VISUALISING IDEOLOGICAL DICHOTOMIES IN NIGERIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CARTOONS

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Abstract

In the realm of ideology propagation, visual elements have often been overshadowed by textual and linguistic analyses. Addressing this research gap, this paper investigates the ideological portrayals within election cartoons, focusing on the dual ideologies of hope and disillusionment (HD) as discursively constructed through visual and textual resources. The study specifically examines how these ideologies are represented in Nigerian election cartoons related to the 2023 Presidential election, emphasising their self-sufficient metafunctional meaning potentials. Grounded in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Grammar of Visual Design's tripartite metafunctions, this study analyses the visual elements, while van Dijk's (1998) and Fairclough's (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) frameworks guide the examination of discursive strategies within the textual components of HD ideologies. The analysis draws on four purposively selected cartoons from Daily Trust and The Punch newspapers, ensuring a balanced regional representation from both northern and southern Nigeria. The findings reveal that visual modes in election cartoons are not merely supplementary to textual elements but are, in many cases, more self-sufficient in conveying HD ideologies. The visual representations employ sophisticated semiotic resources, such as symbolism, composition, and colour schemes, which independently articulate complex ideological stances. Textually, the study uncovers a strategic use of linguistic features that complement the visual messages, enhancing the overall ideological narrative. The use of irony, metaphor, and other rhetorical devices in the text serves not just to depict HD ideologies but also to provide deeper insights into the socio-political context and the cartoonist's ideological perspective. The interplay between text and image often results in a layered understanding of the cartoons, where the textual elements reinforce or, at times, subvert the visual messages.Moreover, the analysis identifies a consistent pattern in the portrayal of ideologies: hope is predominantly associated with the ruling party and its candidates, often depicted through positive visual and textual cues, while disillusionment is largely reserved for the electorate and opposition parties, represented through more negative or critical imagery and language. The study concludes that election cartoons serve as powerful tools for ideological expression, with visual elements often providing a more immediate and comprehensive conveyance of ideologies than textual counterparts. For future research, it is recommended to extend the exploration of visual and textual elements in ideological discourse across diverse socio-political contexts, particularly in non-Western settings.

Keywords: Ideological constructs, Visuals semiotics, Election cartoons, Hope and disillusionment, Nigerian election.

Background to the Study

In contemporary discourse, the limitations of linguistic expression alone in conveying complex and nuanced meanings have become increasingly apparent. Consequently, visual elements have assumed a more prominent role in decoding and amplifying meanings, often intricately embedded within ideological frameworks, irrespective of textual accompaniment. This evolution reflects a broader trend wherein visuals have gained critical importance across various forms of communication, particularly in the political arena, where they serve as potent conveyors of subtle and multifaceted messages. Although visuals have historically been integral to political communication (Farkas and Bene, 2021; Veneti et al., 2019), their significance has markedly increased in recent years, particularly within the medium of election cartoons. These visual representations resonate profoundly with voters, who, akin to the general populace, are more inclined to trust what they perceive, especially when mediated by the ever-evolving and pervasive landscape of modern media. Moreover, the mnemonic efficacy of election visuals, akin to other visual forms, is noteworthy due to their capacity to convey specific, often intricate, messages that might otherwise elude verbal articulation (Grabe and Bucy, 2009).

This study engages with the burgeoning scholarly interest in the linguistic dimensions of political communication within election cartoons, a subgenre of political cartoons. However, it is noteworthy that significant research lacunae persist in this domain, particularly regarding the appropriation of visual representations of ideologies within election cartoons. While the expression of ideology through language has been extensively explored across various domains, including the media, the visual modes employed in election cartoons offer a relatively under-explored avenue for examining the construction and communication of ideological frames. The intersection between language and ideology has been extensively scrutinised, particularly concerning how ideologies are articulated within the textual components of election cartoons. Such texts often afford deeper insights into the interplay between belief systems and political power. Van Dijk (2006) posits that a comprehensive understanding of the power dynamics within dominant social structures is essential for deciphering the political implications embedded within ideological representations in the media. Chilton (2004) further asserts that politics is fundamentally a contestation of power between those seeking to maintain their dominance and those endeavouring to resist it. While the linguistic dimensions of ideology have yielded substantial scholarly insights, the visual modes employed in election cartoons, with their capacity to convey multiple layers of meaning, hold even greater potential for academic exploration. These visual elements enable cartoonists to foreground the ideological implications of polarisation or binary oppositions, often orchestrated by the media to legitimise or delegitimise particular viewpoints during election periods.

This study posits that the visual and linguistic modes employed in election cartoons are intrinsically linked to the competing ideological representations of hope and disillusionment (HD). Colin Seymour-Ure (2001), as cited in Manning and Phiddian (2015:162), elucidates that election cartoons typically make two types of observations regarding those in power or aspiring to power. The first pertains to how cartoons convey election hope ideologies, depicting the socio-political landscape as "what is" and presenting political actors as "who they really are," with a looming sense of uncertainty. The second observation aligns with the ideology of election disillusionment, which critiques the system and its actors, representing "what ought to be" instead. This suggests that the visual and linguistic modes employed within election cartoons are deliberate and cannot be extricated from the socio-political contexts that engendered them. Election cartoons are not mere reflections of reality; rather, they are complex semiotic constructs that expose the persuasive choice and power of media bent through various means, including

satire, caricature, and visual metaphors. As Kerr (1999:78) observes, these cartoons reveal society's "warts and all," engaging directly with the shared prejudices and understandings of voters. This assertion underscores the semiotic paradox of HD ideologies, as articulated through the opposing visual and linguistic modes in election cartoons. These modes are often strategically designed to influence viewers towards a specific interpretation that aligns with the cartoonist's intended ideological stance (Khafaga, 2022:18). Beyond their function as instruments of entertainment or vehicles for reducing societal tension, election cartoons perform critical roles, such as agenda-setting, framing, and reinforcing symbols of national consensus (Speedling, 2004:13). The visual components of these cartoons—through the use of caricature, satire, analogy, and visual metaphors—carry multiple layers of meaning. The verbal elements, including pithy comments, formulaic expressions, and verbal cues, similarly convey complex and layered meanings. Collectively, these visual and linguistic elements engage in a nuanced interplay of manipulative and subjective devices, through which one group asserts influence over others, particularly voters, during election cycles.

Decoding the highly contested visual and linguistic elements in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election cartoons necessitates a profound understanding of the underlying intentions of media proprietors, as well as recognition of the discernible patterns rooted in their ideological precepts. The decoder must also account for the dynamics of the analogous contexts within each cartoon, particularly as these relate to the realities of identifiable spaces, historical narratives, events, and the actions of satirised or caricatured political actors. To rigorously interrogate these contextual cues, this study employs the theoretical frameworks of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), van Dijk (1998), and Fairclough (1995). Additionally, this study draws upon relevant scholarship concerning the role of election cartoons in conveying campaign strategies (Oduola and Adeagbo, 2019), (de) legitimisation (Oni and Oni-Buraimoh, 2017), negotiation strategies (Adeagbo, 2021), decolonisation (Zreik, 2024), and overt subjectivity (Gondwe and Walcott, 2024). Through this comprehensive analytical approach, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the visual and linguistic modes employed in election cartoons and their role in shaping ideological discourses within electoral contexts.

Previous studies on Political Election Cartoons

The media have increasingly evolved into a formidable instrument for the (re)production, reinforcement, and dissemination of ideologies, serving as a rich site for the production of highly ideological meanings (Agustian, 2021). While the linguistic aspects of media texts have been extensively explored by various scholars, particularly in relation to how these texts (re)produce ideologies, there remains a significant gap in the exploration of the visual-linguistic dynamics within media, especially in the context of election cartoons. Previous scholarship has tended to focus on either the visual or linguistic dimensions of political cartoons, often neglecting the intricate interplay between these modalities that jointly construct ideological narratives. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this gap by examining how election cartoons—through their visual and linguistic resources—exude and propagate ideologies, specifically those of hope and disillusionment. This investigation is grounded in the recognition that the visual-linguistic resources in election cartoons are not merely supplementary but are integral to the communicative function of these texts. The study aims to dissect the ideological discursive strategies embedded within these cartoons, focusing on how the visual elements act as potent constructs of ideological narratives, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on media, power, and ideology.

While previous studies on political election cartoons have employed various theoretical perspectives, such as Discourse Analysis (Kazanoğlu, 2016), Encryption Theory of Humour and

Mey's Pragmeme Theory (Oluremi, 2019), Critical Discourse Analysis (Nugraha, 2023), Theory of Conceptual Blending-Framing and Metaphors (Nkumbo, 2019; Fiankor & Kwame, 2017; Ekić, 2010), Multimodal Analysis (Khurram, Shamas & Farooq, 2023; Akpati, 2019), Visual Social Semiotics (Chukwuokoro, Ononye & Ngene, 2024; Bamgbose, 2021; El-Falaky, 2019; Adeagbo, 2022), Pragma-semiotics (Oduola & Adeagbo, 2019), and (Multimodal) Critical Discourse Analysis (Fisher, 2023; Ohemeng, 2020; Omolabi & Abiodun, 2020), there has been limited attention to the combined contribution of social semiotics and discursive ideological resources in negotiating the meaning within political cartoons. Specifically, the ideological constructs of hope and disillusionment within Nigerian election cartoons remain underexplored, particularly in the context of the Nigerian print media. This study, therefore, extends the scholarship on media political ideology by drawing on the Grammar of Visual Design and Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the symbolic visual-linguistic structures and strategies employed in election cartoons. Through this approach, the study aims to uncover how these cartoons not only reflect but also shape public perceptions of political ideologies. Thus, the aim of this study is to interrogate the meaning potentials embedded in the visual and linguistic structures of hope and disillusionment ideologies within the election cartoons of the 2023 Nigerian Presidential election. To achieve this aim, the study will be guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify and critically analyse the visual constructs of hope and disillusionment ideologies in election cartoons, employing the three meta-functions of the Grammar of Visual Design model.
2. To examine the discursive strategies that underpin the linguistic constructs of hope and disillusionment ideologies in these cartoons, utilising Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks.

This study, by integrating visual and linguistic analyses, seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how election cartoons function as multimodal texts that convey complex ideological messages, contributing to the broader discourse on media, power, and ideology.

Literature review and Theoretical Framework

Context of Nigerian Political Cartoons

Nigerian political cartoons have long served as a significant medium for social and political commentary, offering a unique blend of satire, caricature, and criticism that speaks to the socio-political realities of the country. These cartoons are not merely artistic expressions; they are potent tools for engaging with and challenging the status quo, often providing sharp insights into the complexities of Nigerian politics, governance, and public discourse. To fully appreciate the context within which these cartoons operate, it is essential to examine their historical evolution, their role in the public sphere, and the specific socio-political environment in which they are produced and consumed. The tradition of political cartooning in Nigeria dates back to the colonial period, where it emerged as a form of resistance against colonial oppression. Early Nigerian newspapers such as *The Daily Times* and *West African Pilot* featured cartoons that critiqued colonial policies and highlighted the struggles of the Nigerian populace. These early cartoons were instrumental in galvanising public opinion and fostering a sense of national identity and resistance against colonial rule (Omotoso, 2017). Following independence, political cartoons continued to evolve, reflecting the changing political landscape and the challenges of nation-building. During the military regimes of the 1970s and 1980s, cartoons became even more critical, using satire to circumvent censorship and address issues such as corruption, human rights abuses, and the erosion of democratic values (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

In the Nigerian public sphere, political cartoons function as both a mirror and a critique of society. They play a crucial role in shaping public opinion, often articulating the unspoken thoughts of the populace and holding leaders accountable. Cartoons distil complex political issues into simple, often humorous images that are easily understood by a wide audience. This accessibility makes

them a powerful medium for political communication, particularly in a country with diverse languages and literacy levels (Ojebode & Adegbola, 2007). Moreover, political cartoons in Nigeria are not just about entertainment; they are a form of social commentary that challenges authority and prompts critical reflection on the state of the nation. The socio-political environment in which Nigerian political cartoons are produced is characterised by a dynamic interplay of power, culture, and resistance. Nigeria's political landscape is marked by a history of military coups, ethnic and religious tensions, corruption, and struggles for democratic governance. These realities provide fertile ground for cartoonists, who often use their work to critique the failures of leadership, the inconsistencies in government policies, and the socio-economic challenges facing the country. For instance, during election periods, cartoons frequently depict the disillusionment of the electorate, the manipulation of the electoral process, and the empty promises of politicians (Oni and Oni-Buraimoh 2020). These cartoons serve as a barometer of public sentiment, capturing the hopes, frustrations, and scepticism of the Nigerian people. In contemporary times, the digital revolution has expanded the reach and impact of political cartoons. With the rise of social media, cartoons are now widely shared and disseminated, reaching a global audience and sparking conversations beyond Nigeria's borders. This digital proliferation has also introduced new challenges, such as the risk of censorship, legal repercussions for cartoonists, and the spread of misinformation through satirical content (Adesoji, 2011). Nonetheless, Nigerian political cartoons remain a vibrant and influential part of the nation's media landscape, continuing to engage with and critique the ever-evolving socio-political context.

Thus, Nigerian political cartoons are a potent form of socio-political commentary that reflect the complexities and contradictions of the nation's political landscape. They are deeply rooted in Nigeria's history of resistance and continue to play a critical role in shaping public discourse and holding leaders accountable. As Nigeria's socio-political environment continues to evolve, so too will its political cartoons, adapting to new challenges and opportunities while remaining a vital part of the country's media landscape.

Theoretical framework

Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design

The primary theoretical lens for this study is Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Grammar of Visual Design, a seminal framework in the field of visual semiotics. This theory posits that images, like language, are structured through a set of grammatical rules that convey meaning. The Grammar of Visual Designis particularly pertinent for this study as it offers a comprehensive approach to decoding the visual aspects of political cartoons, focusing on three key metafunctions: Representational, Interactive, and Compositional.

1. Representational Metafunction: This metafunction, analogous to the ideational function in linguistics, pertains to the depiction of reality in visual form. In the context of political cartoons, the representational metafunction involves the analysis of narrative and conceptual representations. Narrative representations convey actions and events, typically through the depiction of participants engaged in processes, while conceptual representations provide categorisations or generalisations of the depicted elements. This study applies the representational metafunction to identify and interpret how the cartoons visually construct the ideologies of hope and disillusionment through their narrative structures and conceptual frameworks.

2. Interactive Metafunction: This aspect of the Grammar of Visual Design examines the relationship between the image and its viewers, focusing on how the image positions the audience through visual elements such as gaze, angle, and framing. The interactive metafunction is crucial

for understanding how political cartoons engage the viewer, eliciting particular responses and constructing a specific relationship between the image and its audience. For example, the direction of a character's gaze or the angle from which a scene is depicted can subtly influence the viewer's perception of the depicted ideology.

3. Compositional Metafunction: The compositional metafunction concerns the organisation and distribution of information within the visual space, akin to the textual function in language. This metafunction involves the analysis of information value, salience, and framing—elements that determine the relative importance of visual components and how they are integrated to convey meaning. In political cartoons, the compositional metafunction is instrumental in understanding how elements such as the placement of characters, the use of colour, and the arrangement of text and images contribute to the overarching ideological message.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

In addition to visual analysis, this study incorporates Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore the linguistic dimensions of the selected political cartoons. Fairclough's CDA is a robust analytical tool that examines the ways in which discourse shapes and is shaped by social and political power structures. This approach is particularly useful for deconstructing the language used in political cartoons, revealing how linguistic choices reflect and reinforce ideological positions. Fairclough's model emphasises the importance of intertextuality—the relationship between different texts—and hegemony, the dominance of particular ideologies within discourse. By applying these concepts, the study examines how the language in political cartoons draws on and contributes to broader socio-political discourses, thus reinforcing or challenging dominant ideologies. For instance, the study investigates how textual elements in the cartoons, such as captions or speech bubbles, interact with visual elements to create a cohesive ideological message that resonates with or subverts existing power relations.

Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Model

To further enrich the analysis, this study employs van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Model, which bridges the gap between discourse analysis and cognitive psychology. Van Dijk's model is particularly concerned with how ideologies are cognitively processed and reproduced through discourse, making it a valuable framework for understanding the cognitive mechanisms underlying the reception and interpretation of political cartoons. Central to van Dijk's approach is the concept of the ideological square, a discourse strategy that highlights the positive aspects of 'us' (the in-group) and the negative aspects of 'them' (the out-group), while downplaying the in-group's negative aspects and the out-group's positive aspects. This study applies the ideological square to analyse how political cartoons construct and reinforce in-group and out-group identities, particularly in the context of hope and disillusionment ideologies. The study also utilises six of the twenty-seven discursive strategies identified by van Dijk—Evidentiality, Metaphor, Implication, Negation, Strong Model Obligation, and Rhetorical Question—to dissect the linguistic strategies used to convey and manipulate ideological content in the cartoons.

Therefore, the integration of Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design, Fairclough's CDA, and van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Model provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for this study, allowing for a nuanced analysis of both the visual and linguistic elements of political cartoons. This multi-theoretical approach not only facilitates a deeper understanding of how political cartoons communicate complex ideologies but also underscores the interplay between visual and verbal discourse in shaping public perceptions and political ideologies. Through this lens, the study aims to contribute to the broader scholarship on political communication, visual semiotics, and critical discourse analysis.

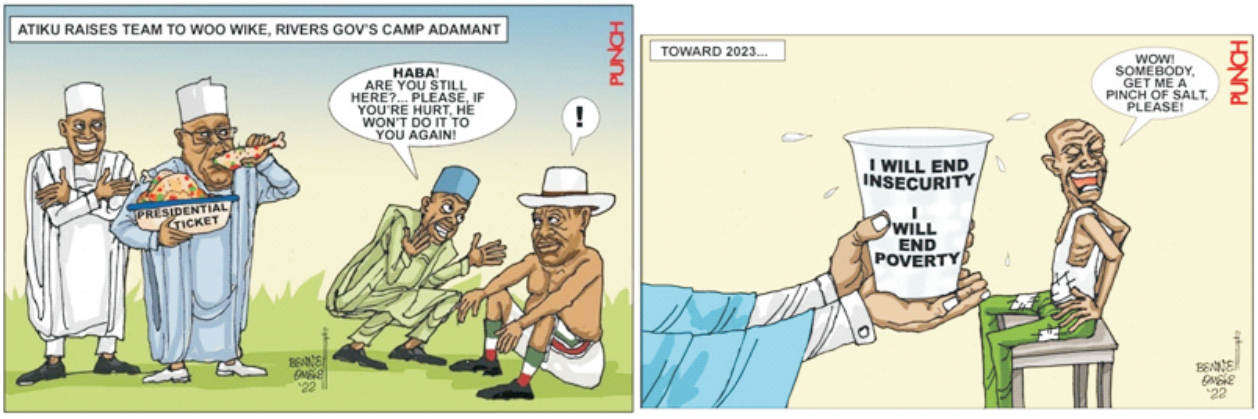
Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research design to analyse the visual and linguistic resources in selected election cartoons concerning the 2023 Nigerian Presidential election. The qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this research as it allows for an in-depth examination of the semiotic and discursive elements within the cartoons, which are inherently complex and multifaceted. The descriptive aspect provides a structured way to elucidate the nuances of these elements, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the ideological constructs present. The sample for this study consists of four election cartoons purposively selected from The Punch and Daily Trust newspapers' online platforms (https://punchng.com and https://dailytrust.com). These cartoons were chosen for their representational value, as they embody a range of ideological expressions that were prominent during the 2023 Nigerian Presidential election. The selection of these particular newspapers is justified by their robust online presence, their status as widely read national tabloids, and their engagement with critical issues surrounding the election, making them a rich source of data for this study. The analysis is conducted using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) The Grammar of Visual Design framework alongside Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and van Dijk's socio-cognitive model. The Grammar of Visual Design is employed to deconstruct the visual elements in the cartoons, focusing on the representational, interactive, and compositional metafunctions. These metafunctions are used to identify and interpret the visual constructs of hope and disillusionment ideologies within the cartoons.

On the linguistic front, Fairclough's CDA and van Dijk's socio-cognitive model guide the analysis of the textual elements accompanying the visuals. Fairclough's framework will be instrumental in uncovering the historical and societal contexts embedded within the cartoons, particularly in terms of how these texts reflect and shape public discourse. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, specifically his concept of the ideological square, is employed to explore the discursive strategies used to construct and reinforce ideologies. Six discursive strategies from van Dijk's twenty-seven identified strategies will be analysed: evidentiality, metaphor, implication, negation, strong modal obligation, and rhetorical questions. The choice of four cartoons is based on their ability to represent broader ideological trends within the election period, providing a focused yet comprehensive dataset for analysis. The utilisation of Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design is justified by its robust framework for analysing visual communication, which is essential for understanding the semiotic depth of the cartoons. Fairclough's CDA and van Dijk's socio-cognitive model complement this by providing tools to dissect the textual elements and their ideological implications, allowing for a holistic analysis of both visual and linguistic modes of meaning-making. The selection of The Punch and Daily Trust as data sources is justified by their significant influence in the Nigerian media landscape, particularly during the election period. Their extensive readership and the critical nature of their election coverage make them ideal sources for examining how media portray election ideologies. This methodological framework thus provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the ideological constructs of hope and disillusionment in Nigerian election cartoons, contributing to the broader field of media and political discourse analysis.

4.1 DATAAND DISCUSION OF FINDINGS

4.1.1 Visual Constructs of Hope and Disillusionment Ideologies in Datum1 and Datum2



Datum 1 and Datum 2 vividly depict the ideological dichotomy between hope and disillusionment within Nigeria's electoral context, aligning with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) concept of narrative processes. In Datum 1, Atiku Abubakar, standing triumphantly over a bowl of chicken representing the PDP presidential ticket, embodies hope, reflecting his longstanding ambition to become president. Conversely, Nyesom Wike, depicted sitting dejectedly, symbolises disillusionment, having lost the primary. The vector created by Wike's gaze, directed towards both Atiku and the electoral prize, signifies a transactional and reactional process, highlighting his disillusionment. The sub-varieties of these ideologies are also evident. The RP in white agbada near Atiku symbolises a variant of hope, while the emissary squatting near Wike suggests a veiled disillusionment, possibly expressing frustration with Wike's continued bitterness post-defeat. This layering of ideological nuances underscores the complexity of Nigeria's political landscape, where hope and disillusionment coexist in the visual narrative.

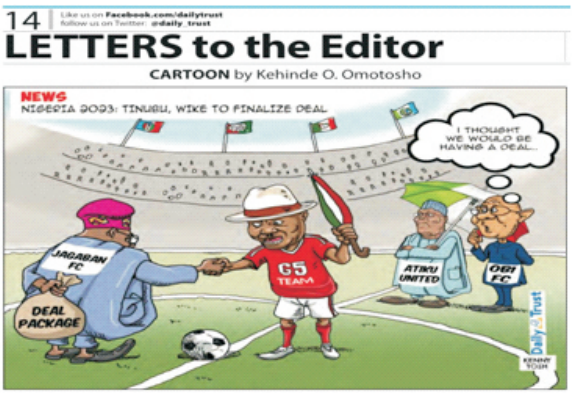
Datum 2 symbolically portrays Nigerian politicians as hands offering deceitful campaign promises to a voter, who now represents a reawakened and sceptical electorate. The dominant ideology here is disillusionment, portrayed through the hands carrying a cup filled with empty promises. The vector, created by the direction of the hands towards the voter, signifies a transactional process, where the voter rejects the deceitful narratives of election campaigns. The interaction between the RPs in this image encapsulates the ideological struggle, highlighting the disillusionment that pervades the electoral process. Both data employ an "offer" gaze, where the RPs do not directly engage with the viewer but rather focus within the frame, inviting contemplation of the ideologies depicted. This approach aligns with Van Dijk's (1998) notion of media control, where ideologically charged content is strategically disseminated to influence voter perceptions. The medium-long shot further reinforces the formal, impersonal relationship between the ideologies and the viewer, encouraging rational engagement over emotional response.

The attitude within these visual constructs is carefully calibrated to establish the truth value of the representations. In Datum 1, the horizontal perspective juxtaposes hope and disillusionment, with Atiku positioned frontally to symbolise involvement and hope, while Wike's oblique angle suggests detachment and disillusionment. Datum 2's oblique angles reflect the disillusionment ideology, contrasting with the frontal angle in Datum 1, which subtly aligns with hope while cautioning against disillusionment. The vertical perspective in Datum 1 further accentuates power dynamics, with Atiku depicted from a low angle, symbolising dominance, and Wike from a high

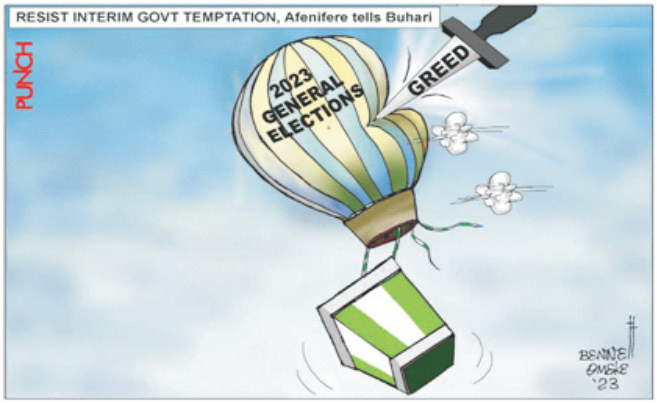
angle, indicating a loss of power. Datum 2, in contrast, uses an eye-level angle to convey equality between the RPs and the viewer, suggesting a more balanced ideological stance. Modality is conveyed through colour, contextualisation, and representation. Both data exhibit high modality, with detailed representations of the RPs and the background, lending credibility to the ideologies portrayed. In Datum 1, the saturated colours worn by the victorious RPs symbolise hope, while the pale colours associated with Wike denote disillusionment. Datum 2 inverts traditional meanings associated with Nigeria's national colours to align with the narrative of disillusionment.

Compositional meaning is conveyed through the placement of RPs within the visual space, reflecting underlying ideologies. In both data, hope is positioned on the left, representing given information, while disillusionment occupies the right, signifying new information. The vertical axis in Datum 1 positions the RPs associated with hope at the top, symbolising the ideal, while those linked to disillusionment occupy the lower part, representing the real. Salience is achieved through size, sharpness of focus, and colour contrast, with Atiku and the cup of promises in Datum 2 made salient through these visual cues. Framing further emphasises the ideological disconnection in Datum 1, with Wike isolated from the other RPs, while Datum 2 presents a more connected composition, underscoring the pervasive impact of disillusionment. In summary, the visual constructs in Datum 1 and Datum 2 are carefully designed to portray the ideologies of hope and disillusionment in Nigerian electoral politics. Through the manipulation of representational, interactive, and compositional meanings, these cartoons provide a nuanced visual narrative of the ideological landscape, highlighting the complex interplay of power, ideology, and voter perception.

Visual Constructs of Hope and Disillusionment Ideologies in Datum3 and Datum4



Source: Daily Trust



Source: The Punch

Datum 3 and Datum 4 present narrative representations that encapsulate the ideological struggles within Nigeria's electoral landscape. In Datum 3, four represented participants (RPs) are depicted in a football field, symbolising the contest for political power. Nyesom Wike, the then-governor of Rivers State, is positioned as the "political bride" whom Bola Tinubu, Peter Obi, and Atiku Abubakar are vying for. This image underscores the ideological divide: Tinubu, representing disillusionment, is separated from the opposition candidates, who are aligned with the ideology of hope. The division of the football pitch into two halves visually reinforces this ideological separation. Wike's gaze, directed towards a bag hidden behind Tinubu's back, conveys a narrative of political intrigue and transactional power dynamics. The other RPs, Atiku and Obi, also direct their gazes toward Wike, highlighting the competitive nature of their political ambitions. This narrative process, marked by vectors indicating action and goals, reflects the transactional nature of these political interactions.

Datum 4 employs a narrative process to depict the damaging impact of coercive power on democratic processes. The image shows a parachute, symbolising the electoral process, being punctured by a sword, representing militarised power. The downward trajectory of the parachute, instead of ascending as expected, visually conveys the ideology of disillusionment. The vector formed by the sword's action towards the parachute emphasises the destructive impact on democracy. The parachute's descent, driven by the sword, signifies a unidirectional transactional process, where the coercive actions undermine the ideal of democratic elections.In terms of interactive meaning, both data present RPs that do not engage directly with the viewer, indicating an "offer" image, where the RPs are presented for contemplation rather than interaction. The absence of eye contact suggests an objective presentation of the ideologies of hope and disillusionment. The social distance in both images is far, indicating a formal, impersonal relationship between the RPs and the viewers, which aligns with the emotional detachment often found in media portrayals of political events. The frontal angle in both images signifies involvement with the viewers, but Wike's oblique angle in Datum 3 suggests ideological detachment, priming viewers to critically assess his role.

The modality in Datum 3 is conveyed through saturated and differentiated colours, with each hue carrying ideological significance. The RPs' clothing in shades of blue and Wike's red attire reflect nuanced political alignments, while the paradoxical meanings of these colours within the Nigerian context underscore the complexity of electoral ideologies. In Datum 4, the less saturated colours focus on the green and white of the Nigerian flag and the sky blue and gold of the parachute, which are reinterpreted within the framework of disillusionment.

Finally, the compositional metafunction reveals how information is structured within these images. In Datum 3, Tinubu is positioned as the given information, representing established ideas, while Atiku and Obi are the new, contestable elements. In Datum 4, the parachute represents the ideal (hope), while the sword symbolises the real (disillusionment). Salience is achieved in Datum 3 through Wike's central placement and contrasting colours, while in Datum 4, the parachute's size and position emphasise its importance. Framing in Datum 3 is created by the football pitch line, separating the ideologies, while in Datum 4, the proximity of the parachute and sword suggests their intertwined roles in the electoral narrative.

Ideological analysis based on CDA Orientations

In conducting an ideological analysis based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) orientations,

this section employs various discursive strategies to unearth the ideologies embedded within the corpus. The micro-strategies selected include Evidentiality, Negation, Metaphor, Implication, Strong Modals of Obligation, and Rhetorical Question.

Evidentiality as an Ideological Discursive Strategy

Evidentiality is employed to lend credibility to discourse by referencing authoritative sources, thereby reinforcing the ideological stance. In Datum 4, the cartoonist invokes the authority of Afenifere, a prominent Yoruba socio-political group, to caution against the establishment of an interim government. This strategy not only conveys objectivity but also aligns with Fairclough's (1992a) concept of manifest intertextuality, specifically historical allusion. By referencing Afenifere, the cartoonist evokes a sense of historical awareness, recalling the negative implications of past political disillusionment. The use of this strategy underscores the seriousness of the disillusionment ideology by associating it with the potential threat of an interim government, a symbol of undemocratic conduct.

Negation as an Ideological Discursive Strategy

Negation, a presuppositional strategy, is used to subtly reject or undermine the hoax ideology of hope here. In Datum 2, the phrase "a pinch of salt" operates as a semantically negative expression, implicitly critiquing the deceptive and empty promises often made by politicians. This phrase indicates that this strategy could trigger scepticism and distrust in the electorate towards the political actors, thereby reinforcing the ideology of election disillusionment. The negation here is not merely a linguistic tool but an ideological one, serving to weaken the persuasive power of political promises by casting them as inherently unreliable. The text implies that voters are now more discerning, recognising the falsehoods embedded in political discourse, thus resisting the disillusionment that such promises seek to perpetuate.

Metaphor as an Ideological Discursive Strategy

Metaphors play a significant role in shaping political ideologies by linking abstract concepts to familiar domains. In Datum 3, the metaphor "POLITICS IS MONEY" foregrounds the idea that political outcomes are often driven by financial transactions. This is illustrated by the notion of a "deal" between political figures, suggesting that loyalty and support are commodified within the political arena. This metaphor not only reflects the corruptive influence of money in politics but also critiques the transactional nature of political alliances, thereby reinforcing the ideology of disillusionment. Similarly, the metaphor "POLITICS IS RELIGION" in Datum 4, with the term "TEMPTATION," appeals to moral sensibilities by framing the concept of an interim government as a moral transgression. This metaphor invokes a sense of ethical responsibility, urging those in power to resist the temptation to subvert democratic processes.

Implication as an Ideological Discursive Strategy

Implication, which involves understanding what is implied rather than explicitly stated, is used to subtly convey ideological messages. In Datum 1, the question, "Haba! Are you still here?" implicitly critiques Wike's refusal to concede defeat. The term "here" suggests a lingering in a state of denial or resentment, subtly condemning Wike's obstinate stance. This strategy not only mitigates direct confrontation but also influences the audience's perception, leading them to view Wike's behaviour as detrimental to democratic values. The implication discursive strategy thus operates as a tool for subtly reinforcing the ideology of disillusionment while promoting a more democratic and sportsmanlike political conduct.

Strong Modals of Obligation as an Ideological Discursive Strategy

The use of strong modals, such as "will," often conveys certainty and authority. In Datum 2, the repeated use of "will" in promises like "I will end insecurity" and "I will end poverty" exemplifies the persuasive power of political discourse. However, when juxtaposed with the dismissive response "Get me a pinch of salt," the modal "will" is revealed as a tool of deceptive power. This contrast highlights the electorate's growing disillusionment with political rhetoric, as the strong modal verbs, typically associated with hope, are re-contextualised to signify false promises. The discourse thus critiques the manipulative use of language in politics, reinforcing the ideology of disillusionment.

Rhetorical Question as an Ideological Discursive Strategy

Rhetorical questions are employed to provoke thought rather than elicit direct responses. In Datum 1, the question "Haba! Are you still here?" serves as a rhetorical device to mock Wike's obstinacy, thereby aligning the audience with the ideology of disillusionment. By posing a question that implies its own answer, the cartoonist subtly ridicules Wike's refusal to accept defeat, framing it as an unsportsmanlike and undemocratic attitude. This strategy, therefore, functions to delegitimise Wike's stance, reinforcing the disillusionment ideology which highlights the negative consequences of such political behaviour.

This analysis illustrates how various discursive strategies are used to encode and reinforce ideologies within political cartoons. Each strategy, whether through evidentiality, negation, metaphor, implication, strong modals, or rhetorical questioning, contributes to a nuanced portrayal of the ideologies of hope and disillusionment in the context of Nigerian elections.

Findings and Conclusion

This study has centred on the semiotic and discursive strategy analysis of ideologies of hope and disillusionment in cartoons from the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. The study was guided by two primary objectives: first, to analyse the visual elements in the selected election cartoons that construct these ideologies, and second, to identify the discursive strategies that serve as linguistic vehicles for these ideologies. The analysis was conducted within the theoretical frameworks of Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) Grammar of Visual Design, alongside van Dijk's (1998) and Fairclough's (1992) approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), focusing on discursive strategies and manifest intertextuality.

The findings from the semiotic analysis reveal that the cartoons encapsulate two predominant ideologies: hope and disillusionment. The cartoonists employed shared visual resources that enable viewers to discern the ideological constructs within the Representational, Interactional, and Compositional dimensions of the cartoons. These ideological meanings are influenced by extra-linguistic factors such as shared cultural knowledge, the nature of interactions among visual referents, and historical intertextual references. This aligns with Ayyaz's (2016) assertion that historical, cultural, social, and political contexts are integral to the ideological divide between hope and disillusionment.The multimodal analysis, grounded in 'visual grammar,' demonstrates that the Representational Metafunction predominantly employs narrative or transactional processes, where Representational Participants (RPs) are engaged in ideologically significant activities. Hope as an ideology is portrayed with a dominant, often overpowering, influence over disillusionment. This ideological imbalance is possibly due to the media ownership structures, where those in power—who are more likely to advocate for hope—often control the media narratives, thereby marginalising the voices of disillusionment. Furthermore, the analysis identifies the presence of both primary and secondary RPs within the cartoons, where secondary

RPs engage in their own narrative or transactional processes. This finding supports Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) claim that images can include secondary RPs, recognised as circumstances that, while not essential, provide additional information and nuance.

In terms of Interactional Metafunction, key concepts such as gaze, social distance, and angle are employed to construct the ideological narrative. The absence of direct eye contact in the cartoons suggests that the RPs are offering information rather than seeking engagement, thus urging viewers to contemplate the ideological implications of hope and disillusionment. The use of social distance and varying angles further manipulates the viewer's perception, creating either alignment with or detachment from specific ideologies. The Compositional Metafunction analysis highlights the strategic positioning of RPs, with those representing hope ideologies consistently placed on the right, signifying familiarity and precedence, while disillusionment is positioned on the left, signifying new information. The use of salience and framing further reinforces these ideological constructs, guiding the viewer's attention and establishing connections between ideologically opposed elements within the cartoons. The discursive strategy analysis identifies the deployment of Evidentiality, Implication, Metaphor, Negation, Strong Modals of Obligation, and Rhetorical Question as mechanisms through which ideologies are embedded and reinforced in the media discourse. These strategies are intricately linked to the representation of power dynamics, where hope is portrayed as dominant, while disillusionment is marginalised, often critiquing and resisting the prevailing narrative.

In conclusion, this study underscores the ideological bias inherent in media representations, particularly in election cartoons. The dichotomy between hope and disillusionment ideologies is not merely a reflection of public sentiment but is actively constructed and perpetuated by media discourse. The dominance of hope ideology, often aligned with ruling parties and their candidates, is a testament to the influence of media ownership and power structures on electoral narratives. Conversely, disillusionment, primarily championed by opposition figures, is portrayed as a counter-narrative that challenges the hegemony of hope, thereby revealing the complex interplay of power, ideology, and media in shaping public perception during elections.

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