
A Comparative Multimodal Study of Selected Cover Pages of *the Newswatch Times* and *The Tell Magazines*

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0128>

Published March 12 2023

Citation: Modu M.M. (2023) A Comparative Multimodal Study of Selected Cover Pages of the Newswatch Times and The Tell Magazines, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies: English Lang., Teaching, Literature, Linguistics & Communication*, 4(2),1-17,

ABSTRACT: *This research explores on a comparative multimodal explication of selected cover pages of two Nigerian news magazines - The Newswatch Times Magazine and The TELL Magazine. Three cover pages each were selected from the two magazines and analysed via Norgaard's (2010) multimodal stylistics tool-kit. The study investigates how multimodal resources such as; colours, images, graphics and other para-linguistic elements displayed on the selected cover pages explore on meaning possibilities. The result reveals that both magazines applied rich multimodal resources on the selected cover pages to portray meaning-making on the aspects of economy, security, politics and public administration in Nigeria. Visually or symbolically speaking, both magazines either criticise or favour the present government in one way or another regarding polices related to economy, security, politics and other aspects of human endeavours via the use multimodal devices.*

KEYWORDS: magazine covers, visual grammar, multimodal text, visual analysis, colour.

INTRODUCTION

This study embarks on a multimodal comparative analysis of selected cover pages of *The Newswatch Times Magazine* (International Edition) and *The TELL Magazine*. Three covers are selected from each magazine to uncover how multimodal resources are important in meaning-making of multimodal texts. In doing this, we explicate on magazine cover, visual grammar, justification for this study, brief accounts of the selected magazines, visual analysis of the selected covers and comparative study as well.

Background to the Study

Magazine covers are multimodal texts designed with varieties of semiotic or multimodal modes to draw the attention of viewers/readers and, or possibly give semantic and ideological insights of a given text. It is worthy to note that multimodal resources such as graphics, images and colours in magazine covers, advertisements and other multimodal texts play important roles in meaning-making, as such, they cannot be ignored. In the words of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the important role of images in current newspapers, magazines, public relations materials, advertisements and various kinds of books cannot be disregarded. In this sense, colours, images,

graphics and other aspects of multimodality portrayed on magazine cover pages serve as yardstick in meaning-making in multimodal texts. “Grammar of visual design [is] a resource for making and communicating meaning through the convergence of many different signifying systems”... [of different semiotic modes which project meaning potentialities in a given multimodal texts] (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). They further explicate that “visual grammar make[s] in roads into understanding the visual as representation and communication – in a semiotic fashion – and also as a resource in the development of theories and ‘grammars’ of visual communication”. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) cited in Frank (2010:98) state ‘to understand the images and design elements presented in multimodal texts require readers to consider aspects of production and reception, in addition to the aspects of the image and text itself. In this way, the capacity of images to affect us as viewers is arguably associated to the larger socio-cultural meanings they evoke and the social, political and cultural contexts in which they are viewed. According to Liu (2013:1) ‘the universality of visual images in computer interface, children’s picture books, graphic novels, textbooks, magazines and advertisements require readers to simultaneously employ written text, visual images, and design elements to make meaning’. In fact, little contemporary texts are not accompanied by visual images as they mostly contain layout, typography, graphics, and colour saturation among others.

Kress (2003:59) posits that ‘nowadays people are exposed to texts that contain elaborate visual images, unusual narrative structures, complex design elements and unique formats of verbal and non-verbal communications’ this shows the levels of interaction among people through different modes of communication, and various semiotic resources, which indicate that meaning is constructed not only through written language alone, but also through semiotics, or integrated linguistic and non-linguistic resources. This shows that texts which contain various semiotic modes such as colour, language, image and graphs are theoretically considered as multimodal texts. In other words, each semiotic mode not only undertakes its own role but is able to complement other modes in relation with each other to make an effective multimodal communication.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2002 cited in Lirola, 2006:4), explain that colours portrayed on multimodal texts are used to denote specific aspects of personality or image for visual discourse. Therefore, background colours and other colour effects on multimodal discourses make it easier for readers to read and analyse messages in a text through symbolism or association of a particular colour. Colour symbolism or association is used to refer to those occurrences where some particular notion or perception is interconnected to a certain or particular colour, or when colours accomplish conventional or cultural effects other than that of nomenclature of the field of colour (Ibrahim, 2009). In this way, we can talk of cohesion in the application of apt colours where the written text becomes part of the visual, and usually the dominance of colour background or image are designed to attract the readers’ attention. This will make the readers’ curiosity to engage with such text in either reading or analyses. However, ‘... as far as visual images or objects and colours with their applications/interpretations in multimodal texts are concerned, it is important not only to develop a suitable image or colour scheme, but is also pertinent to be aware of their more symbolic meanings or meaning potentials in different cultures of the world and varieties of contexts’ (Modu, 2019:56). This shows how in a similar object, image or colour we can find different expressions which

portrays different interpretation in different cultures, and or contextual /social implications to portray meaning possibilities’.

Justification

In recent times, image and language are two inseparable elements in the print media, precisely, the contemporary magazines in meaning potentials. This arguably portrays the mixture of image, colour and language as an indicator to both writers and readers of multimodal texts to create the projected meaning possibilities. Kress (2000) cited in Liu (2013:1259) states that, “... the combined use of different modes to create meaning has gone to the point that it is now possible that when making sense of a text, even of its linguistic parts alone, analysts have to have a clear idea that some other features might contribute to the meaning creation of a text”. Similarly, the analysis of a multimodal text has gone beyond the traditional cognitive strategies, because images and texts are being integrated in unique ways, as analysts might need new skills and strategies for meaning-making in dealing with these multimodal texts due to the scientific and technological advancement. From the foregoing, there is the need to analyse “how the modes of image, [colour] and writing appear together, how they are designed to appear together and how they are to be read together” (Kress, 2003:61), these are evident on the cover pages of magazines and other multimodal texts.

Brief Account of the Selected Magazines

The Newswatch Times Magazine was initially a Nigerian weekly news magazine, but later became a monthly news magazine published by the Newswatch Times Limited, Lagos, Nigeria. ‘It was founded by some Nigerian journalists namely; Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpu, Dan Agbese and Yakubu Mohammed in 1984, and published the first edition of its publication on 28th January, 1985’ (Uko, 2004:). The company headquarters is situated at Broad Street, Lagos, Nigeria. According to Ajaero (2011:2)

On the 8th of May, 2011, it was announced that 51% of the shares of Newswatch Communication Limited had been purchased by Global Media Mirror Limited, owned by Jimoh Ibrahim. He had taken over as the executive chairman replacing Alex Akinyele, Bala Dan Abu, the executive editor of *The Newswatch Times Magazine* given the responsibility to build up the editorial team’ of the company.

The magazine portrays viewpoints, reports and ideologies on issues ranging from politics, economics, education, health, security, law, culture among other aspects of human endeavours from different works of life and backgrounds within and outside the Nigeria.

‘*The TELL Magazine* is an independent Nigerian weekly magazine established in 1991, with its headquarters situated at Berger, in Lagos’ (John & Akinkurolere, 2013:1). It published its first edition on 15th April, 1991. The magazine features political, social, economic and religious situations of Nigeria with national and international coverage. According to Olamide and Segun (2014:1), *TELL Magazine* is one of the prominent news magazines in Nigeria. It has gained widespread recognition across the globe to an extent that it has won several awards for a portrayal of critical social, economic and political issues of the nation.

MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED COVERS

Data Presentation and Analysis form *The TELL Magazine*

For easy reading and comprehension the selected cover pages from *The TELL Magazine* are classified as illustrations A – C and those from *The Newswatch Times Magazine* are tagged as illustrations D – F. the multimodal explications follow beneath each illustration. In the words of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the important role of images in current newspapers, magazines, public relations materials, advertisements and various multimodal texts cannot be disregarded. In this sense, colours, images, graphics and other aspects of multimodality portrayed on magazine cover pages serve as yardstick in linguistic exploration on such semiotic modes and meaning-making. Lirola (2006:154) posits:

The different ways in which the elements of a multimodal text are placed have an effect on how our attention moves over the page. The size and colour of something and its placement at top or bottom, left or right, has an influence in the way we perceive the page since there is normally a hierarchical relationship between elements.



Illustration A: *The TELL Magazine*; Issue No. 45. November 7, 2016.

Analysis of Illustration ‘A’: It presents an army ceremonial cap depicted in different colours. Colours are of great significance, since they are applied to attract readers’ attention and suggest possible meaning or interpretation. Scott (1994 cited in Liu, 2013) argues that ‘pictures are not merely analogues to visual perception but symbolic artifacts constructed from the conventions of a particular culture’. There is the used of faded golden colour as the background which stands for strength, prestige and opulence, this notion can be deduced in the words of (Isiguzo, 2001:5) that gold in the African context symbolises royalty, wealth, elegance, high status, supreme quality, glory and spiritual purity. In this way, golden colour of the background describes the nature, strength,

elegance and high status of the Nigerian Army or army in general in a given nation. Visually, the faded nature of the golden colour used in the background alongside with the second lexical items of the main heading 'NEW ERA OF IMPUNITY' it possibly indicates that the Nigerian Army has lost its strength, prestige and dignity in the eyes of Nigerians due to some happenings in the organisation, such as, the issues of the alleged arbitrary retirement of its officers on 19th June, 2016 without following the due process. It was done based on alleged nepotism, tribalism and favouritism, suspected extra judicial killing of Izu Joseph, a defender with the Ibadan based Shooting Stars Club, among other issues as reported by *Tell Magazine's* edition of 7th November, 2017.

Possibly, the claims of unprofessionalism exhibited by the Nigerian Army are directly channeled to the heads or leadership of the military personnel, because in the social context the cap stands for head. In the views of John and Akinkurolere (2013:67) 'the image of 'head' and 'the wearing of caps' are symbolic as it could be interpreted as leadership. As such, a leader of a community is also referred to as 'the head' of such community'. They further explain that '... black colour depicts leadership ...' in this way, the employment of black colour on the cap implies nobility and masculinity as well as leadership in the African context.

The application of red colour at the middle of the cap depicts energy, strength, masculinity, aggression as well as power of the Nigerian Army during internal security operations and war. Ibrahim (2009:155) describes symbolism of red in Nigerian context as 'passion, strength, energy, fire, heat, arrogance, ambition, leadership, masculinity, power, danger, war, anger, revolution, radicalism, socialism, communism, aggression among other symbolisms, and arguably, some of these symbolisms are part of the potentials and nature of the Nigerian Army when carrying out military operations. In another perspective, red depicts quick decision making, this is because the military personnel are found to be quick in decision making, strong and enthusiastic in protecting their nation against any internal or external attack. The Nigerian Coat of Arms which stands for authority, strength, unity and wealth of Nigeria as nation is also depicted with red colour and little golden colour at top-center of the cap which stands for nobility and strength of the army. Another issue is the mixture of black and gold colours; in the words of Cerrato (2012) gold colour used with black suggests extreme opulence and elegance. He further states that psychologically gold colour is seen as the colour of inner wisdom, quality, wealth and prestige. In addition to the above cited attributes of the army deduced from the symbolism of red, this mixture of black and gold colour signifies the prestige, superiority and inner wisdom of the Nigerian Army in tackling issues regarding insecurity within and outside the country.

Another symbolic visual illustration is how the cap is placed at the centre of the cover page which presents the information as nucleus and implies symbolic status of the army, 'for something to be presented as centre means that it is presented as the nucleus of the information to which all other elements are in some sense subservient' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006:196). Though, due to the impunity ascribed to the Nigerian Army by the publishers in the main headline, position of the cap at the bottom of the cover page shows the cap as 'real information' which makes it more specific and factual oriented information in the visual-social context, hence, this possibly shows some clue

on the issues of claims made against the military personnel on lack of professionalism, bias mind, nepotism, favouritism amongst other blames thrown to the Nigerian Army to have committed against the southern parts of the country.

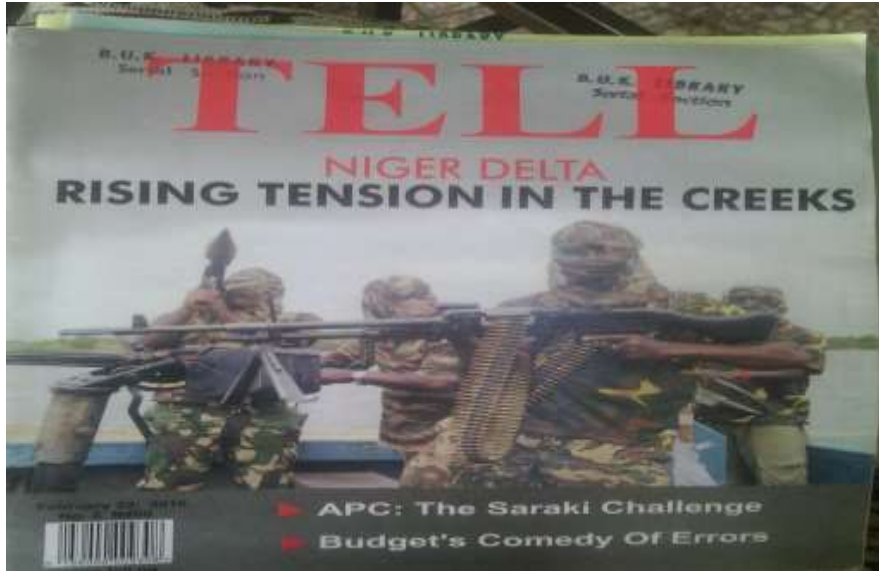


Illustration B: *The TELL Magazine*; Issue No. 8. February 22, 2016.

Analysis of Illustration ‘B’: It depicts half-squad of militants onboard in a gunboat with heavy sophisticated machine guns wearing camouflage shirts and trousers, unlike the military personnel who wear full camouflage uniform and helmet during operation. The standing position of these militants and the manner in which they hold weapons, in connection with the main headline which is written with red colour ‘NIGER DELTA’ signifies that Nigerian Army is again in battle with the militants in the Niger Delta region which is popularly known as the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND). The application of red ink to write the main headline portrays danger and tension in the Niger Delta region; this can be viewed in the sub-head of this cover page – RISING TENSION IN THE CREEKS, also, in the words of Cerrato (2012) red colour is associated with energy, war, danger, blood shade, strength, power as well as determination. Visually, in a related view, according to Ibrahim (2009:148) ‘we fine firmly fixed ideas [that red symbolises] danger or evil; [for instance,] ‘wearing red clothes signals either some fetish or cultist practice; ... red eyes indicate a mean/bad person or a nymphomaniac or an enraged person’. However, red have the proposition of strength, this could be found in idiomatic expressions which portray strength or bravery of a person or an organisation in some Nigerian dialects; (specifically, Hausa, Tiv and Egbira), (Ibrahim, 2009:148). In this way, apart from depicting the said geographical location as being in tension, the militants are bold enough to face the military in the war against oil and gas pipeline vandalism. Another symbolic idea is the grey background which symbolises elegance and strength; as argued by De Bortoli and Maroto (2001) who point out that grey depicts sophistication, elegance, tradition, high taste and strength. Other symbols of analytical interest in the background are the typical nature of creek and the use of a gunboat as an operational vehicle by the militants.

These indicate that the Niger Delta is a riverine area and both parties involved in the battle have manpower and weapon strength to engage each other. Wrapping of face by the militants depicts that they have hidden motives and operational tactics to display in the ongoing operation.



Illustration C: *The TELL Magazine*; Issue No. 4. January 25, 2016.

Analysis of Illustration ‘C’: Unlike the other front pages of *The TELL Magazine*, in this edition, the masthead is written in yellow colour as against the usual tradition of using red colour. This postulates that *TELL* is reporting an issue of high quality or high degree of importance, which possibly incorporates optimism and enthusiasm to curtail hazard or any unforeseen occurrence. Blogger (2016), states that in the African culture yellow is associated with personalities or things of high rank. According to Ibrahim (2009:156), yellow symbolises optimism, enthusiasm, wealth, cheerfulness and among other symbolisms. Similarly, Isiguzo (2001) explicates that yellow is associated with wealth. Likewise, in the words of Cerrato (2012), ‘in most [parts] of the western world, yellow is often associated with food and economy’. Arguably, it is a general notion that economy of a given country has great effect on a nation’s food security, yet, the issue of economy presented on this cover page, solely concerns Nigeria. Debatably, the above colour symbolism of yellow can aptly be deduced in connection with the main headline which is written boldly as ‘HOW TO SAVE THE ECONOMY’ with black colour which depicts hazard or death in the African context; on the issues concerning red colour, according to John and Akinkurolere (2012:1) in their analysis of social semiotics of Children’s Bible about history of Prophet Abraham with his Son Isaac. They submit that ‘... the pot on fire in black (colour) represents death’. The above headline is aptly written in horizontal typography or typesetting across the main salience and symbolic image – the heavy gold colour rope’s cutting point, which arguably shows how the Nigerian economy is about to collapse. Metaphorically the rope represents Nigerian economy; while the golden colour depicts inner wisdom, quality and the vast economic resource of Nigeria and wealth. Therefore, the cutting point indicates that Nigerian economy is about to collapse. This signifies that Nigeria has

vast economic and mineral resources. Cerrato (2001) posits that ‘gold combined with dark red, dark blue or dark green imparts a message of quality, wealth and prestige, this can be observed how the gold colour rope placed or lies across the dark red colour background. The dark-red background colour also depicts terrible or the danger stage of the Nigerian economy. According to De Bortoli and Maroto (2001) red colour in the African context implies death or bloodshed. The visual discourse of this cover page signifies that Nigeria’s economy is near to collapse. This perspective is perceived or presented metaphorically with the applications of colours and imageries.

Data Presentation and Analysis form *The Newswatch Times Magazine*



Illustration D: *The Newswatch Times Magazine*; Issue No. 02. March, 2016.

Analysis of Illustration ‘D’: This cover page presents a triangular portrait pictures of three distinguish prominent Nigerians who won *The Newswatch’s* award of ‘Person of the Year - 2015’ in recognition of their good performances in various fields of endeavour, the presentation and design serve as a style, attraction and meaning potentials to readers and analysts. The persons are; Professor Abdulganiyu Ambali, (Professor of Veterinary Medicine) Vice Chancellor, University of Ilorin, Kwara State, who won the ‘CEO of the Year 2015’ (public sector) by the left side of the cover page depicted as ‘given’ which presents him as well-known personality in Southwest. The composition of elements in a visual image may read through its horizontal or vertical axes. The later axis creates a structure which (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) call ‘given’ and the former is called ‘new’. In this way, the left side is called the given, which presents image or object as known or understood by readers/viewers. In multimodal stylistics, the way professor Ambali looks directly at the reader or the viewer signals a ‘demand’, in this sense, he is demanding viewers to adopt the footpath of his good academic and administrative performance, as well as his style of leadership. By the right of the cover page is Professor Suleiman Elias Bogoro, Professor of Animal Science, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, ATBU, Bauchi State, who won the ‘Overall CEO Award of the Year 2015’. Like his colleagues on the cover, the manner in which he directly gazes at the viewer depicts a

'demand' form the viewer to embrace his ideologies which made him received the best award of *Newswatch Times Magazine*. Next is a man placed at the top-centre of the cover page, he is Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno State, who won the 'Best Returned Governor of the Year 2015'. In the context of multimodality, most visual image placed at the top are tagged 'ideal', 'for an element to be 'ideal' it connotes an idealised or generalised essence of information (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004). Furthermore, the position of a portrait picture at the centre depicts such image or information as nucleus or as central point of view among the displayed images.

Another significant aspect of visual discourse is the structure of the cover page which contains images as described and analysed above and the multi-colours depicted on them. The background in dark-purple, arguably, is in line with the attributes attached to the above persons on the cover page under analyses which depicts transformation, portrayal of award winning as well as dignity and intelligence. The colour symbolism of purple in the Nigerian context include creativity, wealth, royalty, nobility, wisdom, pride among others base on it usages (Ibrahim, 2009). In a similar notion, in the words of Cerrato (2012) purple is often associated with royalty, wealth, spirituality, piety and faith around the world not only in African context. He further states that however, in Brazil and Thailand purple signals mourning.

The vivid-orange-yellow colour of the main headline 'PERSON OF THE YEAR 2015' written in bold font in between the triangular portrait shape serves as significant for meaning potentials in relation to the attributes of the depicted personalities. The vivid-orange-yellow shows their happiness, selfless service and contribution to their nation which in turn fetched them appreciation. De Bortoil and Maroto (2001:23) state that yellow signals warmth, happiness, richness, freshness, aged, brightness and sunshine. This notion on yellow in connection with the white colour of the sub-headline which presents purity, cleanness, wisdom and brightness, these symbolisms arguably describe some of the good qualities attributed to the mentioned award winners.

At the top-extreme left and right are the portrait pictures of the Ministers of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Audu Ogbeh, and that of Environment, Hajiya Amina Mohammed, respectively. In both cases they are directly looking at the viewer which depicts demand form the readers to adopt or belief in some ideas or issues presented in the magazine, on deforestation. In the word of van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2004:16) direct looking at viewers establishes an imaginary contact or relation with images on multimodal text, such pictures symbolically demand something from the viewers. In this illustration, by combining the visual images and the metaphorical inscription aligned to them which reads 'DEFORESTATION: Nigerians Eating Their Tomorrow Today' written in black on yellowish-orange colour and the manner in which both of them open their mouths signals they have many views to share with readers on the issue of deforestation in Nigeria, because their ministries are solely in charge of agriculture, forestry and environment. The multi-colour of their clothes blue, purple, red and white look very bright, 'the multi-colours are bright in nature, as these depict royalty, fashion and affluence (John & Akinkurolere, 2013:67). In a related view, De Bortoil and Maroto (2001:19) submit that purple depicts royalty and blue connotes reliability, neutrality as well as passion. This shows the ministers have deep concern about deforestation due to its effect on environment, food security and economic.



Illustration E: *The Newswatch Times Magazine*; Issue No. 03. April, 2016.

Analysis of Illustration ‘E’: Presents a portrait picture of President Muhammadu Buhari in a typical white native dress and precisely – Northern Nigerians attire which presents him as a noble, peace minded and humbly leader, the native cap – (Zanna Bukar) in multi-colour shows affluence, as the cap is mostly worn by noble men in the north. Portraits are pictures often seen as real but in the visual context it has some hidden interpretation (Modu, 2019:83. ‘As a matter of fact, portrait photos look real and natural; nevertheless, [they contain some] hidden signs, ambiguous and deep concept’ (Behshad & Ghaniabadi 2015:24). Buhari’s transparent spectacles depict his open policy and he does not have any hidden motives in the policies of his ‘change agenda’. Zammitto (2005:5) submits that white is associated with light, purity, innocence, cleanness. Similarly, Cerrato (2012) submits that in the western culture white symbolises purity, elegance, peace and clean, as brides traditionally wear white dress at their weddings. In a contrary view, in countries such as China, Korea and some Asian nations, white represents death, mourning and bad luck, as it is traditionally worn at funerals. De Bortol and Maroto (2001:23) postulate that in Peru it is associated with angel, good, health and time, as well as victory and purity. This critically shows how colour connotation or symbolism changes from one context to another or from one culture to another. Yet, the colour white in the present situation symbolises worthy of leadership, ‘... we find as a colour [white] it is associated with the general concept of goodness or wholesomeness ...’ (Ibrahim, 2009:147). In this way, white depicts good governance of Mr President and his administration toward enhancing the nation’s economy.

In a social semiotic context or visual discourse, the way Mr President gazes at the viewer indicates a plea or an appeal from the viewers or readers to believe on his ideology to look for ways to boost

the alleged falling Nigeria's economy. Most pictures showing people looking directly at the viewer establish an imaginary contact; personalities in such pictures symbolically demand something from the viewer (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004:16). In a similar view, Behshad and Ghaniabadi (2015:25) explicate that such pictures gaze directly at the reader depict demanding mood from the viewers/readers of a multimodal texts. In this illustration Mr President is demanding for ways out from the alleged predicament situation in the country. This is as a result that his administration has admitted on the poor state of the economy and that it embarks to find new ways to revive the economic turn down. This can be deduced by linking the visual image with the sub-headline which reads 'Govt. admits poor state of economy – Charts new ways out'. In visual study, positioning of a portrait at the left side of a text connotes what is tagged as 'given'. In the words of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) elements placed on left side of a cover page is depicted as 'give' in this sense, such images or objects are described as popular or well-known elements for meaning interpretation.

Another element of visual discourse is the background colour displayed in a compound colour – deep orange-yellow and the main headline 'NIGERIA'S MOMENT OF TRUTH' in bold typeface with yellow which symbolise optimism, strength, endurance, visibility, cautionary, creativity as well as determination and enthusiastic vision of Mr President towards fixing the state of the alleged poor economy, which, he is optimistic and determine to charts new ways out from the predicament mood. This idea can be viewed in the words of the following critics; Cerrato (2012) posits in the western cultures yellow is linked to happiness, cheeriness, optimism, warmth (as the colour of sunlight), joy and hope. In another postulation, De Bortoil and Maroto (2001:9) explicate 'gold, orange and yellow tend to cluster close to one another and usually give similar connotation. This notion is observed in the presentation and colocation of the magazine's main image and the main headline. They further submit that, orange symbolises visibility, refreshing, as well as danger in some context, also yellow displays visibility, cautionary, happy, sunny and cowardice in some discourses. In the view of Cerrato (2012:6), orange combines the energy of red and the happiness of yellow. It is associated with joy, sunshine, and tropics. He further explains that orange is very effective in attracting attention, as such, in some context it is used to highlight the most important element of a multimodal text. That is why the main headline is written in yellow colour for attraction, emphasis and highlight.



Illustration F: *The Newswatch Times Magazine*; Issue No. 04. June, 2016.

Analysis of Illustration ‘F’: The most salient visual element on this cover page is the typical flag of Nigerian ruling party –All Progressive Congress (APC). ‘Colours on multimodal texts and other objects usually give interpretation or meaning potentials and they also attract viewers’ attention’ (Modu, 2019:86). He further describes ‘... flag as an object of any kind of material either solid or liquid, often decorated with an emblem, used as a visual signal or symbol’, the above colourful APC flag is not an exception. It contains green – white – blue, a brown broom held with right hand depicted on white part of the flag and the party’s name is written in white on a red background. The visual image in connection with the lexical items of the main headline ‘The Pains and Gains of the Change Mantra’ written in yellow, beneath it, is the sub-headline written in white which reads ‘An x-ray of APC’s one year in power’. These elements have meaning potentials; which include that the party (ruling party) with its ‘change’ agenda sets out with strong confidence and optimism to sweep all filths or deficiency within government ministries and agencies through either pain or gain. In fact, the visions of APC can be deduced in the following analysis of colours attached to this salient visual image.

The colour green on the flag signifies fertility, productivity, progress and development in the African context (Cerrato, 2012), while the white colour on the flag displays light, goodness, innocent, and purity, it is also considered to be colour of perfection and successful beginning (Cerrato, 2005:4), ‘white is mostly associated with positive motives, yet, in very few occasions it is linked with negative connotations; this may be through idiomatic versus colour symbolism in some cultures Modu, 2019:87’. ‘In the Nigerian context it is associated with the general concept of goodness ...’ (Ibrahim, 2009:147). According to De Bortoil and Maroto (2005:15) blue in some African cultures and in Nigeria as well signifies trustworthy, philosophy and soothing. In the words of Zammitto (2005:4) blue depicts peace, piety, wisdom, solitude, emotion control as well as

calmness around the world. While red according to (Cerrato, 2012) is associated with excitement, energy, passion, action, love and danger in the western culture, similarly, in the Nigerian situation it is associated with passion, strength, energy, excitement, leadership and power (Ibrahim, 2009:155). All these symbolisms are linked to the colours depicted on the APC's flag to interpret their vision and mission, as a dedicated, trustworthy, committed and enthusiastic party, which embarks on progressive political ideologies to transform Nigeria into a better democratic platform. The right hand holding the brown broom on the flag depicts good side of APC. In most cultures right is associated to either positive or good things. The brown broom signifies sweeping the earth, metaphorically earth in this context represents Nigeria – thus it means to sweep corruption, insecurity, economic hardship, unemployment among other issues in the 'change' agenda of the ruling party. De Bortoil and Maroto (2012:22) submit that brown depicts earth; similarly, in the Western world it signals masculinity and earth. However, brown has little colour symbolism, yet, in some Nigerian cultures it is associated with fertility - fruitfulness, this shows the strength of the broom of (APC's) flag to sweep (change) all sorts of irregularities in Nigeria in line with the party's 'change' agenda.

MULTIMODAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED COVERS

Visually speaking, in both magazines, the mastheads are boldly written at top-centre of the cover pages in red colours, unless otherwise, *The TELL Magazine's* masthead at times is written in yellow to suit either the background colour or the main heading, and this happens mostly when it reports serious issues, this is evident in illustration 'C' it reports issues on the alleged devastating state of Nigeria's economy.

The most salient image or object on each of the magazine cover page occupies two-third of the cover, they are mostly portraits of high personalities or figures, places, installations, geographical location, group of persons, flags and picture of currencies, though, and they are not always real pictures. In some editions, momentary or manipulated photos, landscapes among other images are displayed. In *The TELL Magazine* such portrait pictures are mostly only single and large in size. This is evident in Illustrations A, and C, Yet, on the covers of *The Newswatch Times Magazine*, apart from the most salient image, the covers also contain some small size photos at the top – extreme right and left, this can be seen in Illustrations D, E and F. The visual effect in this segment goes in line with the multimodal perspective of using various combination of large and apparent semiotic resources in multimodal texts to show linguistic/stylistic meaning-interpretation which is realised not only through language but also through the integrated use of a wide range of semiotic resources including static and dynamic ones. In other words, the visual effect in this discourse portrays the clarity of multimodal meaning potentials, because most salient images on a multimodal text are possibly displayed to attract potential readers for meaning interpretation.

The headings of the selected magazines' cover pages, either main or sub-headlines are very short so that it is easy to read, remember and grasp its purposes, this is evident in all the headings of the magazine cover pages under study. In *The TELL Magazine* headings are mostly written in black

colour, this is observed in Illustrations; A, B, and C. On the other hand, most of the headings of *The Newswatch Times Magazine* are inscribed with yellow. It is obvious in Illustrations; D, E and F. In terms of colour application, both magazines apply very rich colours in either the backgrounds, headings or the graphics to display or convey their visual reports. On the covers of *The Newswatch Times Magazine* the background colours mostly comprise of multiple-dark-colours or single dark colours, for instance, in illustrations; 'D' there is the application of dark purple, in 'E' it is a compound colour of dark orange-yellow, in 'F. However, on the covers of *The TELL Magazine* most of the colours applied are simple and bright in nature. These are found in Illustrations; A, and B. Nonetheless, in illustrations 'C' of the *TELL Magazine* there is the application of a dark-red colour. The different methods of colour selection and application are adopted to show the effects of visual discourse in meaning-making.

The colours used in writing the headings of *The Newswatch Times Magazine* in several instances comprise of yellow in the main headlines and white in the sub-headlines. This is observable in illustrations D, E and F. Nevertheless, colours of both the main and the sub-heads on *The TELL Magazine* are mostly depicted in black colour; it is apparent in illustration; A, while in B the main headline is written in red and black, while the sub-heads are written in white colour. In illustration C, only the sub-headlines are written with black. It is evident that in both magazines white is applied in their headings to report devastating issues which concern the whole nation, for instance, in illustrations C, of *The TELL Magazine* which reported on the economic situation of Nigeria.

Regarding either similarities or differences of the features of the magazine cover pages analysed in this research in terms of - dateline, issue number, price, website among others, it is observed that, on the covers of *The TELL Magazine* these data are written at the extreme left end of the cover page. This is done mostly when the main image is a large portrait photo which occupies two third of the cover page. However, in *The Newswatch Times Magazine*, regarding the said data, such as price, date and website address are displayed close to the magazine's masthead either in a vertical or in horizontal axis as part of style, while the ISBN number and some of the sub-headlines are written at the bottom of the cover page, either by the right or left, these are evident on all the analysed covers of *The Newswatch Times Magazine*.

FINDINGS

The following findings are observed during course of this study:

1. It was established that the mastheads of *The Newswatch Times Magazine* are boldly written in lower case letters with their first letters in capital at the top-centre of the cover pages in red colours to show emphasis for multimodal stylistic and visual effects, while the mastheads of *The TELL Magazine* are written in upper case letters at the top-centre of the cover pages in red colour for clarity and multimodal prominence. However, in few editions, they (masthead of *The TELL Magazine*) are written in yellow to suit either the background colour or the main headings for multimodal meaning potentials, and this happens mostly when it reports special issues.
2. The headings of the selected cover pages, (either main or sub-headings) are written in upper case letters, very short, concise, precise and unambiguous for clarity, easy identification and

reading. However, on some others covers which are not studied of *The TELL* and *The Newswatch Times Magazines* respectively are written in a mixture of capital and small letters for semantic and multimodal meaning effects.

3. It was vividly observed that yellow or white colours are mostly used in inscribing the headings of *The Newswatch Times Magazine* for the portrayal of multimodality or visual discourse and meaning-making either by the use of the colours in isolation or in connection the visual objects on the selected cover pages. However, the colours of both the main and sub-headings on *The TELL Magazine* are frequently depicted in black colour unless in Illustration C the sub-heading is written in white colour for meaning exploration and eclecticism of visual discourse.

4. Background colours on *The Newswatch Times Magazine* are mostly comprised of multiple-dark-colours or single dark colour for visual effects and meaning emphasis. However, *The TELL Magazine* mostly applies light and bright colours as background colours to establish multimodality of the visual modes for meaning interpretation.

5. It was found that *The TELL Magazine* mostly applied question tags in the lexical items on the headings to attract attentions of readers for possible visual meaning potentialities, while *The Newswatch Times Magazine* displayed expressions which contain direct statements on the headings of the selected cover pages to portray linguistic clarity and semantic precision.

6. It was observed that the magazine cover pages under study have some common multimodal discourses displayed via graphics related to economy, security, politics and socio-cultural issues either in supporting or criticising the policies of the incumbent government with the application of multimodal resources (visual modes) – images, colours, other semiotics elements and some graphological devices. Nevertheless, visually speaking *The TELL Magazine* seems to be in support of the present regime with the use of the background colour effect and headings, while *The Newswatch Times Magazine* offers criticisms against the government with the application of images and colour symbolisms.

7. *The TELL Magazine* employs more figurative expressions in the lexical items presented on the selected cover pages for multimodal discourse, as well as meaning interpretation. However, in contrast, *The Newswatch Times Magazine* employs direct statements for multimodal-stylistics effects, as well as meaning comprehension.

CONCLUSION

This research focused on a comparative multimodal analysis of selected cover pages from *The Newswatch Times* and *The TELL Magazines* to demonstrate how the multimodal resources or the semiotic modes displayed on magazine covers and others multimodal texts possibly communicate meaning. From the data examined, it is found that visual analysis is a part multimodal studies as well as linguistics study which attempts to account for the approach on how non-verbal meaning is constructed through semiotic modes or multimodal resources in association with visual grammar as well as graphology. In other words, multimodal discourse analysis advocates meaning-making from a combination of the elements within semiotics, colours, images, and graphics, or possibly alongside writing system for visual/multimodal interpretation or meaning-making on magazine covers and other multimodal texts.

This study discovered that both magazines share some similarities in terms of the multimodal resources displayed on the cover pages – (colour, imageries, layout and graphology) to discuss aspects of economy, security, politics and socio-cultural issues, either in supporting or criticising the policies of the incumbent government. Though, they slightly vary in some areas regarding either ideological deciphering or meaning forecasts on the depicted elements of multimodal resources and graphology. Nonetheless, from the foregoing, possibly, it is observed that *The TELL Magazine* seems to favour the policies of the present government, while *The Newswatch Times Magazine* presents criticisms against the incumbent regime via the use of multimodal modes.

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