

A multimodal study of campaign posters of the Labour Party's Presidential candidate in 2023 general elections in Nigeria

Davidson Monday Omole^{1*} 

^{1*}Department of English, Faculty of Arts, National Open University of Nigeria, omoledave@gmail.com

*Corresponding author

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Abstract: The relevance of multimodal features of campaign posters in disseminating intended information to the Nigerian electorate during the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria is the focus of this research. The study examines six selected political campaign posters of Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party who featured in the presidential election. These posters were chosen because of the researcher's conviction that they constitute key elements in expressing the identity and ideology of Peter Obi and his political party. The purpose of this study is to analyse six campaign posters of Peter Obi and assess the effectiveness of the visual and linguistic components in influencing or persuading the electorate to vote for him as president of Nigeria under the auspices the Labour Party. The study adopted the social semiotic theory to analyse the data purposively sourced from Facebook and WhatsApp. Ideas synthesized from this theory are applied to the posters to reveal their encoded meanings. The paper reveals that Peter Obi was able to disseminate information and project his political ideology on the minds of the electorate through visual and non-visual messages contained in the posters. The conclusion of this study indicates that the campaign posters helped in influencing the decision of the electorate in voting for the Labour Party's presidential candidate to create a healthy rivalry among the contestants for president of Nigeria in the 2023 General Elections.

Keywords: Campaign posters, Labour Party, Multimodality, Peter Obi, 2023 General Elections in Nigeria

Biographical notes: Davidson Monday Omole holds M.A. English from the National Open University of Nigeria.

1. Introduction

This research is a multimodal study of selected campaign posters of Peter Obi, the presidential flag bearer of the Labour Party, and one of the candidates for the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria. Jay-ar (2022: 46) asserts that posters are considered among the leading and most effective non-verbal means of communication in the society. Campaign posters, no doubt, are tools designed in different dimensions with multifarious messages to attract the attention of the electorate. They often contain textual and graphic elements which are technically crafted to be eye-captivating. They help to persuade, motivate and entice voters. Posters, generally, are tools used to communicate messages of diverse intents to the electorate who have the mandate to determine the fate of politicians in elections.

In Nigeria, campaign posters have become ubiquitous and increasingly popular among politicians during the period of elections. Politicians explore their usefulness and invade the political landscape with assorted campaign materials laden with promises and messages that can project their ambition or sway the opinion of the electorate. Campaign posters represent political office seekers in places where these candidates are unable to present themselves physically to the electorate. Hence, politicians make use of expressions that are full of assurances or hope for a better future. This is a unique way politicians hold their audience spellbound.

There is no doubt that politicians do present campaign posters of varied inscriptions and photographs in every accessible platform including the print, the broadcast and the telecast media to sell themselves, their political ambitions or to disseminate information about their parties and their manifestoes. Some of these posters with assorted inscriptions and photographs also appear on social media such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Their graphical and textual features aim either at evoking feelings of enthusiasm, collaboration, hope and joy or have contrary intents geared towards attacking opponents and dissuading the electorate from voting for them. In fact, political campaign posters and other similar advertorial messages are produced and disseminated by campaign media teams and loyalists of different

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political parties in places where candidates are required to speak to the electorate. The posters are conspicuously displayed in public places, advertised on television, radio and other platforms, where the electorate can easily access information about candidates and their parties. It is significant to observe that while some of these political posters highlight candidates' capabilities and achievements, others are intended to demean the personalities of their opponents. Ojekwe (2016: 14) argues that "voters are most likely to trust candidates whose political ad campaigns offer to satisfy their basic needs, as opposed to those who dwell on their personal achievements". This means that campaign posters are very important advertorial tools for politicians. Ugoala (2017) avers that the essence of any semiotic resources like posters is to communicate some form of meaning to the audience. Thus, campaign posters are used in various ways to communicate ideas to the audience.

The Labour Party, the People's Democratic Party, and the All Progressives Congress are three major players in political campaigns for the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria. These parties place their campaign posters on social media and on billboards located strategically in villages, towns and cities. They also engage in political rallies, speeches and discussions in many fora including media houses such as the television and radio stations. This is with a view to passing appropriate information to the electorate. The intended information will solicit votes or persuade the electorate to accept specific candidates and parties for elections. The information may alternatively dissuade the electorate from voting unpopular candidates and parties into power.

In this paper, the researcher selected six campaign posters of Peter Obi, (the Labour Party presidential candidate) the in 2023 General Elections in Nigeria, for analysis. The selection of these posters was based on the researcher's conviction that the campaign posters contain all the multimodal features required for this study. Moreover, the posters are easily accessible through social media platforms. The posters therefore have been selected on convenience, and not based on Labour Party's ideology as this study is purely an academic exercise.

2. Aim and objectives

This study is an academic task which aims at a multimodal analysis of selected political campaign posters of Peter Obi, the Labour Party presidential candidate who participated in the 2023 General Elections conducted in Nigeria.

Objectives of this research are:

1. To explain how the presidential candidate of the Labour Party is portrayed in his campaign posters;
2. To establish how the campaign posters of the Labour Party presidential candidate reflect encoded meanings about the Nigerian society.

The questions are:

1. How is Peter Obi, the Presidential candidate of Labour Party, portrayed in his campaign posters?
2. How do the campaign posters of the Labour Party presidential candidate reflect encoded meanings about the Nigerian society?

3. Literature review

Some scholars have undertaken different researches on the importance and usefulness of political campaign posters during electioneering periods in Nigeria, Ghana, Algeria some other African countries, and elsewhere in the world. There are ample studies carried out by different researchers on multimodal analysis of campaign posters, and these studies have shown how the combination of several semiotic elements can facilitate encoding and decoding of meanings. For example, Ademilokun (2015) analysed some visual images used for political communication in a political rally context in southwestern Nigeria. The researcher used systemic functional multimodal discourse analytical framework and Barthes' (2001) conception of interaction of signs that were highlighted in the concepts of "anchorage" and "relay" in data analysis. The findings showed that semiotic artifacts such as "Ankara", vests and head gears helped to communicate with the electorate in order to gain their acceptance in a socio-cultural environment. Benderbal (2018) researched on political cartoons, and how linguistic and non-linguistic resources coexist with one another in portraying political activities in Nigeria. The study also showed how it impacted on the society considering the social factors that were observed in the cartoons and their implications on the readers.

Morkat & Ghouati (2019) explained how verbal and nonverbal resources interact with one another to portray the political activities in Algeria and how these resources conveyed meaning to the Algerian electorate in their general elections of 2019. Their study was based on the socio-political context of that country. Omolabi and Zakariyah's (2019) work similar to Morkat & Ghouati's (2019) study. Their findings revealed that political campaign posters were predominantly used by cartoonists to inform the public of topical issues around their vicinity. El-Falaky (2019) explained that political cartoons have unveiled the political, social and cultural milieu in Egypt. Their study portrayed that political and ideological positions of Al-Ahram are presented to the audience through multimodal texts.

Mulyadi and Sudana (2021) carried out a multimodal analysis of posters on humanitarian issues. The study adopted social semiotics with a multimodal perspective on campaign posters which were used in spreading the principles of humanity to reduce the prolonged humanitarian crisis in the world. Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) reading images theory rooted in Halliday's (1985, 2009) systemic functional linguistics was used in the study. Connotation of names

and terms of address proposed by Allan (1991); and Bezemer & Kress's (2016) social semiotics were also applied. The findings showed a relation between verbal-visual texts through logico-semantic framework as proposed by Martinez and Salway (2005). It further revealed that campaign posters could be considered comprehensively through multimodality as part of efforts to improve the awareness of freedom, equality and values. Sharndama and Mohammed (2013) explored selected campaign posters in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa State of Nigeria. They used Crystal & Davy's (1985) Linguistic stylistic model to analyse their data, and their findings at graphitic level showed that campaign posters are of different shapes and sizes. The study further revealed that the posters were beautifully designed to attract the attention of the electorate or passers-by.

There are many other works on the analysis of political campaign posters where different theories have been applied in analyzing their data. Most of these researches do not include ideologies that are buried in visual images in a socio-cultural context, and the present study intends to fill this gap.

3.1. Multimodality of discourse

Several scholars have different views about multimodality. According to Paltridge (2012:14), multimodality "brings a new whole meaning to discourse", and the meaning "is not just communicated through language but also through other semiotic signs". Lirola (2016) explains that the society is influenced by the presence of new texts which are clearly characterized by increasing dominance of visual resource. van Leeuwen (2005) posits that multimodality portrays common properties of semiotic modes; that it focuses on ways in which modes are integrated in multimodal texts and communicative events. This view was echoed in Ugoala (2022) who opines that texts encode different semiotic elements that jointly portray the meaning an author wishes to express. Multimodality therefore indicates the various semiotic modes including visual and non-visual resources which are combined or integrated in any given discourse.

Iedema and Stenglin (2001) posited that a multimodal text is "one in which a number of different modes are integrated to form a composite whole". They went further to explain that the mode in spoken discourse "integrates language with intonation, voice quality, facial expression, gesture and posture", while the mode in written discourse "integrates language with topographic expression, illustration, layout and colour". Consequently, it is necessary to assert that the primary focus of multimodality is to project the role of mode and its relationship with text to give the intended meaning. Meaning, according to Hodge and Kress (1988), "resides strongly and pervasively in semiotic systems other than language that is concentrated solely on verbiage". Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran (2016) further asserted that "meaning is made in all modes separately", and it is "an effect of all the modes acting jointly". This scholarly view seems to explain that multimodal texts integrate language with other resources of semiotic nature to make varieties of meanings.

Multimodal texts are liable to different interpretations depending on content and context. van Leeuwen (2008: 136) explains this further by saying that "words provide the facts, the explanations, the things that need to be said in so many words; images provide interpretations, ideologically coloured angles, and they do so not explicitly, but by suggestion, by connotation, by appealing to barely conscious, half-forgotten knowledge". He contends that social actors and their actions can be visually represented, and the "language of images" will enable the producer depict entities from a particular angle and the viewer to make explicit what is concealed in the images. Halliday (1985, 2009) identified three levels of meanings conceivable in context by language users, namely *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *textual* meanings. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) referred to these three metafunctions as *representational*, *interpersonal*, and *compositional* meanings, while Lemke (1998) as cited in Ademilokun (2015) called them *representational*, *orientational*, and *organizational* meanings. Despite the different labels advanced for these concepts by major scholars in multimodal discourse, there are no significant differences in their meanings. Paltridge (2012) explains that these social meanings are concerned with how visuals are perceived by the viewer, either as they present literal meaning, relational meaning or componential meaning. Lirola (2015) suggests that multimodal features in political campaign posters should comprise text, colours, images, symbols, postures and other objects working together to express the intended message. Kress (2010: 61) explains that multimodality is "how the modes of image and writing appear together, how they are designed to appear together, and how they are to be read together".

In this paper, the researcher has identified all the modes presented in the selected posters, deciphered them piece by piece and related them to the Nigerian socio-cultural context. This has been done taking cognizance of Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) assertion that meaning derived from images of multimodality can only be approached from representational, interactive and compositional perspectives. Moreover, the researcher has acknowledged that image and text placement in political campaign posters can affect meaning realization or meaning interpretation. Hence, both words and images play complementary roles in the construction and interpretation of social experiences.

4. Research methodology

This study is based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic theory of multimodal discourse analysis, and the theory maintains that social and cultural contexts are important in the construction and interpretation of social meaning. In other words, meanings are determined in social and cultural contexts. Jewitt and Oyama (2009: 136) explain that the process of social semiotics involves "the description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted". However, to understand how people appear as visuals along with their interpersonal relationships, van Leeuwen (2008: 133) asserts that it is essential to observe the social distance, social relation and social interaction of representative participants (RP). Machin and Mayr (2012) also point out that the analytical framework should focus on images, photographs, diagrams and

graphics which can create meaning. This researcher acknowledges that local context consideration of north-south dichotomy of Nigeria is important in the interpretation of social meaning in this study. Thus, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic theory is used for analysis.

The data for this study were downloaded from social media platforms: Facebook and WhatsApp between December 13th, 2022 and January 15th, 2023. A total of six political campaign posters of Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, were selected and classified for analysis. These posters contain verbal and non-verbal elements that can express symbolic meanings embedded in them. Moreover, the choice of Labour Party was hinged on popularity of candidate as well as his political party affiliation among the electorate and supporters across Nigeria. One important criterion for poster selection in this study is the presence of local meaning making resources that the Nigerian electorate can recognize and exploit. The importance of this criterion is supported by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) who posited that meanings belong to culture rather than to specific semiotic mode. It is believed that a holistic assessment of multimodal features in the posters will add value to the processes of decoding meanings embedded in campaign posters within the context of Nigeria. Everything in the posters including images, colour differentiation, size and positions of fonts, and use of linguistic items, tends to have some impact on the viewers as they contribute to derive different meanings from the posters.

The Data analysis was carried out using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic theory. Ideas synthesized from this theory were applied to the posters to reveal the encoded meanings.

5. Findings and Discussions

A. Poster with symbolic images

The poster considered in this classification contains images that have no visual or conceptual connection to objects or persons in the poster. The meaning of a symbolic image is deduced through convention or what has been learnt about it. The poster in this classification highlights symbols of national identity and other symbolic colourations.



Figure 1: Campaign poster of Peter Obi of the Labour Party
Source: Facebook, 2022

The information value of this figure shows Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of Labour party lifting the symbolic image of a dying Nigeria nation in his hands, and this is the most visually striking image in this poster. He is standing in an open natural space with several unorganized people at the background, and holding the collapsing object in form of human corpse to his chest while standing in the centre of the poster. He is apparently seeking assistance from the public through his direct view of the audience to help him resuscitate the collapsing nation. The people at the background appear helpless even though they look curious for the "rescue mission".

In line with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) model, the information value of the poster requires that it is to be read from the centre to the top since the most salient participant appears in the centre of the poster. The placement of representational participant at the centre contributes to highlighting that Peter Obi is the main social actor and therefore the most salient element of the composition. Peter Obi is facing the viewer and smiling broadly as he presents the lifeless object or "corpse", to the electorate. By this, he seems to send an invitation to interact with the audience through direct or eye-to-eye contact with the viewer. This, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), shows that the candidate is making "a demand".

The lifeless object is symbolic of the Nigerian nation which is in a critical condition. The legs, hands and head of the object are sagging and the candidate is lifting the entire object effortlessly and presenting it before the audience. This seems to suggest that the represented participant has the capability to resuscitate Nigeria from its present challenges. The green-white-green colours of the clothes in which the object is wrapped indicate the dying Nigerian nation which the candidate is willing to rescue from heartless politicians if elected as the Nigerian president in 2023. The background of the poster is natural, scenic and portraying an open environment. Despite its apparent darkness, it is possible to identify some unorganized people standing aloof, most of them are men. They appear helpless. The dark background contrasts with the green and white colours of the written text at the top of the poster, a location which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) describe as "ideal", or the core of the information.

"Green" and "white" are the colours of the Nigerian flag, the symbol of national identity. The dark background suggests that Nigeria is in darkness or in a very bad state, and this could be understood as a big challenge for Peter Obi, whose political aspiration is to win the election and improve the country's worsening situation. The linguistic items "RESCUE MISSION 2023" at the top of the poster re-emphasizes the need to save Nigeria from corrupt practices and disintegration. The text appears in capital letters with the word "RESCUE" in a bigger font than "MISSION". The sizes of the linguistic item emphasise the deteriorating situation of Nigeria and the urgent need to resuscitate her. The

concise and explicit linguistic item further explains the implicit message in the graphics. Moreover, the green and white colours of the object are in harmony with the colours of the Nigerian flag. Another defining characteristic of this poster is the absence of the candidate's name and party affiliation. This suggests that Peter Obi has a national outlook in the pursuit of his political ambition. Hence, he is a personality that is well known and can be recognized by the electorate in any poster at all times.

B. Poster with indexical images

The images in the poster in this category are recognisable, not because of their similarities to objects or persons, but because we understand the relations between them and the concepts that they stand for. Indexical images are usually accompanied with texts to avoid being confused for some other types of images or signs.



Figure 2: Campaign poster of Peter Obi of the Labour Party
Source: WhatsApp, 2023

This figure has a composition of three disconnected elements with the photograph of Peter Obi serving as the most salient participant, and located at the top left region which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) consider “given” / “ideal”. The second “disconnected” element is the Labour Party emblem located on the right top or “new” / “ideal” region of the poster. The third “disconnected” element contains the linguistic item as well as a smaller Labour Party emblem, a thumb print and an indexical mark at the bottom region, that is, the region which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) describe as “real”.

The candidate is introduced to the viewer in a written text as Peter Obi who wishes to be the next president of Nigeria. His name is in capital letters, larger than the other linguistic item, and on a green background at the bottom of the poster just below his image. On the right, beside the linguistic item, is a smaller emblem of the Labour Party, and a thumb print framed in a rectangle that has a white background. There is also an index or a mark in red indicating “good” or “correct” by the side of the emblem. The green, red, white and black colours of the poster are in harmony with the colours of the Labour Party emblem. The image of man, woman and child in the emblem further portrays the ideology of the party. The essence of these salient features is to ensure that all prominent linguistic items are given recognition.

The focal point of the poster is the candidate himself who displays a broad confident smile and looks directly in the face or eyes of the viewer. In the words of Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), he is “making a demand”, that is, requesting votes from the electorate. Moreover, the photograph shows a “close person distance” since it is projected from the candidate’s head and shoulder.

The background colours of the entire poster are white and green. These colours are of national importance as they are the colours of the Nigeria flag; the symbol of national identity and independence. Again, “white” stands for purity; a colour that has the implication of anti-corruption crusade. The “green” colour represents fertility and productiveness. Therefore, its use in the poster might suggest the availability of abundant natural resources in the Nigerian nation. This seems to give the social actor the confidence expressed in his gaze and smile.

C. Poster with iconic images

Iconic images bear similarity or semblance to what people already know or what we conceive about an object or a person. Iconic images usually include maps, photographs and paintings.

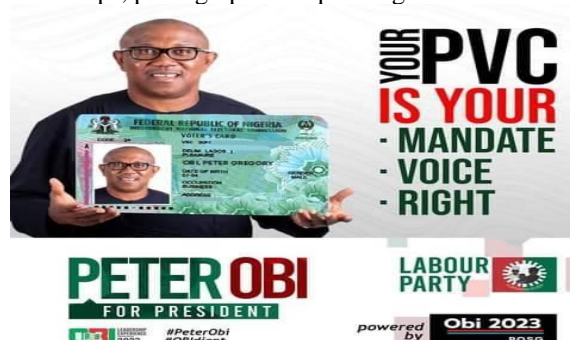


Figure 3: Campaign poster of Peter Obi of the Labour Party
Source: Facebook, 2022

This poster has two sections with visual connection. The first section contains the picture of Peter Obi, the most salient participant holding his PVC in his hands and displaying it to full public glare. The PVC shows that he has the mandate

to vote and be voted for. Apparently, he is proud of this document and that is why he holds it to his chest and displays it for everybody to see.

Information value of the poster further shows that the participant appears on the left region, and he is looking directly into the eyes of the viewer. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) describe this right region as *given* and the photograph as a *demand* shot. The linguistic item on the right region (or *new*) is the second most salient participant, and it conveys in clear terms an emphatic message to the viewer or the electorate; that “your PVC is your **mandate, voice, right**”.

This section has a horizontal disconnection with the second section at the bottom of the poster. This bottom region is what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) describe as *real*. The linguistic item on the right or *given*, just below the images explains further the demand of the candidate. The text written in block letters reads: “PETER OBI FOR PRESIDENT” with “PETER” in green and “OBI” in red both on a plain background. The font of “Peter Obi” is larger, thus making the name prominent. “FOR PRESIDENT” is written in white and placed on a green background. This colour differentiation is in harmony with the Labour Party logo.

The bottom right section of the poster described by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) as *new* contains the Labour Party emblem with its party name written in green beside it. The use of colours in this poster is symbolic. Black signifies mourning and the symbol of PVC represents the mandate and voice of the electorate. Peter Obi’s appearance in black clothes and his display of voter’s card are indicative of an ailing country whose future he hopes to change for the better if voted into power. Red is a symbol of love and the zeal he has for the revival of the Nigerian nation. Green is a symbol of fertility and the possibility that Nigeria will bounce back to prosperity given the mandate to steer the affairs of this nation during the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria.

D. Poster with Images of Metaphor

These are images that can be interpreted based on their social relations, their actions and other social experiences. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as cited in Kovecses (2010), metaphorical insights can be used to interpret visual semiotics because social actors, their actions and other social experiences can be framed metaphorically.

**God does not dwell in a broom
or umbrella.
He dwells where two or three
people are gathered. 🙏🙏**

Mathew 18:20



Figure 4: Campaign poster of Peter Obi of the Labour Party
Source: WhatsApp, 2022

This figure contains information value that is to be read from top to bottom (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The top contains written text while the bottom has two photographic images that relate to each other. Peter Obi’s image is considered the “main participant” and it appears on the left or *given* region. The Labour Party logo appears on the right or *new* region of the poster. The left and right regions are what Kress and van Leeuwen, (2006) consider *given/ideal* and *new/real* respectively.

Peter Obi is gazing and smiling broadly at the viewer. In the view of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), he is making “demand”. However, the logo/emblem of the Labour Party on the bottom right plays an important role as a “secondary participant” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The salience of this logo is shown through its party colours of red, green, white and black. The composition of these images has to be examined and analysed carefully using the various multimodal features.

The second section of the poster contains written text that is paradoxical. The first sentence is a satirical statement intended to undermine the major opposing parties in the contest of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria. The “broom” and the “umbrella” in this linguistic item refer to All Progressives Congress and People’s Democratic Party respectively where the audience is being encouraged to take radical measures towards the other crops of politicians who did not meet the needs of the Nigerian people when their parties were at the helm of affairs. In fact, this text is intended to satirize the rival political parties with the aim of weakening their power or potency.

The second statement presents the Labour Party as a party ordained by God. He imbues the party with the capability of offering a better future to the voters. Biblical reference is also made to Matthew 18:20 and this reinforces the religious undertone of the political poster. The use of colours in the texts is symbolic of paradoxical intents of the message and the need for political change in Nigeria.

E. Poster with images of colour connotations

Images of connotation usually contain implicit messages of values and thoughts. Their interpretations are dependent on socio-cultural background of the viewer. However, the poster in this classification contains visuals and written texts highlighted with colours of different shades and connotations.

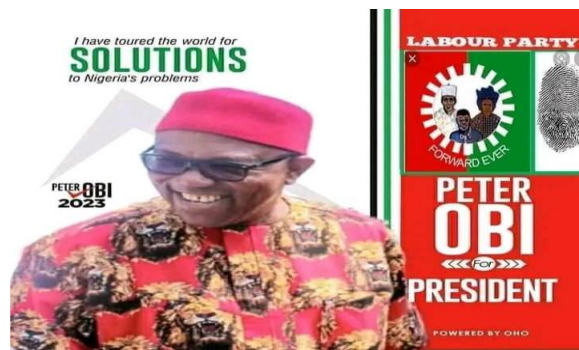


Figure 5: Campaign poster of Peter Obi of the Labour Party
Source: Facebook, 2022

This poster has a framing “disconnection” with vertical black and green colour lines, demarcating the left margin which contains the photograph of the Labour Party’s presidential candidate from the right margin which presents the Labour Party logo, a thumb print and written text.

The poster is also disconnected through the colours of white and red background. The white background of the left margin is in harmony with the red photograph of the social actor, Peter Obi. This white background is however contrasted with the red portion of the Labour Party emblem and the red background of the linguistic item on the right margin. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) conceive the left and right margins as *given* and *new* respectively. The two margins contain the white and red colours. “White” implies purity, while “Red” connotes valour or strength. Both colours suggest Peter Obi’s zero tolerance to corruption and his expected fight against it.

Peter Obi is the most salient element of the poster. He looks away, thereby making an “offer” to the viewer. This offer is confirmed in the right margin of the poster in a written text which presents “PETER OBI FOR PRESIDENT”. By this, the Labour Party candidate is seeking votes from the electorate. The smile on his face appears infectious, and the electorate cannot but establish a relation with him.

It is apparent that each disconnected margin of the poster cannot be interpreted independently without reference to the other margin. The colours used in the poster are in harmony with those of the Labour Party emblem. However, the main colour of the entire poster is red. Red, in this context, connotes Peter Obi’s valour, strength and love for his fatherland. It seems to also suggest that Nigeria is on a red alert and everything should be done to rescue her from disintegration. Peter Obi is aware of this challenge. Hence, the linguistic item on the top left region just above the photograph of the candidate gives hope: “I have toured the world for SOLUTIONS to Nigeria’s problems”. SOLUTION in the text is highlighted in capital and green letters. The others are small letters and written in black. There is another linguistic item which appears at the centre left margin with the message: “VOTE OBI 2023”. This message is indexed with a red mark indicating that Obi is the right candidate that will solve Nigeria’s problems.

The thumb print beside the Labour Party emblem located at the top right margin suggests that Peter Obi needs the mandate of the electorate to win the 2023 General Elections.

F. Poster with images of cultural identity



Figure 6: Campaign poster of Peter Obi of the Labour Party
Source: Facebook, 2023

In this poster, Peter Obi is the agent who represents his Labour Party and he appears on the left or a region which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) call *given*. He is dressed in Benue attire which can also pass for Yoruba cultural attire. He is beaming with broad smile as he faces the audience and make a demand of votes from the electorate. His demand is also expressed in several linguistic items. The written text posits that Peter Obi will facilitate “leadership for a well functioning Nigeria”. Hence, the social actor solicits “support” from the electorate for votes.

The photograph of this social actor has a close personal distance, and this affirms the relation that he is seeking to establish with the viewer. In his interaction with the viewer, Peter Obi seems to say that past and present administrations are responsible for the bane of the Nigerian nation. He therefore assures the electorate of better leadership if voted into power in 2023.

The colours of the Labour Party logo unveil the party’s ideology and the doggedness with which the presidential candidate hopes to pursue this ideology if given the mandate. The colours are suggestive; “white” stands for purity, “green” for freshness and virility of ideas, “red” for valour and determination while “black” stands for the identity of the African race. The thumb print beside the party logo at the top right region of the poster suggests the importance of the candidate’s “demand” for votes from the electorate irrespective of tribes and party affiliation.

The main text of the poster is written in green on a plain white background, which further suggests the abundance of natural resources and the candidate's sincere will to harness them. There is another linguistic item written in white on a red background. This colour differentiation is in harmony with the candidate's style of dressing.

The use of photographs, colour presentation, textual messages, framing of images and in fact, the general appearance of campaign posters helped Peter Obi to achieve the goal of creating a healthy competition among the contestants in the general elections. Thus, the visual and non-visual resources in the selected posters were posited to strategically present the Labour Party presidential candidate in the elections. The findings of this study revealed that politicians are usually presented positively in political campaign posters with an intent of persuading the electorate to vote for the candidate. In objective one, the study showed that political campaign posters were consciously used by Peter Obi to promote his political agenda and solicit votes from the electorate. Through these campaign posters, he is able to disseminate information of varied intents, and project his political ideology on the minds of the electorate via visual and non-visual messages inserted in the campaign posters. The study further revealed that visuals and written texts on campaign posters often reflect the socio-cultural aspects of human relationship, their political inclinations and the reality of the Nigerian nation. It affirmed that semiotic-cultural and social factors have bearings on political campaign posters in Nigeria. Moreover, it became clear that visual images and written texts interacted significantly for the projection of meanings. Thus, visual resources and written messages in the posters potently communicated intended meanings to the electorate without undermining cultural and social factors on the Nigerian environment. The study demonstrated that appropriation of images and linguistic items in the posters helped to communicate, manipulate, mislead or persuade the electorate to vote for Peter Obi and his party most especially in his geo-political region in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria.

In respect to objective two, the presidential candidate is portrayed in the posters as most suitable for the post of the president. The posters portrayed him as a detribalized personality ready to associate and rescue the masses, and the entire nation from hardship and corruption. The study confirmed the relevance of semiotic resources in creating meanings and sustaining the interests of the electorate on the choice of Labour Party as an option to the ruling party in Nigeria. The study reaffirmed that multimodality is an important aspect of political expression both in Nigeria and elsewhere, considering the fact that visuals and written texts used in campaign posters helped to communicate significant messages about politicians, political office seekers and their political parties to the electorate. Thus, visual images should be given as much attention as linguistic items in multimodal study of campaign posters used during elections.

This research paper differs from other studies considering the fact that the framework of social semiotic theory of multimodal discourse analysis was used. Consequently, the study has brought some fresh and different perspectives into multimodal analysis of political campaign posters. It has shown that every visual resource and linguistic item in campaign posters is laden with contextual meaning. This has put to rest any controversy on the relevance and use of political campaign posters in disseminating appropriate information to the Nigerian electorate during presidential elections. It is hoped that this study will help future researchers in investigating and proffering solutions to research problems that are associated with political advertisement and campaign posters.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows that multimodality is an important aspect of political expression both in Nigeria and elsewhere, considering the fact that visuals and written texts used in campaign posters have helped to communicate significant messages about politicians, political office seekers and their political parties to the electorate. Thus, visual images and linguistic items in campaign posters convey different meanings with local applications during elections.

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ORCID

Davidson Monday Omole  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6638-8000>

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