper analyses a discourse of protest by considering the ease with which the combination of words and (still) images can harmoniously work to pass a message.

A multimodal discourse analysis is preoccupied with not only the study of sounds or inscriptions but also with images, gestures/poses and actions. From the perspective of multimodality, the means by which we make meanings are as diverse as the modes of their representation and this affects the way our mental and physical worlds are configured and perceived. The semiotic approach to visual communication stresses the idea that images are a collection of signs that are linked together by the viewer (Langrerhr, 2003). A chosen mode imposes certain commitments on meaning production.

Meanings are usually disseminated and distributed through various media like electronic, print, oral, and others. The output of these media takes the forms of modes like speech writing, cartoon, music as well as images. All media offer specific possibilities to the encoder and receiver; the multimodality of a piece of information creates diverse views and reflects ideological constraints in interpretation. Electronic

media enables the audience to gain immediate access to a broad and great depth of information because of the potentials to engage multiple sensory organs at a time.

Social semiotics draws attention to the many kinds of meanings and to the fact that meanings are relative to or dependent on specific societies and their cultures. Semiotics takes the sign – a fusion of a form and a meaning – as its basic unit. A particular form of the sign is selected in such a way that it expresses the meanings that we intend it to; hence signs always express the meanings that the makers of such signs wish to make.

Signs create signification through various relations. The triadic relation captures the relationship that exists between a sign and what it stands for or between a sign and an object. This relationship is trichotomy when it contains an icon, index and symbol (Sebeok, 2001). Icon as a sign resembles its objects in a way. It shares one or more characteristics or properties of its object. Peirce (1931), classifies icons into three and refers to them as hypo-icons. These are an image, a diagram and a metaphor.

In index, the relationship between a sign and its objects is not resemblance-based. Rather, an index shares a direct physical connection with its object. For instance, a clock is an index of time and money is an index of wealth. Unlike icons and indexes, symbols share no resemblance with the object in any way and are governed by rule or convention or agreement between or among the users. Here, the relationship between the sign (form) and object is arbitrary. A symbol is interpreted according to rule or convention. For instance, the Nigerian Green-White-Green coloured flag is a symbol of Nigeria (Abdullahi-Idiagbon, 2009: 119-120).

Multimodality is essentially a theory of communication but developed by social semiotics. It refers to multiple, diversified and expressive modes of passing messages some of which include textual, aural, and visual resources and all of which are in a way complementary in the creation of meaning. The theoretical framework for this analysis is partly derived from Kress (2004) which observes that one of the present tasks of a multimodality approach is to describe the potentials of and limitations for meaning inherent in different modes.

Halliday (1978: 4), observes that some modes of meaning are, however, outside of the realm of language; they are culture-bound. For instance, semiotic resources like images, gestures and sounds are better interpreted culturally. Kress (2003) defines mode as a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning. According to Kress, different logics govern different modes. While the written text is governed by the logic of time sequence, the visual image is governed by the logic of space (Kress, 2003).

Therefore, the density, diversity and economic viability of cities make them natural sites for social movements and protests (Kohler and Wissen, 2003). Protest is a social and political act and so to create wide publicity, protesters seize public spaces and

employ social media. It is a social right of the citizens to challenge the state and voice their grievances. Protest movements compose of social and interest groups. For that, it is essential to consider the materiality of mode, its contextuality as well as its mediality. Speech uses the human material of sound while writing uses the graphic material. However, neither is self-sufficient in transmitting comprehensive information. One, because meaning relies heavily on context for effective communication, and two; certain things which can be done with graphic substance may not be possible with sound. But in spite of the multimodality of discourses, Ferree *et al.*, (2002) underscore the versatility of media to all modes.

Media

A vast majority of people depend on media for information. For instance, writing, as a mode could take different media forms like newspapers, circular, cartoons, internet messages, graffiti, images, and so on. The media controls people's opinions. It is, therefore, a duty of the journalists to supply accurate and sufficient information, reflect public opinion; and act as a watchdog of the masses. Media manipulate language as a tool and as an important resource to give meaning and shape public opinions. This underscores the power of language to mediate action and, thus it espouses the symbiotic relationship between discursive practices and language as a social activity.

People's course of actions is informed by varied and diverse motives. In the vanguard of publicising these diverse views and interests is the media. The media largely sponsors and can be sponsored to shape public opinions and reactions. This is true because the media language is pragmatic, performative, persuasive and assertive so much that it influences the readers' conception and perceptions of reality. The so-called reality, on the other hand, is construed or constructed with such skills that leave a vast majority of people with little or no contrary views (Tannen, 1989).

Society

The inevitability of conflicting interests in the social structures has revealed that the media more than any social institutions, determine the way audiences act and impose directions of the social responsibilities of various institutions in a discursive practice. This is because discursive practices create and reproduce unequal power relations in the society. Media, therefore, foreground the fact that language, through deliberate lexical and syntactic choices, reports different realities. This stresses the role of the media in the social structure of a particular society. This role of language is exemplified in its intersection with protest as a social and political act. This is why any discussion of the discourse of protest is necessarily intertextual and interdiscursive (Hall, 2012).

Hall asserts that discursive practices and ideologies are intertwined in the society. A society normally selects from the general cultural repertoire of its social norms and values which could facilitate the optimal realisation of its goals and interests. Each class or group sticks to its ideology because by so doing, its relevance and self-serving selection of fundamental socio-cultural values become noticeable. This, of course, often means that ideologies are involved in social conflicts involving individuals or society at large.

Method

This article shall beam its analytical searchlight on two-layers of images: first, the various still images (pictures, inscriptions and real objects), displayed by the protesters; and second, the protesters themselves as a moving image through which a message is passed. Language and images used by the protesters reveal the inter-semiotic and semantic connection and coherence in this multimodal mode. Tools in Multimodal Discourse were employed to analyse the multiple modes of meaning-conveying mechanisms used to decode the message being passed by the data. A synchronic view of Kress' (2004), *Fundamentals of Image Analysis* and Hall's (2012) *Discourse of Protest* will form the framework for this work.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data Presentation

Data Qualities and Source

Analysing visual images begins with a consideration of the originality of the data source(s). Questions like this among others come to mind: Are the images or photographs shot by an independent photo journalist, a state-owned media photographer or a civil right activist? One thing is central to all these sources; a photo attempts to portray a real life event and story from the standpoint of individual or ideological perspective.

Image analysis is an effective way for transmitting a message into our subconscious, change our mood, inspire, and create lasting effects. Still, images in form of pictures showing various ways and scenes of protest were selected from CNN picture news. All visible objects and noticeable non-verbal cues of the protesters including their utterances, colours and inscribed texts were taken into consideration in analysing the data. Essential features of the data as expressed in Machin (2007:57) were identified. These are:

- a). Degree of articulations of the background which include varieties of background ranging from blank space, faded, sharp and detailed background.
- b). Degree of articulation of tone and visibility (based on the data being analysed) colours in the images in terms of brightness, darkness, and so on.
- c). Degree of colouration and colour variation representing all the fine nuances of a given colour.

Kress and Van Leeuwen in Machin (2007:69), distinguish between two kinds of ‘accordances in colour’ as two sources for making meaning. They explain that a colour is culture-bound in terms of meaning. For instance, in Nigeria, colour red is perceived as representing danger and cultism, among others while green and white colours are popularly used to represent the country itself. But generally speaking, whenever a different colour is used for one of the words that make an inscription, it is signifying emphasis. This is because colour is said to increase coherence and textuality of the intended message.

This paper presents data with nine pictures shot at different locations, featuring different protest scenes during the 7-day national strike declared by the Nigeria Labour Congress and its Trade Union Congress affiliate and other civil rights organisations each with its own different method of protest. Lagos, being a mega city with the highest population of inhabitants of all faiths and culture, is being used as a microcosm of Nigeria as a country. The pictures have a high degree of resolution and are a fair representation of the participants and actions used in expressing their grievances. The writer considers the textual inscriptions and colours satisfactory and catchy enough for academic attention.

Meanwhile, the analyst is not unaware of the fact that a number of factors guide and inform the choice of diction and style and the selection of pictures to be shot or used for a story in news reporting. As such, no news or a news mode should be considered safe and truly objective. Pictures can be deliberately shot in favour of or against a news report. Analysts of a multimodal discourse should be non-partisan and distant themselves from any situational analysis that can be controversial and extremely partisan.

Data Analysis

Headline/Caption

The nature of the data makes this analysis an integrative multimodality; the messages’ visual elements of the graphic substance are multilayered. That is, the pictures and captions are mostly harmoniously integrated to function as a single text. The data features protesters carrying placards, pictures and objects – most importantly, a coffin (See Figure 7).

Incriminating and instigating captions adorn the placards to strengthen the message of the protesters. This abounds in all data. Here, the images speak louder and more messages are conveyed conspicuously than voices of the protesters. As potent as speech is, orderliness and audibility are major challenges protesters have to contend with. Thus, the written mode of discourse with its multiple media like speakers and drums becomes a viable and better alternative. The inscriptions are precise, easily understandable and inciting.

These banners and placards with various incriminating inscriptions almost all of which appear in upper case are shown below and they were carried by the angry demonstrators.

- i. REVERSE THE FUEL PRICE TO #65 PER LITRE NOW!*
- ii. NIGERIANS SAY 'GO'.*
- iii. (a) JONATHAN IS NOT BIGGER THAN NIGERIANS.
(b) STOP THE HIKE.
(c) EDO PEOPLE SAY NO TO FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL*
- iv. ...KWARA STATE CHAPTER SAY NO TO JONATHAN.*
- v. BAD LUCK JONATHAN MUST GO!*

The written and graphic layout of the inscriptions and images constitute clues to the minds and agitation of the protesters. Incriminating, inciting and horrific inscriptions in plain English, graphic expressions and still images or a combination of both criminalising the actions of the government in jerking up the pump prices were on display. The multimodality of this protest – consisting of pictures, written elements and voice channels, creates more awareness and wins more sympathisers for this struggle.

The Politics in Language Use

Barthes (1977) argues that denotation is the first level of meaning and connotation is a secondary semiotic source. The denotative meaning of these captions is straightforward and is easily understandable. However, another level of meaning can be possibly introduced to suggest that this protest cannot be said to be free of political opponents' sponsorship.

The use of language is suggestive of this insinuation. Politicians' unique manipulation of the English language is nothing new. It is often a case of hiding behind the passive while taking actions and switching to the active when necessarily convenient. Name-calling and finger-pointing are strategies of the State against opposition. The captions in Figures 1 and 8 *NIGERIANS SAY 'GO' and BAD LUCK JONATHAN MUST GO* are likely pointers to this assertion. The protesters were

labelled ‘miscreants’, ‘thugs’ and ‘hooligans’. These tags were used to legalise and legitimise all attempts to crush the activities of the protesters. In view of this, the Nigerian government deployed policemen and troops to ‘restore, peace, law and order’ in the society. The security agents, as the state instrument, became a dreaded tool used against peaceful street protesters.

That conflict of interests, misplaced priorities and policies which degenerate into mutual distrust is a normal occurrence between the government and the people. This often sparks mass’ reactions from time to time. Participants in protests are often described in various ways; for instance, ‘protesters’, ‘activists’, ‘rebels’, ‘militants’, ‘rioters’, ‘looters’, and so on. The choice of labels depends on who uses them and the intention in using them. Name-calling is strategic in order to justify a clamp down on the protesters and to gain both national and international support that justifies any government action.

But apart from an individual or collective sentiments attached to the christening of participants in crises, each name is not without its semantic (entailment) implication. For instance, protesters are said to be more peaceful than rioters because rioters have succumbed to mob rule. On the other hand, rebels are known to be those fighting against a regime they are not comfortable with; while militants are considered extremists who are blinded by their own belief. Therefore, it is a case of calling a dog bad names in order to hang it.

Image: Posture and Gesture of Protesters

In effect, lots of meaning-conveying potentials are observable among the protester images in this data. For instance, the images of stern-looking protesters carrying placards with anti-government inscriptions on their placards and the composition of the protesters in terms of gender and age-balance are both significant. Therefore, the protest enjoyed overwhelming participation from the citizens, male and female, young and old and from across the nation. This composition is usually considered a fair representation of the people, as such, not easily vulnerable.

Poses and gestures, as can be seen in Figure 5 and 6 indicate aggression as well as a determination on the agitations. Some gesture poses are spontaneous while others are deliberate; the spontaneity or otherwise of these paralinguistic cues emanate from the different levels of emotional attachments exhibited by an individual protester. The angry, moody faces and sarcastic smiling faces of the participants attest strongly to their resolve to fight the government.

Through images, ideas and values are communicated. All these images and their accompanying texts intercomplementarily generate a network of coherent structure and meaning which (Royce, 2007) is called inter-semiotic complementarity. All these

visual message elements carry semantic properties whose potential meanings are immeasurable to the coherence and comprehensibility of the message (Royce, 2007). Visual elements are imbued with peculiar compositional features, which, on their own, convey messages. Take another look at the pictures and real objects (e.g. an NLC flag and a coffin in Figures 2 and 9). Similarly, in this context, a textual inscription plays a secondary or complementary role in relation to what it represents. Here, images and symbols are the major driving forces to discourse meaning and message.

The harmonious blending of all categories of meaning bearing elements which co-exist with the image creates intertextuality or interconnectivity among the component semiolinguistic devices to facilitate a meaningful discourse. The interconnectivity between images and inscriptions serves as both cohesive and coherent devices. O'Halloran, Tan, Smith and Podlasov (2011), stress that inter-semiotic relations create integration between the written texts and the pictures rather than treat each as a discreet semiotic unit. This platform recognises and takes care of the variety of readers; the literates and those that can only make meaning out of pictures.

Symbolic Object and Image

Some images function as a secondary text; for instance, the coffin and burning tyres in Figures 2 and 9 complement the accompanying inscribed messages and the images of the protesters. The symbolic values of every item in this mode are noticeable in driving home the anger of the protesters. Death, as symbolised by the coffin, becomes a powerful meaning conveyor because the protesters seem to have been pushed to the wall; the belief of Africans is that it is inhuman to wish someone death even if they are your enemy. When red colour, a signifier of danger, is used to write inscriptions on placards or on any available object the protesters can improvise, it does not only make the inscription conspicuously legible but ultimately connotes danger and horror.

In Figure 1 below, the icon of President Jonathan as a fuel attendant is of semiotic note; this is because this graphic design is debasing and humiliating.



Figure 1

Source: Nigerians Protest End of Fuel Subsidy. iReport Occupy Nigeria Protest

This icon of the President is associated with his action of subsidy removal in fuel. The images and symbolic items displayed by the protesters are all premised on the background cause. The increase in pump price is a thematic preoccupation, a strong catalyst, a propeller of the protest actions. Here, the background information functions as the context and exerts an influence on the analysis and interpretation of the data.

In real life, the burning of tyres on streets hinders traffic flow as illustrated in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2

Source: Nigerians Protest End of Fuel Subsidy. iReport Occupy Nigeria Protest

It also symbolises danger and horror and sends a message to passersby who cannot join the protest to stay at home. Vividly noticeable in Figure 2 is a bus with the flag of the Nigerian Labour Congress; this congress was a major organiser of this public disobedience conveying and joining protesters. This demonstrates the spirit

of comradeship. The bus bears the yellow colour of a commercial bus in Lagos. This symbolises that not only was this particular picture taken in Lagos but also that the transport unions were also part of the protest.

Through a skilful deployment of multiple means and modes of event analysis, multimodality affords the readers an opportunity to have detailed information as witnesses do even though they were not present at the scene of the event. As Zelizer (2007: 424) writes, ‘eye witnessing is one of the most effective methods of accounting for reality’.

Image Schema

Image schemas and force dynamics in these pictures are a representation of the general discontent about the hike in fuel price. Actions in the data, like the burning of tyres, rampaging, rallying, public gatherings, shouting, sketching of the President’s picture as a petrol attendant, the carrying of placards, the displaying of a coffin and so on signal the demise of the President, all of which took place at different times and places (spatiotemporally spanning 7 days and on the major streets of Lagos State as well as other States) are strong indicators of the fury of ordinary people against the removal of the fuel subsidies.

It is important to note that denotative meaning of these images, in particular, and the protesters’ actions in general, go beyond peripheral denotative interpretations. Apart from the various looks on the faces of the protesters which can aptly be described as stern, disappointing, frustrating, pessimistic and queerly cheerful, the protesters also sacrificed their personal comfort to bear all hardships of hunger, weather, environment and harassment from security agencies.

Setting and Size of Protesters



Figure 3



Figure 4

Source: Nigerians Protest End of Fuel Subsidy. Report Occupy Nigeria Protest

Figures 3, 4 and 5 show protesters in different sizes; the first with a small number of protesters and the second indicates that the protest is taking place on a major road. The people, the inscriptions, the traffic code and the setting constitute visual elements with a harmonious inter-semiotic blend towards the overall discourse cohesion of the thematic preoccupation.



Figure 5

Source: Nigerians Protest End of Fuel Subsidy. iReport Occupy Nigeria Protest

Protesters in their hundreds of thousands are on rally ground in Figure 5. The composition is all-inclusive and broad cutting across different sex, age, tribe, religion, and so on. The size of a protest probably points to its popularity and thus, the bigger the size, the intimidating it is, in this context, to the government. The high visibility nature of this crowd hampers effective control of the masses by the government. Speakers at the protest ground seek to establish a firm control of mind and action of the group by highlighting consequences of the hike in fuel price.

Visible in the background in Figure 5 is a twin overhead bridge which suggests that the physical setting is a densely populated traffic area in the outskirts of Lagos. This, no doubt, has an effect on economic activities in Lagos, the commercial hub of the country. The vicinity is known as Gani Fawehinmi Square, named after a late human rights activist icon. This setting serves as an anchorage or a symbol of freedom.

Juxtaposing Images of Unusual Scenes

Figure 6 shows an unusual public interaction in the Nigerian society; an unusual image of the soldiers and civilians exchanging pleasantries – waving at each other at a close range.



Figure 6

Source: Nigerians Protest End of Fuel Subsidy. iReport Occupy Nigeria Protest

The soldiers were actually deployed to enforce peace but they eventually turned friendly to the protesters. In this picture, the soldiers are seen exchanging cheers with the street protesters, connoting a tacit support for the people's actions. This scene is significant given the background setting against which the military men were deployed; that is, to restore, or more appropriately, enforce peace and order of the Commander-in-Chief, the perceived enemy of the protesters. This public display of an unusual cooperation and camaraderie between the prey and their predators through the exchange of cheers and banter instead of chairs and bullets not only betray the general resentments against the regime's policy but also a way military men could show that they identify with the public agitations.

Discourse Cohesive Strategy

Barthes (1977: 41), identifies three major components of a multimodal discourse that need to interact to produce a cohesive and coherent discourse.

1. Anchorage, text, supporting image
2. Illustration, image, supporting text
3. Relay, image and text

Anchorage and illustration are deployed for reference purposes and they serve as the basis for the written text and images in the data. Subsidy removal serves as the basis for the protest. The text and images are illustrative of people's discontent and resentment and this mood is relayed through the moving image (the protesters) and still image (the pictures) as well as the various textual inscriptions on display. Lexically, the use of words like *reverse*, *go* and *stop* as inscriptions mark an order from Nigerians to president Jonathan's administration. The order is legally non-binding but it constitutes

both a moral and political challenge for a responsive and sensitive government. The power to issue such an order is derived from the people themselves who are bound by one common interest. The people, in the first place, are the same electorate who vested the elected officers with the power to rule through the ballot papers.

Object and Image Size

The image of a human-size coffin symbolises horror and a death wish for the President, the people's perceived enemy. The real size of the coffin is important and sends a clear message. The number of the people in attendance also plays a significant role in championing, advocating and probably realising an objective. The mammoth crowd in Figure 5 is significant because it does not only showcase the popularity of the protesters' demand but also shows the credibility of their uprising and agitation. In this gathering, various speakers of diverse ethno-religious affiliations delivered motivating speeches.

The situation is the same in other parts of the country regarding the stream of people that took part in the rally. The participants are also made up of individuals and associations such as opposition political parties, students' union bodies, civil rights and religious organisations, and others to mention but a few. Similarly, the use of capital letters and their big fonts in the various inscriptions are more of an emphasis effect than of mere orthographic design.

Articulation and Foregrounding

Machin (2007), citing Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), discusses eight modality markers that depict the degrees of articulations of information and its coherence in a multimodal discourse. Looking at the degree of articulation of the people's demand, there is no doubt that it was forceful, clear and business-like. The powerful inscriptions: 'NIGERIANS SAY GO', 'KWARA STATE CHAPTER SAY NO TO JONATHAN' in Figures 7 and 9, which accompany the images therein are of semiotic significance.



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

Source: Nigerians Protest End of Fuel Subsidy. Report Occupy Nigeria Protest

The various inscriptions on the hike in petroleum prices does not only strengthen the degree of articulation of the agitation but also foreground the anchorage, the articulation of background as seen in the above figures. The coffin connotes a powerful imagery; it is a symbol which calls to mind ‘death’. It is a mark of ill-wish for their perceived mortal enemy. The degree of articulation of the voice tone is not unaccounted for in still images since the data is not electronic. However, one can still observe the mouths of the protesters wide open appearing to be shouting in fury. The resolution of the pictures is clear, colourful and bright.

Colouration of selected lexical items is another technique used for textual foregrounding in the data as seen in the placard with the inscription; ‘REVERSE THE FUEL PRICE TO #65 PER LITRE NOW!’ (See Figure 3).

Two foregrounding techniques, colouration and the interjection mark, as well as the background setting, were used to show the degree of articulation. A traffic sign with a ‘NO U-TURN’ inscription can be noticed at the back of the protesters. Protesters in Figures 7 and 8 are mostly youths carrying placards containing different texts and colours that illustrate their discontent with the announcement. Some of the inscriptions bear the following:

JONATHAN IS NOT BIGGER THAN NIGERIANS!
EDO PEOPLE SAY NO TO FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL!
BAD LUCK JONATHAN MUST GO!

Note the graphic effect of colour red. The anger and frustrations conveyed by the tone of these written messages are visibly manifest on the faces of these protesters – this complementarity between the image and text constitute multimodal discourse coherence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has examined the multimodality of the images displayed by the protesters with a view of showing the inter-semiotic and semantic connection and coherence in the written and graphic meaning of the written mode. It also studied the complementarity of the images and text as an effective way of showing public anger by protesters. Protest naturally involves a multitude of people; therefore, speaking or shouting may deter the audibility of the message, hence, this necessitates our investigation into how various images can serve as a means of conveying effective communication during the protest which voiced message cannot.

Since its inception, Discourse Analysis has undergone and still is witnessing developmental growth in scope, focus and genre, thus, the presence of critical discourse/critical studies, sociological discourse, political discourse, multimodal discourse and critical multimodal discourse. This paper adopts multimodal discourse approach which stresses the essence of the collaboration of multiple modes of information packaging and dissemination. Apart from being multimodal, it is also multimedia; thus it leaves little room for message misrepresentation. A protest staged by multitudes on the street, with public address system, placards and several symbols and images is likely to receive local, national and international attention and coverage, and consequently, generate the much-desired pressures on the target.

References

- Abdullahi-Idiagbon, M.S. (2009), 'African Traditional Semiotics: The Example of 'AR'OKO' in Yoruba Tradition.' *Signs-International Journal of Semiotics* 3 pp. 115-134. University of Copenhagen: Denmark Royal School of Library and Information Science.
- Barthes, R. (1977), *Image-music-text*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Ferree, M. (2002), *Four Models of the Public Sphere in Modern Democracies, Theory and Society*, 31 (3) pp. 289-324.
- Hall, S.B. (2012), *The Discourse of Protest Using Discourse Analysis to Identify Speech Acts in UK Broadsheet New*. London: Media @ LSE, London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978), *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. Maryland: University Park Press.
- Kohler, B., and Markus, W. (2003), 'Globalising Protest: Urban Conflicts and Global Social Movements.' In *the Urban Sociology Reader*, Edited by Jan Lin and Christopher Mele, 346-353. New York: Routledge.
- Kress, G., and Hodge, R. (1988), *Social Semiotics*. London: Polity Press.

- Kress, G., and Van Leeuwen, T. (1996), *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G. (2003), 'Literacy and Multimodality: A Theoretical Framework'. *Literacy in the New Media Age*. London: Routledge. p. 36. ISBN 0-203-29923-X.
- Kress, G. (2004), *Reading Images: Multimodality, Representation and New Media Image*: Roman Duszek.
- Langrehr, D. (2003), *From a Semiotic Perspective: Inference Formation and Critical Comprehension of Television Advertising*. Retrieved January 13, 2005, from <http://www.readingonline.org/articles/langrehr/>.
- Machin, D. (2007), *Introduction to Multimodal Analysis*. London & New York.
- Nigerians Protest End of Fuel Subsidy. iReport Occupy Nigeria Protest. Accessed from <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/01/09/world/africa/nigeria-strike/index.html>.
- O'Halloran, K.L., Tan, S., Smith, B.A., & Podlasov, A. (2011), *Multimodal Discourse: A Critical Analysis Within an Interactive Software Environment*. *Critical Discourse Studies* 8 (2). pp.109-125.
- Peirce, S. (1931), *Collected Papers 1931-1958 (81 b/s)*. Harvard: Cambridge University Press. Accessed from www.em.wikipedia.org/semiotics.
- Royce, T.D. (2007), *Intersemiotic Complementarity: A Framework for Multimodal Discourse Analysis*. Columbia University pp.64-109.
- Sebeok, T.A. (2001), *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics (2nd ed)*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated.
- Tannen, D. (1989), *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zelizer, B. (2007), 'On Having Been There: Eye-witnessing as a Journalistic Key Word,' *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24 (5): pp. 408-428.