

A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF PHOTO NEWS REPORTS ON THE ABDUCTED CHIBOK GIRLS IN NIGERIA

IBRAHIM OMOLABI
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA

AND
MUHIDEEN OLA DUROSIMI
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA

Abstract

The use of news photos is becoming very prominent because it is capable of presenting the news story or situation live and able to generate diverse interpretations. The study explores the various pragmatic acts performed in visual news reports on the abducted Chibok girls in Nigeria, especially the construction of acts or meaning through visual codes. The study drew insight from Mey (2001) aspects of Pragmatic acts and Hoyer and Kaiser's (2007) visual acts as the theoretical framework underpinning the study. A total of eight (8) visual news reports relating to the stories of the abducted Chibok girls were purposively selected from two Nigerian newspapers (*Guardian & Dailytrust*) and analysed from the points of pragmatic acts and visual acts theories. The study revealed that pictures are capable of performing many of the same complex pragmatic acts of urging, indicating, condemning, accusing, protesting, challenging, warning, shaming which are often suggested in the picture captions. The study also revealed that visual representation in Nigerian newspaper is far from being straightforward. It goes beyond choosing and placing specific photographs forgetting readers' attention, or for authenticating verbal reports. Some pragmatic acts are craftily performed through the pictures and they are meant to surreptitiously control readers' evaluation, opinion and action about the news report on the abducted Chibok girls.

Introduction

The use of photo news is becoming very prominent in the media because it is capable of presenting the news story or situation more concretely and able to generate diverse interpretations. The press is also using photo news more than ever because it is capable of meeting the needs of various categories of the audience. The illiterates or semi-literates could view events represented in news photos. In other words, different categories of the audience get different layers of meanings from the complexity of news photos. News photos are often ambiguous because meaning resides in man and meaning construction by individuals depend

largely on different social variables. Also, the various semiotic resources that are embedded in photo news account for different meanings it often generated. However, the press benefits from the pseudo ambiguity as it increases patronage. Jacobs (378) reports that visual representations are far more 'news worthy' than other forms of representations. This assertion corroborates the adage that "a picture is worth thousand words". Barret and Barrington (8) also affirm that visual messages can be more influential on assessment of individuals or events than verbal ones. They, however, assert that recipients of media messages are information processors with a 'limited capacity of processing'. However, when pictures become journalistic, they become historical and popular icons and they have strategic pragmatic meaning directed towards achieving both informative and persuasive functions of the newspaper. Perimutter, (7). In fact, news photographs are often 'cropped', that is cut to fulfil certain objectives: the space requirements of page; to maximize impact; to serve aesthetic or ideological criteria. This endeavour elucidates the pragmatic acts performed by the use of photo news of the abducted Chibok girls in the print media with the aim of explicating how these picture contribute to the felicitousness of the messages embedded in the abducted Chibok girls' news reports.

Background to the Study

Boko Haram (henceforth BH) – an insurgent group in Nigeria – kidnapped about 276 girls at a government school in Chibok in Borno state, northeast of Nigeria and burnt down the school in April 2015. A total of 43 of the kidnapped girls escaped, leaving over 233 girls still missing. According to Chinluwe & Ikufor, on the day of their abduction, many of the students had taken their West African School Certification Examinations (WAEC). Usually, on the evening of the attack, none of the teachers, the principal, or other administrative staff was within the school grounds, the students told Human Right Watch. The school was re-opened in April after the closure of Borno Schools in March, as a center for the Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations, during which female students lived in dormitories while male students came in daily for the month-long exams.

By the kidnap of the Chibok schoolgirls, BH again demonstrated commitment to their philosophy of non-tolerance to western culture and influence, especially education for women and girls. The Nigerian military initially claimed they had found the girls only later to admit that over 200 were still being held by BH. This resulted in a global outcry not only against the kidnapped schoolgirls but also for systems that promote violence against children and denial of formal education for girls. Following their generally assumed lethargy in finding the kidnapped girls (who were later reported to have been sold to slavery or married off to terrorists), various individuals including parents and relations of the missing schoolgirls as well as social and activist groups in Nigeria carried out demonstrations at Abuja calling on the Nigerian government and the armed forces to find the girls (Chinluwa & Ikufor, 5).

Review of Literature

Studies on how readers interpret visual images suggest that photo news is essential part of news texts because believing is seeing (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; van Leeuwen 2005, Barret and Barrington, 2005; Perimutter, 2008). Preexisting ideology and prejudices affect the type of pictures or images placed in Nigerian newspapers and how they are placed. News pictures often undergo digital retouching — a process whereby computer technology is used to combine,

retouch, or recreate photographs (Hill and Watson 52). Software such as Photo shop could be used to edit or crop pictures. All this affects what meanings readers get and inferences they draw from news photos in newspapers. This is especially so when journalists, editors, or page designers manipulate and place in newspapers pictures that confirm or reinstate strongly held notions but which critical analysts consider as conspiracy at work.

Through visual coding, Nigerian journalists control the way publishers are perceived, received, liked, and the kind of people they appeal to. Images are trickier than words because their contents are in large measure 'emotional and visceral' Kaib and Saivetz,(60). They succinctly capture so many layers of meaning in a confined space. Thus the reporter may cunningly express his or her biases and judgment on newsmakers through visual representations. In other words, news photo is strategically used to perform certain pragmatic acts. Every news picture connotes a value which is present as an implication or implied meaning, depending on the connotational positioning. Through news pictures, power and ideology are made to signify in Nigerian newspapers. Messari (72-75) remarks that media pictures can be used as 'elusive means of audience manipulation'. This is why many researchers in the field of visual rhetoric strongly refute the assumption that pictures merely signify realities (Morris, 1993; Huxford, 2001; Kenney & Scott, 2003). They argue that images can also express all kinds of non-literal, symbolic, and pragmatic meanings. Similarly, social semioticians (e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen Jewitt & Oyama) regard pictures as capable of realising many of the same complex meanings as verbal language. According to these scholars, the visual mode possesses a kind of 'grammar' which determines how visual elements combine into a meaningful whole.

Kress and van Leeuwen present a system of networks adapted from Halliday (1994), providing a means for visual analysis that is essentially functionalist in nature. Similar to the semiotic coding of language, the semiotic coding of images also 'represents the world (whether in abstract or concrete ways) ... plays a part in some interaction and, with or without accompanying text, constitutes a recognizable kind of text' Jewitt & Oyama (140). In other words, the analogical bridge drawn between Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Kress and Van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design (GVD) can be described in terms of the meta-functions that operate simultaneously via the patterns of experience, social interaction and ideological positions that both linguistic and non-linguistic types of representation encode.

Bignell opines that 'news is not just facts, but representations produced in language and other signs like photographs' (81). A photograph (shortened as photo) is a picture produced through the chemical action of light on sensitive film. It is a medium of recording reality that is iconic as well as indexical. A photograph resembles or imitates something thereby making it iconic, it achieves this through the use of light from the subject, therefore making it less arbitrary and indexical. In other words, the signifier is directly linked to the signified, be it physically or casually. This indexical property of photographs leads observers to make a judgment that a photo is an objective medium of record as there is a little difference between the signifier and the signified. However, a photograph is a representation of a particular moment and situation in time. Barthes cited in Bignell (98) expresses his view that a newspaper photograph is, 'an object that has been worked on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms which are so many factors of connotation.' There are many decisions taken by the photographer such as; focusing, lighting, angle that produce various representations, and readings, of the same moment creating different connotations. According to

White, the size of the photograph and the position it takes in the newspaper is an important code for the reader as it affects the attention given to the paper. The front page is often seen as the major selling point of the paper, it is what attracts the potential reader to buy the paper and to read further. The size and position is also an important signifier of the importance of the story and the image itself.

Igwebuike Ebuka, Taiwo Abioye and Lily Chimuanya submit that verbal text used in the media usually serve complementary role to visual text it accompanies. The deployment of photo news in the media according to them plays copious role and performs more acts than verbal text employed in online posts. The online posts of 'Occupy Nigeria Group' were selected for the research and the research is anchored on Pragmatic Act Theory and Multimodal Discourse analysis. Demonstrative, assertive, suppository, condoling and stipulating actsb pervade the analysed data (210).

Nigerian newspapers play a role in shaping issues in the society and setting the boundaries of what is talked about and how it talks about the policy that is opposed and that which is celebrated. The newspapers are particularly known to lead in the initiation and broadening of discourse on key national issues as kidnapping by picking on statements and actions of happening around the nation and exposing them to their readership. Given the little attention paid to the study of news headlines and especially pictures as pragmatic acts in Nigerian newspaper, the study of visual news report has complemented the existing works in media discourse and pragmatics, especially with the insights from its analysis of pragmatic and visual acts and ideology. The visual pragmatic acts system incorporated into the analytical frame work allows the analysis to be extended to news photos through which the study has shown that news photos form a discourse unit that is analysable as an independent text, a functional part of news discourse that is tactically encoded to underscore some special kinds of pragmatic acts and social meanings.

Theoretical Framework

The study uses Jacob Mey's (2001) pragmatic Act Theory and Hoyer and Kaiser's (2007) visual pragmatic acts as its theoretical framework.

Mey's Theory of Pragmatic Acts

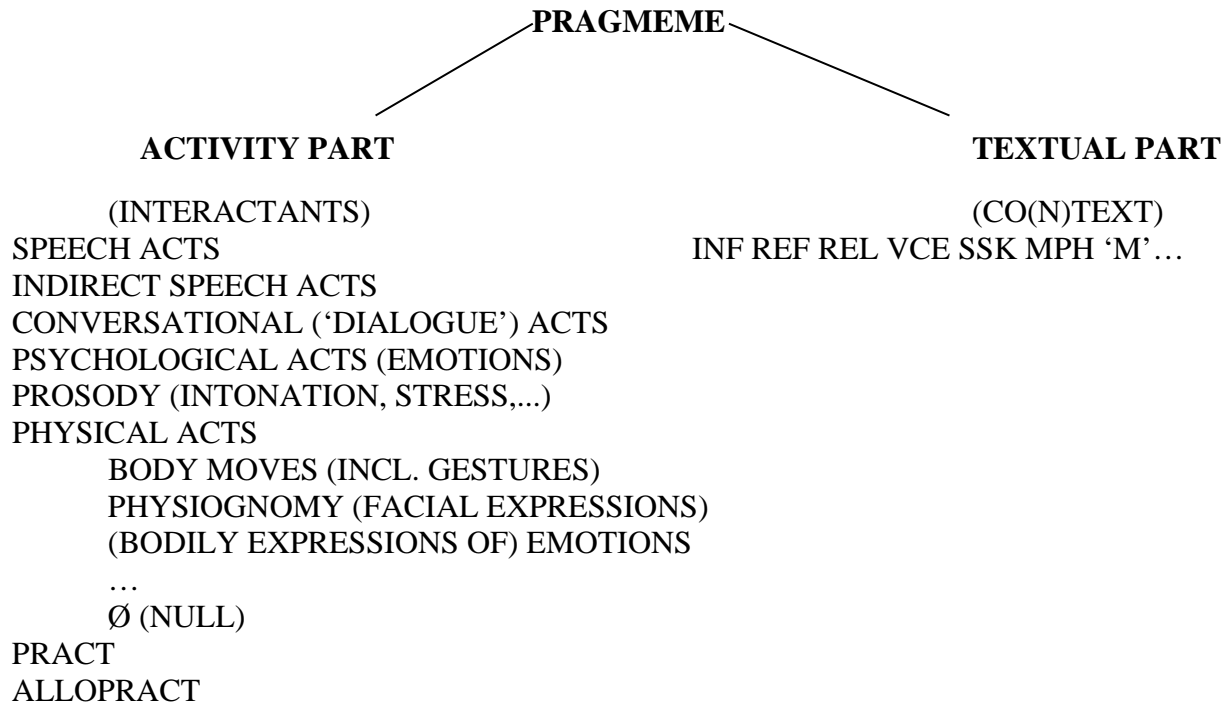
Mey (2007) agrees that in uttering a speech act, the speaker does something with his or her words. He, however, disagrees with earlier scholars on the nomenclature 'speech acts' and the idea of speech act verbs (SAVs). His argument is that there exists asymmetry in the relationship between speech act verbs (SAVs) and speech acts (SAs) proper. Mey argues that not all SAs are represented by a specific SAV but rather they may be represented by several verbal items (except the pure, strictly institutionalized SAs such as to baptise). For example, the SA of 'ordering' may be expressed in various, often, indirect ways. Also, not every SA has a corresponding, custom made SAV of its own. Mey adds that SAVs are not really needed since performativity is all over the verbal spectrum. Thus, as a result of the problems noticed in SAs and SAVs, Mey came up with the idea of pragmatic act to which speech act is just a part. Mey's theory of pragmatic act offers a solution to the problems that were noticed with speech act theory. Mey's vantage on the speech act theory is on the insistence on the abstract idealization of the intentional speaker and hearer and not on social reality (Hoyer and Kaiser, 32). Mey argues that the speaker/writer and

listener/reader cannot be isolated from societal reality (6). He argues that they cannot be isolated as they are not dummies but rather real-world users of language. Mey also observes that “speech by itself does not act: strictly speaking there are no speech acts since ultimately all speech acting crucially depends on the situation in which the action takes place. Hence, speech acts, in order to be viable, have to be situated”. Odebunmi succinctly puts it, the emphasis in pragmatic act “is not on conditions and rules for an individual speech act but on characterizing a general situation prototype, capable of being executed in the situation” (157). Hence, pragmatic acts unfold within a particular context and are conditioned by it (Hoye and Kaiser, 32). The basic idea about pragmatic act, as differentiated from speech act, is the fact that pragmatic act does not depend solely on the actual words being used but rather on the circumstances that led to, and accompany those words. Thus, the explanatory power of pragmatic act theory lies in its focus on use, users, and context.

Mey labels the prototype or generalized pragmatic act as a *pragmeme* and its instantiation in a particular situation as a *pract*. He also submits that pragmatic act can be approached from two points of view: *agent* and *act* (227). As far as the individual *agent* is concerned, his or her class, gender, age, education, and previous life history will affect his or her communication. Mey adds that such factors also constitute *affordances* (action possibilities latent in the context, enabling the speaker/writer to act in accordance with his or her capabilities) imposed on the individual in the form of necessary limitations on the degree of freedom that he or she is allowed in society. From the point of view of *act*, the interest is in the representation resources (language, gesture, or visual image) that are used in performing a pragmatic act. And from the point of view of the *agent*, the emphasis is on the user’s intention and attitude to the language and visual image deployed, for example, especially as determined by his or her gender, class, status, experience, position, and education. Thus, Mey sums up by affirming that the pragmatic acting can be considered as adapting oneself linguistically and otherwise, to one’s world.

Mey observes that pragmatic act engages the whole communication activities, not just the speech or linguistic portion. It also involves body language and visual images (not as simple supplement or aid to verbal language but taking part in the communication process). According to Mey, pragmatic acts are essential in ‘establishing and maintaining the meta-communication function of framework for communication’ (223). The theory is schematized in fig. 1 below.

Fig. 1: Mey's model of pragmatic acts (Mey, 222)



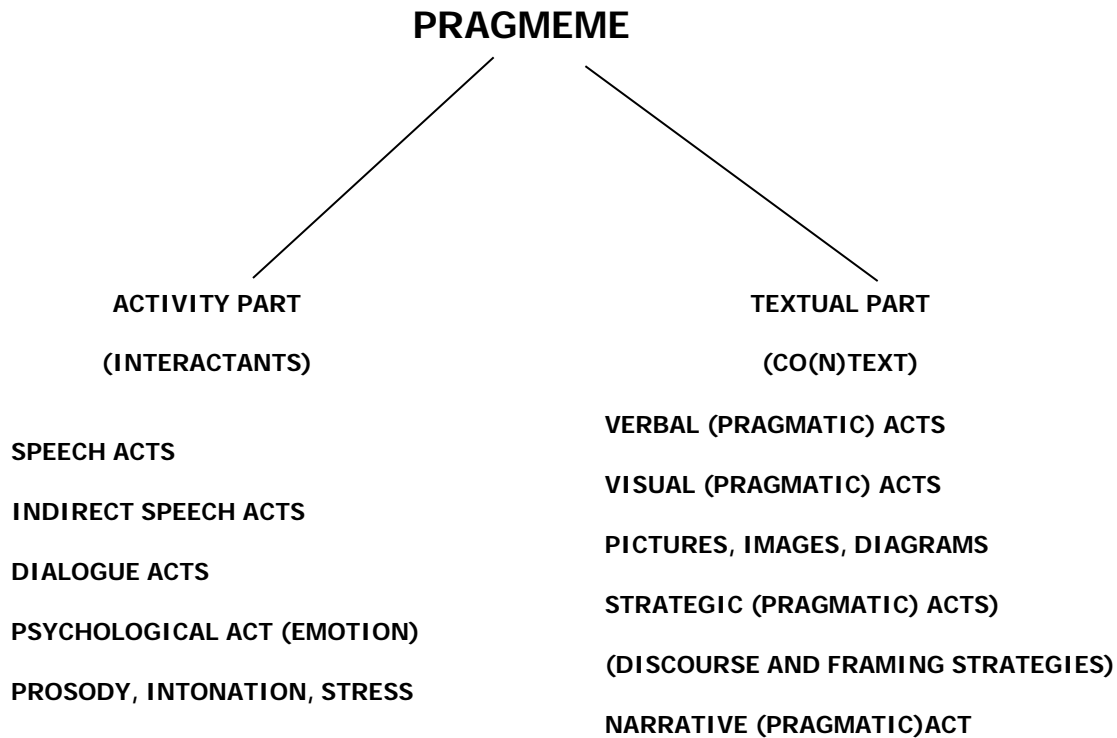
Pragmeme, Pract, Allopract

Figure 1 shows that there are two parts to a pragmeme: activity part, meant for interactants and textual part, referring to the context within which the pragmeme operates). To communicate, the interactants draw on such speech act types as indirect speech acts, conversational ('dialogue') acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts and physical acts. These are engaged in contexts, which include INF representing "inference"; REF, "reference"; REL, "relevance"; VCE, "voice"; SSK "shared situation knowledge"; MPH, "metaphor"; and M "metapragmatic joker". The interaction between activity part and textual part results in a pract or an allopract.

Francis Hoyer and Ruth Kaiser's Theory of Visual Acts

Hoyer and Kaiser's theory of visual acts could be said to have been developed to complement Mey's pragmatic act theory. In other words, Hoyer and Kaiser (32) make a case for visual pragmatic acts to cover the shortcomings of Mey's (2001) theory of pragmatic acts. To the duo, any analysis of pictures as symbols must take its point of departure in a communicative situation where an encoder is using one or more pictures to 'say' (in a general sense of 'saying') something to somebody. They argue that it is only by trying to understand the whole situation that one is able to tell whether the pictures 'do' something or not, and if they do, what do they do and how do they do it. The concept of visual pragmatic act enables us to understand that the visual and communicating visually are not matters of the static and the immutable. What the visual image means and does are determined by the specific users, in specific contexts, in historical or material world (Hoyer & Kaiser, 32). The choice of theoretical framework is therefore schematised below.

Theoretical model is schematised below:



Modified Mey's (2001) Pragmatic Act scheme

Methods

The study involves qualitative critical content analysis of selected visual news stories from two Nigerian national daily newspapers (*The Guardian and Daily Trust*). The two newspapers were selected as representatives of national newspapers because their circulation cuts across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria and they are known for moulding enlightened public opinion, pungent editorialising on issues of national interest and informed feature articles and news on national issues (Ogungbe, 2014). The newspapers were also part of the most widely read newspapers in Nigeria and they share similar features in terms of circulation, coverage and fame. Visual new stories selected cover the abduction of Chibok girls till it birthed a year. Eight News Pictures were purposively selected for the analysis. The theoretical appurtenances of Jacob Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory and, Hoye and Kasier's Visual Acts Theory as modified are used for the analysis of the selected text.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data comprise of eight photo news relating to the abduction of the Chibok girls in Nigeria.

Text 1: *Daily Trust*, Monday, April 21, 2014



Allopract: Expressive visual practs of Informing, asserting, threatening, challenging

Discussion: Nigerian newspaper visual representations are made polysemous so that readers can choose several meanings. Although captions try to control this potential proliferation by selecting single specific meaning for each image, the reader cannot but give cultural and social meanings to the pictures. These pictures themselves (with or without captions) embody a set of possible meanings or have meaning potential (Halliday 1978 cited in Ogungbe 234). Which of these, where, when and for what reason? For example, Text 1 presents the pictures of the abducted girls who have been kidnapped for over a year in Chibok, Borno State by the Islamic militants otherwise called Boko Haram. Looking at this picture, it appears that the girls are forced to put on Hijab to tell the public that they are now Muslims for the fact that some of them are Christians. This text curtly informs the public of the veracity of the abduction and the fact that they are conforming to the dictates of their abductors. This informing serves as the bases for the other acts performed by this text.

Apart from this, the picture explicitly informs and report to the public that confidently, the girls were in Boko Haram custody and they are all hapless. Through this, the pictures implicitly threatens and dares the public that their lives are not save. Apart from this, the picture indirectly challenges the security agents who may want to come for their rescue having confirmed the girls are still in their custody as against the insinuation that no girl was abducted which was pejoratively believed by the public. Many people believed that the report on the abducted Chibok girls is mere political propaganda to distract the sitting government. Finally, the visual reporter condemns Boko Haram insurgents for enforcing the girls to embrace their religion (Islam) when Qur'an says outright no one is to be forced to accept any religion. This is signalled by the use of abaya (hijab) by girls that are predominately Christians.

Text 2: *The Guardian*, Wednesday, April 30, 2014



Allopracts: Expressive visual practs of demanding, urging, supporting Assertive visual Practs of informing

Discussion: Text 2 has ten participants which are members of the United States of America parliament. They join the rest of the world in the clarion call for the release of the abducted Chibok Girls. Their message is simple and it is the same: “Bring Back Our Girls”. The illocutionary force inherent in their message is undergirded by the textual part of the pragmeme of inference, relevance, shared situational knowledge and reference. The text implicitly informs the readers that the US parliament is now in light of the prevailing situation, hence, their solidarity. This information practically provides adequate platform to make demand to bring these girls back

Aside that, the interaction between activity part and the textual part of the pragmeme indicates that the explicit practs of demanding and urging the Federal government of Nigeria (or perhaps the Boko Haram insurgent group) to ensure the safe return of the girls. In addition, there are implicit practs inherent in this pragmeme. Firstly, it indicates that the US in particular and the world in general are in support of every means to ensure the safe return of the girls. The implication of this is that, the Chibok abduction is no longer just a Nigerian issue but a global issue. This will go a long way to covertly threaten their abductors that the world is indeed against their horrendous act and the entire world will hunt them down, as well as affirming the credibility of their abduction. Also, the use of “our girls” further corroborates the fact that the world has fully admitted to the act and has identified with the parents of the abducted girls.

The use of a picture with solely woman implies that womanhood has been defiled by the heinous act of this dreaded group, hence, the use of woman to represent the whole American Parliament.

Text 3: *Daily Trust*, Monday, May 5, 2014

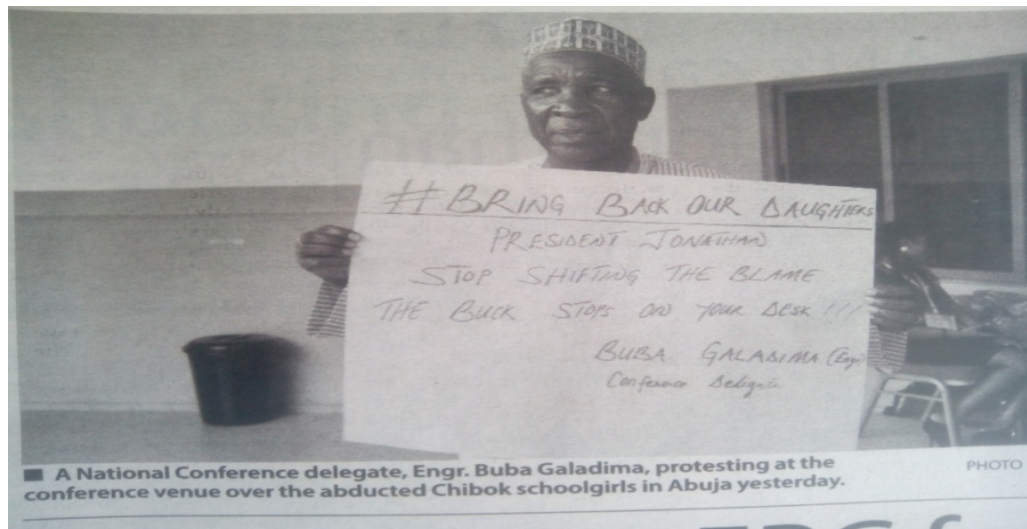


Allopract: Explicit visual practs: Demanding, pleading, sympathizing.
Assertive implicit visual pract of informing

Discussion: The picture in text 3 is polysemous. In other words, it does not merely perform an act of demanding the release of the abducted Chibok girls, but also identifies and sympathises with the parents of the abducted girls. The participant in this pragmeme is Mitchell Obama, the wife of the then American President, Barack Obama. America is one of the powerful (if not the most powerful) countries in the world. Based on inference, any message coming from the wife of the number one citizen of America is a powerful message. In this pragmeme, she relies on shared situational knowledge that these girls have been truly kidnapped to produce explicit pract of demanding that the kidnapped girls should be released. Apart from this, she (un)wittingly banks on the psychological act is sympathy signalled by her physiognomy which interacts with contextual feature such as inference to tell the whole world that America is against terrorism and is in support of all human wellbeing.

Astonishingly, while some Nigerians and even some Nigerian leaders still find it difficult to believe that the girls were indeed abducted, the wife of the President of America is acknowledging that indeed the girls were abducted; not only this, she is also encouraging every effort made towards bringing them back.

Text 4: *DailyTrust*, Wednesday May 14,2014



Allopract: Expressive visual practs of Entreating, asserting
Implicit visual practs: Advising, urging, condemning

Discussion: In Text 4, the participant is Engr Buba Galadima, a delegate at the national conference held in Nigeria on 13th May, 2014. Galadima's message is the same: 'Bring Back Our Daughters'. He was also urging the then President, Goodluck Jonathan, to take responsibilities. Galadima's countenance betrays no emotion. His placard clearly asserted the bearer's intention. Just three sentences: two imperatives and one declarative. His message is precise and concise. All these add together to foreground the illocutionary force inherent in his intended meaning.

The caption is situated in the context of metaphorical analogy and the shared situational knowledge of President Jonathan blaming everyone but himself regarding the issue of the abducted girls. This socio-situational knowledge becomes axiomatic to the full understanding of the inherent meanings embedded in this caption. So, Galadima is first and foremost entreating Goodluck to rescue the Chibok girls. He is also informing President Jonathan that everything largely depends on him. The agent in this text did not establish an eye contact with the reader, hence, the explicit act of asserting.

Text 5: *The Guardian*, Wednesday, April 22, 2014



Allopract: Expressive visual practs of Demanding, reporting, protesting and challenging

Discussion: Everyone in the caption is putting on red and or white, or either has a touch of either colour. Colour white signifies purity and sincerity. This signifies that the concern of these women is pure and sincere which may perhaps not have any political insignia. The red colour which signifies passion exemplifies the passion with which these women have intensified this campaign. From the vintage position of the caption, only women can be seen in the protest. This is germane because the Bring Back Our Girls campaign has been relatively manoeuvred to tilt towards feminism. Only girls were alleged to have been captured by the insurgent, Boko Haram, so the women were rallying against what they perceive as the subjugation of the female child which makes them regret.

By a priori, we have established that the protest was sponsored by the then opposition party (i.e. APC). This however, is a normal proclivity in a democracy. The opposition party is usually keen about the failure of the ruling party hence; they seize every possible means to criticize the ruling party. In spite of this fact, the genuineness and passion of these women copiously perform the pract of challenging and demanding the ruling party to positive action. The underlying political tone is to make the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) culpable for its failure to ensure the protection of lives and properties: the basic duty of any government.

Text 6: *Daily Trust*, Wednesday, May 27, 2014



Allopract: Expressive visual practs of Demanding and showing camaraderie

Discussion: It's May 27: Children's Day. It is a day set aside in many countries in the world to honour children globally. The participants in this caption are Nigerian children: they join their fellow children across the world to celebrate their day. Based on shared situational knowledge, whenever school children are together, they put on same uniform as an insignia of the school they attend. However, they are putting on red with a touch of white: the unofficial uniform of the #Bring Back Our Girls# protest.

The pract instantiated here is that of protest: they are demonstrating to the Nigerian government that their abducted colleagues should be brought back. The use of red colour exemplifies solidarity. Without much ado the sloganeering of Nigerians and outsiders became prominent and assumed different forms. At the side of the parade is a participant that seems to be either singing to issuing commands. All of these are geared towards the practs of demanding.

Text 7: *Daily Trust*, Friday, May 2, 2014



Allopract: Expressive visual practs of Informing, reporting, lamenting

Implicit Allopract: Demanding

Discussion: The physiognomic part of this pragmeme is amusing. A scrupulous look at the photo shows that these women's persistence in demanding for the rescue of these girls and their relentlessness corroborates the obvious fact that these girls are actually missing and the government needs to do something serious and urgent about it. Again, the text comprises solely women, this further underpins the apparent fact that the saga has tilted invariably towards feminism. Overtly, the text informs readers that the Bring Back Our Chibok Girls campaign is still on in grand and ingenious styles exuded with passion. The posture and physiognomy is that of lamenting and wailing. This showcases the pains of motherhood.

Implicitly, the text makes unequivocal demand from the government. The posture demonstrated by the woman further sustains the tempo of the campaign and in fact portrays to the world that concerned mothers are not relenting on this issue. It must be noted that, whether these women are sponsored or not sponsored, their genuine demonstration is palpable and quite audible to the ears.

Text 8: *The Guardian*, Tuesday, April 14, 2015



Allopract: Expressive visual practs of commemorating, reporting, requesting

Discussion: The reporter actually uses the picture to report and commemorate with the gory abduction of the Chibok girls who were abducted on April 14 2014. Thus this text is indirectly condemning the government that it has failed in its duty to rescue the girls as earlier promised. So the day this rally was made makes it exactly one year. In essence, the rally is a form of commemoration. However, the participants in this caption, remarkably, consist of men and women. As if to erase any doubt, the pictures of thirty of the girls are on their banner. The implicit visual act being performed here is an act of *convincing*, i.e. to convince those who are still cynical about the disappearance of the girls that the Chibok girls abduction story is true indeed. As a result of this, the word NOW indicates their urgent need of the girls' return.

Text 8: *The Guardian*, Wednesday, April 15, 2015



Allopract: Expressive visual Practs of Commemorating, authenticating

Discussion: A news item comprises five crucial features: who, why, what, where and how. The “who” is usually a key element because people focus on news item largely based on who is involved. The “who” gives credibility to a news item. In this caption, the world renowned Nigerian dramatist and Nobel prize winner, Wole Soyinka is captured. This gives more credibility to the ‘Bring Back Our Girls’ campaign, and further authenticates the pain of the story of the girls’ abduction especially for those who are still sceptical about the true story of their abduction. *1 Year* portrayed in their placards reminds the world how long it has been the girls have gone missing. Apart from this it also implicitly foregrounds the incompetence and ineptitude of the Nigerian government for their failure to rescue the girls after one year.

Conclusion

The analysis in this section has examined visual pragmatic acts performed by the news reporters on the abducted girls in *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust* newspapers only. The analysis shows that allopracts of asserting, and informing are foundational to the performance of various pragmatic acts of commemorating, soliciting, questioning, protesting, amusing, authenticating which are neither explicitly suggested in the pictures captions nor obviously projected in the cropping of the pictures but rather impinge on the news reports of the abducted girls. Some pragmatic acts are carefully performed through the picture and are meant to surreptitiously control government, events represented in the news.

The finding of the study indicated that news photos are a discourse unit that is analysable as independent text. They form a functional part of news discourse that is pragmatically encoded to underscore some special kinds of social meanings and implicitly perform some visual (pragmatic) acts. This tends to buttress the submission of Kress and van Leeuwen (34) and Jewitt and Oyama (56) that pictures are capable of performing many of the same complex pragmatic acts of urging, indicating, condemning, and accusing, protesting, challenging, wearing, shaming which are often suggested in the picture captions. The study also revealed that visual representation in Nigerian newspapers is far from being straightforward. It goes beyond choosing and placing specific photographs for getting readers’ attention, or for authenticating verbal

reports. That is, some pragmatic acts are craftily performed through the pictures and are meant to surreptitiously control readers' evaluation, opinion and action about the news report on the abducted Chibok girls.

The visual acts in the images show that the visual representations are essential parts of news discourse in the print media, because believing is seeing. Pre-existing ideology and journalists' personal biases affect the type of pictures or images placed in Nigerian newspapers and consequently, the pragmatic acts performed through them. This is especially so when reporters, editors, or page designers are placed in newspapers pictures that confirm or reinstate strongly held notions (such as showing the pictures of the abducted girls).

All the selected news photos arrest readers' attention and above all challenge, expose, and urge the government of the need to expedite their action on the rescue of the abducted Chibok girls. The numerous captions of pictures on the same dismal-pisual phenomenon, therefore, ridicule the Nigerian government and pronounces them as 'slow actors' on the welfare of their subjects.

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