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## **A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SOME NEWSPAPER POLITICAL CAMPAIGN ADVERTISEMENTS FOR NIGERIA'S 2015 ELECTIONS**

### **Abstract**

This paper examines some political campaign adverts for the 2015 general elections in Nigeria with a view to analysing patterns of verbal and non-verbal meaning-making in the adverts. Data for the study comprises nine purposively selected adverts published in major Nigerian newspapers from January to March 2015, which was the peak period of electioneering campaigns for the 2015 elections in Nigeria. The adverts are generally of the two leading parties in the country (People's Democratic Party and All Progressives Congress) leading to the elections. The data obtained were analysed using the social semiotic approach of Gunther Kress. The analysis reveals that the producers of the political adverts creatively constructed verbal and visual resources to project political aspirants for acceptance by the Nigerian electorate. The appeal to history for the education of the electorate about the previous deeds of certain political contestants, making the campaigns evidence-based, the foregrounding of credibility matters and the emphasis on change serve as useful rhetorical appeals in the discourse upon which the multimodal resources are anchored and which allow for their effective interpretation. The paper further reveals that other noticeable discursive tropes in the discourse are counter discourse and brand association.

**Key words:** Political campaigns, newspaper adverts, multimodal discourse analysis, 2015 elections, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

The place of competition is at the heart of participatory democracy. Thus, the need to outwit or supplant the other is imperative among the political class contesting elective offices. Whereas such politicians often have different motivations for seeking the coveted political offices, they mostly manifest similar tendencies in terms of their behavioral strategies and struggles for the achievement of their political ambitions. Although the strategies and struggles of politicians for political posts are encoded and perpetuated through diverse means, political

campaigns occupy a central position in the activities of politicians relating to their political ambitions.

Political campaigns generally refer to the total and collective efforts of politicians to present themselves favourably to the public for acceptance and support. According to Aduradola and Ojukwu (2013:105), “the ultimate goal of almost every political campaign is to win election”. Some of the major forms of political campaigns are political rallies, political debates, political interviews and political advertisements (Opeibi, 2009). The goal of politicians, using the various forms of campaigns, is basically to offer promises to the people in order to secure votes in return. But since politics involves a raw contestation for power, political campaigns manifest the keen struggles for power by the political class, as serious issues relating to strengths and weaknesses in governance, personality qualities and deficits among others are foregrounded largely for positive self representation and negative other representation. Given the social and political nature of the issues in the discourse, language becomes an active agent in the political process which is deployed forcefully and strategically for the execution of vital social and political functions.

Political campaigns in Nigeria date back to the 1960s when democratic politics began in Nigeria owing to its independence. Nigeria witnessed significant political activities at that period known as the first republic as politicians such as Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Ladoke Akintola, Chief Fani Kayode, among others, made political campaigns popular in Nigeria owing to their eloquence. Political campaigning in the era was however marked by violence as popular political parties were said to have hired thugs to disrupt political campaigns of opposition parties in order to intimidate them (Geddes 2010). The second republic witnessed a continuation of the electioneering campaign practices of the first republic

considering the fact that many of the politicians of the first republic were still in the saddle in the second republic and the campaigns were also aggressive and marked by violence.

Political campaigns in Nigeria's third republic were creative, dynamic and vigorous. The political contestants for the post of President, Chief M.K.O. Abiola and Alhaji Bashir Tofa invested tremendous energy and resources into political campaigns just as their parties Social Democratic Party and Nigerian Republican Convention respectively embarked on nationwide campaigns for them and flagbearers at other political levels (Opeibi 2009).

Since the commencement of the current fourth republic, political campaigns have grown markedly. Even though features of political campaigns in previous republics such as violence and money politics still manifest in the campaigns, there is innovation and more creativity in the campaigns. Apart from the traditional means of campaigns such as print media advertisements, there is now the use of various platforms on the electronic media such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, among others, for political campaigns.

This paper thus attempts to add to the literature on the use of language for the enactment of political goals and objectives by Nigerian politicians during the campaigns for the 2015 elections in Nigeria. However, this paper departs largely from most studies on political language in Nigerian politics as it has a broader conception of language. Here, language is seen as all the semiotic modes that politicians deploy for meaning-making. Thus, this paper focuses on all the communicative elements used in selected newspaper campaign adverts for the 2015 elections in Nigeria, paying attention to how all the features contribute to the dissemination of the messages in the adverts.

## **Language and Politics**

Politics is one of the realities in our social world. Since language is the creator of the social world, it therefore becomes inevitable for language and politics to be intrinsically linked. Language is indeed central to politics. The view of the relationship between language and politics is age-long. According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012:19), Aristotle was the earliest person to engage the subject on the relationship of language and politics, and his view on the matter is that since human beings are political animals, speech is basically an asset with which they enact their political nature. Aristotle captures this view in his popular extract from his book

*Politics:*

But obviously man is a political animal in a sense in which a bee is not, or any other gregarious animal. Nature, as we say, does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech. Speech is something different from voice, which is possessed by other animals also and used by them to express pain or pleasure.... Speech, on the other hand, serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and what is unjust. For the real difference between man and other animals is that humans alone have the perception of good and evil, just and unjust, etc. It is the sharing of a common view in these matters that makes a household and a state.  
(1253a 1-18, Ackrill 1987 in Fairclough and Fairclough 2012:19)

Fairclough and Fairclough (ibid) affirm that Aristotle's view of the relationship between language and politics is that "politics is action in pursuit of highest goods based upon decisions, which arise out of deliberations". The thrust of the quotation is that "deliberation" (language use) is the major resource for decision-making on important issues in a political structure.

Schaffner (2004:117) asserts that "politics cannot be conducted without language". Chilton (2004:6) captures the centrality of language to politics in the following words: "the doing of politics is

predominantly constituted in language.” Chilton’s (ibid) remark unequivocally impresses upon us the fact that politics is only politics through language. Beard (2000:2) captures this same sense when he opines that the whole essence of politics is to gain power, exercise and keep power and language is the major vehicle for achieving these goals. Adegaju (2005:54) contributes to the discourse on the centrality of language to politics when he says that “the intricate bond between language and politics is such that it becomes difficult to conceive of politics without its medium – language”. Similarly, Ayeomoni (2004:200) reinforces the interconnectedness of language and politics when he remarks that language is the means by which politics or political discourse and ideas are widely disseminated”.

While most of the opinions above on the role of language in politics seem to echo the centrality of language to politics, Awonusi (2008:10) considers the relationship between language and politics in a somewhat different way when he says that “the relationship between politics and language is bi-directional”. By this, Awonusi (ibid) means that language influences politics as much as politics influences language. This view is similar to the sense conveyed by Opeibi (2009), who considers the relationship between language and politics as symbiotic. While one tends to accept the view that language is central to politics, as political actions are inevitably linguistic/semiotic actions, the fact remains that politics influences and shapes language, as political language has its distinct features which mark it political. However, no matter how one views the relationship between language and politics, the undeniable truth is that an intrinsic relationship and complementarity exist between the two.

Scholars have engaged in the study of the relationship of language and politics from different academic perspectives. Linguists, sociologists and political scientists have indeed worked on the interdependence of the two concepts. In fact, the issues of language and politics

can be said to have deepened interdisciplinarity in scholarship in recent times. But generally speaking, the two fields in which the relationship between language and politics is most explored are political science and linguistics. Although each of the disciplines focuses on different issues, they also have some meeting points. Since politics is all about gaining power to make decisions, to control the economic power of the state, to control other people's behaviours, language according to Ayoade (1982:724), is the conveyor belt of power, which moves people to vote, debate or revolt. For instance, while linguists will generally be interested in the linguistic choices made by politicians to appeal to the electorate in political contexts, political scientists tend to examine issues articulated through language by politicians. Specifically, the attention given to the relationship between language and politics has contributed to the entrenchment of political discourse not only as a discourse genre but also as an academic discipline. In addition, critical discourse analysis as a relatively new strand in research on discourse which is fast growing dwells greatly on discourses that can be considered as political discourse such as political speeches, political advertising, political debates, among others.

Insights from scholars such as Beard (2002), van Dijk (2001), Ayoade (1982), among others, reveal that politics influences and shapes language greatly. Since politics involves wielding power, and political actions are enacted through discursive formations (van Dijk, 2001), it therefore becomes important for linguistic/semiotic resources to be used in ways that will enable politicians achieve their aim of wielding power. To win elections in politics, politicians are usually conscious of the need for them to persuade and convince the electorate using different means.

## **Perspectives on Nigerian Political Discourse**

Nigerian political discourse has no doubt enjoyed significant scholarly attention from linguistic, sociological, cultural and psychological perspectives. Owing to the linguistic orientation of this study, the focus is on previous linguistic analyses of political discourse in Nigeria. Generally, linguistic studies on Nigerian political discourse fall under the categories: speeches, advertisements, cartoons, interviews and debates. However, political speeches represent the most researched aspect of Nigerian political discourse. Some of the earliest studies on Nigerian political speeches (Awonuga 1988; Akindele 1989; Oladeji 1991) focused on the political idiolect of foremost Nigerian politicians such as Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief Ladoke Akintola.

Awonuga (1988) describes the features of Awolowo's political language as political jargon, the use of metaphors, vagueness and ambiguity, couplings and strings of words and statements with satirical undertones. Awonuga reports that the metaphors typical of Awolowo's language are derived from war, sleep, music, game, slavery, nature and gambling. Akindele (1989) corroborates Awonuga as his findings are basically similar to those of Awonuga.

Oladeji (1991) focuses on the use of songs in Nigerian politics of the first and second republics. In the paper, Oladeji (*ibid*) asserts that since the Yorùbá community was an illiterate one in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, songs became an inevitable mode of political communication. Oladeji's assertion on the illiterate nature of the Yorùbá of that time can be contested, as politicians of the time such as Chief Obáfẹ̀mi Awólówò, Chief S.L. Akintola, and others, communicated political messages through speeches in Yoruba language and English language. However, Oladeji's (*ibid*) position on the centrality of songs to political communication in Nigeria in the past is true, even up to the present times. Drawing on songs

from different sources such as social events, palaces, etc, Oladeji (ibid) reported that political songs were used to praise political leaders and kings by their supporters and subjects respectively. Similarly, songs were confirmed in the study to serve the purpose of derision and abuse of oppositional political groups or ethnic groups. The paper concluded that oral language will infinitely have a place in political communication in Africa.

There are also studies on the political discourse of the third republic. Such studies basically revolve around the campaign discourse of Chief M.K.O. Abiola and Alhaji Bashir Tofa who were the flagbearers of the annulled 1993 presidential elections in Nigeria, and the protest discourse generated by the cancellation of the elections (see Opeibi 2009 and Adegboju 2005). Since the different republics were interrupted by military intervention in Nigerian politics, studies have also been carried out on the political discourses of Nigerian military Presidents (Amafah 1991; Oha 1994; Adegbija 1997; Ayeomoni 2007; Daramola 2008). Oha (1994) examines the war speeches of General Gowon and Colonel Ojukwu during the Biafran war, showing how language was used by the two leaders to motivate their people for the prosecution of the war. The study was carried out from the perspectives of semiotics and systemic functional linguistics. Ayeomoni (2007) also studies the lexical choices of some military heads of states of Nigeria. Alo and Igwebuike (2009) is another important contribution to the language of Nigeria's erstwhile military leaders. Employing a systemic functional linguistic approach, Alo and Igwebuike (ibid) report that Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu's coup speech of 1966 was characterised by lexico-semantic strategies and grammatical features such as military diction, lexical relations and referring expressions, coercive features and the declarative mood.

Since the end of military rulership in Nigeria and the commencement of the fourth republic in 1999, there has been a welcome proliferation of research on political discourse in

Nigeria with political speeches being the major focus. One major observation is that there have been political discourse studies of the speeches of each of the Presidents that Nigeria has had since 1999. There have been studies on President Obasanjo's speeches (see Yusuf 2003; Ayoola 2005; Taiwo 2008; Ezeifeke 2013), on Late President Umaru Yar'adua (Olaniyi 2007; Ayeomoni and Akinkurolere 2012) and also on the language of Dr Goodluck Jonathan, the immediate past President of the country (see Kamalu and Agangan 2011; Abuya 2012; Waya and Ogechukwu 2013). Scholars have equally worked on language use at political campaigns and in political manifestoes (see Alo 2004, 2012). Similarly, studies have been done on political advertisements and cartoons (see Opeibi 2006; Medubi 2008). Furthermore, the language of Nigeria's legislature has received scholarly attention (see Daramola 2006; Ayodele 2008).

All of the previous studies highlighted above provide insights into the present research endeavour. However, the present research departs significantly from the existing studies in the sense that it seeks to fill a gap in political discourse analysis in Nigeria which borders on the inadequate exploration of multimodal resources in Nigerian political advertisements, especially from a socio-semiotic perspective. Whereas Medubi's (2008) touches on the importance of multimodal elements in political communication in Nigeria, the focus of the study was political cartoons. Also Opeibi (2006) who investigated political advertisements in Nigeria focused only on the verbal component of the discourse. This paper thus seeks to fill this gap by analysing some newspaper political adverts for the 2015 general elections in Nigeria from a socio-semiotic approach to multimodality.

## **Methodology**

Data for this study were drawn from print media advertisements in three national newspapers in Nigeria: *The Punch*, *The Nation* and *Nigerian Tribune*. The newspapers were published between January and March 2015 which was the most eventful period of political campaigning for the March 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Nine advertisements were purposively selected for this study owing to the rhetorical appeals in them. The adverts were basically those of the major political parties: *Peoples' Democratic Party* and *All Progressives Congress* sponsored by the parties themselves or by the various associations identifying with the parties and promoting their ambitions. The adverts were campaigns for gubernatorial and presidential elections. The decision to focus on the strongest parties was motivated by the fact that their political adverts cut across most Nigerian newspapers towards the elections due to their financial capabilities and media influence. The adverts are subsequently scanned and converted to word document for data presentation.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study deploys the social semiotic approach to multimodality which was developed by Gunther Kress in its analysis. This approach to the analysis of multimodal communication is rooted in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics from which it takes its analytical principles. Kress et al. (2001:11) remark that a primary consideration in the approach is that "media of communication are shaped and organized by a culture into a range of meaning-making systems, modes, in order to articulate the meanings demanded by the practical, social requirements of different communities". Therefore, the approach to semiotic analysis sees signs not only as culturally constructed but also interpreted within certain cultural purviews. Furthermore, social semiotics adopts Halliday's metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal and textual) in the analysis

of semiotic ensembles showing how the various meanings are communicated by the verbal and visual signifiers in a semiotic ensemble.

## **Findings and Discussions**

The analysis of the selected advertisements for the 2015 elections in Nigeria which constitutes the data for this study is presented in this section. The data reflect the heated nature of the Nigerian political atmosphere in preparation for the elections, characterised by unusual lack of confidence and desperation of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party and the growing popularity of the All Progressives Congress. Thus, both political groups enacted power in their adverts. The multimodal analysis of the select adverts is built around the advertisers appeal to history, emphasis on change, appeal to credibility, counter discourse and branding, which are major tropes in the adverts.

### **Appeal to History**

Whereas Ademilokun and Taiwo (2013) had revealed that the political adverts for the 2011 general elections in Nigeria were characterised by historical allusion which was used by political actors to convince and persuade the electorate to accept them and reject their opponents, the political adverts for the 2015 general elections do not just contain historical allusion but feature history as a major rhetorical trope for political mobilisation. Since the activities in politics have great influence on the lives and futures of a people, the electorate need information about the antecedents of politicians seeking their votes in order to judge their suitability for the political positions that they seek. Conscious of this fact, the advert producers under the instructions of the political parties inundate their audience with information about the histories of political contestants in an election, especially their political opponents. The campaign adverts for the 2015 general elections in Nigeria being studied in this work manifest this tendency greatly

owing to the fact that the two strongest political contenders for the post of President of Nigeria are persons who had earlier served in that capacity at different times and in different political formations and arrangements. Thus, people had certain perceptions about their governance which the adverts producers intentionally desired to foreground for positive representation of their candidates and negative representation of their political opponents. Consider the advert below:

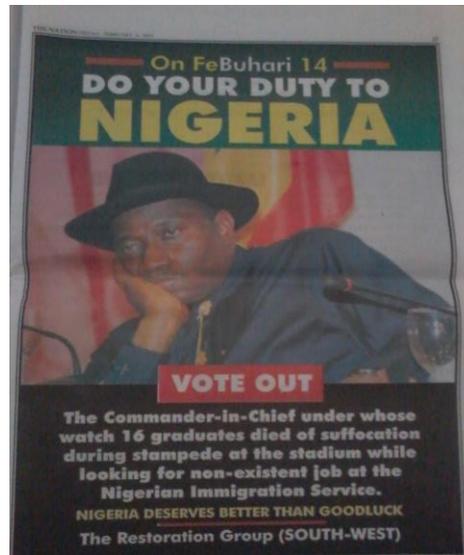


(Nigerian Tribune, March 20, 2015)

The image above is a vivid example of multimodal recreation of history for political purpose. The advert which was sponsored by the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) is pungently used to present the presidential candidate of the opposition party, General Buhari, in a bad light drawing on his historical deeds while he was the military President of Nigeria between 1984 and 1985. The expression “Man who made history... punished our **Royal Fathers** for visiting Jerusalem” is consciously used to draw the attention of the electorate to the action of General Buhari in reprimanding two notable traditional rulers (King Sijuade, Ooni of Ife and Alhaji Ado Bayero, the Late Emir of Kano) for travelling to Jerusalem contrary to his instruction during his regime. The advert producers intentionally used the historical fact to construct the General seeking election as President as a defiant, given the fact that traditional authorities are

held sacrosanct in Nigerian cultures. Thus, the utter disrespect and ridicule of the monarchs is presented as a grave act and an omen of the repugnant character of the general. In fact, in the advert, the supremacy and heights of the monarchs is reflected in the manner in which “royal fathers” is written as it is intentionally foregrounded through the capitalisation of the initial letters of the two words and their presentation in bold characters. Similarly, in order to strengthen the construction of Buhari’s act as unacceptable, the word “history” is used sarcastically and is written in red to present the action as evil since red has an evil association.

Therefore, the message being clearly communicated in the advert is that a critical look at the history of Buhari will reveal that he would not make a good leader as he does not respect the monarchs of Nigerian major ethnic groups. The advert is also strategically used to appeal to the Hausa who respect the Emir of Kano and the Yoruba people whose major traditional leader was humiliated to deny Buhari their support in preparation for the 2015 elections. The words “stop” “think” and “act” capture the wish of the text producers that the people will reflect on the record of Buhari in relation to his relationships with Nigerian leaders and thus disapprove of the general and ultimately vote for Dr Jonathan, the PDP candidate. History is also strategically used for the achievement of political goals in the following image:



Certain verbal and visual signifiers are strikingly used in the advert above to discredit the candidate of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party and make the electorate reject him and his party. However, underlying the advert and its semiotic orchestration is the recourse to history. In the segment of the advert written in white, there is a reference to an ugly incident which happened in Nigeria on March 15, 2014, when some Nigerian youths were suffocated to death while trying to take a recruitment test of the Nigerian Immigrations Service. The matter, which generated a lot of furore in the country, had been used in the media and other quarters to score the government of President Jonathan who was seeking re-election lowly. Therefore, the opposition party, APC, who were trying to snatch power away from the PDP decided to foreground the historical fact as a way to colour the judgments of the people about the PDP and their candidate.

In the advert, colour plays an important role as it is strategically used to buttress the messages of the advert. The use of yellow and white in writing "NIGERIA", "NIGERIA DESERVES BETTER THAN GOODLUCK" and "On Fe ....14" is significant. By writing Nigeria in that way, the advertisers are portraying Nigeria as a richly endowed nation in spite of

her leadership challenges, as the colour signifies abundance, riches and wealthy life. The optimistic and positive attitude of the advert producer to Nigeria is reinforced by the use of the colour in presenting “NIGERIA DESERVES BETTER THAN GOODLUCK”, showing that a richly endowed nation such as Nigeria deserves better governance and leadership. The third appearance of the colour is used to show that the flourishes that had eluded Nigeria will start manifesting from the day that Nigerians vote in Buhari, which was originally intended to be February 14. Still on colour in the advert, the writing of “VOTE OUT” in white on a red background is significant, as through it, the meaning is communicated that the government to be voted out is dangerous and evil while the voting out is a positive action given the fact that white is a positive colour.

The gaze of the President is also strategically used to communicate the incompetence of the President as such facial posturing is synonymous with lack of ideas and submission to failure. The gaze of the President is intentionally presented to justify the need for his removal from office as President, as a major campaign point against him by the opposition parties was incompetence.

It is remarkable that the ruling PDP, in addition to using historical facts for negative other representation of the APC presidential candidate, General Buhari, also deployed historical facts for the edification of Dr Jonathan, PDP presidential candidate. This is achieved through what can be called their evidence-based campaigns. The party legitimated itself and its candidate by providing information about many of the accomplishments of the President since he assumed duties as President. This, for the party, is a way of asserting that since they had accomplished so much, they deserved another opportunity. Consider the following advertisement:

**Facts Speak**

Compare & Contrast

Jonathan	Buhari
✓ Upholds the rule of law. ✓ Committed to credible elections.	✗ Truncated democratic progress by suspending the 1999 constitution. ✗ Jailed several Nigerians without fair hearing.
✓ signed the Freedom of Information bill into law.	✗ Promulgated Decree 4 of 1984 to gag the press.
✓ Established 14 new universities in two years. ✓ Initiated the Almajiri system of education.	✗ Never built a single school for the educational advancement of the country.
✓ Reviving the railway system.	✗ Scrapped the Lagos Metrolink Project at a loss of \$70 million of taxpayers' money.
✓ Unbundled the power sector with policies that encourage massive private sector investment.	✗ NIL
✓ Declared Nigeria's food import by \$5.3 billion. Food production expanding by an additional 2 million metric tons.	✗ NIL
✓ Revamping Automobile Industry.	✗ NIL
✓ Re-equipping and re-positioning the Nigerian Armed Forces.	✗ NIL

I am convinced that I have kept my pact with  
 my people, and it is now time to look to the future.  
 With your tremendous support, we have collectively  
 done so much in the last three and half years, but to  
 take our country to the next level, there is still more to  
 be done."  
 President Goodluck Jonathan, GCPR



**Vote right, Vote PDP**  
 Peoples Democratic Party... power to the people

www.pdpnigeria.org  
 www.facebook.com/pdpnigeria  
 www.twitter.com/pdpnigeria  
 www.youtube.com/pdpnigeria

In the advert, the PDP presented an array of achievements of President Jonathan. In fact, the title given to the advert (Facts Speak) which is foregrounded by its font size, colour and position in the advertisement clearly shows the nature of the evidence-based campaign of PDP. The historical facts presented in the advert such as the establishment of fourteen universities, reforms in the power sector, revamping of the automobile industry, repositioning of the armed forces, among others, are meant to persuade and convince the Nigerian electorate that the President deserved a second term in office. This meaning is further reinforced and conveyed in the text at the left bottom of the advert where the President stated that “I have kept my pact ....we have collectively done so much in the last three and half years”. The expression “I have kept my pact” as a part of the text conveys a fundamental information about the attitude of the President regarding his performance or accomplishments. The tone of the text is assertive, showing that the President was convinced that he did well and thus deserved re-election. The expression “we have collectively done so much in the last three and half years” is a continued expression of the

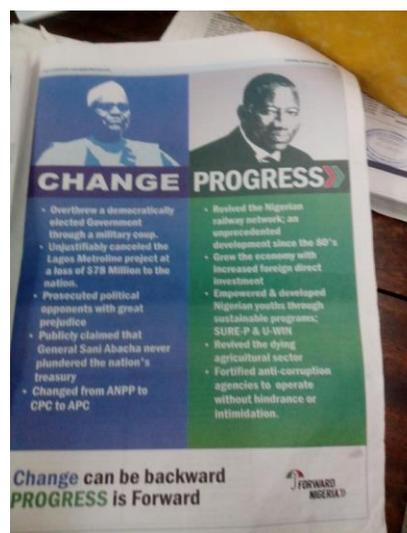
conviction of the President that he had performed well since he assumed duties as President, even though this time he uses an inclusive pronoun “we” to refer to himself and his entire team.

### **Emphasis on Change**

The data reveals that many of the adverts deploy linguistic and non-linguistic signifiers to project the need for change in the Nigerian society. Indeed the discourse of Nigerian public political discourse and civic discourse prior to the 2015 general elections had centred on change, as many Nigerians thought there was need for change in the affairs of the nation. The demand for change was motivated by the rising negative realities in the nation. Some of the problems which are generally acknowledged as dangerous to the health of the nation include *Boko haram* insurgency, naira devaluation, large scale corruption, rising impunity among some political office holders, among many others. Thus, it was strategic for the opposition party to consistently harp on the need for change as a reasonable number of Nigerians were not comfortable with the situation of the country. Below is an example of the use of change as a campaign point:



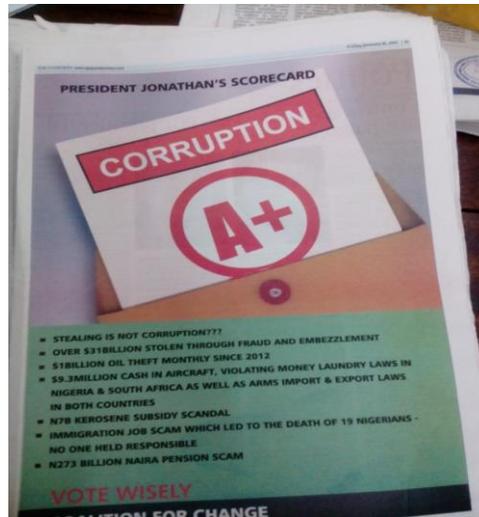
In the advert, the APC presented to Nigerians a list of negative happenings in the country such as insurgency and its dastard effects on the people, naira devaluation, poverty, oil bunkering, among others. By doing so, the party was sensitising the Nigerian electorate to the need to take action in order to prevent the continuation of the multifarious problems of the nation, while presenting themselves as the solution to the problems. Even if one is not sure that the party has what it takes to solve the problems, they, at least, present factual information about the unfortunate situation of the Nigerian nation, thus appealing to the Nigerian electorate. After all, the thinking of some Nigerians was that even if the opposition party does not perform on getting into power, there was need for a change of hands in the realms of affairs of the nation. The writing of the words “Destroy” and “Nigeria” in capital letters is significant as it is used to emphasise the potential danger of the continuation of the Nigerian problems while the drawing of the President and the animal he held was used to show the pitiable condition of the nation under the leadership of a weak leader, as shown by his body structure in the image, especially his legs. In reaction to the pervasiveness of campaigns on change by the APC, the PDP produced the following advertisement:



The advert is used to deconstruct the idealistic notion of change being brandished by the APC. The advert producer alerts the Nigerian electorate to the thinking that change can either be positive or negative and that given the antecedents of the candidate of the APC, his idea of change might be anti-progressive. The juxtaposition of the achievements of President Jonathan and General Buhari's past deeds is used to call the attention of the public to the fact that President Jonathan's plans for the nation supersede the parochial notions of General Buhari. This thinking is summed up in the expression "change can be backward; PROGRESS is Forward", in which the idea of change of the APC is undermined while the agenda of the PDP is glorified not only by the word "progress" written in capital letters but also by the contrast between the words "backward" and "forward".

### **Appeal to Credibility**

Since the election outcome has a huge effect on the destinies and lives of the people in any society, there is usually recourse to credibility issues relating to contestants in elections. In the Nigerian society which is rife with corruption and many other reported vices, the question of credibility becomes more important for the glory of the country to be restored. Therefore, the campaigners for the 2015 elections in Nigeria foregrounded credibility for positive self-representation and negative other-representation as evident in the data for this study. Consider the advert below:



In the advert above, the PDP presidential candidate, President Jonathan, is presented as an incredible person whose personal beliefs and style of governance support corruption. The advert producers strategically presented information about some of the cases of financial misappropriation under the government of President Jonathan to show that he condoles with corruption due to his low sense of credibility. In addition, reference is made to the popular statement made by the President sometime during the campaigns that “stealing is not corruption” to show the level of the depravity of the man’s mind. The advert thus markedly presents the President as morally bankrupt with the series of shady dealings and financial misappropriation in his government which qualify him to earn an “A1”, which in the Nigerian context means distinction, in the aspect of corruption. Therefore, with the full information provided on the credibility of the President as manifest in his immoral belief and condolment with corruption, the Nigerian electorate are sensitized to use their votes positively for the growth of the nation by voting for the APC, which promised change. Below is another advert in which credibility is deployed as a persuasive strategy:



In the advert above, Jimi Agbaje, contestant for the post of Governor of Lagos State under PDP, is presented as a man of credibility. Although the advert does not contain a lot of words, beneath its brevity lies a bold message of credibility of the personality of Jimi Agbaje. The verbal signifiers that tacitly convey the message in the text are the parallel structures, “JK WE KNOW” and “JK WE TRUST”. Certain words are significant in the two simple sentences. In the first sentence, the word “know” is significant as it is used to state that Jimi Agbaje is someone that has proven himself over a long period of time as a man of intact integrity and credibility. In the Nigerian context of English usage, the expression has a pragmatic effect which implies someone that one is sure of or people are certain about. The use of the word “we” is also significant as it is used to present Jimi Agbaje as someone generally respected and believed in by everybody. The “we” may be referring to the party, which is presenting the candidate to the people as someone they are confident about and it might also have been used strategically by the advert producer to portray the gubernatorial candidate as someone that the generality of Lagosians respect and can vouch for.

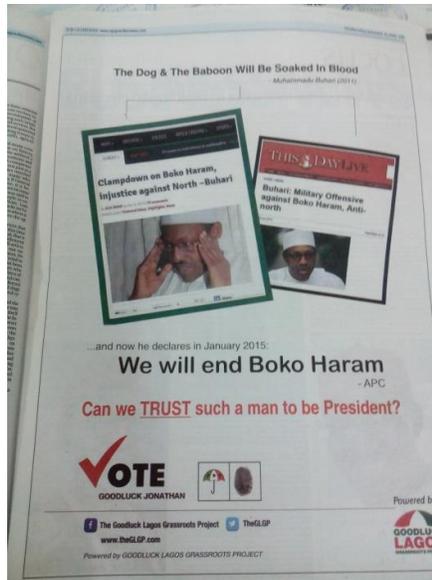
The second sentence, “JK we trust”, is also used to strongly endorse the candidature of Jimi Agbaje drawing on his integrity and credibility. Apart from the inherent meanings of the sentences relating to the integrity of Jimi Agbaje, the structural parallelism of the text and its content and the capitalisation of the sentences combine to emphasise the absolute credibility of the gubernatorial candidate. The bold appearance of Jimi Agbaje in the advert is used to reinforce the message of the advert about the credibility of the man as he looks on confidently radiating confidence and calmness, which are features of a credible individual.

### **Counter Discourse**

The data for this study reveals that an important rhetorical feature of the newspaper advertising discourse for Nigeria’s 2015 elections is counter discourse. By counter discourse, we mean the use of language by politicians to debunk the claims made by their political opponents. Counter discourse is a discursive strategy that is popular in discourses that seek to challenge hegemonic orders or oppositional stances. According to Thomas (2010:24-25), counter discourse seeks to “represent reality differently and to counter the strategies of the dominant which regulate the understanding of social reality”. Of course, politicians generally give good reports about themselves during political campaigns in order to appeal positively to the electorate. However, due to their desperation, some of such information provided by them may not be necessarily accurate, as they are just meant to influence the judgment of the electorate. During the political campaigns for the 2015 elections, political opponents intentionally presented information contrary to the declarations made by the sitting President of Nigeria at that time, Dr Jonathan. Consider the following advert:



In the advert above, the popular declaration of President Jonathan “My administration has reduced poverty rate in Nigeria by 50%” is presented as untrue by the opposition party. Prior to the elections, the campaign point of the President and his team had been that the Nigerian economy was growing and that poverty was reducing in the country. But the advert above sponsored by the APC which cites an authoritative source, World Bank Survey, shows that the country and its people were indeed poor, as the country is ranked third among the five poorest countries. The information provided in the advert is strategic and intended to alert Nigerians to the reality of their situation with a view to making them vote against the ruling PDP and their candidates, most especially the President. The counter information provided by the APC about the true state of the Nigerian nation is sensitive enough to cause a revolt against the PDP since many people do not pray for poverty in a nation whose wealth is brazenly enjoyed by the political class. To consider another advert:



In the advert above, some counter discourse is provided to present the APC presidential candidate, General Buhari, in a negative light to the electorate. *Boko Haram* insurgency has been a major problem to the Nigerian nation and thus constituted an important part of the campaign discourse for the 2015 elections, especially the opposition party. Therefore, the APC stated that “We will end Boko Haram” to secure the confidence of Nigerians regarding a matter which was of utmost concern to every Nigerian. But the PDP countered the declaration of the APC by making reference to the previous statements of General Buhari where he had stated that the offensive against *Boko Haram* was anti-north. Therefore, the PDP was saying that the General Buhari was not committed to the locution that he made, which is captured in the interrogative “can we TRUST such a man to be President?”. It is interesting that a similar interrogative is deployed to convey the theme of figure 8 just as the word “trust” which features in figure 8 occurs in 9. The texts above thus show that counter discourse feature in the campaigns of the two major political parties, APC and PDP.

## **Branding**

Another discursive element in the newspaper advertising campaign discourse for the 2015 elections in Nigeria is branding. Branding, according to Adolphsen (2009:5) refers to “any organization’s activities aimed at the creation and fostering of a distinct brand image in consumers’ minds”. Citing Grimaldi (2003:7), Adolphsen (ibid) states that such activities involve focusing resources “on selected tangible and intangible attributes to differentiate the brand in an attractive, meaningful and compelling way for the targeted audience”. Branding is intentionally used by politicians and political leaders because “it seems to assist politicians and party leaders in aligning their communication activities to a fixed set of messages and emotions ...” (Adolphsen, 2009:2).

In some of the adverts and indeed other political campaign discourses, political contestants for the 2015 elections were branded through the use of certain creative linguistic expressions in reference to them. For instance, as revealed in figure 7, Mr Jimi Agbaje, PDP gubernatorial candidate in Lagos, was famously referred to as “JK” which are his initials. But the expression was so popular in the campaign discourse and in the public discourse as the man was generally known as “JK”, which was also impressively presented in the adverts. Similarly, the presidential candidate of the APC, General Buhari was presented as a brand with the expression “FeBuhari” which featured in the campaign adverts and other campaign discourses. The expression became so popular in the country such that it was used in different contexts for mobilisation for the APC and their presidential candidate, General Buhari. The expression which emanated from the association of the month of February with the combination of the Yoruba verb “fe” to marry or love and “Buhari”, the surname of the General, in view of the

homophonous nature of the expressions. Such use of language became a brand and enhanced the mobilisation of people for the APC and General Buhari.

## **Conclusions**

This paper has dwelled on the analysis of some political campaign advertisements for the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The paper reveals that the adverts reflect the tense nature of the Nigerian political landscape before and during the elections as the adverts were used by the political parties and politicians to fiercely pursue and promote their political agenda without any conscious recourse to modesty. The multimodal resources of the adverts, which were socio-culturally grounded, were analysed under the broad themes of appeal to history, emphasis on change and appeal to credibility which were the major tropes in the adverts. The centrality of history to the discourse emanated from the fact that the contestants for the presidential elections were persons who had occupied the positions before and whose antecedents the electorate considered important for their decision-making. The historical facts were thus used for both legitimisation and crucification in the discourse. The dictum “change” which was a major campaign point for the opposition party, APC, also served the purpose of positive self representation and negative other representation in the discourse, as the opposition party harped on it to assert that the sixteen years of PDP governance had been a waste to the country and that the change it was preaching would restore the glory of the country.

The paper further reveals that theme of credibility featured prominently in the discourse for the purpose of promoting the self and denigrating the other as a way to condition the perception and reception of political contestants by the electorate. It is also revealed that counter discourse was strategically used in the discourse to discredit and dispute some of the positive declarations of political contestants aimed at appealing to the electorate. Furthermore, the paper

revealed that through the peculiar use of semiotic resources in the discourse, the discourse producers branded political contestants. The data clearly shows that the discourse producers hired by politicians to present the adverts were conscious of the need to link up the discursive formations in the adverts with the broad socio-cultural realities in the Nigerian context.

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