A MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON SELECT NOLLWOOD MOVIE POSTERS IN NIGERIA

Happiness Emmanuel FRANCIS

Department of Languages (English Unit), Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Edo State, Nigeria

Email: manuellesaapines@gmail.com

Phone Number: 08072781228

&

Chibuzor Franklin AKPATI

Department of Languages (English Unit), Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Edo State, Nigeria

Email: akpatichibuzor@yahoo.com

Phone Number: 07035146161

Abstract

This study investigates the representation of participants in selected Nollywood movie posters, focusing on the communicative interplay of visual and non-visual modes using Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design. Drawing on multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA), the study analyses how elements such as gaze, gestures, costume, and color convey meaning, reinforce ideology, and construct power and identity. The findings reveal that visual elements in movie posters communicate layered meanings related to authority, ethnicity, gender, and cultural identity. The study concludes that applying visual grammar enhances the interpretation of multimodal texts, revealing underlying ideological and identity narratives often overlooked in traditional discourse analysis.

Keywords: Multimodality, Nollywood, Movie posters, CDA, Visual design

Introduction

Nollywood is a term used to characterize the Nigerian film industry. It evolves around movies directed and produced in the African continent and in the African diaspora. Nollywood is one of the largest film industries after Hollywood and Bollywood, a term used to characterize American and the Indian film industries. Nigerian English movies produce in countries such as the United States, Ghana and other African countries are also categorized as Nollywood. It dates back to the 20th century. It began producing movies shot on celluloid by Nigerian movie makers after Nigerian was declared independence in 1960.

Nollywood movie posters are movie advertisements which involve images and texts that possibly pass information related to the main movie down to the people it is being communicated to. Movie titles on the other hand are distinct names given to an oral, written, printed, or a production. They are names given to differentiate between two particular things. However, Nollywood titles or titles of movies are names given to movies that are produced or in the process of production. It is possible for titles of movies to give an insight of how a movie will look like.

Several works have been done on nollywood and movie posters in Nigeria such as Nurudeen, Ogungbe and Zakariyah (2021), Ken (2020) and Taiwo (2015). These studies focused on linguistic, visual and non-visual modes used as meaning making strategies. However, much attention has not been paid to the study of how visual and non-visual modes reveal the role of ideology in the distribution of power in Nollywood movie posters in Nigeria; this study, therefore, investigates the representation of participants in selected Nollywood movie posters, focusing on the communicative interplay of visual and non-visual modes.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The history of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) dates back to the 1970s. It came forth from ' Critical Linguistics ' which heaved in height at the University of East Anglia by Roger Fowler and few other scholars. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was earliest developed by Lancaster School of Linguists in the late 1980s as a programmatic development in European discourse study. According to Fairclough (1992), CDA has to do with the investigation of the relationship between two assumptions about language use, both; (a) socially shaped and (b) socially shaping. In the same vein, Fairclough (1992, p. 110-12) further explains that the critical discourse analysis of a text should pass through the three stages of description, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and the explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context. Furthermore, van Dijk (2004) views critical discourse analysis as a type of discourse analysis research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts.

The thrust of CDA is to critically describe, interpret and explain the ways in which discourse constructs, maintains and legitimize social inequalities. CDA is rooted in ideology, power and identity.

Ideology

Discourse is any piece of extended language written or spoken and has unity, meaning, and purpose. Ideology on the other hand is the belief system and ideas defined from the multidisciplinary ways, van Dijk (2006). Ideology connects the perspectives of people from different fields. It reflects the personal thoughts, behavior, and attitude, not only does it reflect the previously mentioned, it also reflects the social forms of processes which the symbolic forms evolve in the social world. In other to understand a discourse, one needs to have the ability to interpret a mental model.

Power

Power is said to be the ability of an individual to authorize or control the behavior of others, most time, in opposition of their will.
Weber (1968) views power as the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.

Identity

Identity is the graphic representation of an individual created in one's mind as they observe an individual and the way an individual uses language. In spoken and written discourse, identities are exposed.
Individuals and language are entangled. There are three essential discursive sources of identity; Nationality, sex, ethnicity. A child inherits all these when once he finds himself in the world. In terms of nationality, discourse plays a unique role as a source of identity. It is one of the most visible ways of social identification; what the culture unveils how it shapes an individual, and the roles of each individual in the society. Sex/gender is also an identified source of identity. Every individual must fall into a gender either female or male. Ethnicity/race is also very essential as there are numerous indigenous languages.
Identity deals with an individual or group of persons, personal or social, as a result of how things are being carried out. Each identity is important and has its meaning is different occasions. These identities could be in form of a worker, parent, teacher, mason, etc. There are various discursive approaches to identity, such as; the function of language in communicating and representing notions, representation of identities and the examination of the identity type. However, the different discursive notions relating to identity are affected by the graphic representations people acquire.

Multimodality

Multimodality is an art that merges various modes of communication and yields meaning. The combination of these various modes such as; images, colour, videos, symbols gives deeper interpretations of a given text. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, P. 20) define multimodality as the interplay between different representational modes, i.e between images and written or spoken words.
Gee (2003) explains that language is not the only important communication system in digital media, visual symbols and signs are as significant as written or spoken language in a text or discourse.
There are three theoretical assumptions of multimodality;

i.   Multimodality assumes that communication has to do with modes, which contribute to meaning. It dwells on analyzing the modes which are used in communication.

ii.   Multimodality assumes that resources are socially structured to be materials that make meaning and enunciate meanings that are required by different environments.

iii.   Multimodality assumes that individuals generate meaning from the different modes of communication and can also generate their significance.

However, there are four notions which occur in multimodal work; mode, semiotic resource, modal affordance and inter-semiotic relations.

i.   Mode: This refers to both the material, cultural, and social use by persons for communication.

ii.   Semiotic Resources: This shows the usual occurrences in their daily usage.

iii.   Modal affordance: This is seen as the traditional characteristics of modes.

iv.   Inter-semiotic relations: This has to do with the configuration of modes.

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

Multimodal critical discourse analysis raises the ability to learn various modes like; images, graphics, and not only to learn language. Djanov and Zhao (2013. p.2) outline that multimodal critical discourse analysis has two important aims, the "prior", which has to do with scanning the meaning making potentials of individual semiotic resources and the "next" has to do with theorizing the interaction between different semiotic resources in multimodal communication. The effort of great Linguists such as; Kress and van Leeuween, Bob Hodge and the likes gave rise to the multimodal critical Discourse Analysis. They placed their focus on how language and semiotic modes of communication came together to make meaning. An example of traffic signs to stress the importance of multimodality. He demonstrated a traffic sign showing the way to go to a car park of a supermarket. The sign consists of three different modes which are; writing, image, and colour. Kress further explains that if the writing is used without the images and colour, it will not work and that the message which is being communicated will be complex or hard to understand. Also, if the image is used alone, it would be more understandable but better with the signs and writings. However, the three modes give a better understanding of the image being communicated (Kress, 2009, p.1). Below are some strides of how multimodal critical discourse analysis does it study;

i.   Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis regards vocabulary analysis of texts.

ii.   It studies the semiotic resources which replaces the attitude of the interlocutors.

iii.   Representations of people and naming strategies in language and visual semiotic resources.

iv.   It exposes the way people act.

v.   It is concern with the recurrence of metaphorics in discourse.

vi.   Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis also consist of nominalization and presupposition as a study area.

vii.   It also involves the use of modality, enclosure in texts, and visual communication as one of its procedures.

However, the above listed strides show how meaning is constructed, formed, and developed.

In addition, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has made a strong attempt to establish the theory of inter-connectedness of discourse, power, and ideology and it is mainly concerned with the role discourse plays

in maintaining and legitimizing inequality in the society. CDA has become more multimodal in its analysis because of the realisation that all levels of communication are shaped by power relations and ideologies and not just language.

Methodology
Method and Data Selection for Analysis
The data for this study were selected from English Nollywood movie posters in Nigeria and five posters were selected with no restrictions of year range.

Purposive Sampling Technique
Purposive sampling is a set of non-probability sampling technique wherefore units are selected based on characteristics, convenience or comfortability ensuring one to achieve a result and collect data without difficulties. This technique was adopted to select twelve English Nollywood movie posters amongst the broad number of data vacant. For this present study, the titles of movies selected for this research are thus; Things fall apart, 666: Beware the end is at hand, Heart of a widow, Prophetess, Slave.

Theoretical Framework
This study concentrates only on two metafunctions of language established by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) in their approach on Grammar of Visual Design. The two metafunctions are;
i.)   Experiential metafunction which has to do with the representation of interactions and conceptual relations between the people, places, and things which are formed through images.
ii.)   Interpersonal metafunction which has to do with the different compositional arrangements in realising the textual meaning.
However, the data are analysed using Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design, which was established in 2006.

The Grammar of Visual Design
The grammar of visual design refers to as the study of images. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) has been acknowledged for it. Studying images brings about the prior classification and broad account of the grammar of visual design. The ways in which images communicate meaning from the angle of the formal elements and structures of design, colour, view, framing and composition were studied by Kress and van Leeuwen. "Grammar goes deep beyond formal rule of correctness. It is a way in which the pattern of experiences are represented and it helps humans to structure a mental image of reality, to make meaning of the experiences they have and of what evolves around them and inside them" (Halliday, 1985).

Halliday introduced three metafunctions that form the base of Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design is;

    i.) Representation and the way experience is portrayed in the world – experiential/ideational metafunction.
    ii.) Social relations in the world and how they are enacted – interpersonal metafunction.
    iii.) The organization of meaning within text – textual metafunction.

These metafunctions are altered in Kress and van Leeuwen's approach so as to accommodate the significant use of images in communication. In Kress and van Leeuwen's approach, the experiential metafunction deals with "the representation of interactions and conceptual relations between the people, places and things depicted in images. The interpersonal metafunction has to do with "the complex set of relations that exist between images and their viewers". The textual metafunction deals with "the different compositional arrangements that allow for the realization of different textual meaning".
In grammar of visual design, visual structures indicate some interpretations of experiences and forms of social interactions.

The Components of Grammar of Visual Design
Visual design refers to all forms of communication. In communication, language is essential, it could include; aurals (spoken words), visuals (images), gestures (body languages). The features of design includes; symbols, letter, colour. Communication is fluent when the language is understood.
The Representation Dimension
The representational dimension as clearly explained by Tan and Chae (2015) is derived from Halliday's ideational metafunction, where relationship between things in the world and things within us are represented. There are two areas in this dimension as established by Kress and van Leeuwen, they are;
i.)   Narrative processes
ii.)   Conceptual processes
The narrative processes can be defined as active and functions in presenting unfolding actions and events processes of change, transitory spatial arrangement. The conceptual processes on the other hand can be seen as fixed and represents the participants in respect to their class, structure and meaning (Tan and Chae, 2015).
Tan and Chae (2015) point that in narrative processes, the participants displayed in an image are linked by a vector which is a line composed by the elements of the image. Vectors comprises of bodies, tools in action, limbs, and this occurs when participants are presented engaging in something or assisting others to do something. Eye-lines and gestures presents a force line in a specific point. The "Actor" is known as the participant who brings the vector into existence, while the "Goal" is known as the participant that takes possession of it. The reactional process also known as the narrative process occurs in images when a vector is built by the eye-lid and generates a response in place of an action. In this process, the gaze performer is known as the "reacter" and the person or object which receives the gaze is known as the phenomenon.

On the other hand, in the conceptual structure, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identifies two categories of participants. First are people, places, and things that are displayed in texts and images, while the second participants are the interactive participants and they are the category of participants to produce the texts and images. The conceptual process is related to portraying notions in images, where the participants can be examined, identified, and described. For example, diagrams, charts, and tree structures. This process is divided into two processes, which are;

i.)   Analytical Process
ii.)   Symbolic Process

The analytical process consists of the carrier and possessive attributes. The carrier is referred to as "the whole", while the possessive attribute is referred to as "the part". For instance, an institution can be analytical; where the entire institution as a whole is the carrier and all the parts of the institution are the possessive attributes. On the other hand, the symbolic process is related to expressing the meaning or who an individual is. For instance, an image with two participants can be presented, where one participant is the carrier and the other is the symbolic attribute. Here, the meaning or who the carrier is formed in connection with the symbolic attribute which represents the meaning or who the participant is.

The Interactive Dimension
Tan and Chae (2015) give more light on another dimension, which is the interaction and relationship between the producer and the viewer of images. This is based on Halliday's interpersonal function in Kress and Van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design (2006). According to Kress and Van Leeuwen's approach (2006), meanings are put into images through the gaze of the participants, the distance between the participants and the viewer, and the angle in which the participant is viewed.

The Gaze
The gaze is the way or manner the participants look at a person or an object which could possibly be present within the image or outside the image or could be staring at the viewer. This gaze is connected by a vector which is a line that draws between the participants in an image.
Tan and Chae (2015) explain that "gaze in images where presented participants look at the viewer, are formed by vectors between the participants and the viewer which connects both parties at an imaginary level". They further explain that the images (the participants) makes demands that the viewer should go into an imaginary connection with him or her. Generally, the images demands for something.

Social Distance
This has to do with the distance between the participants and the viewers. It is related to the different associations such distance implies. This is the second structure generated by Tan and Chae (2015). They concluded that the distance between the participant and the viewer if shorter, the relationship becomes more intimate.

The Angle

The angle is also known as the viewpoint. There are two angles as explained by Kress and Van Leeuwen (Tan and Chae, 2015). This is the third structure that births a connection between the presented participants and the viewers. The two angles includes; Horizontal angle and vertical angle.

The horizontal angle is "a function of the relation between the frontal plane of the image producer and the frontal plane of the presented participants". There is possibility that the angle can depict whether there is a relationship between the image producer, the viewer, and the represented participant or not. However, the frontal angle shows the involvement but an oblique angle shows detachment. On the other hand, the vertical angle has a relationship between itself and power, i.e; "if a represented participant is viewed by the viewer from a high angle, then the viewer is seen as more powerful, but if the represented participant is viewed from a low angle the represented participant is seen as more powerful". However, "the level of involvement, detachment, and power depends and is graded on the degree of the angle" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006).

Analysis of Movie Posters
Poster 1:
Things Fall Apart

Things Fall Apart is a Nigerian movie which features the likes of Pete Edochie and late Sam Loco Efe. This movie was based on the novel "Things Fall Apart" by Chinua Achebe. The movie was scripted by Adiela Onyedibia and Emma Eleanya.

<div align="center">

S   P   A
Things   Fall   Apart

</div>

The title "Things Fall Apart" is a simple sentence with the SPA sentence structure, where "things" is S (subject), "fall" is P (predicator/verb), and "apart" is A an (obligatory adjunct).
There are three participants represented in the image above. The first participant is a black woman who is in tears. The tears signifies pains and she is deep in thought and starring at an unseen phenomena with a jagged vector, the second participant is a white man with a steel gun pointing at a phenomena the viewers cannot see, which is seen as doing something. The fact that the phenomenon is absent makes it a non-transactional process. The third participant has just his legs shown in the image and with the dressing of an African in the colonial era.
The image between the black woman and the white man is the map of Africa. The cross in the background of the image signifies the church and Christianity. Red colour is used for the white man's hand. The white

colour used for the title of the movie signifies peace and it is a reflection of peace which Africans had before the whites came and everything fell apart. The title of the movie is written in a fallen and damaged manner which signifies the destruction the Europeans caused when they invaded Africa. The image producer presented the battered image of Africa during colonialism, the missionary journey and slave trade in Africa.

Poster 2:
666: Beware the end is at hand!

There are four participants presented in the image. All the participants seem to be staring at an unidentified phenomenon, leaving the viewers in a state of imagination. The first participant is a man of God who is seen commanding and warning the unseen phenomena. The second participant is also a man of God with a jagged vector pointing to the unseen phenomena. The third participant is a middle aged man presented as one of the cohorts of the devil and screaming at an unidentified phenomenon. The fourth participant is a dwarf fury young man presented as one of the cohorts of the devil with a horn at the centre of his head. He is raged and staring at an unseen phenomenon. All the participants are reacters since they are seen doing something. The vector from all the participants is a jagged vector showing; anxiety and damage.

The two participants in form of devils are in black clothes which in this context signify the devil's colour (satanic). The flames of fire signify hell (the satanic kingdom).

The title is written in both figures and words. The figures are the name for the end time period where the devil will come to the world to tempt and to take innocent souls. The figures are coloured in red which also in this context signifies danger. The words below the figures "beware the end is at hand" is a warning to the viewers concerning the end time. It is a sentence with the SPA sentence structure, where "beware the end" is the S (subject), while "is" is the P (predicator/verb), and "at hand" is the A (adjunct).
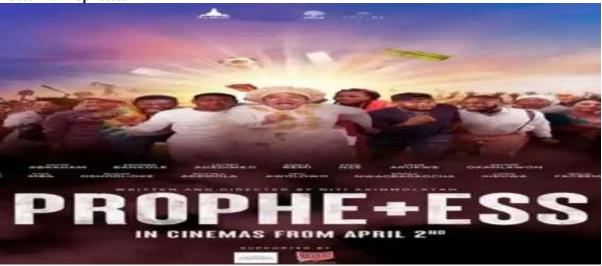
Poster 3:
Heart of a Widow

Heart of a widow is a noun phrase with the nominal structure HQ type, where "heart" is H and "of a widow" is Q. There are ten participants in the text above. The salient image in the text above is the one with the MS frame (medium shot frame) with a jagged vector. The male participant below shows a posture of breaking the 4th wall with a sharp vector, seen as wanting to kill. The depth of field image behind the salient image is known as focus foregrounding, which signifies worry and tears. Culturally, the salient image represents the Igbo tribe. Women in the Igbo culture are forced to skin cut their hair and put on black dresses for some days as a sign of mourning. Pink colour signifies love, while white represents

peace and purity. Blue signifies loyalty while red in this context represents danger and black in this context signifies mourning and grief. "Heart" in the title has been designed in a manner of love with the shape of love attached to it. The image producer portrays the female participant as the victim of circumstances in a patriarchal society.
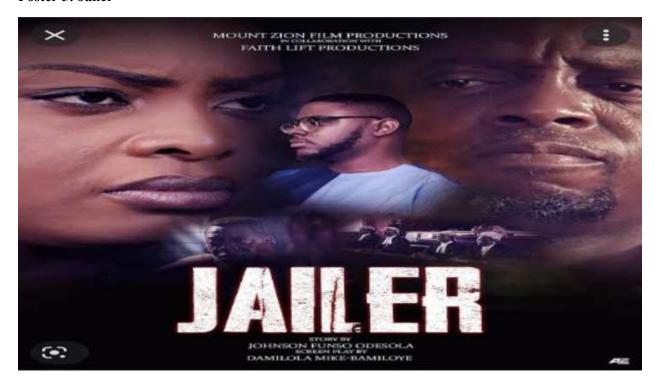
Poster 4: Prophetess

Prophetess is a noun which carries an additional morpheme; Prophet + ess = Noun
"Prophet" is a free morpheme and grammatically a noun, while "ess" is an inflectional bound morpheme. There are eleven participants presented in the poster and the rest are foregrounded. Some participants seem to be chasing and running from an unseen phenomenon. They are also staring at the unseen phenomenon. The invisibility of the phenomenon makes it a non-transactional process, leaving the viewer to imagine who or what the reacters are reacting to, while some are chasing the prophetess. The white colour used for the title signifies purity and peace. The cross symbol used in replacing the letter "t" is a symbol of Christ and the church.

Poster 5: Jailer

There are eight participants presented in the image above. All eight participants are seen doing nothing, which makes it static. The four participants under the salient images are carriers, their outfit is a possessive attribute because information is given about their outfit to the viewers. This is also a symbolic process because the participants are presented as lawyers. The single image under the salient images is a prisoner. The other participants behind the eight participants are captured using the depth of field: focus foregrounding depth.

In the title of the movie, there are splashes of blood which in this context signifies bloodshed, death and pain. The word "Jailer" has jail as its root, or free morpheme which is a noun, while "er" as a derivational morpheme. Jailer refers to someone who restricts other people's liberty by imprisonment.

Conclusion

The study shows that adopting the framework of grammar of visual design helps in analysing texts beyond what they mean at the surface level. It further reveals that texts communicate more than the way they are presented. The study reveals both connotative and denotative meanings in texts. Images, texts and colours as semiotic resources have the ability to communicate meanings at diverse levels and could possibly have the ability to consist of more functions in communicating events. In text 1, the image producer presented the battered image of Africa during colonialism, the missionary journey and slave trade in Africa. Text 2 explains how participants are presented as reacters. Also, the numbers 666 are coloured in red which signifies danger. In text3, female participants are portrayed as victims of circumstance in a male dominated society. Coloure in text 4 is the foregrounded feature. White connotes purity and peace while in text 1, participants are presented as meaning carriers. "Blood" signifies bloodshed, death and pain.

REFERENCES

Djanov, E. & Zhao, S. (2013). *Critical multimodal studies of popular culture*. London: Routledge.
Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. London: Polity Press.
Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge*. Brighton, UK: Harvester.

Gee, J. P. (2003). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*? New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Giddens, A. (1979). *Central problems in social theory*. Berkeley, CA: University of Califonia Press.
Halliday, M. A. K. & Hasan, R. (1985). *Language, context and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. Oxford,: Oxford University Press.

Hermawan, B. (2011). REVIEW: Reading images: The grammar of visual design. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, I(1), 147-148.
Ken, N. (2020). Pragmatic Analysis of Desire in the Nigerian home video. Munich, GRIN verlag, http://www.grin.com/document/981654

Kress, G. & van Leuween, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
Kress, G. (2009). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. London: Routledge.

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. London: Bloomsburry.

Melissa, N. P. & Johnson, E. M. (2020). Discourse analysis. *International encyclopedia of human geography.*

Nurudeen, M. A., Ogungbe, E. O., & Zakariyah, M. (2021). Socio-semantic approach to multimodal discourse in select Nollywood film advertisement posters. *Studies in   Pragmatics   and Discourse Analysis*, 2(2), 31-45. http://doi.org/10.48185/spda.v2i2.364

Taiwo, O. E. (2015). *The Pragmatics of language use in the Nigerian Nollywood*. USA: Indiana University Press.

Tan, H. & Chae, K. (2015). A visual design analysis of two advertising images. *International Journal of Contents*, 11(2). 51-56. http://dx.doi.org/10.5392/IJoC.2015.11.2.050 The Five Modes | English Composition 1 - Lumen Learning.

Van Dijk, T. A. (2004). *Critical discourse analysis. The handbook of discourse analysis*, Blackwell, Oxford, Uk; pp. 352-371.

Van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Ideology and discourse analysis. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 11*(2). 115-140

Weber, M. (1968) *Economy and Society: An outline of interpretive sociology*, New York, Bedminster Press

Wrong, D. (1997). *Power: its forms, bases, and uses. New Brunswick*, Canada: Transaction Publishers