

Cartoons of Corruption in the Nigerian Newsprints and the Dynamics of Semiotic Discourse

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Abstract

Cartoons as elements of meaning significations have, doubtless, become a globally accepted route of scholarly perception in the print media. Extant studies in Nigerian Newspaper cartoons have examined various issues of socio-political concerns with stint consideration for the dynamics of semiotics in the representations of corruption in selected Nigerian newspaper cartoons, analysing the discursive elements that house corruption as the bane of the Nigerian economy. Kress and Leeuwen's multimodal approach to social semiotics, rooted in Pierce's theory of signs, is deployed as hermeneutic model for the corruption theme using descriptive research design. Six cartoons, two each from Daily Sun (DS), Daily Trust (DT) and The Punch (TP), were purposively selected for national spread, professional predispositions, and their relevance to nation-building processes. The data were subjected to Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). Cartoon images, as meaning signification tools, manifested certain linguistic and non-linguistic resources in forms and structures that depict the Nigerian clime as corruption personified. With shrewd deployment of compound and complex clause structures, deliberate deployment of colour palette for emotional and symbolic meanings, composition for layout, framing, and salience (prominence) of elements to reveal the cartoonist's emphasis and priorities. These were combined with series of non-linguistic forms such as irony, hyperbole and symbolism. The artistic intelligence of the cartoonists deployed in DT cartoon, TP cartoon, DS cartoons respectively unearth the damning level of media corruption in the polity in much the same way the army and the political class were affected. Both expressive and non-expressive language forms project 'corruption identity' for the main effort of nation-building purpose. Cartoon texts, within their expressive and impressive language forms, embodied in iconicity, symbolism, and indexicality, have demonstrated the themes of corruption in the Nigerian newspapers for pragmatic actions. They, contributing to knowledge in imagistic interpretations, media studies, language pedagogy, and applied English linguistics, therefore constitute covert call to stakeholders for meaningful nation-building process in the Nigerian polity.

Keywords: Semiotic representation, Corruption identity, Nigerian Newspaper cartoons, Artistic intelligent, Discursive dynamics

Introduction

Cartoonists' representation of corruption as the bane of socio-economic reality in the Nigerian print media, and the valuable insights it offers into how meaning is created, communicated, and understood in especially nation-building contexts obviously depict semiotics as a dynamic field that continues to evolve even in the 21st century global polity. It is thus necessary to think of a study in which language could be analysed beyond its purely linguistic properties, considering how it functions as a system of signs embedded within broader socio-economic, and cultural contexts. In this connection, we are set to investigate the relationships between the physical form of the sign, such as a words and images that manifest in cartoons and their associative concept or meaning that constitute social semiotics. Social semiotics is a term borrowed from Halliday (1978) to mean the way language functions both as expression of, and as metaphor for social processes of meaning making in reality (Akinwande 2018; Onugu 2020). What should, therefore, be looked out for is an analysis that is stud-bolted on the Peircean strand of semiotics, to be explicated in the light of groundwork provided by Kress and Leeuwen's semiotic perception. This is with a view to raising awareness that transforms mere scholarly perceptions on corruption to national concerns. In prognostic term, therefore, we project a topical discursive issue that can consequently generate some reader-interest moves towards taking personal and communal steps to eradicate corruption in our society. Such awareness and skill development are capable of not only brightening the readers' horizons but also generating the right perceptions and attitudes towards decoding corruption in cartoons. We are, therefore, set to explore semiotics as a dynamically evolving field, offering valuable insights into how meaning is created, communicated, and understood, intersecting between the contexts of media ideological representations and socio-economic threat posed by corruption. Examining newspaper cartoons of corruption, as embodying signs or symbols of semiotic authority sheds light on the complexities of socio-economic and media communication, enriching the understanding of how the established corruption culture has become the bane of Nigeria's existence.

Statement of the problem

A large number of scholarly innovations have been mined in the field of media discourse that investigate cartoons mostly as humorous and satirical means of communication. Ashiru and Bello (2020), for instance, recognize cartoons as fast becoming important means of passing information in especially, the print media, used to examine happenings in a society with a view

to informing, criticizing, evaluating and evoking reactions to a particular perspective or narration, without fancies for explaining the message of a cartoons.

Two years earlier, Tyumbu (2018) had adopted Pierce's semiotic theory, examining cartoons of diverse themes in *The Nation* (a Nigerian daily newspaper) leaving out cartoons based on issues of corruption. Al Ghezy (2020) focuses on cartoons based on issues of corruption among Iraqi politicians using a cognitive semiotic approach. Abiodun and Omolabi (2020) is an onshore investigation which merely examines diverse themes such as embezzlement, lack of faith in the Nigerian government, greed, lies, and others in political cartoons. This obvious academic lacuna on corruption cartoons, especially in the Nigerian context automatically evokes an interest in seeing the way and manner modern Nigerian cartoonists tend to depict Nigeria and corruption issue in the newspapers whose views they are projecting. In view of this, and armed with the appropriate hermeneutic tools, the present study attempts to venture into semiotic interpretation of corruption (which has become the bane of Nigeria's socio-economic development) in selected newspaper cartoons in Nigeria. The study is to be anchored on Kress and Van Leeuwen's multimodal approach to social semiotics.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

Studies abound that have explored several issues of socio-political relevance meagre attention to analysing the discursive elements that house corruption as the bane of the Nigerian economy, manifesting in Nigerian newspaper cartoons. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the instrumentality of the linguistic and non-linguistic resources deployed in the presentation of various political themes, especially corruption and other related economic and financial offences in the Nigerian polity. The specific objectives are to:

- (i) identify and categorize the linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic resources employed to signify corruption in the selected cartoons;
- (ii) analyse the signalling imports of the linguistic and non-linguistic categories that signal corruption in the selected cartoons;
- (iii)interrogate the socio-political and economic implications of the semiotic resources signalling corruption in the selected cartoons.

Significance of the Study

Semiotic analysis of cartoon texts gives insights into the intrinsic meanings such texts in order to enhance better understanding of the concepts embedded in the texts. This study is significant in the following ways: One, it will contribute to the existing literature on semiotic studies of cartoons, establishing the possibility of deploying theoretical eclecticism in harmonising Peirce's theory of signs and Kress and Leeuwen's multimodal approach to social semiotics. Two, the study is capable of raising awareness on corruption in the nation for the people to have proper perception of it. Consequently, interested readers can be moved towards taking personal and communal steps to eradicate the evil called corruption in our society. Three, expanding the frontier of knowledge in semiotics, the study will help to improve and increase further scholarly interest in the field.

Moreover, the study can further sharpen the readers' awareness and analytical skills of newspaper cartoons. Such awareness and skill development are capable of not only brightening the readers' horizons but also generating the right perceptions and attitudes towards decoding corruption in cartoons. Consequently, readers can be moved to taking steps towards stemming the tide of corruption in the society. In addition, the results of the study will help to broaden knowledge in the field of semiotics, making it a worthy venture.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the content of the foregoing review which has displayed views and arguments that are in tandem with the preoccupation of the current research, it became obligatory to extend our investigative tentacles to accommodate Peirce's theory of signs and Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal discourse approach to social semiotics. Such framework permits observing a gamut of semiotic resources that are available in our data. This reveals a set of signs with representations that are interpretable in terms of their social significance.

Peirce's Theory of Signs

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) was an American philosopher, scientist, polymath and pioneer in modern semiotics who studied the history of epistemology for which he developed a new vocabulary which he called the "Study of Signs" (Esposito, 1998). In 1857, Peirce developed the first version of his triadic system of categories. This triad consists of "the I"

(identified with reason, goodness and permanence), "the thou" (reflected in love, beauty and causality) and "the it" (which manifests in sensation, truth and community).

Peirce's reflection on the history of epistemology revealed that the structure of the knower's relation with the known, with the structure of the process of knowing and what is known is governed by triadic relations. This then gives rise to a short list for formal relations which Peirce calls the firstness, secondness and thirdness. The firstness, as Aghaei (2015) explains, is a mode of mere being without reference to anything else. He cites the example of the mode of "redness" of an object before anything else in the universe is red. The secondness is the relation of a first to a second. This may be as a result of action, reaction, causality, reality, actuality or factuality of things that exist in our senses which in turn produce physical effects. The example of a weather vane turning to the direction to which the wind is blowing is cited here. Feeling pain as a result of a toothache is another example. The thirdness, Aghaei (2015) explains refers to itself by comparing one thing to another. A synthetic, "law" in the sense of a predictive concept is thereby established. The law of gravity which allows us to predict that each time an object is thrown up, it falls to the ground is cited as an example here.

The Peircean iconicity and the universe of discourse

Peirce also called an icon a "likeness" (CP 1.558) as Ransdell (1979: 55) notes a subtle distinction in Peirce among icon, iconic sign, and hypoicon. An icon is, phenomenologically speaking, always a first. A map of a terrain, since it is an existent, could not, strictly speaking, be counted as an icon. However, it can act as an iconic sign, which Peirce wants to call a hypoicon (cf. CP 2.276). Ransdell clarifies the distinction in the following way: "An icon is any possible qualitative content of consciousness what Peirce calls a 'Firstness' considered in respect to its possible function in cognition as the form (that is, quality or character) of an actual or possible object. An iconic sign ('hypoicon') is anything which does or can function as a sign in virtue of its embodiment of some icon proper. See Short (1982: 291). For the sake of convenience, I'll forgo this subtle distinction in favour of using the term icon for all instances of similarity in signs regardless of phenomenological status.

The universe of discourse, according to Liszka (1996), is what an utterer and interpreter must share in order for communication to result, and so might be more appropriately called a

discourse community. In order for genuine communication to take place the sign which is the utterer must be part of a sense common to the interpreter, and conversely, it requires a sensibility gained from a common community. This allows in principle the exchangeability of utterer and interpreter, that is, the interpreter could in turn serve as the utterer to the utterer Peirce (CP 8.179) hints at this in the following passage:

Let him [the utterer] try to specify a place on the interpreter's panorama, and he can only look over his own panorama, where he can find nothing but his own ideas.

According to Atkin (2006), Peirce developed his ideas about signs and semiotics in three broad accounts. They are: the early account (from the 1860's), an interim account (developed from the 1890s and 1890s and presented in 1903) and the final account (developed between 1906 and 1910). Each of these accounts will be discussed in the subsequent sections. In precise term, Charles Sanders Peirce emphasises the pragmatic aspect of signs.

Kress and Leeuwen's Multimodal Discourse Approach

Kress and Leeuwen's multimodal discourse approach is a recent approach in semiotic analysis. The approach according to Igwebuike, Abioye and Chimunuanya (2017 pp 5 and 6) "encompasses the linguistic features of a text which are usually regarded as speech acts; and non-linguistic features, like images, symbols, pictures and colours". It is a model which accounts for all modes in a communicative event. This approach to social semiotics sees signs as being culturally constructed and interpreted within certain cultural scopes. Confirming this, Omolabi and Abiodun (2020 pp. 154-155) posit that "media of communication are shaped by a culture into a range of meaning making systems, so as to articulate the meanings demanded by the practical, social requirements of different communities". They also observe that the construction of meanings in any society does not only involve verbal components but also non-verbal components.

Rather than venture into 'telepathic discourse theory' that explains discourse as a means of establishing or receiving involuntary projections of logocentric advertisement of a particular university's products through communication (Oduola, 2021). Kress and Leeuwen's (1996) belief that visual images like pictures, colours, typography and other semiotic modes are similar to language and can be used to fulfil three metafunctions is given deliberate emphasis. Building

therefore on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, they propose three metafunctions in visual grammar. These are 'representational', 'interactive' and 'compositional' meanings which, according to Omolabi and Abiodun (2020), correspond with Halliday's ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions, respectively. Just like Halliday's metafunctions, Kress and Leeuwen's approach is based on functions of the signs. In complementary term, we, therefore, have a study in the light of Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) to examine how meaning is constructed through various modes of communication, such as language, image, sound, and gesture.

Methodology

Being data-driven in nature requires that a naturalistic method be facilitated for the study. It follows, therefore, that deploying a descriptive and analytical research design is justifiable in the natural context of corruption issue in Nigeria. Thus, data were sourced from three Nigerian Daily Newspapers: *The Punch*, *Daily Trust* and *Daily Sun*. The newspapers were purposively selected based on the geographical location of their place of publication, their wide coverage of readership. The three Nigerian newspapers have private proprietorship with deep-seated personal and institutional ideological leanings as well as social and developmental interests.

A Model of Social Hermeneutics for Cartoons of Corruption

As part of the methodological approach, and as Ojeniyi (2012, p.73) puts it, there is therefore the need for a "model of analysis which is capable of providing explanations for the interrelationship maintained between messages and the intertwined systems of codes that are employed to communicate them". In the light of this, attempts are made in this study to organize the semiosis of the various semiotic materials which have been employed to signify corruption in the selected cartoon-texts through the combination of a theory of signs and a theory of social hermeneutics.

The model takes its roots from Pierce's theory of signs and Kress and Leeuwen's multimodal approach to social hermeneutics. Pierce's theory of sign vehicles vis-a-viz, sign, object and interpretant are used to identify the signification process while Kress and Leeuwen's multimodal approach is used to provide the social interpretations of the signs. The need for designing such a model arises because cartoons are made up of both linguistic and non-linguistic signs in their signification processes; and to cater for semiotics' concern with signs and how they signify, there

is the need for a model which identifies the signifiers in the selected interpretation within the Nigerian cultural setting as presented below:

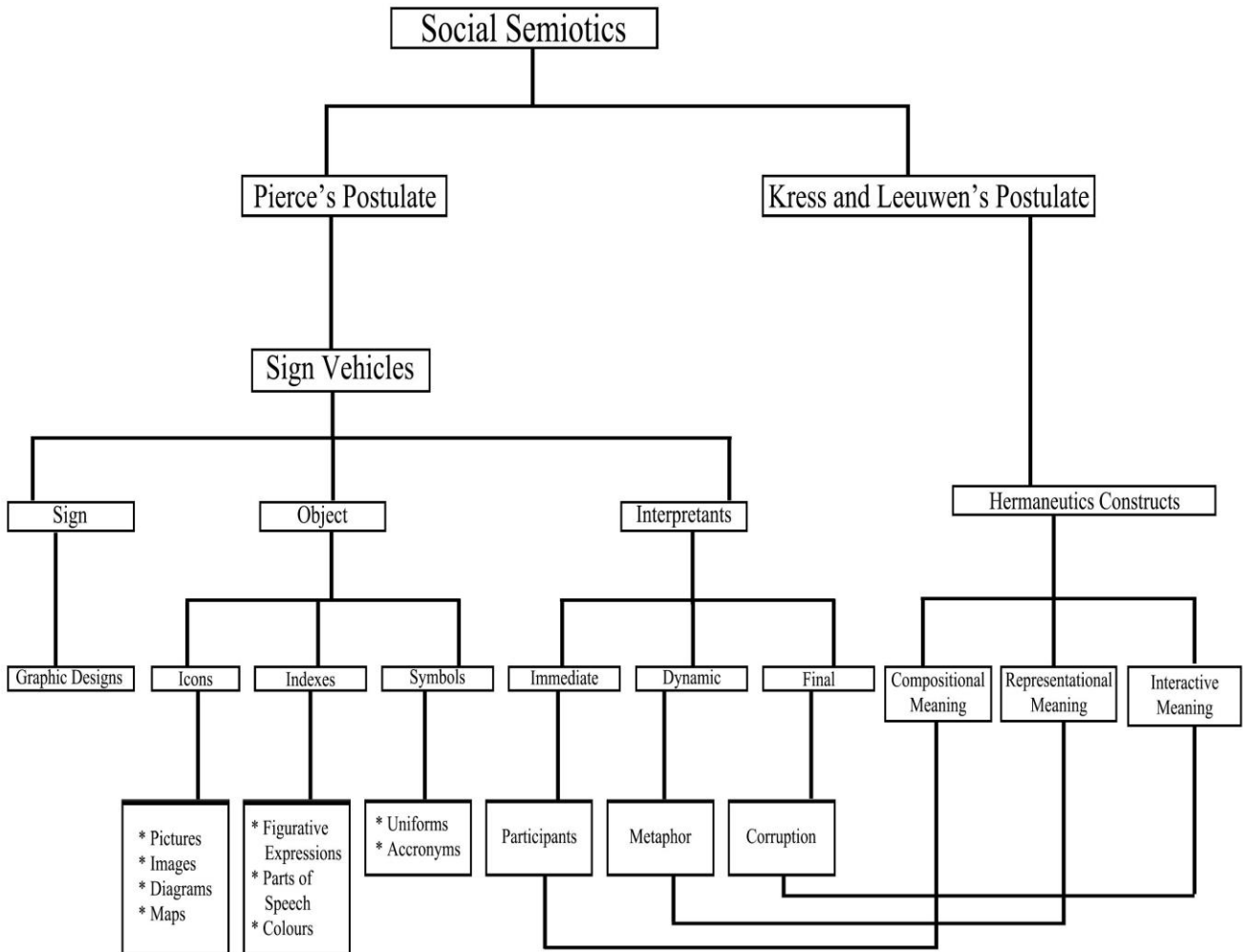


Figure 1: Oduola & Adeyinka’s Social semiotic hermeneutic model of messages and systems of codes intertwined

It is obvious that this model of ours, presented above, can provide a useful template for easy application of Pierce’s theory of signs and Kress and Leeuwen’s multimodal discourse approach to social semiotics the analysis of cartoon images. These automatically serve as instruments through which the cartoons as communication materials can be converted into signs which can be subjected to relevant social interpretations, setting the stage for smooth analysis of our data.

Analysis and discussion

Semiotics is a powerful tool used by Nigerian newspaper cartoonists to communicate the issue of corruption in the country. Through the use of visual signs and symbols, they are able to highlight the severity of the problem and the need for action to be taken to address it. It is of paramount interest to align with Onugu (2022) in the deployment of Odebunmi's (2020) analytical mappings in pragmatic analysis; that is, top-down approach of function to form. Our analysis, however, sets out for bottom-up analytical template that generates the functions from the forms.

Semiotic Analysis of Corruption in Selected Cartoons

The analysis of our texts is in two parts. The signalling contents of each cartoon are categorized into linguistic and non-linguistic signs, employed to signal corruption in the selected cartoons. The linguistic signs are identified as icons and hypo-icons such as metaphorical statements, and so on. Indexes and sub-indexes such as proper nouns, personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, relative pronouns, acronyms, and other elements of linguistic categories, are also identified as part of the linguistic resources employed as signals to corruption in our data. Non-linguistic resources identified as signals of corruption in the selected texts include pictures, diagrams, images and colours. The signs so identified are seen as interpretants of corruption in our analysis.

Signals of Corruption in Government Institutions

Such signals are essential tools that function as inherent instruments which invoke sets of interpretations in the mind of the sign reader. It is clear that corruption can be signalled through semiotic resources in institutions. Such institutions as observed in our data include government institutions, educational institutions and the oil sector. Mismanagement and embezzlement of public funds as impunity, scams and scandals, and political figures are all manifested as signals of corruption as exemplified below:

Cartoon Text 1: DS cart: Daily Sun, Monday, 7th February,2020



The semiotic elements deployed in DS cart 1 to represent issues of corruption in the Nigeria Police Force depicts the role of the members of the House of Representatives in addressing corruption and their determination to weed out corrupt officers from the force. The cartoon emphasizes the need for comprehensive police reforms and the challenges faced in the attempt to eliminate corruption at all levels.

Categorizing the Semiotic Resources

Using the MDA, the identifiable categories of semiotic resources are conveyed through such modes as images, text, colour, and composition. All of these come in the form of:

1. Graphical lettering modality includes (i) textual mode with (ii) specialized font style that suggests (iii) the tonal mode (iv) normal phraseology
2. Foregrounding modality includes quotations mode, capitalization mode

All of the above express Iconicity, indexicality, and symbolicness

The first statement is made up of a main clause: "WE IN THE HOUSE OF REPS HAVE DECIDED TO COME WEED AND OUT THE BAD ELEMENTS AMONGST YOUR PEOPLE" and a subordinate clause, "SO RELAX". The nominal word group (nwg), that is, the completive element of the prepositional word group (pwg), "in the House of Reps" embedded in the main clause serves as a complement for the pronoun "we". Embedded in the noun nwg is an abbreviation "Reps", which is an abbreviation of the House of Representatives which is the lower arm of the National Assembly in Nigeria.

Another element also embedded in the clause is the noun phrase, "the bad elements". The most important lexical item in this clause is "weed" which forms part of the infinitival verb phrase "to come and weed" which itself is the complement of the main verb, "decide".

The second statement is contained in the second speech bubble "(WHISPERS) CALM GUYS, NO "YAWA", THE MORE THEY LOOK, THE LESS THEY'LL SEE" is of a complex clause structure. Embedded in the statement is a verb phrase, "calm down". The noun "guys" as observed in the statement is a slang, a colloquial expression which means "fellow". The noun "yawa" is another slang with its origin in the Nigerian Pidgin. It means trouble or problem. "No yawa" means "no problem". "The more they look, the less they'll see" is an idiomatic expression mostly used in the performance of magical arts. The non-linguistic resources in the cartoon are the images of men of the Nigerian Police Force as projected by their uniforms, images of the members of the House of Representatives and images of farming implements (hoe and rake).

Signalling Imports of the Semiotic Resources

The semiotic resources in DS cart 1 project a number of signalling imports. The abbreviation "Reps" which stands for "representatives" projects the visitors as icons of the members of the House of Representatives, the lower arm of the Nigerian Parliament. The verb "weed" from the agricultural register means the removal of unwanted elements. It is a metaphor for the cleansing assignment for which the members of the House of Representatives have come.

The whole whispered expression presented in the second statement is an 'index' to the bad state of the Nigeria Police Force reflecting the level of corruption. The whisper is an 'index' to the secrecy with which issues of corruption are usually handled. The verb phrase "calm down" in the imperative clause is an 'index' to the state of mind of the police officers. This projects them as being jittery at the visit of the members of the House of Representatives, hence the need to 'calm them down'. The idiomatic expression, "the more they look, the less they'll see" connotes the existence of mechanisms for proper covering up of all the atrocities the officers might have committed. It 'indexes' the confidence that no matter the depth of investigations, the corrupt practices can never be uncovered.

The uniforms of the officers (black boots, black pairs of trousers, blue tops and black berets) position them as 'icons' of the men of the Nigeria Police Force. The dressing of one of the

members of the House of Representative is 'symbolic' of the dressing of a farmer. His dressing synchronizes with the word "weed" which signals the cleansing assignment for which they have come. The pair of glasses the man is wearing is a 'symbol' of knowledge and insight. The man is therefore a symbol of a "farmer" who has insight and knowledge of the existence of corruption among the officers and has come to carry out a cleansing job. The red colour of his dress is possibly 'symbolic' of the danger which the visit portrays for the officers if their corrupt practices are uncovered. Protruding bellies of the police officers is an 'index' of the extra weight carried by the police officers as a result of their involvement in corrupt practices. The heavy weights and protruding bellies are indexes of the existence of corruption. The officers are seen as iconic representations of corrupt police officers. The police officer, possibly the most senior among the officers as he is being singled out from the others, looks down, unable to look into the eyes of the man addressing him. This indexes timidity occasioned by guilt. The rake and hoe are metaphors of the instruments with which they intend to rid the force of "bad elements".

Generated Interpretations

It is implicated that the law makers have the thought of taking direct actions to address corruption. The inherent communicative force however is that no serious weeding is intended. The statement reflects the scepticism and cynicism prevalent among some police officers regarding anti-corruption efforts. It implies that there may be a belief that the actions of the members of the House of Representatives may not yield significant results as corrupt officers can evade detection.

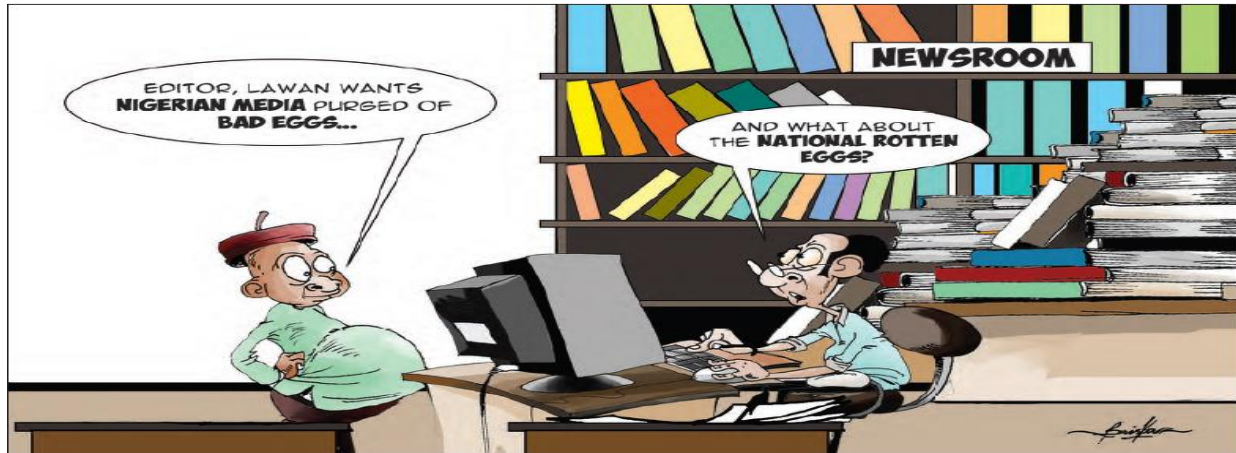
A number of figures of speech are observed in the presentations of the semiotic resources. The abbreviation, "Reps" as embedded in the noun phrase is a synecdoche for the House of Representatives, the lower arm of the National Assembly. The noun phrase, "the bad elements" is also a metaphor for corrupt police officers.

Socio-political and Economic Implications

DS cart 1 is representative of the actual situation of corruption in Nigeria and the attendant difficulties faced in attempts to stamp out the rot. The text projects the endemic nature of corrupt practices among the men of the Nigeria Police Force and some sort of moral hypocrisy of corrupt members of the Parliament pretending to be fighting corruption. The cartoon, therefore, suggests

that there is a need for more proactive steps to be taken if corruption is going to be actually stamped out of the force and the nation at large.

Carton Text 2: DT Cart: Daily Trust, Wednesday, 5th May 2021



DT Cart 2 depicts a man visiting a news room to demand that the Nigerian media be “purged of bad eggs.” The other participant then asks about the “national rotten eggs.”

The Semiotic Resources

These are to be projected in terms of the following outline, using the MDA:

1. **Representation:** Identify the participants (people, objects, symbols) in the cartoon and their roles. Analyse how they are depicted, dressed, and positioned.
4. **Composition:** Study the layout, framing, and salience (prominence) of elements. This reveals the cartoonist's emphasis and priorities.
5. **Colour:** Investigate the colour palette and its emotional and symbolic meanings.

Both linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic resources are identified in the cartoon text above. The first linguistic resource in the cartoon is a statement credited to one of the participants in the cartoon, “EDITOR, LAWAN WANTS NIGERIAN MEDIA PURGED OF BAD EGGS... Another linguistic resource identified is a rhetorical question from another participant, “AND WHAT ABOUT THE NATIONAL ROTTEN EGGS?” Also observed is the linguistic item, “NEWSROOM”. Other linguistic semiotic resources include an ellipsis (...) and a question mark(?).

The non-linguistic semiotic resources identified in DT cart 2 include two human interactive participants (a Senator and an Editor) positioned equidistantly with a desktop on a table in-between. Books of different colours and sizes arranged on a bookshelf at the background. The kind of cap gives out the symbol of Nigerian politician. The dilated eyes, open mouth and vector lines around the mouth and nose are all examples of framing and prominence that reveal the cartoonist's emphasis and priorities of depicting corruption as endemic. The politician's pot belly is salience and representational.

Categories of Semiotic Resources

The simple sentence, "Editor, Lawan wants Nigerian media purged of bad eggs..." forms the basis of the theme of corruption in the cartoon. "Nigerian media" and "bad eggs" are of semiotic significance in the main clause. The rhetorical question credited to the editor has a noun phrase, "the national rotten eggs" embedded in it. Also observed is a normative expression "newsroom". The non – linguistic semiotic resources are categorised as images.

Signalling Imports of the Semiotic Resources

The statement credited to the man with the protruding belly indexes the desire of the legislators to rid the media of corrupt persons. The proper noun, "Lawan" is to be understood as a metaphor for the entire house of Senate in Nigeria. It is a synecdoche which stands symbolically for the entire members of the Nigerian Senate. The speaker is therefore projected as a spokesperson and icon of a member of the Senate.

The two noun phrases "bad eggs" and "national rotten eggs" are metaphors which index the existence of corruption and corrupt individuals within the media (bad eggs) and in the Senate (national rotten eggs). The nominal expression, "newsroom" in which the dialogue takes place serves as an indicator of class struggle between the legislative arm and the fourth arm of the realm, the media. The presence of only two participants, one representing the legislative arm and the other representing the media is also symbolic of the class struggle between the two arms of government. The surprised new editor's response, "and what about the national rotten eggs" is clearly a dialogic rhetoric and it further indexes the struggle between the two arms of government represented by the two participants. Ordinarily, an acceptable English sentence should not be headed by a coordinating conjunction (and) but the ellipsis (...) in the proceeding

statement provides the cohesive tie that justifies the flow of discourse. It suggests that the editor interrupted the politician cutting his speech short. It could be an indication of the editor's anger at the politician's proposition.

The cap worn by the first speaker is semiotically significant. It is a symbol of the political class in Nigeria. It, therefore, adds to the interpretation that the speaker is a member of a political class, and a representative of the Nigerian Senate. The spokesperson's protruding belly is a symbol of the greed and excesses associated with the political class and corrupt politicians in Nigeria. His widely open eyes, vector lines around the mouth, nose and eyes are indexes of the emotion of surprise at being caught off balance by the editor's response. The politician uses his hands to support his back which carries the weight of the protruding belly. This symbolises the weight of the proceeds of corrupt practices.

The editor as an icon of the news media is represented working on a desktop. He wears a pair of glasses which is a symbol of intellectualism and insight. His bulging eyes, vector lines above the eyes, open mouth, enlarged ears and lowered eyeglasses are indexes of a bewildered expression. The physical space in which the dialogue takes place, (newsroom) and which is the space of the editor symbolises the isolation of journalists who attempt to report the truth in the face of political pressure and intimidation. The computer with which the editor is working and books of different sizes and colours on the shelf are indexes of the fact that the media has the needed tools to expose corruption in Nigeria and to hold those in power accountable. The arrangement of books on the shelf is also significant. The neatly arranged books could be symbols of a desire for order and transparency while the disordered ones could be symbolic of the chaotic and corrupt nature of the Nigerian political and media circles.

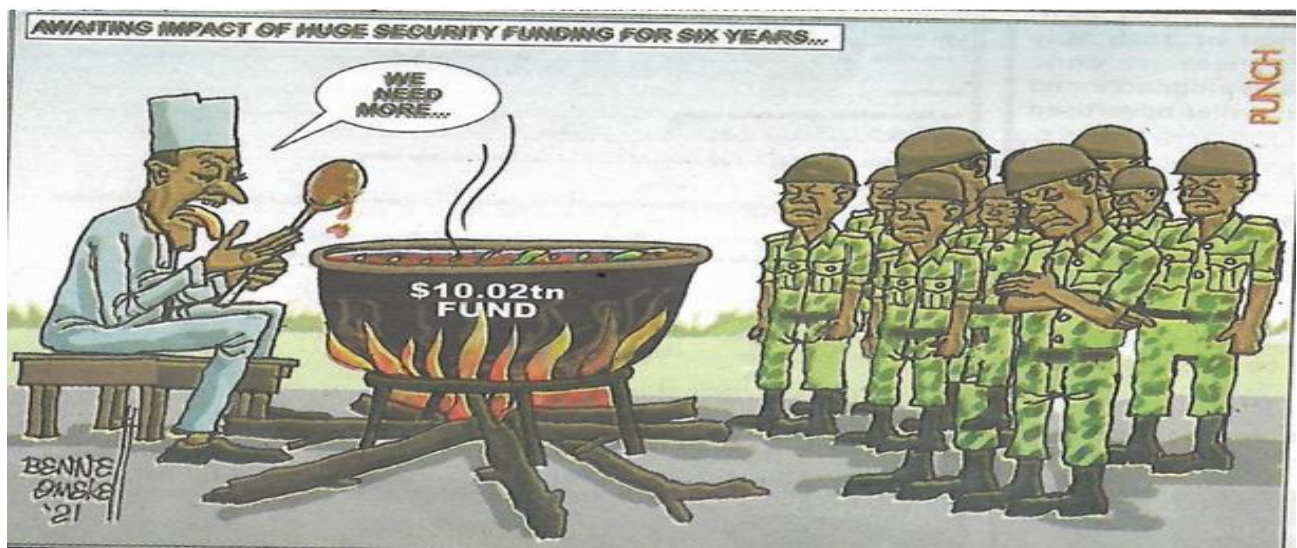
Generated Interpretations of the Semiotic Resources

DT cart 2 effectively projects the scenario of the actual situation of the issue of corruption both among the political class and media practitioners in Nigeria. The deployment of the lexical items "bad" and "rotten" in the adjectival is instructive of the fact that the issue of corruption is worse with the lawmakers than with the media. The cartoon critiques corruption within the Nigerian political system and suggests the important role of the media in exposing and combating corruption.

Socio-Political and Economic Implications of the Semiotic Resources

Overall, DT cart 2 has deployed both linguistic and non – linguistic resources to interrogate the issues of corruption among the two realms of government. The cartoon implies that corruption and malpractices are so widespread in Nigeria that they permeate every sector of the nation. The widespread nature of corruption creates a constant struggle between the legislators and the mass media such that the two arms are always in mutual suspicion. Many times, members of the mass media are even arrested, prosecuted and put behind bars. This to a great extent contributes to stifling of the press leading to lack of information for the masses.

Cartoon text 3: TP cart: The Punch, Thursday, 20th May 2021.



The cartoon text above presents a semiotic representation of issues of corruption in the security sector in Nigeria. It projects a picture of embezzlement and mismanagement of funds allocated to the security sector.

Semiotic Resources

The caption of the cartoon, “AWAITING IMPACT OF HUGE SECURITY FUNDING FOR SIX YEARS” provides the contextual information and acts as linguistic sign that draws the sign reader’s attention to the issue of misappropriation of funds and failure to effectively address security challenges in Nigeria, despite significant funding. Another linguistic sign observed is “\$ 10.02tn FUND” which serves as a label for a pot. “WE NEED MORE...” is another linguistic sign credited to one of the participants in the cartoon. It ends with an ellipsis.

Our selected cartoon text also features a human participant dressed in traditional kaftan and a tall cap. He holds a spoon in his hand from which he is tasting from the content of a pot. He is also depicted sticking out his tongue. Another group of participants are observed in green uniforms and black helmets. Also identified as part of the non – linguistic signs in the cartoon is a pot labelled “\$10.02tn” placed on a burning fire fuelled with firewood. Vector lines are also observed on the faces of the human participants in our selected text.

Categorising the Semiotic Resources

“Awaiting impact of huge security funding for six years...” can be categorized as an elliptical sentence. The subject of the sentence has been elided to achieve a stylistic purpose. “\$10.02tn FUND” with which the pot is labelled is a noun phrase where the figure \$10.02tn serves as an adjective “WE NEED MORE...” is a simple sentence which ends with an ellipsis.

Signalling Imports of the Semiotic Resources

The elliptical sentence, "Awaiting impact of huge security funds for six years" which serves as the caption for the cartoon serves as an index to the existence of corruption. It opens the sign reader's mind to the quest to identify why the impact of such a huge amount of fund is yet to be felt. Such a quest eventually guides the sign observer's mind to the represented participant, corruption. “We need more...” is an index to greed and insatiable desire for funding.

One of the human participants in the cartoon is depicted dressed in Nigerian traditional kaftan with a cap. The participant's slim, tall body frame and facial build presents him possibly as an icon of an immediate past president of Nigeria, an iconic representation of a Nigerian politician. The pot labelled \$10.02tn is a symbol of the huge amount of funds expended on security with no tangible results. The fire and firewood are symbols of the resources meant for other failing sectors of the Nigerian political system all directed towards improving the security of the nation, yet, no favourable results. The participant is depicted holding a spoon with his tongue sticking out to taste from the content of the pot. The tongue sticking out and the vector lines on the face of the participant all index pleasure derived from enjoying the content of the pot. This symbolises corrupt practices and embezzlement of funds while ignoring the actual needs of the security sector.

In front of the first participant is another group of participants. They are dressed in black boots, army green attires and helmets. These are symbols of the uniform of the Nigerian army. The men are represented icons of the men of the Nigeria Army. Vector lines on the faces of the men, are indexes to unhappiness, dejection and depression. The drooping heads and arms folded across the chest are indexes of a state of helplessness in the face of danger. All are caused by their inability to access the funds voted to protect them in the face of danger. It is an index that the allocated funds failed to reach them to address their needs. This symbolises the absence of resources and support they require

Generated Interpretation of the Semiotic Resources

The elliptical sentence, “Awaiting the impact of huge security funding for six years...” has an ellipted subject. This helps the sign reader to exercise the mind for the possible source of the statement. While the men of the Nigeria Army are obviously possible sources from which the statement might have emanated, the omission directs the sign reader’s mind to other possible sources of the statement. Such could include the Nigerian masses who daily face the consequences of insecurity aside from the soldiers who are made to face danger at the war front without any means of protection. This suggests that the only people enjoying the huge security votes are those who are at the source of the release of the funds – the politicians.

The presence of the participant tasting from the pot serves as an iconic representation of the executive arm of government. This suggests that the request for more funds, “we need more...” is addressed to the legislative arm of the government, the arm of government saddled with the responsibility to legislate laws that will facilitate the release of such funds.

Furthermore, the represented semiotic resources in the cartoon suggest misallocation and embezzlement of funds. It highlights the corruption within Nigeria’s security sector right from the executive arm of government. It suggests that the politicians enjoy the largesse of the funds intended for security while the soldiers and possibly the masses who are the true intended beneficiaries of the funds suffer.

Socio – Political and Economic Implications

DT cart 3 is a critique of the failure of the government to effectively manage the resources of the nation in order to have a meaningful impact on improving the security situation of the country. It calls attention to the need for transparency, accountability, effective resource distribution and management of funds in order to combat corruption and address the pressing security challenges in Nigeria.

Summary of findings and conclusion

So far, it has been made conspicuous in the analysis that the dynamics of semiotic discourse in cartoons of corruption in the Nigerian print media have indexed Nigeria as a nation on the precipice with corruption constituting the bane of her existence. These findings are, therefore, reflected through various levels of analysis that include:

1. Textual Analysis:

- (i) **Verbal Language** in the forms of linguistic texts accompanying the images sometimes with captions or speech bubbles to provide additional context or commentary on corruption in the Nigerian polity
- (ii) **Typography** in the form of font styles, sizes, and emphasis. Are certain words or phrases highlighted to convey specific corruption meanings in the Nigerian polity

2. Gestural analysis:

- (i) **Facial Expressions:** Interpreted as conveying emotions such as greed, guilt, or outrage in the Nigerian polity
- (ii) **Body Language:** explained in the form of postures and gestures of characters as signs of deception, confidence, or complicity in the Nigerian polity

3. Intersemiotic Relational analysis:

- (i) **Integration of Modes:** deployed to examine how different semiotic resources interact.
- (ii) **Imagistic complement:** there exist instances where text and imagery complement each other, creating tension which are traceable to corruption in the Nigerian polity.

Analysing newspaper cartoons of corruption, using Kress and van Leeuwen's Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) to complement Pierce's Sign Theory, has descriptively provided a rich understanding of how corruption is 'powerfully' represented and constructed in visual

media. Our use of MDA has focused on how various modes of communication, such as language, image, layout, text, colour, and composition work together to convey meaning, leaving us with the conclusion that cartoon texts, within their expressive and impressive language forms, are embodied in iconicity, symbolism, and indexicality, demonstrating the theme of corruption in the Nigerian newspapers for pragmatic actions. They, contributing to knowledge in imagistic interpretations, media studies, language pedagogy, and applied English linguistics, therefore, constitute covert call to stakeholders for meaningful nation-building process in the Nigerian polity.

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SECONDARY MATERIALS

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