ABSTRACT

Covid-19 is one of the most disturbing infections that has rattled the world in recent history. This flu affected nearly all the countries of the world with different degrees of medical, scientific, social and scholarly attentions. The humanities are not left out from the perspective of language and communication during the pandemic. In the light of the above, this paper undertakes a multimodal semiotic analysis of Covid-19 memes in the Nigerian context with a view to showing how the visual and language complement each other in communicating aspects of Nigerian socio-political realities during the pandemic. Among the images circulated through the Whatsapp medium, ten were selected for this study and Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) multimodal theory was adopted as our theoretical framework. The findings revealed that language and visual images effectively complement each other as viewers are made to gain easy and quick access to the messages being communicated with a visual understanding of the realities on ground.

KEYWORDS: covid-19 pandemic, multimodality, language, semiotics, memes, communication

INTRODUCTION

Corona virus is a respiratory disease alleged to have evolved from Wuhan in China in December, 2019 (Kandola, 2020). Popularly known as Covid-19, the disease caused by this virus is one of the worst pandemic in the recent history of mankind with its method of infection, transmission and high mortality rate. Its first appearance in Nigeria was in February 2020 as an imported case from Italy. As the most populous Black Country, coupled with its decayed health facilities and other infrastructures, Nigeria possesses very high potentials for the ease of transmission of the virus. This condition is made worse by the inability of the government to provide palliatives for the largely poor masses, making a total lock down impossible. With the high corrupt indices of government officials and politicians in Nigeria, they see the emergence of the pandemic as another means of enriching themselves. The subsequent palliative saga that emanated from the #Endsars protests in Nigeria exposed the selfishness of most Nigerian politicians and public officials during this period (Onah, 2021).

With the above scenario, the arrival of Covid-19 in Nigeria was viewed with trepidation and scholars have followed its trend. Adegboye et al. (2020), in a preliminary epidemiological
analysis of the first 45 days of the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus in Nigeria, concluded that the growth rate in Nigeria was low but affirmed a high risk value as there may be many asymptomatic cases. Amzat et al (2020) studied the burden of the virus and its socio-medical response during the first 100 days of its appearance in Nigeria. Adopting the analytical method, the paper presents a framework to highlight some multi-sectorial responses to the pandemic. While revealing that the pandemic has moved from an imported case and elitist pattern to community transmission mode, the study concluded that there are potentials of overwhelming impact of the virus in Nigeria.

Focusing on the impact of the pandemic on the economy of Nigeria using National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and World Health Organisaton (WHO) reports for the period covering 11th and 19th March, 2020, Maijama’a et al (2020) recommended that all the regulatory measures recommended by NCDC and WHO should be strictly adhered to in order to curb the spread of the virus. In a similar vein, Ohia et al (2020) assessed the current relations of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria as at April 2020. The study expressed a grim reality for Nigeria as it concluded that the national health care system cannot effectively respond to the spread of the virus. Again, Tijjani and Ma’s (2020) study was based on the response of Nigeria in tackling the spread of the virus, especially in the North eastern states with its ongoing humanitarian crisis occasioned by the Boko haram insurgents.

Studies have also been carried out on language, communication and the Covid-19 in Nigeria. Obi-ani et al. (2020) was an observation of the Covid-19 pandemic and the social media (online newspaper, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, blogs) in Nigeria. The study observed that the social media is not only a veritable tool for information dissemination, but also a very powerful tool for propaganda. It further stated that apart from making information readily available, it also performed the role of misinforming the people about the pandemic by circulating unverifiable and deceptive messages. Obiora (2021) studied the role of Nigerian indigenous languages in the disseminations of information on the Covid-19 pandemic among Nigerian indigenous people. The study adopted Salauw’s (2015) developmental communication theory for indigenous languages as a theoretical framework. This theory posits that the media should source information with an indigenous language and deliver same to the audience through same indigenous language irrespective of the channel of communication. The study showed at the end that indigenous languages are able to advance the indigenous people’s knowledge of Covid-19 during the pandemic. Similar to the present study, Ajayi and Akinrinlola (2021) focused on Covid-19 memes from the pragmatic perspective using Mey’s (2001) pragmatic act theory and Kress’ (2010) multimodality as frameworks. The study concluded that texts and images in the memes combine with the prevailing sociopolitical and religious contexts in Nigeria to evoke pragmatic practs of warning, admonition, information, mockery, criticism, condemnation, and rebuke among others. Furthermore, Anyanwbu (2022), through content analysis, examined the headlines and front-page news of two prominent Nigerian newspapers to measure their coverage of the coronavirus outbreak in Nigeria and government and citizens’ perception against what obtained elsewhere. Their findings revealed that both newspapers effectively covered the outbreak. It concluded that the Nigerian government paid lip service in its response to Covid-19.

From the above, it is obvious that the Covid-19 virus and its disease are attracting scholarly attentions not only from the medical, scientific and sociological perspectives but also from the areas of language and communication. What is obvious is that much still needs to be done
Semiotics and Multimodality

According to Eco (1976), the origin of the term semiotics can be traced to F. Saussure who sees semiotics as concerned with how signs mean and C.S. Peirce who opines that semiotics is not only concerned with what is known as signs but also with anything that stands for something else. To Eco (1976:7) “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” while Balci and Ozgen (2017:25) state that semiotics studies signs and researches how people create signs, build a system from these signs and communicate through this channel. Oliveira and Baranauska (2000:153) support the above views by stating that:

… modern semiotics has evolve to view everything as a language where the ‘language’ does not only refer to spoken or written language, but also include dance gesture or primitive tribes music, sculptures, visual tutorial imageries, dreams and so on.

The above supports the fact that semiotic communication is indeed multimodal in nature as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:19) aver that “language and visual communication can both be used to realise the ‘same’ fundamental systems of Meaning”. It is beyond the ability to read and write alone as it encompasses every aspect of human interaction, be it in print, physical gestures, art work or sign language. The adoption and use of visuality in contemporary human communication has contributed to the growth of scholarship in communication. Kress, Heite-Oarcia and van Leeuwen (1997:258) maintain that:

The visual is now much more prominent as a form of communication than it has been for several centuries, in the so called developed word at least. This change is having effects on the forms and characteristics of texts. Not only is written language less in the centre of the new landscape, and less central as a means of communication, but the change is producing texts which are strongly multimodal.

This assertion implies that text producers rely not only on linguistic features to create their texts and messages, but also on a range of representational and communication modes which co-occur within a text. This interrelation between signs (memes) and language has earlier been observed by Barthes (1976) who argues that the meaning of images is related to and dependent on verbal texts as images themselves are polysemous and subject to a variety of possible meanings and interpretations (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:18).

Therefore, multimodality examines how individuals communicate with each other by means other than the written mode. It includes investigating other modes of communication such as signs, gestures and other visual forms. Multimodality determines “the combination of different semiotic resources, or modes in texts and communicative events such as still and moving images,
speech, writing, layout, gesture and/or proxemics” (Adams, 2016 as cited in Alyousef, 2020:1). Thus, this study adopts a multimodal approach to the analysis of Covid-19 related images in the early stages of the pandemic in Nigerian.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1999, 2006) social semiotic framework of visual grammar which has its root in Halliday’s (1970, 1971, 1978), three basic language meta functions. These are the ideational function which serves for the expression of content, the interpersonal function which serves to establish and maintain social roles and the textual function through which language provides for making link with itself and with features of the context of situation (Maledo and Edhere, 2020). Kress and van Leeuwen extend these three meta functions of language into their visual grammar as they believe that visual resources can fulfil these three meta functions of language.

In their approach, the representational dimension corresponds with Halliday’s ideational meta function through which images and other visual modes represent objects in the real world. They identified narrative processes which serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements and conceptual processes which represent participants in terms of their class, structure or meaning (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:59). They also identified interactive and represented participants in their framework. Represented participants constitute the subject matter of the communication while the interactive participants speak, listen, write, read, make images or view them. Participants in narrative images are connected by a vector which could be formed by eyes, limbs or tools.

Their interactive dimension corresponds with Halliday’s interpersonal function. The interactive participants constitute the people who communicate with each other through images – the producers and viewers of images. Three types of interactive relations are also identified: the relation between represented participants, the relation between interactive participants and represented participants (the interactive participants’ attitude towards represented participants) and the relation between interactive participants (the things interactive participants do to or for each other through images). These are realised through gaze, angle, social distance and modality. The compositional dimension relates to Halliday’s textual metafunction. This focuses on “the composition of the whole, the ways in which the representational and interactional elements are made to relate to each other, the way they are integrated into a meaningful whole”. This can be realised through information value, salience and framing (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive analytical method. Among the memes circulated through the Whatsapp medium during the peak period of the pandemic in Nigeria, ten were purposively selected for this study to reflect some topical issues in relation to the pandemic and the Nigerian social, political and economic context. They are numbered from Figure 1 to Figure 10 and analysed using Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) framework as discussed earlier.
Data Analysis

As stated earlier, the outbreak of the COVID-19 was first reported from Wuhan, China, on 31 December 2019 and by January 2020 cases of its spread were reported in Europe, notably in France and other European countries. In Africa, the earliest cases were reported in Egypt on 14 February, 2020, in Nigeria on February 27th 2020 and in South Africa on 5 March 2020. These cases were recorded through travellers returning from Europe, United States, and Asia (see African CDC, 2020; Federal Ministry of Health, 2020; NICD, 2020). Despite this, the widespread and mortality rate was very minimal (Osei, 2022) and it was more or less seen as a European/Asian disease. Before the outbreak of the virus, Europe was seen as a safe haven for African migrants and they were not welcomed. But with the virus ravaging Europe, the African continent, with its low spread and low mortality rate, is now considered a safe haven from the disease. Thus, Figure 1 is a meme used to illustrate the need to curtail the international/inter-continental spread of the virus:

As seen, the images consists of two memes in one and the meaning that can be read from it depends mainly on the verbal texts “Then…” and “Today…..”. “Then…” refers to the period before the outbreak of the virus. This was when social-economic problems in conjunction with poverty made Africans to migrate to Europe while “Today…” is the reality of Covid-19 and Africans would not want visitors from Europe. The first part of the meme shows African immigrants being chased by poverty into Europe (Poverty here is represented by a yellow image with thin legs, red eyes and thorns all over its body). The Africans, seen here in a boat in an ocean, are stopped by an image
with a raised hand (European official) and a red round caution sign meaning “no entry”. A speech balloon emanates from the image with a raised hand “STAY ON YOUR CONTINENT”. In the second meme we see a role reversal. The Africans now become the Actors who perform the action while the Europeans (the Goal) are seen in a boat in the centre of the ocean running away from Corona Virus to Africa. The image of the virus as depicted in the meme is similar to that of poverty in Africa. A similar speech balloon emerges from the image representing the African: “STAY ON YOUR CONTINENT”. It is worthy of note that the boat in the first part of the meme is depicted “immigrants” while the second both has no such depiction.

The two images are not only dynamic but dramatic. The first (Then) relates African immigrants and Europeans through a transactional schema in which the Europeans play the role of the Actor and the Africans the Goal, the one whom the action is performed. In the second part of the meme, the reverse is the case. In terms of interactive meaning, the image represents an offer of information. It tells the viewers the state of affairs between both continents before the pandemic and during the pandemic. There is also a clear contrast between the backgrounds of the images in terms of information structure. In the first part, the Africans (the Given information) are cast in a darker hue while the Europeans (the New information) are cast in a brighter hue, making the Europeans more prominent as it were in real life.

Figure 2 depicts the confusion, uncertainty and the suspense that greeted the early wake of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The image is a dual human lower legs which lie between the knee and the foot in a sitting position between a wall and the ground. The image is so creatively produced such that the viewers are left in confusion as to ask “where is the body that owns these legs?” This is stated clearly on the language placed boldly on top of the image to impose meaning: “This is the picture of corona virus in Nigeria. You can’t understand anything”:

This human leg is the represented participant as it is the subject matter of the communicative event. It is a symbolical conceptual structure as it has no vector (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:59). Although there is no direct and immediate relation between the interactive participants, and the context of production and reception of this image differs, its communicative resources allow for
the understanding of the social interactions and relation of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The image offers the represented participants to the viewer as an object of contemplation and as an item of information. The image maintains an impersonal close social distance with the viewers as the whole figure is visible. Though fictional, the participant is given more modality in terms of saturation than the background. It is an apt representation of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria: the more you look the less you see and understand. The Government has failed to provide adequate and truthful information to the people, especially during the lockdown period. The testing and isolation centres and the hospitals where the patients are quarantined and treated are unknown and nobody knows anyone who has suffered and died from the virus except for the very few high-profile government officials who probably must have died as a result of their underlying health conditions. Thus, the uncertainty created by the government of Nigeria about the pandemic is represented in this image.

The next major issue with the wake of Covid-19 in Nigeria is the need for social distancing. Figure 3 incorporates the cultural aspect of greeting among the Igbo of Southern Nigerian to show that social distancing is being practiced in Igbo land before corona virus. The message is derived from the verbal texts on the image:

The meme is an image of two Igbo men greeting each other with their walking sticks instead of shaking of hands. The verbal text, “IGBO KWENU”, is a form of chorus greetings by the Igbo. The semiotic elements in this meme are construed through interpreting the cultural as well as the semiotic activities performed by the participants. The Igbos are great travellers and adventurers and thus visionary. This is depicted in the highlighted portion of the verbal text on top of the image.
The meme is a narrative image as it represents a transactional reaction. A vector emanates through the eyes of the man on the left towards the man on the right. Their hands and their walking sticks also form vectors through which they observe social distance. In terms of interactive meaning, this meme represents an offer since none of the participants is engaged with the viewers. It offers the participants as objects of contemplation to the viewers. It is a close shot portraying friendship. Both participants are in a social distance (medium shot) since their bodies can be seen from the waist upwards. On the compositional aspect, the system of informational value from left to right margin does not apply. The modality is high because of the use of bright colours.

Also projecting social distance is figure 4. This image is an offer as it “does not contain human or quasi-human participants looking directly at the viewers” (Kress & Van Luween 1996:119) as seen:

The represented participant, maize curb, is offered to the viewers as an object of contemplation or an item of information portraying social distancing. Another social semiotic significance of this meme is that it projects the subject matter of hunger which results from low yield in periods of inactivity. Nigerian is a poor country where a greater percentage of the population depend or daily labour and subsistence agriculture to make a living. Thus, the prolonged lockdown was an invitation to hunger which the maize curb with countable and well-spaced grains denotes.
With the above, Figure 4 is a representation of the condition of poor Nigerian masses during the lockdown: the poor found themselves in between hunger in their homes and the deadly virus outside as Figure 5 shows:

Three represented participants form the subject matter of this image: the virus itself with the designation “OUTSIDE”, hunger with the designation “INSIDE” and the human participants (a family of father mother and son) sandwiched between the two. The virus and hunger are the Actors while the human participants form the Goal. The vectors emanate from the eyes, opened mouths and the hands of the Virus and Hunger. Thus, the image is a transactional narrative. The Virus and Hunger are Given and New respectively by the placement of each at the left and right sides of the image while the human participants form the nucleus of information. It is the most salient by virtue of its sharpness of focus, placement (centre image) and colour. The human represented participants in this image are depicted as demanding a social response for help from the viewers. This is depicted by their opened eyes and mouth and the stretched hands of the woman and the man towards the viewers. On a wider social note, it depicts Nigerians locked down in their homes under the pangs of hunger and starvation while the fear of the virus and its consequences awaited them outside their homes. The condition of the poor masses is made worse by the inability of the Nigerian government to provide the needed palliatives for the poor masses as it was done in other countries.

Thus, Figures 6 and 7 are offers. The represented participants are offered to the viewers as object of information of the kind of palliatives given to the poor masses by the Nigerian government and its politicians.
Figure 6 consists of a cup of garri, three boxes of matches, less than one-quarter of a tuber of yam and a packet of noodles inside a wheelbarrow while Figure 7 consists about two cups of garri, beans and rice with a box of matches with one tin of tomato. The sizes of the above frames suggest the social relation between the viewers and the objects. It is at a close distance which presents the objects as if the viewers are engaged with them. These figures represent the palliatives given to Nigerians by the government and the politicians during the pandemic. In most cases, a street of about fifty families with not less than five members each will be given a bag of rice, a cartoon of noodles and a cartoon of tomatoes as palliatives while the politicians and other government officials stash away a huge quantity of the items meant for the poor masses. These palliatives were later discovered to be hidden by the politicians in different warehouses across the length and breadth of Nigeria during the #Endsars protest, with some of them expired (Agbedo et al., 2020). This again underscores the greed and wickedness of Nigerian politicians.

While the poor Nigerians wallowed in hunger and denial during the Covid-19 lockdown as the above memes suggest, the government agents and the politicians were busy stashing away the palliatives in hidden warehouses at the detriment of the ordinary citizens:
The language of Figure 8 imposes a representational meaning on the image. The represented participants include the head of the Nigerian government and one of his ministers, the bags of palliatives meant for the government and its agents (politicians) and an ordinary citizen symbolically representing the poor Nigerian masses walking away from the government agents and the palliatives. On top is the caption “FEDERAL GOVERNMENT” written in capital letters in green and white colours indicating the Nigerian flag and to symbolically identify the government as Nigerian government. This is followed by a speech balloon with the inscription: “FELLOW NIGERIANS, THANK YOU FOR THE PALLIATIVES. WE APPRECIATE”. The message here is ironical and it underscores corruption, greed, and impoverishment of the masses by the Nigerian government during the pandemic period. As a narrative, a vector emanates from the speech balloon to the head of the government. Another vector emanates from the head of the government’s finger to the bag of fuel price hike on his left hand. In this instance, the head of government is the Actor while the bag is the Goal. Another vector also emanates from the eyes of the man as he glances back at the palliatives. This is a reactional narrative process where the man is the Reactant and the bags of palliatives on the floor are Phenomenon. Another important fact about the human participants in this meme is that the head of government and his agent are not wearing facemasks while the man walking away has his mask on. This foregrounds violation of rules by the government and its agents during the pandemic.

The palliatives mentioned in the speech balloon are further presented in boxes and bags of different colours and sizes with the appropriate label to indicate their source. Thus, $82M WORD BANK and COVID 19 RELIEF FROM CHINA indicate external funds from foreign bodies and governments while COVID 19 FUNDS FROM NIGERIAN BILLIONAIRES are donations made to the government by private individuals to curb the transmission of the virus and to provide palliatives for the poor masses. All these are stolen by the government and its agents. There is a bag of FUEL PRICE HIKE, STAMP DUTY, ELECTRICITY TARIFF, BANK CHARGES and
VAT. These are charges and taxes imposed on ordinary Nigerians instead of palliatives as it is done in other countries.

At the interactional level, demand is realized through the gaze and the smile from the head of government and his agent. The image demands that the viewer enters into a kind of imaginary relation of happiness with him as the owner of the palliatives. The image is portrayed in a long shot so that viewers can see the whole body of the participants as well as the sacks on the floor. This signifies a formal and an impersonal far social distance. Besides being represented in a long shot, the government representatives are presented in dark background while the man representing ordinary Nigerians is captured in a white background. This is an indication of insincerity and transparency respectively. From the compositional perspective, the men on the right and the bags of palliatives are “Given” information while the man on the right is “New”. The bags of palliatives are given salience through colour choices, centre image, size, and their placement in the foreground.

To the Nigerian Government and its politicians, Covid-19 presents another means of looting of the national treasury. In April 2020 the United Nation, in collaboration with the Nigerian Government, launched the COVID1-9 Basket Fund to complement ongoing efforts to mobilise resources in support of the National COVID-19 Multi-Sectoral Pandemic Response Plan developed by the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 (United Nations,2020). In the heat of the pandemic, Prince Clema Agba, the Minister of Budget and National Planning denied the fact that the Nigeria government received 5.6 billion American dollars as donations towards COVID-19 (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2021). He avers that it was a loan obtained from the World Bank, the IMF, the Islamic Development Bank and the African Development Bank for budget financing. He further claims that the total Covid-19 package includes, N500 billion stimulus from special federal government account in the budget, and a N1.8 trillion through financial institutions. Out of the N500 billion Covid-19 funds, N288 billion were given to implementing agencies, N126 billion to build resilience health system in Nigeria (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2021). In all these and much more, there is nothing on ground in the Nigerian health sector as its pathetic nature became more glaring with an inept and unconcerned leadership, accompanied by dilapidated health institutions characterised by poor working conditions and incentives (Obi-ani et al., 2021). The masses never benefitted from any of the Federal Government interventions during the pandemic. Thus, Covid-19 is seen as an automated Teller Machine by the Nigerian government and its agencies as the meme below illustrates:
The language of Figure 9 imposes a representational meaning on the image. The represented participants include the Federal Government of Nigeria, (as the ATM machine), a state governor in Nigeria, and a bag of Covid-19 funds representing the looted covid-19 funds. The image offers the represented participants to the viewer as an object of contemplation and as an item of information of what the state governors and other government agents have turned the covid-19 funds into. The image consists of a covid-19 image which serves as the ATM with tag “COVID 19 CASHPOINT” in black and white colours. At the withdrawal point is the text inscription “PLEASE WAIT WHILE WE CHECK YOUR COVID 19 STATUS”. The human participant is labelled “GOVERNOR” and behind him is a bag with the inscription “COVID 19 FUNDS”. The image is portrayed in a long shot so that viewers can see the whole body of the human participant as well as the ATM machine. This signifies formal and impersonal far social distance. At the compositional level, the ATM machine is “Given” while the governor is “New” denoting the looting of the Covid-19 funds. At a stage during the pandemic, a state that announces the highest of Covid-19 patients gets the highest amount of money from the FGN. This gave rise to inflating the number of patient with Covid-19 and outright lying about the figures. At a time, Governor Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta State reports that he and his daughter had Covid-19 to attract more funds from the FGN. On April 6th 2020, Governor Nyesom Wike of River State criticised the federal government for giving a N10 billion grant to Lagos State to fight the coronavirus while “abandoning” other states of the federation (Ukpong, 2021). This meme, to a very large extent,
underscores the large scale corruption of the Nigerian Government during the peak of Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 10 displays a Nigerian police officer collecting bribe from a motor-cycle operator. This is a depiction of social distancing with the underlying theme of bribery by the Nigerian police during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this meme, the text producer contrives an image to mock the Nigerian police force. The message is conveyed through a cohesive blend of verbal and visual texts. The verbal text reads: “Maintain social distance in every instance. Una good night o”. Though this verbal text is placed below the image dotted with smiling emoticons, it attracts attention and enhances the satirical interpretation of the image:

In terms of its representational meaning, this image is a narrative with the represented participants, a policeman and a cyclist with his passenger, presented as doing something for each other. The Actor is the policeman from whom the vector emanates through his outstretched arm and a long stick with a basket at its end. Here, the policeman is the most salient participant with his dark and conspicuous black dress and his shadow forming another vector towards the cyclist. Thus, he is bent on taking bribes despite the social distancing laws. The cyclist with his passenger form the Goal as the vector is directed at them. As presented, the cyclist with his passenger are young adults as seen in their dressing and the angle of the cyclist’s cap while the policeman represents the law enforcement agents who constantly extort ordinary Nigerians. From the interactive perspective, the image represents an offer; the text producer offers the represented participants to the viewer as items of information and objects of contemplation on the issues of corruption and Nigerian police with respect to social distancing during the peak period of the pandemic (see Kress and van Leeuween, 2006:119). An impersonal close social distance exists between the participants and the viewers since the whole figure is visible. This again underscores the impersonal social relation between ordinary Nigerian citizens and the Nigerian police force. At the compositional level, the
cyclist with his bike and the passenger are “Given”. They are placed on the same angle interacting with the “New”, the policeman on the right side of the image. However, the act of bribery represented by the stick bearing the basket and the hand of the cyclist dropping money inside the basket carries the information value as it is placed at the centre of the image. This interactive syntagm attracts the viewer’s attention as it is placed in the foreground with relative space and sharpness in focus. Thus, it is the most salient aspect of the meme.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown the extent to which verbal language and visual images complement each other in communication. Visual images as analyzed has a very high communication value against written language. Viewers can make meanings out of images easily than when images are described through language, this is more so when an apt written text is imposed on an image to avoid ambiguity and to ease interpretation. In the Nigerian online Covid-19 discourse, images such as the ones analyzed are more effective means of communication than written language. This is because most Nigerian online users have no patience and time to read large chunks of written online texts in midst of hunger and boredom during the lockdown. To the image producers, it is a subtle means of saying so much in satirizing the government and giving the realities on ground a visual representation for easy understanding.

REFERENCES


Salawu, A. (2015). Language, culture, media and development: A nexus of harmony. [An Inaugural Lecture]. Department of Communication Faculty of Human and Social Sciences North-West University, Mafikeng Campus
