

Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Selected Nollywood Posters

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Abstract— Language in communication is somewhat controlled by semiotic resources such as the visual image, sound and action. Given the assertion above, multimodal features of text make such control possible; transposing nuances of visual arts into verbal or grammatical contexts. Thus, multimodal discourse analysis evolves not as a form of abstract to grammatical process but a device to understand visual impressions through semiotic regimes. Understandably, movie posters yield forms of ambiguity and create semantic problems for readers in meaning construction. This study analyzes the application of multimodal features to construct meaning in movie posters. The descriptive and analytical method of data analysis are used in discussing the data. Drawing from Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory of visual grammar, the study finds that modality arrangement are deliberately used by movie producers to achieve visual impressions that promote semantics of visual design.

Keywords— Multimodality, Nollywood movie posters, colours, pictures and titles.

I. INTRODUCTION

The change that comes with the influential technological development in information and communication system brings with it diverse and novel vista to the understanding of image, sound, action and other non-verbal symbols. Language embraces other semiotic regimes that discursively enhance communication among diverse groups. With an enlargement of semantic boundaries beyond the orthographic level, the dominance of orthography and oral sounds in the traditional sense are now greatly challenged. Thus traditional discourse embraces more symbolic systems deriving from the more complex, multi-modal discourse texts.

Multimodal discourse analysis applies visual programming languages for interpreting visual texts. Visual programming language is a picture layout grammar, a mechanism for defining the syntax of visual language. Multimodal discourse critically views the list of methods to social multimodal discourse analysis, does not in isolation identify and study modes, but it is focused on multimodal understanding of the world.

The available studies on this subject seems to concentrate either on text only, or on aesthetic design. Thus, very little on how a major modalities and semiotic tools work simultaneously to create meaning. To enrich the theory of MDA and fill in the gap in poster analysis, we try to set up a model for MDA of movie posters based on the grammar of visual design (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1990, 1996).

The objectives of this study are to:

To critically examine the visual component of Nollywood posters and to assess the symbolic significance of colours on Nollywood movie poster

The theoretical and practical significance of this study to researchers and movie lovers can be seen in the broadening of the field of multimodal discourse analysis. This is evident in the selected Nollywood movie poster adoption of the visual syntax analytical framework, semantic shift and language parsing. It also helps nollywood poster designers to be methodical and rational in movie posters model selection and distribution, as to achieve the best design results. The selection is not informed by any particular thematic focus of filmic techniques and style but, in the basis of their unique visual ordering and parsing features.

Framework and Review

The study adopts van Leeuwen's visual analysis theory also known as visual Grammar. In establishing the visual analysis theory, the study equally examines the subfield of visual rhetoric with emphasis on seeing how the approaches advanced by Leeuwen enhance an understanding of multimodality and semiotic.

Visual Analysis Theory

Visual analysis theory emerges from van Leeuwen's study of the communicative processes involved in the application of symbolic representations in discourse. Leeuwen (2001) submits that language is not a unidirectional semiotic system. He notes that meanings in language are not specific to the systematic arrangement of words but extends to other semiotic regimes like icons, images or colours, all of which express uniquely decipherable semantic values. Leeuwen goes on to say that visual analysis is typically based on visual semiotic and iconography which is associated with the art of representation of pictures and description of image.

Conceptual Analysis

The multimodal literature contains significantly different definitions of mode and different foci. For example, systemic functional approaches began by analyzing how meaning is embedded within images and artifacts, and these studies have been extended at times to include studies of interaction. Mediated discourse analysis focuses primarily on interaction and understands images and artifacts through how social actors interact with them, rather than seeking to decode possible meanings forth the perspective of the analyst.

Conversation analytic approaches also focuses on artifacts as they appear in interaction.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis goes back to Halliday's (1978,1989) "Social semiotic approach to languages". The semiotic approach enables people to communicate through semiotic resources, (gesture, image and music in order to transmit meaning with each other, hence language operatives to describe the social situations that contributes in creating meanings (Brain Partridge, 2012, P.170).

Halliday, M.A.K (2009) describes three types of social meanings which is the whole idea of the text, interpersonal meaning which pertains to the relationship between the participants, and textual meaning that relies on how the message is organized.

In multimodal discourse analysis, the images contains different figures such as diagram, photographs (Persons), and maps. Images also contains written text like slogan, emblems and banners. This means that multimodal discourse analysis depends on the link between the portrayed element and the written text, specifically the combination between verbal and non-verbal communication. It is important to note that visual analysis is very significance to provide reader or viewer with sufficient detail of what is depicted or exhibit (Images, video, photography).

The concepts of multimodality and social semiotics build on the basic notion of semiotic resources described by Halliday as a "resource for making meanings". (1978, P 192), which has been elaborated further by Kress and Leeuwen (1996) to include visual communication and, in Leewen's (1999) individual perspective, to include meaning- making not only speech and writing but also music and sound and arrangement of all these semiotic resources as multimodal ensembles (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Van leeuwen 2005).

Overview of systemic-functional MDA

Systemic functional linguistics treats language as a socials semiotic system. Mas it developer, Michael Halliday, believes that language is system network and the grammatical or other features of language are described as sets of choices. He maintains that all languages involved three co-operating net function: ideational inter personal and textual function. Although originally conceived for the study of language, systemic- functional Grammar is widely used to analyze other semiotic resources.

Early History of the Nigerian film Industry

Early Nigerian films thematically emphasized culture and history and to some extent morality and politics, but contemporary social realities were left out. Perhaps, the success of Nollywood could be attributed to the ability of present day film makers to emphasize on contemporary realities which many Nigerians and African car relate to. The cultural aspect is still present though. The cinema of Nigeria is a developing industry that has become increasingly productive in the recent years. Although Nigerian films have been

produced since the 1960's, the rise of digital cinema has resulted in a growing video film industry.

The Nigerian video boom started in 1992 but the experiences of most film makers is like trying to ride a tiger. Most of what we refer to as Nollywood films are adaptations of the folklores, the myths and the role of the supernatural in the lives of people. A march 2006 article in the Guardian cities Nigeria film industry as the third largest in the world in terms of earning.

The Central Focus of Nollywood

Many Nollywood movies have themes that deal with the moral delimmias facing modern Africans. Some movies promote the Christian or Islamic faiths and some movies are covertly evangelical. Others, however, address questions of religious diversity, such as the popular film 'Not without my Daughter' Many of Nollywood films deal AIDS comption, women's rights, and other topics of concern to ordinary African.

The literature review highlighted the main studies done by scholars in the area of multimodal discourse analysis in terms of pictures, text and posters and in the areas like political rally advertorial, bill board adverts and others but not much of these studies show nollywood poster analysis using multimodal discourse analysis. This is the critical gap in literature which this current study intends to fill.

Taking systemic- function linguistics as theoretical basis, we borrow from the grammar of visual design by kress and ran leeuwen and intend to develop a systemic and **comprechrsvie** model for MDA of movie posters. In discussion, a qualitative and interpretative approach is adopted.

The data collected for this study consist of nollywood movie poster from film stores and super Markets borrow from the grammar of visual design by kress and van leeuwen and intend to develop a systemic and comprehensive model for MDA of movie poster.

The movies introduced by these poster are with good popularity and each poster is successful in visually interpreting the theme and synopsis of the movie concerned. The interpretation which focuses on their unique visual designs and modes of expression is vital for illustrating the key to the application of the model.

II. METHODOLOGY

The data comprise both primary and secondary data. The primary data which are selected Nollywood Movie posters acquired by the present researcher for the purpose of the study. The secondary data are text books, Journals and blog materials etc.

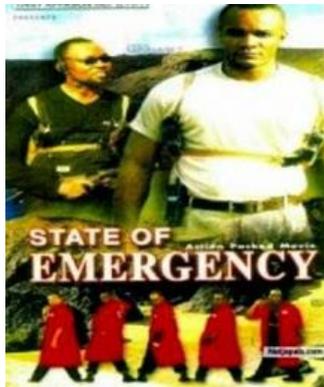
The analysis is basically content based, hence, the descriptive and analytical approaches are used in analyzing the data the descriptive and analytical approaches are aspects of qualitative research method and are used mostly in discussing variables that are not measured in numerical terms.

Analysis

Representational meaning, according to Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996:45), refers to how semiotic system exhibit

objects and relations between them outside the representational system or in the context of a culture. The primary focus of this analysis is on the inter-play amounts photographic images, colours, gestures and themes of the movie posters.

Analysis of State of Emergency



For the poster of State of emergency, there are three major represented participants- two different men and some group of people. The representational meaning involves two reaction processes, a mental process and the function of circumstances. From the color differentiation, it is evident that the lower and the upper sections contain different representational images. The upper section contains two very fascinating young men. The lower section contains a group of five young men all of whom are dressed in a red and black attire. In-between these two representations is a wrote-up in two lines of unequal font and case. Above all, the two young men looking forward out of the frame are undoubtedly the locus of attention. Their eye lines towards viewers form two similar reaction processes, where the reactors are the executors/defenders of a state of emergency. Their direct gazes at viewers serve as a visual demand to call for involvement and identification from viewers. Moreover, in terms of mental process, there is necessarily a sensor and a thought balloon (sensor is an inner mental process).

However, in this poster, no conventional thought balloon is presented. Instead, a mental process is indicated by where the upper section serves as the content of the thought balloon and the group of five young men in the lower section as O sensor. This hidden mental process is significance for it integrates two separate sections vertically and also accounts for the relationship of the three major represented participants. As far as circumstance is concerned, the distinctive scenery of the bright sky and hilly surface in distance as circumstance of setting shows that the scene of the story is a metropolitan subjected to military attacks; and the costume of military jacket, pistols and walkie talkie act as circumstance of accompaniment to show the identity of the two young men as ex-service men. At last, as far as conceptual process is concerned, an analytical process, which relates represented participants within a part-whole structure, is embedded in the circumstance of accompaniment: the military jacket and the pistol as well as the walkie talkie are integrated into a whole as a carrier which refers to the outfit for conflict or war; while

each item of the whole can be regarded as attributes for their identical characteristic of conflict, revolution or war. Interactive meaning, on the other hand, is associated with both the social relations between participants and the evaluative orientations that participants deploy towards each other and towards the represented world in an image. Four dimensions will be involved in the following analysis: visual contact, size of frame, perspective and modality. In terms of visual contact, image act of Demand is formed as the two young men in the upper section are looking directly at viewers. This imaginary eye contact is a visual form of direct address as if the young men are demanding the viewers to identify with them and call on the viewers to enter their world and share their story. Concerning size of frame, the young men are shot above the shoulders and the strands of their hair can be figured out clearly. This close personal distance suggests the imaginary relationship of intimacy between the young men and viewers as if they are friends, so that viewers cannot help becoming sympathetic with these young men and convinced of their patriotism.

In contrast, in the lower section the group of five young men in red are taken in a long shot which indicates a distance of public business interactions between these young men and viewers. That is, for viewers, these young men are not ordinary p they may meet everyday. Considering perspective, all represented participants have a frontal angle with an indication of the interactive participants involvement with the represented world. In other words, viewers are willing to enter into the threatened landscape in the poster and to find out the historical story of the military incursion. As for the vertical angle, the perspective is more complex: On one hand, these group of five young men presented at viewers eye level to indicate a relationship of equality. This angle and the group's facial expression also show their animosity and unwillingness to take viewers as their good friend. On the other hand, these young men in the lower part are represented from below to suggest their relegated position.

The last dimension of interactive meaning is modality which refers to the interpretation of the degrees to which a visual inmate is considered to be truthful or unauthentic based on its visual coding orientation. For this poster, the image producer deploys the commonsense naturalistic coding orientation. In realizing the mental process, modality plays a significant role. On one hand, the lower section which possesses a high modality in the perspective of naturalism presents a sense of reality: firstly, the image is the sharpest and most finely grained; secondly, it is appropriately contextualized since the labyrinthine bush roads and forest zones are adopted as the background which functions as circumstance of setting; thirdly, the hilly surfaces and the track road in distance create depth; fourthly, the colour is duly saturated, maximally diversified and modulated.

To sum up, all the modality markers cooperate harmoniously in constructing the images of reality and a sensation of fear which contribute greatly to the visual composition of the whole poster. The implication of this is that compositional meaning is realized through the arrangement of various visual elements, relates the represented

and interactive participants to each other and makes all elements of an image into a meaningful integration. There are three interrelated systems to realize compositional meaning: information values, salience and framing. Information value means the placements of the elements endow them with specific information values relative to each other (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996:181).

Analysis of the poster of The Kingdom of Darkness



As far as this poster is concerned, the narrative meaning is embedded in an action process in which two infested hands in the top right and left corner of Forman obvious vector. The infested hands extending from the center of the images on the poster somehow serve as emphasis and guide in visual communication in that they evidently draw viewers attention to the two bold faces whose facial make-ups reveal something quite ominous and deadly. While these faces seem not only the goal of this vector, they appear most interestingly as the most significant visual element in this poster. Moreover, the highlights of this poster lie in the conceptual process, especially the symbolic suggestive process. For one thing, from the choices of colors, all the important visual elements are presented in the color of blood (red) which symbolizes death and killing and thus conveys the impression of an extremely bloody and brutal story to viewers.

The connotation of blood accords with the emotional tone of the movie background. Again, from the choices of visual elements, the blood (red) lining splashed round the white spots on the foreheads of the bold faces like a corona around an eclipse, are designed just like blooming red plum blossoms and thus endowed with multiple symbolic meanings: first, the title *Kings of Darkness* employs a figure of speech called paradox. The vehicle is “kings” and the tenor is Darkness. Kings do not rule darkness nor do they rule light. Darkness here only serves as a deictic pointing to the clash between the two kings which most often results in bloodshed and death. Darkness thus re-images death. Importantly, the notion of this conflict is articulated in the sub-title of the movie: clash of the irokos. Hence, the two bold faces which represent the “irokos” are placed above other images to inscribe their position as centres of authority while their subjects are placed below them.

The poster designers choose to illustrate the main title of the movie in the colour “red” and the sub-title in “black”, colours which seemingly share the relatively the same

connotation and essence worldwide. These colours are symbolically used to hint the morals and sentiments of the leading characters.

For this poster, the interactive meaning is mainly demonstrated by size of frame and perspective. In terms of size of frame, the foreground and the background are respectively shown in long shots which both create a sense of alienation between viewers and the represented environment temporally and spatially. The impersonal distances indicate that the movie is not about a recent event but a great while ago. Speaking of perspective, the whole image has a frontal angle horizontally suggesting impartiality and objectivity of the narration of the movie story; while in the vertical direction, the gloomy sky (dark) in the upper section takes up 3/4 of the whole image and suggests the world into which the society of the movie is trapped so that viewers can appreciate the direction of the vectors (the hands) looking up at those symbolic visual elements.

In its compositional meaning, it becomes clear why the sky in the upper section and the ground in the lower section form an Ideal-Real structure. In the Real part, the coarseness of the earth and the darkness of the sky suggest a sight of a war-worn area. In terms of framing, though there is no clear framing line, the gradual transition from the ground to the sky serves as the framing device to separate the whole image into two part axis. In this poster, framing plays a vitally important role in realizing information value, because it does not only point up the Ideal-Real structure, but also realizes the natural transition between the two parts. Speaking of salience, color is the dominant element. The poster designers use the color of blood (red) to stress all the important visual elements so as to heighten the mood of sorrow created by the background of the gloomy sky.

Analysis of the poster of Alter Ego

In the poster of *Alter Ego*, the image of the Adaora, the lead character is in the foreground and presented as the main participant. Hence, there is no other framed photo in the background to indicate a secondary participant. This follows from the fact that the story is developed around just a single character. Technically, this is a fault not in terms if the poster design but in the dramatic development of characters. To choose a right angle of justifying this unusual design, that is, the use of a single image, the knowledge of the movie is required.

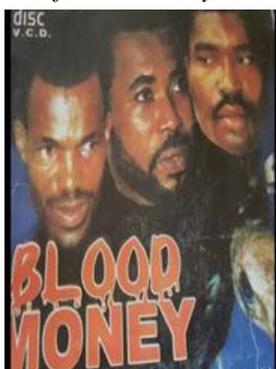
Alter Ego tells a story of a successful lawyer who has dedicated a great part of her professional life to prosecuting sex offenders. She adopts any measure possible to see that sex offenders, especially, those who molest children are jailed. Ada Igwe (Omotola Jalade) does not only rely on the law to exert punitive measures on offenders as she also uses orthodox methods to make sure those she finds guilty of child molestation and sex offences pay for their crimes. Her quest for justice is influenced by her personal childhood experience as she was raped by her teacher in school. However, her drive to punish sex offenders is impeded by her high craving for sex. A situation that is beyond her control. She engages her domestic as well as official workers in sex to quench her urge

whenever she feels the cravings, irrespective of the time and place.

As a matter of fact, this movie is not a biography so that the images of other peripheral participants ought to have been added to the poster design. However, this is deliberately not done for some multimodal stylistic reasons. What is important to the poster designer is the split figure of the main character's personality. Based on the analysis above, we could believe that the explanation should be done from the angle of circumstance: the framed photo serves as circumstance of setting to provide viewers important information about the background of the movie so it is presented in large size to be visually stressed. Moreover, the angle of perspective plays a significant role in analyzing the image of Adaora. On one hand, her body is split in two, thus angling it away from the plane of viewers which encodes a sense of detachment from her double personalities. This shows that viewers are somewhat excluded from the world of Adaora whose personality remains enigmatic to both participants in the movie and the viewers. However, not keeping the same oblique angle with her body, the image turns her head forward and her gaze forms eye contact with viewers to show her willingness to make communication.

The poster conveys the message that although her world seems contradictory, she is still willing to communicate with you from her world of conflict and confusion (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996:144). On the other hand, in term of the vertical angle, the image is photographed from a low angle giving viewers an impression of superiority. As a lawyer, she exudes authority, but that authority is altered by the other side of her split personality. In order to indicate the alteration this other side does to her power and the authority, she is costumed in red, a symbolic indicator of danger. To sum it up, from the angle of perspective, much information can be read: the image, as the symbol of the law, demonstrates the power and the authority of Nigeria's legal profession through legislation against sex offenders. But she lives a life which is alien and unknown to us and keeps her own way of behaving in public which is elegant and conservative. Yet, in the privacy of her office and her home, she shows deep concern and is willing to show her amiable side to the public and to accept the opportunities to communicate with the masses.

Analysis of the poster of Blood Money



In the poster of Blood Money, the most conspicuously represented participant is the graphetics of the word “Blood” in the title of the movie. To decide a right angle of interpreting “Blood” is the sticking point. Above all, a careful observation is needed. First, it can easily be found that the image of “blood” is attached to the word “Blood” in the title of the movie and it is carefully laid on the frame of the vulture both of which are laid under the pictures of three heads which seem to be unrelated. However, in scrutinizing these pictures, viewers can discover that the background on which the whole images are laid is a blue cloud of striking lightning.

The mystical bearings of the colour symbolism relates the three heads to the first three of the Seven Deadly Sins: Greed, Pride, and Sloth. Since the images are presented within a part-whole structure, it is not difficult to recognize the spatial analytical process, within which the three heads relate to the Seven Deadly Sins but the possessive attributes of the three heads and their spatial relationship to the vulture and the dripping letters of blood point to the content of the Seven Deadly Sins. Therefore, it is rational to stress the representative meaning in the MDA of this poster from the angle of spatial analytical process so that viewers could know better the synopsis and keynote of the movie.

III. CONCLUSION

The sociolinguistic significance of usual texts in constructing filmic messages has been the focus of this study. It draws from the background of multimodal discourse analysis to interpret selected Nollywood movie posters with the intention of showing how the visual lay-out of movie poster creates room for an expansive semantics of the theme of movies as a trigger for understanding how other semiotic regimes can be used to read and understand textual communication. Movie posters are not merely peripherals needed only in the promotion of the movie (advertising) as erroneously perceived by many. Rather they are image summary of movie contents and thus occupy a central place in movie production. From the discussion, it is recommended that Nollywood movie poster creation, should be recognized, like other branches such as make-up and costume, be considered a professional sub-discipline so that visual grammar analysts and advert professionals can effectively create an ideologically relevant image-complementary narrative for the movie contents. In all, through the integrated analysis of multimodal features, the paper holds that movies posters combine orthographic and non-orthographic language forms, images of clothing, iconic images etc., to express character diversity, themes, discursive and counter-discursive strategies.

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