

A Multimodal Metaphorical Representation of Selected Political Cartoons in Nigeria

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Abstract

Complementing studies on the representation of political cartoons which apply metaphorical representation in the portrayal of societal ills, this study explores a multimodal metaphorical representation of selected political cartoons in Nigeria to investigate how cartoonists employed metaphors to represent the current political situation in the country. In the face of the ongoing election petitions and handover of office to the President, among other activities within the political domain in Nigeria, a number of political cartoonists have flooded the online platform with cartoons depicting visual metaphorical representations of happenings within the nation. Such metaphorical representations are semiotically showcased via such cartoons as *Go to Court*, *the Scape Goat*, *Buhari's Pet*, *Corruption*, and *Original Wahala Received by Me* in the portrayal of reality that Nigeria faces today. Given the foregoing, this study combines linguistic and visual modes to form a multimodal representation of the metaphors used in the selected political cartoons. The study adopts a qualitative analysis of 10 political cartoons in Nigeria. It uses Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006, 2020) approach to multimodality and Forceville's (1996, 2016) view of visual realisations of conceptual metaphor in constructing meaning to investigate how visual images are constructed to cue conceptual metaphors. The results of the study suggest that Nigerian political cartoons rely mainly on visual metaphors as a means of communicating their messages. In addition, the metaphors used often rely on comic, exaggerated and simplistic depictions to convey their meaning effectively and to stir a strong emotional reaction from the readers. Furthermore, the findings of the study emphasise the importance of metaphorical representation in political cartoons and its implications for public discourse. The results reveal ways to improve the power of the metaphorical messages and the impact of the cartoons on public opinion. The study contributes to the multimodal metaphor research field and reveals the Nigerian public's underlying beliefs and ideologies.

Keywords: Representation, multimodal, metaphor, metaphorical representation, political cartoons, Nigeria.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

For the past eight years, Nigeria has witnessed unprecedentedly tense political, economic and social situations. For the first time in the history of the country, many Nigerian youths showed great concern for the well-being of their dear nation. Due in part to the economic situation and other political challenges during the previous administration, many youths were displeased with how our political leaders handled the country's social-political and social-economic resources endowed with the Giant of Africa in the last eight years. For this reason, several youths were fully present at the polling units to cast their votes, with the intent of bringing a paradigm shift and correcting the maladministration and turbulence faced by the country. The intent here is on the hope that through casting their

votes, they can usher in the man they believed could turn the tides of things around in the country for the better. This of course did not go well because many believed that the election process was fraught with undesirable results, therefore opening the door for judiciary arms of the government; and its aftermath court cases.

In the face of ongoing election petitions, the handover of office to the President-elect and a whole lot of happenings within the political domain in Nigeria till the present moment, a number of political cartoonists have flooded the online platform with a lot of cartoons depicting metaphorical representation of the happenings within the state called Nigeria. Such depicting of the happenings in the country are semiotically showcased via such cartoons as *Go to Court*, *the Scape Goat*,

Buhari's Pet, Corruption as well as *Original Wahala Received by Me* among others in the portrayal of reality that Nigeria is faced with today. The application of metaphorical expression as a means of correcting political ills in a nation now serves as a vehicle for setting social agendas. This has also brought innovation to the field of linguistics, especially when viewed from multimodal analysis perspective with such affordances as colour combination, compositional elements as well as other meaning-making resources. In this way, language, be it verbal, non-verbal or visual, now plays a more important role as a tool for correcting social ills in society. Language, therefore, is critical to human communication and expression.

In Nigeria, a number of scholars have examined studies on political cartoons from semiotic (Akande, 2002), construction of satire (Sani *et al.*, 2012; Usman and Nuhu, 2016), visual representation of power (Oamen and Fajuyigbe, 2016) and the more recent studies on Satirical representation of social and political issues in Nigeria (Makinde, 2023 and Nwachukwu *et al.*, 2023). There are also a number of studies in Nigeria on social semiotic and semiotic analysis from the lenses of multimodal analysis (Kamalu, 2016; Ifechelobi and Nwachukwu, 2021; Makinde and Mgbodi, 2022, and Makinde and Odili, 2023); with a few studies investigating cartoons from a multimodal discourse perspective (Akinwale, 2015; Akpati, 2019; and Igbokwe *et al.*, 2023); however, none of these studies examine the current political situation in Nigeria from a multimodal metaphorical representation perspective.

Complementing studies on the representation of political cartoons which apply metaphorical representation in the portrayal of societal ills, this study explores a multimodal metaphorical representation of selected political cartoons in Nigeria. The aim here is to investigate how cartoonists employed metaphors as resources for representing the current political situation in the country.

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Metaphor

The concept of metaphor as Forceville (2016) notes, has been a much-debated trope from time immemorial. A metaphor can be described as a comparison that shows how two things that are not alike in most ways are similar in another important way. Metaphors can provide (or obscure) clarity or identify hidden similarities between two different ideas. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 5) note, the idea of Conceptual Metaphor began with the view that “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another”. Conceptual metaphor, therefore, involves the systematic mappings between two conceptual domains; it entails understanding one domain of experience (typically abstract) in terms of another (usually concrete). Therefore, Fig. 1 below gives a pictorial overview of mapping the source domain with the target domain, as shall be seen in this study.

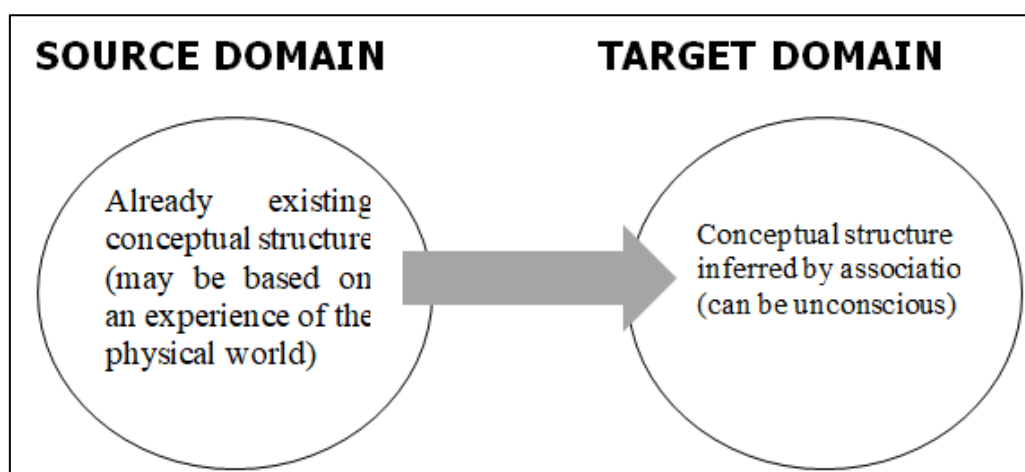


Fig 1: Showing CM mapping of Source – Target Domains

Fig 1 above shows that there is a great deal of metaphorical link between the Source Domain and the Target Domain. The figure that follows (Fig 2) highlights the theoretical framework of Conceptual Metaphor as regards link between an already existing conceptual

structure with the conceptual structure inferred by association where ‘Journey’ and ‘Love’ are metaphorically mapped as Source and Target Domains respectively.

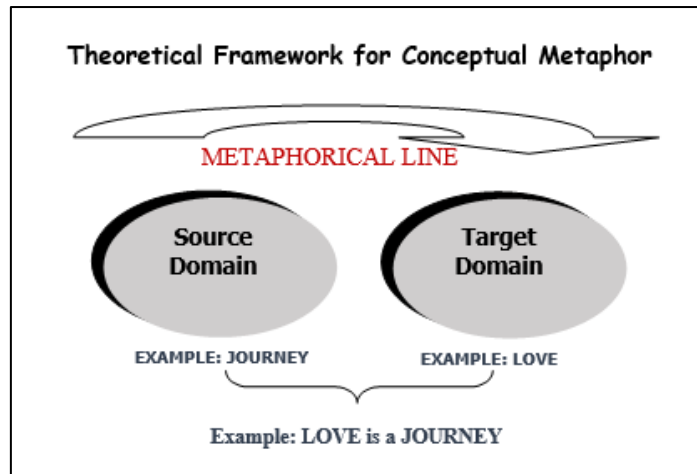


Fig 2: Showing metaphorical link journey and love as source and target domains

Fundamentally, the idea that metaphor should not be seen “primarily (as) a matter of thought and action, and only derivatively a matter of language” supports the view that metaphor should be considered from verbal and non-verbal perspectives (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 153). El Refaie (2003) broadened the examination of metaphor to include political cartoons. CMT perspectives on metaphor in film are also adopted, for instance, in Coëgnarts and Kravanja (2014). Therefore, a study of this nature which focuses on multimodal metaphor representation of political cartoon in Nigeria contributes to the body of literature on both conceptual metaphor and multimodal studies.

2.2 Political Cartoons in Nigeria

Political cartoons, as a genre of editorial cartoons, are being used around the world as press cartoons to comment on contemporary societal issues such as governance, political leadership, societal vices and politics in general, among which irrefutably involve Nigeria (Naji Kadim and Haif Abbas, 2022). They combine an often complex idea in a transparent panel. In their study, Edwards and Winker (1997) posit that political cartoons can serve as a barometer of public sentiment, reflecting and shaping the populace's views. According to Medhurst and DeSousa (1981), cartoons are a form of rhetorical communication that can simplify and clarify political messages, thereby enhancing their persuasive power. They are satirical or humorous drawings that involve a series of illustrations or animated films (Makinde, 2023).

Political cartoons, therefore, are abundant and public and often depict analogies, absurdities, and premises that sometimes scarcely mirror realistic political arenas. They are often discursive creations that use appropriate metaphoric expressions to illustrate specific political themes. Each political cartoon employs the most current trends in the culture of political metaphor (Cameron, 2008). Political cartoons often employ definitive argumentations, which require meticulousness from the cartoonists who structure them.

They are derived from national culture, beliefs, values, and beliefs shared by the generality of the population. Political cartoons are culturally constructed by political cartoonists and interpreted by the society where they are published. In them, the skillful cartoonists use the persuasive muscle of language and its power to make meaning beyond what meets the eye. Outwardly, they explain linguistic ideas that characteristically and philosophically defend a critical analogical vision, introducing the cartoonist's philosophical notions and embedded themes and variations in the cultural sectors.

As electro-mechanical reflections of macro-social worries, all political cartoons utilize an apt political vocabulary and a political lexicon to depict national and global political clusters. Thus, cartoons are found to utilize codified contexts via idioms, metaphoric symmetry, prose, lexical prominence, dialogues, grammatical articles, parody, and etymological imaginations to capture intriguing political aspirations and actions. The extralinguistic creativity of the cartoonists is designed via linguo-graphics, the prevailing culture that inspires metaphorical expressions amongst the indigenous Nigerian people.

Widely circulated political cartoons usually feature combative zeal targeting political actors and holding them accountable. In the Nigerian political cartoon scene, cartoonists deploy metaphorical ideas, highlighting the consequences of the actions or inactions of political actors (Sunarso *et al.*, 2022). Nigerian political cartoons not only reflect personal judgement but also offer intriguing predictions about the future of Nigerian politics on the part of the cartoonist (de-Graft Aikins and Akoi-Jackson, 2020). Cartoonists exhibit a witty, concurrent, and intellectually vibrant culture of metaphors that form the textures of the discourse creations in all published Nigerian political cartoons.

2.3 Pictorial and Multimodal Metaphors

Pictorial and multimodal metaphors are powerful tools for communication, blending visual and

textual elements to convey complex ideas succinctly and effectively. They are prevalent in various forms of media, including political cartoons, advertisements, and social media. Pictorial and multimodal metaphors have been shown to leverage cultural symbols and associations to create persuasive messages. Forceville (1996), in his analysis, is of the view that the use of visual metaphors in ads helps to evoke emotions and influence consumer behaviour.

A literature review reveals the pivotal role of Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) work on visual grammar, which provides a robust framework for analysing the structural elements of images. Their theories are instrumental in decoding how visual elements function as metaphors, thereby complementing linguistic analysis. Furthermore, O'Halloran's (2008) and Bateman's (2014) studies contribute significantly to multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), with their studies emphasising how various modes (text, image, sound) interact to create meaning. This approach is crucial for understanding how metaphors operate across different semiotic resources.

Forceville's (2009) research on pictorial metaphor highlights the cognitive processes involved in interpreting visual metaphors and underscores their effectiveness in bypassing linguistic barriers. Also, Bounegru and Forceville (2011), in their study on political cartoons from the Gulf War, illustrate how visual metaphors can encapsulate and critique international conflicts, demonstrating the cross-cultural applicability of these metaphors. In another study, Rodríguez and Dimitrova (2011), in their analysis of political cartoons during the 2008 US presidential election, show how multimodal metaphors are used to construct political identities and influence public perception.

The foundation for understanding pictorial and multimodal metaphors is rooted in cognitive metaphor theory, particularly the groundbreaking work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) introduced the concept of conceptual metaphors, where understanding one idea (the target) is framed in terms of another (the source). This theory has been expanded to include visual and multimodal forms, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the use of metaphors in various modes. Most often multimodal metaphorical analysis involves qualitative, semiotic and Critical Discourse analysis in its approaches. Qualitative analysis often involves systematically categorizing visual and textual elements to identify recurring themes and patterns. Studies often use coding schemes to analyze how metaphors are constructed and interpreted (Rose, 2016). Secondly, Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, is also employed to understand how images function as metaphors. Barthes' (1977) study provides a framework for decoding visual elements' denotative and connotative meanings. From the lens of CDA, this

approach to multimodal metaphorical analysis is used to examine how metaphors in visual media reflect and shape power relations and ideologies (Fairclough, 1995, 2013). This approach is particularly relevant in political cartoons, where metaphors often critique societal and political issues.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006, 2020) approach to multimodality and Forceville's (1996, 2016) view of visual realizations of conceptual metaphor in constructing meaning to investigate how visual images are constructed to cue conceptual metaphors. Multimodality has been described as the application of multiple modes within one medium; this includes such modes found from the placement or arrangement of images to content organisation and delivery methods to create meaning. Multimodality is a theory that examines the different modes that people use to communicate with each other and to express themselves. A mode, such as writing, gesture, posture, gaze, font choice, colour, images, and video, refers to a communication channel recognised by a culture. Conceptual metaphor as a theory, as used here, applies to how visuals are resemiotised from one conceptual domain (source) to another conceptual domain (target) in the portrayal of societal ills within the political domain in Nigeria.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study combines linguistic and visual modes to form a multimodal representation of the metaphors used in the selected political cartoons. A qualitative analysis of 10 political cartoons in Nigeria was adopted for the study. The selected cartoons, which speak to the current Nigerian political situation in 2023, were collected from Facebook and analysed through the lenses of multimodal metaphorical analysis. The selected cartoons range from Mike Asukwo (@Asukwoeb), Bennett Omeke and Moses Okpara; these cartoonists are known to be prominent in their satirical cartoon depictions that speak to political, economic and social situations in Nigeria. These cartoons were collected within five months, from May 2023 to September 2023. The researcher deliberately selected the cartoons due to their relevance to the study, as he came across them on his Facebook page while surfing online.

For analysis, the researcher woven together elements of metaphorical depiction with the tenets of multimodality to investigate how these features are employed in the selected cartoons. In this way, the research highlights how multimodal features are explored. These are, therefore, analysed through Kress and van Leeuwen's notions of represented participants, compositional and interpersonal representation. Via these affordances, the researcher is able to reflect on how visual and textual elements serve as resources for multimodal metaphorical representations. Furthermore,

the study relies on Forceville's (2016) concept of metaphor as depicted via the source and target domains.

In analyzing the selected political cartoons, the researcher identified metaphors by recognizing visual and textual elements that represent something beyond their literal meaning. The main criteria typically employed in this process include identifying political cartoons that use symbols such as objects, animals, or people that stand for more significant concepts and understand their conventional associations to decode the metaphor. Another criterion adopted involves identifying cartoons with exaggeration, depicting caricature and hyperbole elements to emphasize certain traits or issues. Recognizing what is exaggerated in the corpus helps to reveal the underlying metaphor, highlighting the cartoonist's commentary on the subject. Also, juxtaposition, the act of placing contrasting or incongruous elements side by side, is part of the criteria for creating a metaphorical meaning. Here, analyzing how different elements are positioned relative to each other is vital to understanding the intended metaphor.

As pointed out earlier, the study draws on political cartoons that use current events, cultural knowledge, or historical references. Thus, Contextual Clues help the reader understand the context in which the cartoon was created and provide insight into the metaphor. Labels and Captions of the textual elements, including labels on objects or characters and captions, often directly guide the viewer toward the intended metaphor. These elements can clarify or enhance the metaphorical meaning. In addition, intertextuality, which

references other texts, well-known images, or previous cartoons, also helps create a deeper metaphorical layer. Identifying these references helps in understanding the broader commentary being made.

Lastly, visual puns, in which cartoons use visual puns, where the imagery creates a play on words that conveys a metaphorical message, are crucial for interpreting the metaphor in this study. By applying these criteria, the study deconstructs the metaphorical language of political cartoons to uncover the deeper messages conveyed through the interplay of visual and textual elements.

4.0 Data Presentation and Discussion

In visual representation, truth and reality are constructed visually through modality markers such as colour saturation, colour differentiation, colour modulation, contextualization, depth, and brightness (Scollon and Scollon, 2003). Therefore, the visuals presented in this study rely on metaphorical representation, which depicts partly reality on the one hand and the truth on the other hand in the sense that abstract and decontextualized representations often convey a deeper truth, which this study aims to depict. In the metaphorical representation of political cartoons in Nigeria, real events, in the material world in which Nigeria is, are being comically presented via humorous representation. In the following figures, this study presents and analyses the multimodal metaphorical representation of 10 selected political cartoons in 2023.

4.1 Portrayal of Reality and the Nigerian Legal System

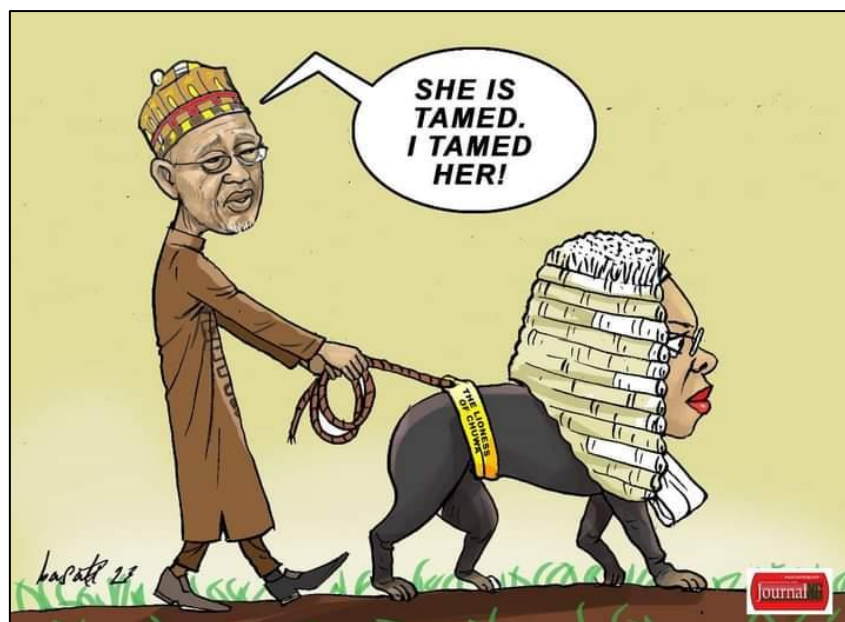


Fig 3: She is Tamed: A Metaphorical Representation of the Nigerian Legal System

Source: JournalNG, Ola Adegbo July 12, 2023

<https://www.facebook.com/journalngr/photos/a.935589789826731/6604206629631657>

Fig 3 above presents the portrayal of a tamed judge and the representation of corrupt practices in the Nigerian legal system. Following Kress and van Leeuwen’s notion of multimodality, two represented participants associated with the Executive and Judiciary arms of Government are depicted here. The participants who are representative in nature are depicted as Offering information as evident in the gaze of the represented participant at the left (connoting see how I have tamed her). The visual is shown to be in complementarity with the textual elements as in “she is tamed”.

The figure above is in a narrative process of doing and happening. The onward motion (in the forward movement) of the represented participants depicts Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006, 2020) Left to Right reading direction. A number of affordances such as colour, attires, setting, as well as visuals from legal (judiciary) and executive domains as evident in the use of woollen wigs, the shape of the mouth and the facial expression of the President. From the Discourse Aanalysis (DA) perspective, there is an element of dominance as in the power relations showing the dominance of Executive arms of Government over the Judiciary.

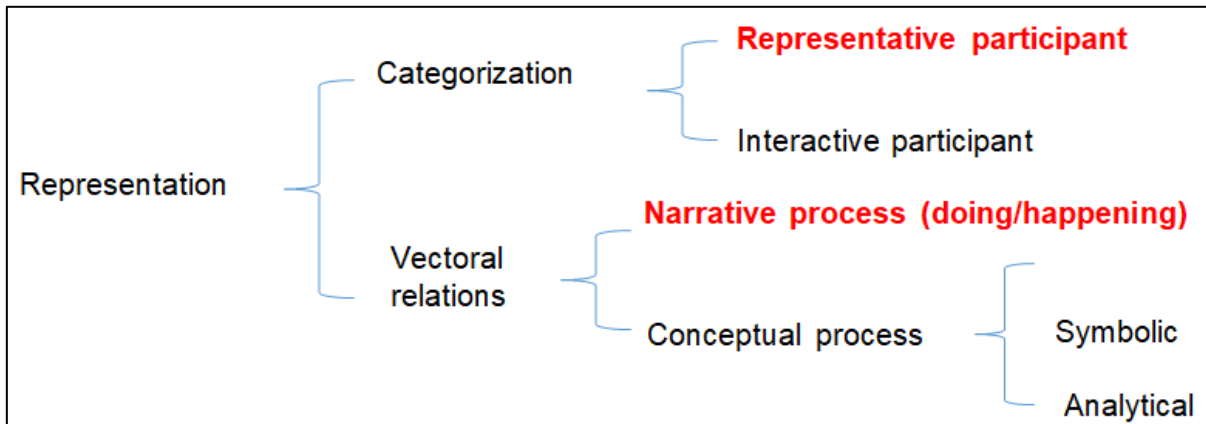


Fig 4: Showing multimodal representation of visual in Fig 3 (Nigerian Legal System)

Metaphorically, Fig 3 above depicts the manifestation of both visual and textual elements in its representation. This is in support of the complementarity that exists between the visual and text depicting a systematic mapping between two conceptual domains “she” on one hand and “Judiciary” on the other hand as well as “I” which represents the Executive arm of Government. “She” and “I” therefore serve as the source domain in the context of the above representation while

the “Judiciary” and the “Executive” denote the target domain. This is illustrated in the data below. Secondly, the use of the pronoun “she” denotes the visual of the “Lioness” being tied by the waist and held like a domestic animal. This in turn denotes the verb “tamed”. In this way, the cartoonist is in a metaphorical way presenting the power dominance of the Executive arm of Government over the Judiciary.

Source Domain -----
She (is Tamed) -----
 Source Domain -----
I Tamed Her! -----

Target Domain
Judiciary
 Target Domain
Executive arms of Govt

Above is the metaphorical representation of the two domains, as evidenced in Fig 3 above, as presented in the visual and textual elements. Following Forceville’s (2016) view, the two domains evoke a network of features and connotations that constitute the ‘semantic domain’ of power dominance between the

‘Actor’ (Executive) and the ‘Goal’ (Judiciary) arms of Government. The ‘Goal’ is resimiotised metaphorically as it shows a human head and the body of an animal. The head is depicted to wear woollen wigs showing the visual as representing a Judge.

4.2 Metaphorical Representation of End of Tenure – (PMB)



Fig 5: The Runner, Showing metaphorical representation of the end of tenure

Source: Business Day Nigeria, Cartoon by Okpara Moses, June 01, 2023

<https://www.nairaland.com/7172332/nigeria-state-nation-cartoons/35#123504869>

In Fig 5 above, the viewers are presented with the visual representation of a runner who is depicted to “have ran a very good race...”. Here affordances such as an image of a runner, colour, eye glass, cap, trophy, the finishing rope with the inscription “winner”, as well as textual elements are in use. In its multimodal representation, colour, visual and textual modes are woven together as resources for making meaning. The visual image of the represented participant depicts that of former President Muhammed Buhari (PMB), the colour of the attire which is green denotes Nigeria. The

cap and the eye glass elaborate more on the metaphorical depiction of the participant. The textual elements, “I HAVE RAN A VERY GOOD RACE”, “OFF” and “WINNER” have been used by the cartoonist as euphemisms. This is evident in the backgrounded elements: ‘Debt’, ‘Insecurity’, ‘Corruption’, ‘Poverty’, ‘Inflation’, ‘Unemployment’ and ‘Unrest’ as presented in the above figure. The figure that follows represents the multimodal representation of the visual presented in Fig 5 above.

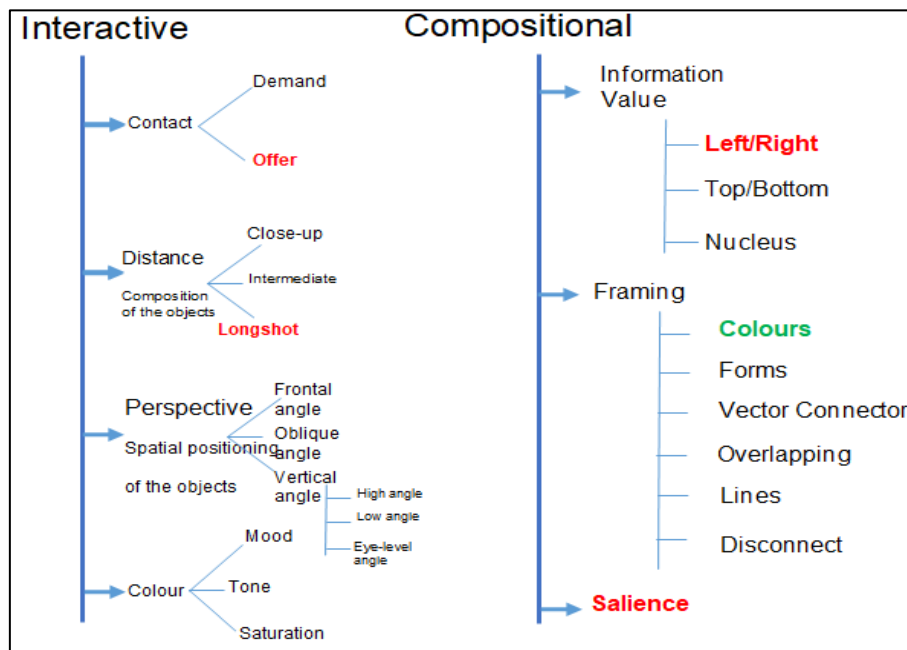


Fig 6: Showing multimodal representation of visual in Fig 5

Representationally, the image is presented for the viewer's visual scrutiny with its absence of GAZE from the represented participant. The Fig is, therefore, shown to offer information to the viewer; showing how the participant has run his race to the end. The composition of the object is presented in a long shot showing the entire features of the image. The Interactive participant is depicted in a vectoral relations of the narrative process of doing - running. Compositionally, there is a Left-Right reading information value with Text-Image realization. In this way, the text serves as a point of departure with the image illustrating it (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2020). In terms of framing, colours such as green, red, white, blue and black are used as resources for meaning. The image is presented in a salience and made prominent through size. The

accompanying texts are also made prominent in bold font sizes and capital letters.

In its metaphorical representation, the image-text relations are in contrast; therefore, we have contradictions in the use of various affordances: visual and textual elements. Although there is a visual element enacting the act of running the race, the textual elements are metaphorically presented in contrast to the affordances in the image depicted in this figure. Therefore, while the visual presents the participant as a "WINNER", there are contrasting texts in "debt", "insecurity", "corruptions", "poverty", "inflation", "unemployment", and "unrest" which are characteristic elements found during the tenure of President Buhari.

4.3 Metaphorical Representation of Transition – (PMB-PBAT)



Fig 7: Visual representation of Transition of Power

Source: Business Day Nigeria, Cartoon by Kelvin Okojie, June 13, 2023
<https://www.nairaland.com/7172332/nigeria-state-nation-cartoons/33#123011955>

Fig 7 above presents three affordances, two represented participants in the persons of President Mohammad Buhari (PMB), the outgoing president and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (PBAT), the incoming president, with the baton as represented object. The first represented participant from the left (PMB) who is shown handing over the baton to a fellow runner is shown as a Major Actor. The baton creates a vector connecting the two represented participants (PMB and PBAT), making the PBAT the Goal. The two represented participants are distinguished through their attire i.e. caps, the size of their clothes, eye glass, and their body sizes.

From the visual perspective, the figure presents a multimodal DEPICTION of leadership TRANSITION in Nigeria via such resources as representative participants who are involved in a process: leadership transition. Other meaning-making resources employed here include size (salience), colour (green signifying Nigeria), and the **FIELD** – source domain + **NIGERIA** which serves as the target domain. The facial expression depicted in the gazes of the two represented participants is both offering and demanding information; while that of the first participant was offering information with the eye contact, shape of the mouth and body posture showing – *Hey! Over to you, I have finished my race*; the gaze of the second participant was demanding

information from the viewer – with the eyes and mouth wide open facing the viewers directly. This complements the text in the bubble “OFF AND RUNNING” at the upper right-hand side of the frame. The visual also shows the capacity to form text that coheres with each other and the context within which the visual was produced. In addition, the figure presents an image-text relation with the text “OFF AND RUNNING!” complementing the image.

Viewed from the lenses of Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980: 5) postulation, the essence of metaphor is to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another. From the Fig above, visual and textual elements are metaphorically represented. Such affordances as the baton with the inscription “NIGERIAN ECONOMY” represent the handing over of the economic situation in the country as portrayed in

the four textual bubbles containing such texts as Infrastructure Deficit, oil dependency, unemployment, inflation, corruption and currency depreciation. The colour green, with some touches of white in the attire, represents Nigeria. The green symbolises agriculture, while the white symbolises unity and peace. Metaphorically, the land that is meant to enjoy the benefits of natural resources bequeathed the nation is depicted to be bedeviled with such challenges as infrastructure deficit, oil dependency, unemployment, inflation, corruption, and currency depreciation, as depicted in the textual bubbles. Backgrounded elements are also depicted in the setting of the action with such affordances as framing, colour and the running track, which provides a consistent surface for competitors to test their athletic ability; only that there are no opponents to contend with in this case.

4.4 Original Wahala and Buhari’s Pet



Fig 8: Delivered as Agreed, Visual representation of *Original Wahala Received by Me*

Source: Business Day Nigeria, Cartoon by Mike Asukwo, May 29, 2023

<https://www.nairaland.com/7172332/nigeria-state-nation-cartoons/35#123438357>

Fig 8 above presents three participants: two human represented participants and a big box containing different sizes of animals (snakes). Affordances such as colour, sizes, shapes, and positioning as well as visual and textual elements contribute to the multimodal metaphorical representation of the figure above. Observations further show that all the textual elements in the above figure are in capital letters and different sizes. While the visual of the represented participants in this figure is backgrounded, the visual representation of the box is made prominent via size for viewers’ attention.

Compositionally, there is top-down, left-right reading direction in Fig 8 above. At the lower left-hand

side of the figure is the image of the two represented participants who are engaged in discussion as indicated in their gazes. The visual here is not demanding, rather it offers the viewers information; it depicts the visual representation of the conversation and signing of an agreement between PMB, the outgoing President and PBAT, the incoming President. This visual is in complementarity with the text positioned above the represented participants. The text, *I HAVE DELIVERED AS AGREED PLEASE, SIGN HERE. ‘ORIGINAL WAHALA RECEIVED BY ME’*, speaks volumes of the situation in the handing over note.

The meaning of the visuals and textual elements at the left-hand side is further enhanced with the visual representation of the big box with its positioning, as it occupies the entire frame and made prominent through salience. This contributes to the meaning being conveyed in the entire frame. The box is shown to depict Nigeria as indicated on the box. The visual representation of snakes of different forms depicted the Nigerian socio-economic situation. Each of the snakes carried a labelled which described the various situations in the country. Some of such visible labels found in the box include *death, debt, deceit, anger, hunger, and hate*. It is

Conceptual Metaphor

ORIGINAL WAHALA -----

Visual (snakes in a box)

Source Domain -----

unethical for a person to conceit signing an agreement accepting *Original Wahala Received by Me* contributes to the metaphorical representation of visuals presented in the box above. *Original Wahala* here is a metaphor for *Nigeria Economy* as indicated in the textual elements inscribed on the snakes. It is this stagnant economic situation that constitutes part of the *Original Wahala* being handed over to the incoming President. This goes to show that the leadership of Nigeria and all the challenges involved are being taking over by the incoming President who will pilot the affairs of the country for good or for bad.

“NIGERIAN ECONOMY”

Target Domain

Following Forceville’s (2016) view that a metaphor imposes an identity relation between two ‘things’ that are conventionally (or in a given context) considered as belonging to different categories, the visual above presents a multimodal metaphor representation of the two domains in its comparison between Nigeria Economy and the visuals presented in the box.

The figure that follows presents the visual representation of a controversial water bill which was to be signed into law under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari. This is what is represented as Buhari’s pet. The analysis shows how the incoming President handled the controversial water bill.



Fig 9: Visual representation of controversial water bill

Source: Punch Newspapers, Cartoon by Bennett Omeke June 11, 2023

<https://www.nairaland.com/7172332/nigeria-state-nation-cartoons/37#123713429>

Figure 9 above is a visual representation of the annulment of the controversial National Water Resource Bill. The water resources bill was the initiative of the former President of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari. The bill entitled *A Bill for and Act to Establish a Regulatory Framework for the Water Resources Sector in Nigeria, Provide for the Equitable and Sustainable Redevelopment, Management, Use and Conservation of Nigeria’s Surface Water and*

Groundwater Resources and for Related Matter seeks to transfer the control of water resources from the states to the Federal Government; with the intention of establishing federal government agencies such as the National Council on Water Resources, Nigeria Water Resources Regulatory Commission, River Basin Development Authorities, Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency, and the National Water Resources Institute. The implication of this is that the Federal

Government will be taking ownership, control and possession of all the waterways in the country. This bill was fraught with a lot of controversies as views show that the Act is an attempt to allow herdsmen to grab land under the guise of the water resources bill.

It is the annulment of this bill that gave room for the visual representation as shown in Fig. 9 above. The above figure, therefore, presents a multimodal metaphorical representation of the controversial water bill as presented by the former President Muhammadu Buhari to the two National Assemblies. The Fig. depicts three affordances of two represented participants, an ‘Actor’ and a member of his cabinet, and visual of animal tagged “Buhari’s Pet”, which serves as the ‘Goal’. The cutlas, an object in the hand of the first participant serves as a vector (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2020) that connects the first two objects in a narrative process which indicates the going on in the process of piercing the animal object. There is also a reactionary process which “forms the vector by an eye line, by the direction of the gaze of the two represented participants” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). This is made up of ‘Reactor’, the participant performing the action and the ‘Phenomenon’, the object which the Reactor is looking at (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

In addition, with the gaze on both represented participants focusing on the animal object, the visual in the above figure is presented to “offer” information. The interactive meaning of the figure is further depicted in a longshot distance showing the entire composition of the objects presented in the frame for viewer’s interpretation. In this way, the spatial positioning of the objects is presented in a vertical angle with eye level angle as if the viewers are in front of the frame. This choice in perspective helps to present the narrative process employed in the frame.

Compositionally, the representational and interactive elements presented in Fig 9 are integrated to make the whole visual meaningful. The information value of the objects is in a Left/Right reading direction. Furthermore, the visual elements are made prominent via such resources as salience. Other affordances employed in the above figure include colours, office setting and textual elements (‘AH, WHY DID YOU BARGE IN LIKE THAT? YOU SCARED ME!’ and ‘DON’T PANIC, BUHARI IS NOW IN DAURA OR, NIGER REPUBLIC!’) that enhance the visual ones in the process of multimodal representation.

From the metaphorical perspective, the two domains found in Fig 9 above are presented below:

BUHARI’S PET -----	controversial WATER BILL
Visual (animal)	
Source Domain -----	Target Domain

The visual representation of animal as Buhari’s Pet is the source domain; it serves as conceptual metaphor depicting the “controversial Water Bill Act”

which represents the target domain. In this way, the media has communicated to the Nigeria society the abolishment of the controversial water bill.

4.5 Metaphoric Representation of Nigerian Political Leaders and their Empty Promises

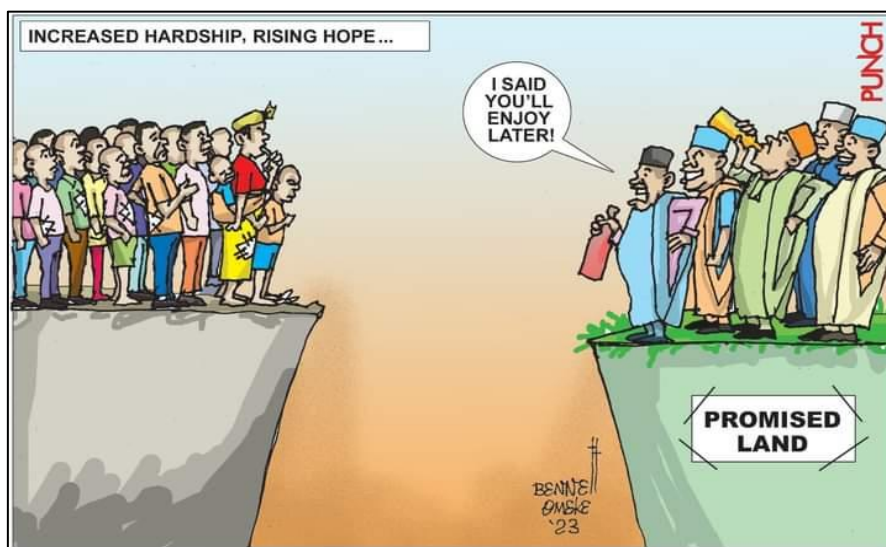


Fig 10: Increased Hardship, Rising Hope (Unfulfilled Promise)

Source: Punch Newspapers, Cartoon by Bennett Omeke July 06, 2023

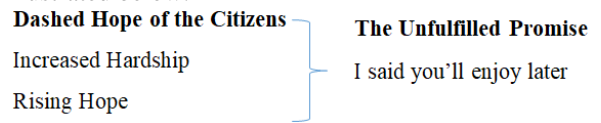
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=647992520698268& set=a.34435766823 47136>

Fig 10 above presents a visual representation of two groups of represented participants: the citizens representing the poor masses and the leaders representing the Government. These affordances depict the power relation that exists between the two classes of people. From a multimodal perspective, there is also a visual visibility of the gap between the two groups thereby leaving each group in a left-right composition. The gap depicts two separate spaces that reflect the economic situation of the two categories.

Visual representation of the “Promised Land” upon which the Government stands depicts the access to the National Resources while the citizens are depicted standing in an empty/unfertile space as evident in the current economic situation the citizens found themselves. This is further enhanced through the dashed hope of the citizens based on the constant unfulfilled promise: “I said you’ll enjoy later”. Other semiotic resources that enhance the multimodal metaphorical representation in Fig. 10 above include sizes (the body sizes of the two groups are contrasting; one is well-fed while the other is impoverished), attires (casual dressing on the citizens compared to the expensive clothes ‘agbada’ wear by the leaders), and colour (green representing flourish nature where the leaders are positioned) as well as the background colours of the

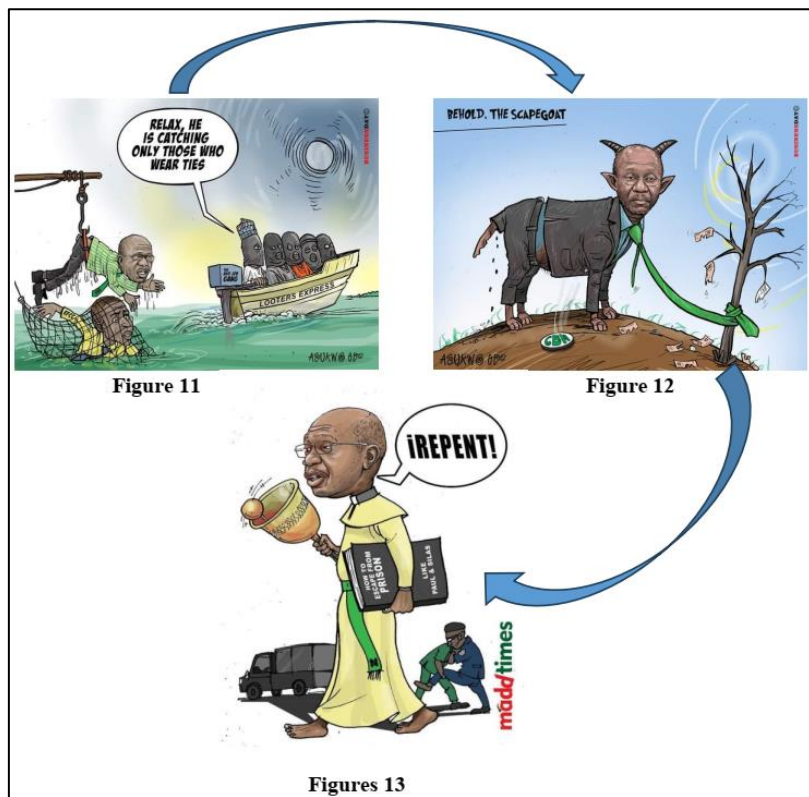
frame all contribute to the different modes depicted in the frame).

The principle here is that a visually rendered object is turned into the target of a metaphor by depicting a comparison between two domains, the poor masses, and the appointed leaders. The comparison is further enhanced via the content of the text “INCREASED HARDSHIP, RISING HOPE...” and “I SAID YOU’LL ENJOY LATER!”. In Figure 10, the visual context provides the source domain while the text provides the target domain, a domain of hardship and empty promises. The metaphor of ‘dashed hope’ and ‘unfulfilled promise’ as conveyed in the visual is further illustrated below.



In this way, the cartoonist is able to provide an insight into the social-economic situation of going on within the nation, Nigeria, via such resources as metaphorical representation laced with multimodal affordances for viewers to interrogate.

4.6 The Scape Goat - A Metaphorical Representation



Figures 11, 12 and 13: The Scape Goat

Source: Business Day Nigeria, Cartoon by Mike Asukwo, June 21, 2023
<https://www.nairaland.com/7172332/nigeria-state-nation-cartoons/33#123011955>

Figures 11 to 13 represent the visual representation of the scapegoat and its metaphorical representation and transformation of the represented participant (Formal CBN Governor). Prior to the 2023 general election in Nigeria, the then CBN Governor, under the leadership of Godwin Emefiele, created a government-sponsored Central Bank Digital currency. The CBN Governor cited Nigerians hoarding notes in their homes as the reason for the currency redesign. However, some political analysts believed the aim was to curb vote buying by thwarting politicians who had amassed a stockpile of naira in preparation for election day. This decision of the CBN resulted in a currency crisis precipitated by a shortage of cash currency which affected both the poor and the rich.

In a statement issued through the Secretary to the Government of the Federation's Director of Information, Willie Bassey, on Friday, June 9, 2023, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu suspended Godwin Emefiele, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), from his position. The statement said that the CBN Governor's suspension was due to the planned changes in the economy's financial sector and the ongoing investigation into his office. Following his suspension, Godwin Emefiele was arrested and detained by the Department of State Services (DSS) over the alleged misuse of office. It is this arrest and other issues that result to the metaphorical representation of the figures presented above.

Using framing, Fig. 11 above presents such affordances as fishing net, fishing hook, boat (with the inscription of 'Looters Express'), river and seven represented participants. Following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) left-right reading direction, the frame presents visuals of a fishing hook catching a human object at the left-hand side of the frame. This is followed by that of a human object in a fishing net. At the right-hand side of the frame is the visual of five represented participants in a boat fleeing the scene of the arrest. By drawing terminologies from the domain of fishing, the figure uses affordances – fishing hook, fishing net, river, boat as well as backgrounded colours of different saturations – which contribute to the semiotic landscape of Fig. 11 above to construe the idea of "catching only those who wear ties" in the context of arresting and detaining 'looters'. In this way, the cartoonist has portrayed via visuals a multimodal metaphorical representation in his use of a fishing hook and net to capture human beings like fish in a river. There is, therefore, a direct comparison of two domains – the act of catching humans with a fishing hook and net in the representation of arresting and detaining looters in the country.

In Fig 12, the cartoonist in his portrayal of the scapegoat resemiotised Godwin Emefiele which serves

as a tool for metaphorical representation. Following Kress and van Leeuwen's notion of *Reading images*, the figure presents a visual of a human-goat with a tie tied to a tree. The textual element "BEHOLD, THE SCAPEGOAT", written in bold and capital letters and positioned at the top left-hand side of the frame, directs the viewers to the object of focus. The image of a human-goat is strategically positioned at the centre of the frame with a rope-like tie connecting it with the object (tree) at the right. The object is presented with its gaze facing the viewer for scrutiny. In portraying Godwin Emefiele as the scapegoat, the human image has been repurposed with the head of a human and the body of a goat; a further element of repurposing is depicted view such affordances as goat horn and the long ear added to the feature representing the face and human head depicting that of Godwin Emefiele. In addition, the tie is also repurposed as a tool for tying goats. Other resources employed in the ongoing resemiotisation include the attire (a suit, shirt and a tie), the backgrounded colour and the top of a hill upon which the goat is placed contributes to its landscape as the position makes the scapegoat visible for all to see. In this way, the multimodal metaphorical representation portrayed here includes the combinations of multiple modes of communication as well as the use of metaphor in order to push the intended meaning to the viewers.

Fig 13 presents a visual metaphorical representation of Godwin Emefiele who was shown carrying a bible during one of his ongoing court case sittings. Following this backdrop, the cartoonist has in this sense presented in a caricature a recontextualized born-again saga of Godwin Emefiele. Fig. 13 represents a participant with such affordances as a Bible, and bell, dressed in religious attire.

At his left hand is a big book with the inscription "NOW TO ESCAPE PRISON LIKE PAUL AND SILAS" all written in capital letters. On the right-hand side is a big bell with a ringing sign. The visual is presented in an ongoing process depicting him as an evangelist proclaiming the message of repentance as indicated in the text "iREPENT!" positioned in a circle-like shape. Compositionally, the represented participant's gaze is not demanding information, rather it is presented for the viewer's scrutiny. With the use of such affordances as size in the visual big head, big bell, big bible, and long religious attire as well as a barefooted leg, the visual presents a resimiotised, recontextualized and reused visual of Godwin Emefiele. By drawing on resources from the religious domain, the visual has presented the scenario that is common with most Nigerian politicians and top Government officials who always faint during court cases.

4.7 Go to court: A metaphorical representation of post-election court cases

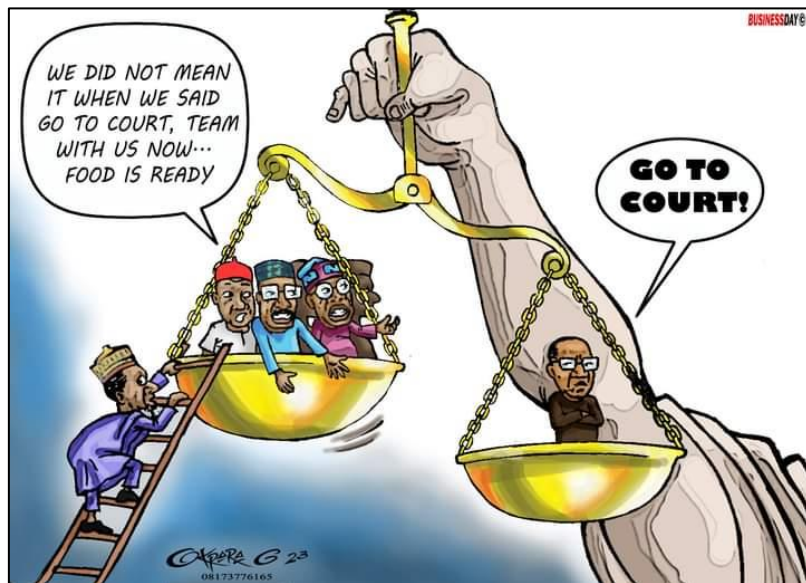


Figure 14: Food is Ready, Go To Court

Source: Business Day Nigeria, Cartoon by Okpara Moses May 08, 2023

<https://www.nairaland.com/7172332/nigeria-state-nation-cartoons/33#123011955>

Fig 14 is a visual representation of 2023 post-election court cases in Nigeria. In depicting the court case between the Labour Party (LP) presidential candidate and All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential candidate, the figure employed a multimodal metaphorical representation in the portrayal of the court case. It presents such affordances as six represented participants, ladder, scale of measurement and an image of a giant hand. The represented participants were placed on the weighing scale with the giant hand holding the scale. In a left-right reading direction, the figure depicts the slogan *Go To Court!*, a slogan made by the electoral empire to challenge the outcome of the 2023 Presidential election that was fraught with irregularity. What the visual here shows is not about the number, rather there is a depiction of the availability of facts provided by the parties involved in the court case. While there are four represented participants on the scale at the left-hand side with the fifth person climbing the ladder to balance the equation, the scale on the right with just the image of LP presidential candidate remained weightier. The hand holding the weighing scale represents the court while the two scales are that of APC representatives and LP representative respectively. Baffled by the outcome of the available facts presented by the LP candidate, the opponent proclaimed “*WE DID NOT MEAN IT WHEN WE SAID GO TO COURT, TEAM WITH US NOW... FOOD IS READY*” as indicated at the upper left-hand side of the frame as they call for more people to join their team. From an interactive perspective, the composition of the objects is in an intermediate distance with the image offering information for the viewer to interrogate. The spatial positioning of the objects in this frame is depicted from a frontal angle, reflecting the total involvement of the subject with the viewers.

Compositionally, with a left-right information value, the visuals are made salience via colour, and size with framing showing a vector connector between the giant hand and the scales of measurement.

CONCLUSION

This study unpacked a multimodal metaphorical representation of political reality in Nigeria (achieved through visual-verbal modes). Visual representations of cartoons are employed metaphorically as resources for meaning making. In examining how metaphors are used to create meaning in political cartoons in Nigeria, the visuals presented help to identify the underlying beliefs and ideologies of the public. Thus, metaphor is used as meaning-making resource in the representation of political discourse to depict: - economic challenges, - poor standard of living, - poverty and hunger, etc. Via affordances such as metaphor, images, colours, language, framing, and information values (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2020), the material world of Nigeria’s political situation is x-rayed. For instance, the direct comparison as seen in *Go to Court* in the case of challenging the outcome of the 2023 Presidential election as well as the metaphorical representation of *the Scape Goat* and *Buhari’s Pet* all contribute to the visual metaphors in the pictorial expression of metaphorical thinking of the Nigeria political situation.

In this way, the country’s political discourse is reconstrued, resemiotised and repurposed via multimodal metaphoric representation (MMRs). Therefore, this study is a clarion call for the Government of Nigeria to turn a new leaf, do the needful and use the country’s resources for the well-being of the citizens.

Thus, this study provides a valuable contribution to the field of multimodal metaphor research and reveals the underlying beliefs and ideologies of the Nigerian public. In addition, pictorial and multimodal metaphors are vital tools in political communication, offering rich avenues for research across disciplines. By integrating cognitive, semiotic, and critical approaches, scholars can deepen their understanding of how these metaphors shape and reflect societal discourses. Future research should continue to explore the evolving landscape of digital media and its impact on multimodal metaphor usage.

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