A MULTIMODAL STUDY OF SELECT NIGERIAN POLYTECHNIC LOGOS

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Abstract

This paper examines Nigeria polytechnics’ logos with a view to analyse the appropriateness of semiotic resources; the peculiar framing of the logos, and the predominant colour combinations. Data for the study comprises nine (9) purposively selected logos, which cut across northern, southern, and eastern part of Nigeria. The logos are generally taken from nine polytechnics (3 federal, 3 state, and 3 private polytechnics). The data obtained were analysed using the social semiotic approach of Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996/2006) Grammar of Visual Design (hereafter GVD). The analysis revealed that the producers of each polytechnic logo creatively constructed verbal and visual resources to project the mission of the institutions for acceptance by the Nigerian parents and students. In addition, the semiotic resources used by each logo designers are appropriately selected along with colour combinations which depict the mission of each polytechnic. The predominant colours in the logos are red, yellow, brownish-yellow, blue, green, brown, black, white, and purple. Here, red signifies power of knowledge, yellow for resourcefulness and enlightenment, brownish-yellow for hope, blue for love and freedom, green for nature harmony, black for strength and authority, white for purity, and purple for education. The study concludes that the logo design is circular in terms of framing.

Keywords: Semiotic, Colour, GVD, Logos and Multimodal

Introduction

The major purpose of communication is to pass information through language. Language is as ancient as the origin of human being. This means that language forms the way we communicate on a daily basis. Language is a system of communication between two or more people which relates to sound and meaning. It is peculiar to human being because it is one of the most complex cognitive abilities possessed by human. This distinguishes human beings from animals. Communication is a means of interaction between a person (sender) and another person (receiver) through language or linguistic elements such as symbols, signs, visual images, objects, gestures, diagrams, drawings and technology such as social media etc. Communication is very essential in human lives. More so, in all social and cultural context, communication occurs through the activation and interpretation of sign embedded with message. Signs here are pervading and they are seen in all aspects of human endeavour from medicine to theology, from geography to agriculture, from philosophy to communication approaches theory on itself.

Multimodal discourse analysis is an emerging area in discourse analysis which was introduced to develop the creation of visual/image information as a communication tool. This research is concerned with the appropriateness of semiotic resources; the peculiar framing of the logos, and the predominant colour combinations. Multimodal discourse analysis refers to making enquiring
about texts construction through various communication modes. According to O’Halloran, Tan, Smith and Podlasov (2009), multimodal discourse is “a form of communication involving multiple semiotic resources such as language (spoken and written), gesture, dress, architecture, gaze, camera angle etc. Lirola (2006) confirms the shift to multimodality in contemporary communicative practices when she remarks that “our society is influenced by the presence of new texts which are clearly characterised by the increasing dominance of the visual mode”. This innovation brought a new branch called critical literacy which is characterised by the increasing dominance. Critical literacy according to Lirola (2006) is concerned with the relationship of verbal and visual signifiers in discourses or texts that will show using Kress’s (2003) words, “how the modes of image and writing appear together, and how they are to be read together.

Multimodal discourse analysis is a developing model in discourse studies which extends the study of language necessarily to the study of language combination with other resources, such as images, scientific symbolism, gestures, action, music and sound. MDA is used to present concepts and approaches develop in the new field of study. MDA focuses on the theory and analysis of semiotic resources and meaning expansions that occur as semiotic choices combine in multimodal phenomena. MDA is also concerned with the design, production and distribution of multimodal resources in social settings. MDA centres on how text draws on modes of communication such as pictures, films, videos, images, and sounds in combination with words to make meaning. MDA abridges distance and brings images and experiences into people’s homes. This changes the viewer from a position of ‘Spectator’ to a position of ‘witness’ of the events.

Many scholars have given their foundations on multimodal research in the 1980s and 1990s drawing upon Halliday (1978, 1985, 1994, and 2004) Social semiotic approach to language to model the meaning potential of words, sounds and images as sets of interrelated system and structures. Kress and Van Leewuen (2006) examine images and visual design and used Halliday’s systemic functional model to a semiotic analysis of displayed art, painting, sculpture, and architecture. Halliday’s 1978, Halliday and Hasan, 1985 are concerned with both text and context and potential which is reflected in their work. Several works have been built via these approaches and created new ones which also brought forth Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA). Jewitt (2009, p. 29-33) grouped contextual and grammatical approaches as “social semiotic multimodality” and “multimodal discourse analysis” respectively.

These approaches derived from Halliday’s social semiotic approach to text, society and culture which could be expressed in three fundamental principles: Tri-stratal conceptualisation of meaning explains how text such as images and sound with low level characteristics move to higher order semantics through sets of related lexicogrammatical systems to suit the social context of usage. Metafunctional theory: This model breaks meaning into three aspects or metafunctions which are: Ideational meaning: That is the actual idea of the world. It could be experiential or logical meaning. Experiential meaning implies representing and portraying the experience of the world while logical meaning deals with the logical relations in that world. Interpersonal meaning: It is part of the social relation. Textual meaning: It implies how the text is organised to form a coherent text. Instantiation model: It has to do with the actual choices in text to the systemic potential, with intermediate sub-potentials, registers which appears as way of choice making in text- types such as normal conversation, debate etc. Multimodality research
gradually expands during the mid-2000s while other language researches became interested in investigating the integration of language with other resources. There was an open recognition that communication is naturally multimodal and that literacy is not confined to language. There are several approaches to multimodal studies (Norris, 2004; Norris and Jones, 2005; Scollon, 2001; Ron and Wong, 2004). These approaches emerge from mediated discourse analysis which are the basics in interactional sociolinguistics and intercultural communication, and Charles Force Ville’s (Force Ville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009), cognitive approach to multimodal metaphor based on cognitive linguistics (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

More so, critical discourse approaches have been developed (Machin 2007; Van Leeuwen 2008) based on social semiotics and other critical traditions. The increasing popularity of MDA could be seen by the emerging publications while multimodality could be attributed as “a domain of enquiry”. Being the domain of enquiry, multimodal approach enables other engagements from other discipline under the same object of study. Although, including knowledge, theories and methodologies from other disciplines create many problems not least having provision to carry out research. The emerging of theories in MDA help promote other discipline of study, including linguistics. MDA uses texts or types of text to examine, illustrate and problematise issues.

Polytechnic Logo and Multimodality
Polytechnic logo is an emblem that portrays the attributes an institution possesses. It is something through which inner thoughts are presented logically to convince the audience. It is a convincing approach that changes the perception of the audience. Logo is derived from a Greek word, “logos” which implies “logic”. It is a literary device that could be seen as a symbol used to promote a business, organisation or an institution. It could be in form of an abstract or figurative design and it can also include the name and some features it comprises. Polytechnic logo is a symbol that distinguishes an institution from another. It is one of the distinct qualities of an institution. It is the cornerstone of the institution. Logo is a combination of text and visual images that serves two purposes. It portrays the name of the polytechnic and a visual symbol that represents the institution.

Multimodality on the other hand is a theory of communication social semiotics. Multimodality depicts communication patterns in terms of the textual, aural, linguistic, spatial and visual modes used to compose message. Multimodality could be viewed as a means in which people interact with each other not only through writing and speaking but also gestures, symbols, gaze, and other visual forms.

Logo as a Medium of Communication
As earlier discussed, a logo is a very good means of communication. A logo makes an institution stand out from others. A logo identifies the major information about an institution. Also, logo builds institution recognition. Through logo, audience are able to comprehend the attributes of any institution. It is a way of conveying messages to the people about the institution. Logos are structured in a way to persuade and influence people. Logo comprises signs which could be a word and an imprint; a graphic mark or symbol used by any designer to aid or promote instant public recognition (Onipede, 2018). The selected logos have their meanings structured with both pictures (symbols) and texts.
It is obvious that pictures convey information more effectively and efficiently than a word does (Tahririan & Sadri, 2013). Meaning is easily conveyed visually than writing. Any individual that comes across a picture, symbol or sign can confidently say something about it. This cuts across the educated and uneducated members of the society. Assuming it is only written text, the uneducated members might not be able to read meaning to the text.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework to be applied in this research is Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996/2006) Grammar of Visual Design, which developed from Halliday's Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse analysis (hereafter SFMDA). The systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis is rooted in Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics. According to O’Halloran (2008), “the major strength of SF theory for MDA is Halliday’s metafunctional principle which provides an integrating platform for theorising how semiotic resources interaction create meaning”. It is a theory that is concerned with the practice of analysing meaning from various semiotic resources in discourses such as written, printed and many others.

This approach emerged to explain the meaning arising through the use of language and visual imagery in printed texts. SFMDA deals with the investigation of linguistic and non-linguistic visual forms of semiotics and the combination of cross-functional systems such as colour etc. An integrative aspect based on SF metafunctional principle is forth put, and the content and expression are developed to capture the spreading of meaning which occurs when linguistic and visual forms unite. The SFMDA approach is portrayed through the analysis of ideational meaning in a print advertisement. The practical approach involves the use of digital technology in the form of image-editing software which gives rise to a more detailed semantic and ideological interpretation. SFMDA is also an approach in analysing discourse in the social semiotics tradition. Social semiotics here signifies the study of semiotics, that is, social rather than structural.

To Halliday, semiotics is not the study of sign, but “the study of sign systems, that is, the study of meaning in its general sense” (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Halliday was a linguist during his lifetime and he was more concerned about the semiotic system of a language. He sees language as interaction with other semiotic systems and communication as multimodal discourse. MDA develops from SFL to analyse the types of meaning that could occur in communication. The three metafunctions are ideational meaning which deals with human experience of the world and its consciousness which could be experiential or logical while interpersonal meaning has to do with the interaction between two or more people and textual is the organization of meaning as a coherent texts and units (O’Halloran, 2011). Another linguist named Lemke (1998) posits his own contribution to Halliday’s metafunctions as representational, orientational and organisational meaning.

This research study is based on the multimodal analysis of selected logos, then, Kress and Van Leeuwen’s model of visual grammar is used to examine the components of the logos. Representational mode presents the participants, their actions, and gives in-depth knowledge about them, that is, their appearance, outfit, possessions such as electronic devices are modern and familiar for language learners and users. Interactive mode on the other hand, deals with the
relationship between image and the viewer. It can be analysed based on distance, perspective, and modality.

Distance here refers to the visual frame components, such as the size of the visual frame. According to Leeuwen (2006), he sees close-up pictures as including the head and shoulders of the participants which shows a closer or friendly relationship. Same as Oxford cabin biscuits which show two participants smiling with a biscuit in their mouth also indicates a relationship between both of them sharing biscuit happily. The medium shot shows the subject up to the waist. The visual appearance indicates social connection and far personal distance, a long shot frame displays social distance between the viewers and the visuals. Perspective means the selection of an angle, ‘a point of view’ in which the audiences see things. Modality focuses on judgements which are social, dependent on what is seen as real or true in the social group for which the representation is primarily intended (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). More so, contextualisation concerns the background analysis of both photos and drawing. The compositional mode deals with the analysis of the text for its information value and salience. All this information could be realised by the placement of elements of the image (left, right, top, bottom, center and margin or pictorial zones). For Kress and Van Leeuwen, the top part represents abstract emotive and general information to show ‘what might be’ while the bottom part comprises concrete specific detailed and practical information that shows ‘what is’. Figures 1 and two below present the system network of GVD.

Figure 1: Main types of visual representational structure in Visual Grammar
Methodology
This section explains the design and the corpus of the study. The section ends with procedure and data analysis. The research is based on descriptive study using qualitative data to examine visual and textual elements in selected Nigerian polytechnic logos. The visual elements were analysed qualitatively according to Kress & Van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) model of visual grammar, to examine the appropriateness of the visual elements; the logos framing and the meaning inscribed on them. Logos are widely used to pass across information to the public. These logos are designed by each polytechnic to show its sense of belonging. The logos were downloaded online. Nine logos were examined; the nine logos have their names and motto included as reading texts. These logos are designed by each polytechnic to show its sense of belonging and mission. Nine logos were examined- three Federal Polytechnics, three state polytechnics, and three state polytechnics, which cut across the geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

Results and Discussion
Visual grammar
Figure 1: Lagos State Polytechnic

Lagos State Poly (LASPOTECH) was established in 1977. It is located in Ikorodu, Lagos State. LASPOTECH logo features technological tool which shows the mission of the school. Colours red, blue, yellow, and green represent the colours of Lagos State flag. Other colours are black, white and brownish-yellow. Colour red stands for power generation; blue for love and freedom; yellow for resourcefulness and enlightenment; green for nature and harmony; black for strength and authority, and white for purity. Brownish-yellow signifies the sands that can be seen in all
divisions of Lagos. The technological tool used in the logo portrays the mission of the polytechnic as her readiness to protect skilled manpower for commerce and industry using modern facilities and competent personnel for the benefit of all the students. Lagos State Polytechnic works towards her maxim which says: "If you give a man a fish, he will have a single meal, if you teach him how to fish, he will eat all his life" This therefore shows that the vision and mission of the Polytechnic is to produce competent entrepreneurial graduate that will be independent of anybody for sustenance after his/her graduation. The logo does not include the institution's motto, but the inclusion of Lagos State flag's colours is sufficient for viewers or readers to interpret what they see.

**Figure 2: Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic**

Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic was founded in 1991. It is located at Ikot Osuru. The participants in Akwa Ibom State logo are technological tool, book, star, and the colour combinations are black, white, and blue. The text that accompanies the logo is the institution's motto which reads: "Technological skill and progress" and the institution's name (Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic). Colours black, white and blue stand for strength and authority, purity, freedom and love respectively. The images of book and technological tool show that the polytechnic is ready to produce highly competitive middle manpower for state, country and the global society. The motto of the polytechnic therefore supports the semiotic resources used in the logo for technological progress.

**Figure 3: Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic**

Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic was founded in 1979. It makes use of colours green and white with the acronym 'HUKP'. The technological tools used in the logo are hammer and nail. Colour green stands for nature and harmony while white signifies purity. The images of nail and hammer show that the polytechnic is ready to produce graduates that are independent of applying their
technological skills to solve human problem in the society. The polytechnic graduates are trained to create jobs and they are not expected to be roaming the street in search of job. The multimodal resources along with the texts are evident of the institution's mission to provide the defined training and undertake innovative research in order to meet the technical manpower needs of state and Nigeria at large. The polytechnic motto 'success through labour' is a call to her students to be hard-working in order to be successful in their academics.

**Figure 4: Federal Poly, Ilaro**

The Federal polytechnic, Ilaro, is also known as FPI. It was established on July 25, 1979 by the Federal Government of Nigeria. It is located along Ilaro-Oja-Odan express way. The logo of FPI is circular in shape and it comprises a book and technological tool. The colour combinations are black, green and brownish-yellow. At the top of the logo is the acronym 'FPI', which stands for Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. Colours black, green and brownish-yellow stand for strength and authority, nature and harmony, and reliability. The book and the technological tool support the institution's mission to provide opportunities of qualitative technical education in a severe and conducive learning environment to all eligible Nigerians who would derive the national industrial economy. This mission also supports Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) objectives in all tertiary institutions. FPI's motto 'Towards development' is also evident that a graduate of the institution should be able to depend on himself/herself for economic development. The Polytechnic expects every graduate of the institution develop entrepreneurial skills to create jobs. The institution's acronym (FPI) is used by the logo designer to identify the school with the public.

**Figure 5: Federal Polytechnic, Oko**

Oko Polytechnic was taken over by the Federal Government and was renamed Federal Polytechnic, Oko in 1993. Its main campuses are located at Oko, Ufuma and Atari. Figure 5 (Federal Polytechnic, Oko) comprises image of a student clothed in a graduation gown at the centre of the logo. The colour combinations are navy blue, red, and white. The colours stand for professionalism, excitement, and purity respectively. The human participant in the logo shows that the polytechnic trains and graduates students who are equipped for competition in a
globalised world, with complete information and communication technology (ICT) facilities and access to knowledge base of the world. It is expedient of every graduate of the institution to be creative in terms of economic system ability. This therefore supports the polytechnic motto (Creativity and service).

**Figure 6: Kaduna Polytechnic**

![Kaduna Polytechnic Logo]

Kaduna Polytechnic was established in 1956. It is located in Kaduna South Local Government Area. Kaduna Polytechnic's logo is circular in shape with a cobweb. The colour combinations are black, white and green, which stand for strength and authority, purity, nature and harmony respectively. The spider image shows that the students of the institution are trained to be interconnected worldwide after the completion of their programmes. The institution's name (Kaduna Polytechnic) is written beneath the cobweb, which attracts viewers’ attention to the mission of the polytechnic. The logo is designed to support the institution's mission to prepare Nigerians social economic status; creed and ethnic affiliation, to take control of their own destiny, liberate them from dependency and endowing them with initiative.

**Private Polytechnics**

**Figure 7: Dorben Polytechnic**

![Dorben Polytechnic Logo]

Dorben Polytechnic was founded in 1995 by Dr A. B Ekwere. It is a private Polytechnic located in Bwari-Graran road of the FCT- Abuja. The logo of Dorben Polytechnic is like the shape of a circle. The multimodal elements of the logo are two stars, slate and colours. Colour red stands for power of knowledge and colour black signifies strength and authority. The institution's logo is appropriately selected to fulfill the mission by providing high quality academic studies for individuals who intend to develop career as professionals and technical experts with self reliance.

**Figure 8: Grace Polytechnic**

![Grace Polytechnic Logo]
Grace polytechnic is a private Polytechnic founded by Late Dr (Chief) O. O. Onamuti in 1999. It has two campuses: One in Surulere, Lagos central, and the other one in Omu, Epe Division of Lagos State.

The logo features colours black, white and purple. Colour black denotes strength and authority, white stands for purity, and purple represents celebration, education and elegance. The mission of the school is to provide training and development for her students through innovation to promote moral value of the students. As a religion-base polytechnic; the institution is ready to change bad character to good one. Hence, the mission of the polytechnic supports its motto (Only the best good enough). In addition, the images of book, spanner, computer, screwdriver and graduation cap show the institution as a technological-driven polytechnic that trains students to be creator of employment based on the entrepreneurial skills they have acquired during their stay in the polytechnic. The graduation cap assures the polytechnic students that they are admitted to be trained and pass out successfully.

**Figure 9: Heritage Polytechnic**

This polytechnic started as a Continuing Education Centre in 1994 and grew to a college in 2003. It is located in Ikot Udota Eket, three kilometres from Exxonmobil Airstrip Eket. Figure 9 (Heritage Polytechnic) makes use of colours green, white, red and black. Colour green stands for natural harmony, white for purity, red for power of knowledge, and black for strength and authority. The institution's mission which aims to provide quality education that will contribute to technological, economic and social development of students in the world is best illustrated with the images of book and graduation hood.
Visual Grammar

Interactive Mode

The interactive mode shows the relationship between the image and the viewer which could be analysed based on distance, perspective, and modality. Distance assists the viewer to see the actual size of the image. If an image shows head and shoulders of the participant then it will display a closer or friendly relationship. The display of head and shoulders is what Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) call “close up picture” while the display of an image showing the participant up to the waist shows a social connection and for personal distance it is termed “a medium shot”. Also, a long shot frame shows social distance between the viewers and the visuals that is, the person viewing the image.

From the analysis of interactive mode, we discovered that polytechnic logo designers made use of various types of interactive modes. Nigerian viewers analyse the logos based on their background knowledge to understand the message of the images. So, the social distance between the viewer and the participant is appropriate.

The Perspective Mode

The perspective mode used in the selected logos was appropriate since the images and the point of views depict the proposed meaning. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) suggest the various perspective modes as horizontal and vertical for non-human, frontal/oblique, and high/low/eye-leveled; the other perspective used by the Polytechnic logo designers is circular in shape.

The Modality Mode

The modality mode focuses on visual elements for colours and contextualization of the pictures. The picture contextualisation is based on colour saturation, colour differentiation and colour modulation. The selected polytechnic logos colours were properly used based on the background knowledge of the viewer. The colours depict the real experience and interpretation of the viewer. The polytechnic logo designers made use of high modality of visuals to convey effective information between the viewers and the images. The selected logos made use of the following colours: red, gold, white, blue, yellow, black, brown, green, and purple.

Figure 1 (LASPOTECH logo) has red, white, yellow, blue, black and green colours. The red colour represents strength, power, and determination. The white colour represents hope, purity and goodness of knowledge while the gold colour represents the courage, passion and authority of the institution. The circular shape represents completeness and strength of the institution. Figure 2 (Akwa Ibom Polytechnic logo) has the following colours: white, blue and black. The use of yellow represents beauty, rich heritage and orderliness of the institution; the red colour signifies desire and power of knowledge. The white colour represents the hope, purity and peace for the institution. The colour blue depicts love, freedom, freshness and unity while the green colour represents nature and harmony. Figure 3 (HUKpoly logo) is circular in shape and it signifies completeness. colours green and white denote nature harmony and purity respectively.

Figure 4 (FPI logo) is circular in shape which depicts eternity and completeness. The logo colours are green which signifies fertility, freshness and harmony, white represents purity and cleanliness, and colour black indicates strengths and potentiality of the institution. Figure 5 (Oko Poly). The
designer made use of colour black which indicates strengths and potentiality of the institution. Colour red stands for power of the institution. Figure 6 (Kadpoly) The logo is circular in shape which shows the power of unity. The green colour signifies purity. The white colour indicates purity and the goodness in the land. Figure 7 (Dorben Polytechnic) Green signifies fertility, freshness and harmony, white represent purity and cleanliness, and colour black indicates strengths and potentiality of the institution. While colour red represents power, blue signifies professionalism. Figure 8 (Grace Polytechnic) Colour black denotes strength and authority, white stands for purity, and purple represents celebration, education and elegance. Figure 9 (Heritage polytechnic) Colour green stands for natural harmony, white for purity, red for power of knowledge, and black for strength and authority.

Salience
In terms of salience, the pictures or images are presented to get the viewer’s attention, the background of the logos have different colour contrast, different symbols and relative size of pictures to communicate the salience of the pictures. The analysis above showed that the logo designers made use of more visual images than text. The texts are in form of name and motto of the specific polytechnic. The use of colours and images are similar in the selected polytechnic logos.

Conclusion
Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) posit that visual grammar cannot be separated from verbal or any other grammar. This implies that appropriate pattern of logo, images and textual elements assist the viewers to understand the intended meanings. In the selected nine polytechnic logos, we found out that both polytechnic logos designers expressed the institutions ideas, messages, and mission through appropriate visuals and texts. The visual components featured participants which could be easily identified in the logos. This is obvious with the use of some technological instruments.

References


