NIGERIA IN THE EYES OF MIKE ASUKWO: A SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
Humans are placed in a world of symbols which they have created. That pictures are universal is for the most part incontestable. However, much attention has not been given to the analysis of pictorial representations of cartoons in the media. This makes people view cartoons as ordinary pictures. The study sought to explore the inherent meaning potentials contained in the political cartoons; analyse their symbolic representations; categorise them into specific conceptual and source domains; investigate the multimodal resources deployed in creating such cartoons and finally, align the findings with the shared vision of the cartoonist for Nigeria. The population of the study was 124 cartoons from Asukwo's BusinessDay on-line publications between 2015- 2018. The study provides a qualitative analysis of six cartoons on the themes of corruption and violence. They were purposively sampled due to the high frequency of their occurrence within the period. The study adopted Kress van Leeuwen's (2006) Social Semiotic framework for its analysis. The findings showed an increasing rate of violence and corruption in the political arena within the period. The cartoonist therefore creatively harnessed the text and cartoon media to humorously communicate serious socio-political issues. He condemned the high rate of corruption and violence in the country while advocating better and responsible governance. These findings align with the ideological stance of the Cartoonist and his overall vision for the country.
Keywords: Semiotics, Political Cartoons, Ideology, Multimodality, Humour

Introduction
Background to the Study
Analysing visual language has always been a problem to many people who interpret images just as they appear. Communication is a form of semiosis which is concerned with the exchange of messages through signs. Human beings use language to speak about objects in their environments, social relations, history, the future, and products of the imagination. Communication among humans is often done with the intention of conveying messages or meaning through the act or process of signification. Only the human language can serve this purpose. Signification in this regards means the ability of signs (whether visual, textual or gestural) to communicate meanings. Consequently, all known cultures rely on signs to convey messages swiftly and conveniently. The conveying of such messages are most times contextual.

Many societies have evolved systems of symbols, which at a first glance, may appear strange and odd to the outside observer owing to the irrational meanings which they seem to evoke. Upon a closer examination, however, those symbols tend to reflect a specific cultural logic. Thus, every symbol functions to communicate information between members of a specific culture in much the same way as conventional language which does so in a subtler manner. Hence, for the contemporary media to catch the attention of the public, they have to depend on the use of the verbal and non-verbal signs to convey information. This process of recording ideas, knowledge, or messages in some physical way is called representation in semiotic studies. More precisely, representation refers to the use of signs to relate, depict, portray, or reproduce something perceived, sensed, imagined, or felt in some physical form (Danesi, 2002). These signs and symbols do not in themselves constitute a language. Rather, they are devices by which ideas that are too difficult, dangerous or inconvenient to articulate in common language are transmitted. This transmission

usually takes place among people with shared cultural, ethical, religious, social, political, etc., experience and orientations. Thus, given that communication is meaning oriented, the ultimate goal of semiotics is to unravel the meanings that are inherent in human interactions including those that come from words, symbols, narratives, symphonies, paintings, and comic books to scientific theories and mathematical theorems (Danesi, 2007). It must be emphasized, therefore, that communication by visual means such as through images as part of human culture predates the advent of textual scripts. Pictography predates the written texts. Unfortunately, this has not received the attention it deserves in the academia as it is still struggling to catch up with "the horse that long left the stable" (Kress, 2010). While most linguists have been more interested in the linguistic structure of texts and how such texts feature in the social process, their attention has largely drifted away from the pictorial devices used in communication. In other words, the written text is so close to home that global academia has neglected its non-verbal component.

Verbal language is being displaced as a communicational mode by image in many instances of public communication: whether in school textbooks, in newspapers, in reports produced in institutions of all kinds, in the electronic media, and in the information and communication technologies in general. The logical conclusion to be reached from all these is that image has ceased to be used as mere illustration or an embellishment of the core message of the written text. Instead, literacy is being considered to go beyond the ability to read just words but also the ability to interpret pictorial representation of ideas within the written text. The emerging paradigm shift suggests that the shape and the direction of the current communicational world demand a re-assessment, in which language is just one of a number of modes of communication, all of which are culturally and socially shaped (Kress, 2010). A holistic approach that incorporates both the verbal and non-verbal means of meaning making is not only desirable but long overdue.

That pictures are universal is for the most part incontestable. Again, given that human experience is now more visual and visualized than ever before, the tendency in modern world is to rely on pictures because they make communication more comprehensible, quicker and more effective (Mirzoeff, 1998). This is captured in what has come to be called "pictorial turn" in which the visuals are also being acknowledged as an essential component of communication (Mitchell, 2004). In other words, visual messages are much more succinct and provide clearer summary of events or issues because such messages are given preference over conventional media in view of their unique feature in communicating and retaining information (Benoit, Klyukovski, McHale, and Airne, 2001). Accordingly, the fundamental task of a semiotic investigation is to provide a platform or a system in which the perceptual and conceptual representation and interpretation of ideas through signs and symbols can be considered as a given in every society.

Consequently, as texts evolve from mono-modal (where they were dominated by the written language) to multimodal ensembles (which are replete with visual images, sophisticated design elements and hypertext features), the strategies readers draw upon to comprehend these complex texts will need to evolve as well (Unsworth, 2002). Thus, the competencies required of readers in today's environment have expanded from cognitively based reading comprehension skills (Pressley and Block, 2001) to include strategies for comprehending the visual images and design features presented within and across multimodal texts (Serafini, 2011; Sipe and Pantaleo, 2008). By deploring both graphic and discursive resources, political cartoons function like complex, multimodal riddles constructing images that trigger cognitive mechanisms in the minds of the readers. Cartoonists re-enact reality by creating imaginary scenario and using cartoons to refer to real life situations.

Furthermore, since visual signs have become an important part of political expression, constructing either positive or negative images of politicians, political parties and addressing other issues and events of concern in the society, etc., a study of political cartoons which generally rely on a multiplicity of visual resources is not only desirable but also expedient in the light of the emerging linguistic and socio-political practices. This is because the cartoonist acts like the court jesters of old, who were allowed to speak truth

to power in a way that ordinary citizens were not allowed to. Cartoons, therefore, become the tool kit for the cartoonist who joins in the war of criticism through pictorial representations.

The fundamental ingredients of pictorial representations are images. Every image that is utilized by the cartoonist in any given socio-political environment must be such that can provide a conventional comment, the transcription of a reality, a word, a vision, or an idea into a visible code that becomes, in turn, a manner of speaking of the world and inhabiting it (Mbembe, 2001). Images serve as visual codes which can be used to create messages in a socially meaningful way (Cobley, 2001). Hence, through pictorial representations, political cartoons challenge the traditional ways of literacy, thereby affording readers new ways of interpreting meaning and reality. This use of image in communication is important because the message that it communicates and its effects on human emotions and behaviour… will likely inspire the viewers to act as and when required (Mitchell, 2004).

Cartoons are being increasingly used to open up political spaces, awaken critical consciousness, and address issues of deprivations and violence. Political cartoons usually come handy at a time when it is considered unsafe to be too openly critical of an authority. Mike Asukwo joins the battle through his cartoons by engaging in the act of graphic defiance and resistance against authoritarian leadership. To determine whether his contributions are effective in this regard, a collection of his works over the years needs to be examined in order to see how a reliance on multimodal tropes has helped him to comically represent the Nigerian political and socioeconomic experience. This will also assist in investigating how his cartoons conceptually construct satire as a way of denouncing socio-political and economic imbalances in the country with a view to transforming its national values.

Multimodality, relies on the amalgamation of various communication modes ranging from audio (both oral and aural resources) to visual (including gestural resources) to convey messages to the target audience (Danesi, 2013; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). A multimodal ensemble is a text that draws on a variety or multiplicity of modes while modes are socio-culturally shaped resources for realizing, representing, interpreting and communicating meaning potentials (Kress G. , 2010). However, it must be pointed out that each mode is capable of representing meaning but it is inadequate in solely communicating meaning effectively. Accordingly, the premise of multimodality is that in many domains of contemporary writing, textual structure is realized, not by only by linguistic means, but also visually, through layout, colour, typography and other resources.

The world is saturated with negative stories – disasters, oppressions and terrorism. Nigeria as a nation is fraught with political upheavals and economic downturn with a legion of corrupt practices and insecurity. The contemporary Nigerian society needs a medium that can subtly deliver socio- political issues in an accessible. Many are yearning for a more responsible government; others are looking for a humane diction and style in reportage. Everyone is patiently waiting for someone to change the narrative. Nigerians need someone to jumpstart a new sociology of hope. Mike Asukwo, sarcastically and in a "mischievous manner" has responded to this call, through his political cartoons.

However, aside being confined to the fringe side of newspapers (where most of these cartons occupy a tiny section of the entire textual layout), there is also a more disturbing scenario where the readers hardly see beyond the humour and the entertainment that come with flipping through the cartoon sections of our national dailies. In other words, there is a gross lack of interest in probing beyond what appears to be the dark and slapstick humour emanating from political cartoons. There is a need, therefore, to explore the meaning potentials of political cartoons; analyse their symbolic representations; investigate the multimodal resources deployed in creating them, and align the findings to the overall vision of the cartoonist who creates them.

The research aims at studying Mike Asukwo's collection of political cartoons as have been presented in the online editions using insights from multimodal discourse analysis and socio-semiotics. More specifically, the study seeks to:

- Investigate the recurring themes in the cartoons published within the period
- Analyse the symbolic and humorous representations of such cartoons;
- Investigate the multimodal resources deployed in creating the cartoons,
- Align the findings to the overall vision of the cartoonist for Nigeria.

Consequently, not only will the study examine the cartoons for their apparent critique of corruption and other un-seeming activities in Nigeria through the themes represented by the cartoonist, it will also examine the graphic humour in the cartoons and investigate the applicability of a combination of multimodality and social semiotics in analysing the data.

Humans are placed in a world of symbols which they have created. Often times, their lives are inseparable from the values and meanings that such symbols bring to them. An in-depth study of these symbols will not only deepen an understanding of shared world experience but will also help in the development of the non-verbal aspect of human communication. Against this backdrop, the study will be of benefits to language students and teachers, political office holders as well as the general public in the acquisition of knowledge, expansion and interpretation of their non-verbal repertoires. The study will serve as a springboard for assisting students in coming to better understanding and appreciation of semiotic and multimodal contributions to the analyses of political cartoons. This will help gain insights into the socio-political events in the country through the thematic representations of such events by the cartoonist. Also, the analyses of the corpus of Asukwo's editorial creation will broaden the teachers' perspectives in helping their students to have an increased understanding of the structures and features of political cartoons in a more integrated and holistic approach. For the political office holders, the discussion of the semiotic as well as the multimodal contents of the cartoons will help in providing a platform for them to evaluate their actions and policies vis-à-vis the yearnings and aspirations of the masses. The documentation of Asukwo's editorial creations in the form of political cartoons will help them not only to review their own contributions as active participants in the political events in the country but also help to see the mistakes made by their predecessors and how such mistakes shaped public perception of governmental policies thereby avoiding a repeat of the similar mistakes. Most importantly, the study will help them to be their own critics using a light-hearted non-confrontational method provided by the cartoonist. The vast majority of Nigerian masses (who have become the direct victims of government oppressive and corrupt practices), the study will help them to find some solace in Mike Asukwo's work since it does not only seek to adumbrate how government actions and inactions affect them but also a non-confrontational engagement can become impactful in shaping governmental decisions.

The study is restricted to the print versions of Mike Asukwo's cartoon creations on Nigerian political events and issues as contained in his online print medium. The timeline covers political cartoons created by the cartoonist within the period (2015 to 2018). The study is carried out drawing insights from two linguistic theories: multimodal discourse analysis and social semiotics.

Theoretical Framework
In an increasingly visual age, multimodality can help us to avoid the routine of privileging one semiotic mode over the others. This accounts for an emerging paradigm in discourse studies which extends the study of language in combination with other resources. Multimodal discourse analysis is essentially concerned with the theory and analysis of semiotic resources. The concepts of multimodality and visual communication are grounded on studies proposed by Halliday (1978) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996/2006) where visual communication and verbal discourse form a comprehensive meaning-making unit. Systemic Functional Linguistics posits the interconnectedness of the linguistic and the social, stating

that the structure of language has evolved as a result of the meaning making functions they serve within a social system or culture where they are used (Unsworth 2008). Drawing from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996/2006) stated that images, like language also simultaneously realize three different kinds of meaning. In their model, they named Halliday's ideational meta-function "representational meaning" where the verbal and the visual construct the nature of events, the object and the participants involved. The interpersonal, they termed "interactional" meaning, where the verbal and visual resources construct the nature of relationships among speakers/listeners, writers/readers and viewers/what is viewed; while the textual meta-function was termed the "compositional meaning asserting that any semiotic mode has to be able to represent aspects of the world as experienced by humans.

In the concept of interactive meaning, images are shown to create relationship between the viewers and the world inside the frame. The artist is able to achieve this through three key factors. They are contact – where the image through facial expression/gaze makes a demand from the viewer; distance through which images bring people, places or things closer to the viewer or keep them at an arm's length and point of view which is presented through the angle used in the image to suggest attachment of domineering power over the viewer (Jewitt and Oyama 2001).
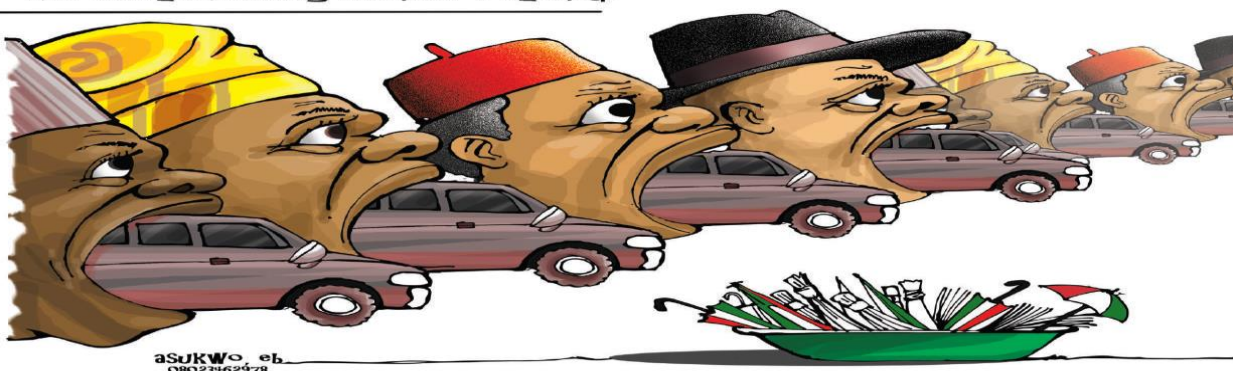
Methodology
The research design is qualitative in orientation and approach. It investigates a social phenomenon in a particular society. The data were drawn from Asukwo's BusinessDay on-line publications between 2015-2018. The population of the study was 124 cartoons out of which the purposive sampling technique was used to select six cartoons from the themes with high frequency of occurrence for analysis. Content analysis was used in sorting the cartoons into topical themes reflecting current issues and events. This study employs the Visual Social Semiotics as explicated by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) as an effective model for a multimodal analysis. Basically, a social semiotic analysis of an image tends to focus on its three different layers of meaning: *Representational meaning:* the "participants" (people, places or things) that are literally depicted in the image; *Interactive meaning:* the implicit relationship between the viewers and the characters in the image; *Compositional meaning:* the placement of the image's visual elements that integrates them into "a meaningful whole (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Jewitt and Oyama 2001). The model therefore gives us an understanding of how an image performs the above meta-functions simultaneously.

Data Presentation
Three cartoons were chosen from each theme for a semiotic analysis. The selected cartoons are rich in semiotic resources. The analysis is based on the key concepts and theses of semiotics such as the semiotic resources' denotative and connotative meanings, the images' representational, interactive and compositional meanings. Special attention is also paid to the aspect of visual signification process:

Cartoon no. 1 "Lawmakers are not talking"

The above cartoon shows the Nigerian lawmakers with their mouths stuffed with vehicles which were gifts to them. With such gifts, they could no longer condemn acts of corruption. The vehicles were used to prevent them from performing their oversight functions as senators. The different regions of the country are recognisably represented through the shapes of caps adorning their heads Again, it can be seen that the vehicles have become a unifying factor for the lawmakers as they dropped their brooms and umbrellas being their party symbols while trying to swallow the cars. Ordinarily, the symbolic brooms and umbrellas were objects of disunity among the political parties but because they were gifted collectively they decided to forego their differences for the period.

Cartoon no. 2 "The Growing Mess" (July 3, 2015)

In the cartoon, **"The Growing Mess"** the Naijean stable represents the Nigerian nation. The cartoon shows the President with beads of sweat laboriously trying to clean the heap of dungs deposited over a period of sixteen years by the People's Democratic Party. PDP was accused of being the most corrupt government having messed up the nation's economy. The ruling party APC however, promised to clear up the mess and to restore sanity to the nation within a few months. The President, looks bewildered as the cow, symbolic of the APC is seen contributing to the mess in the stable. The composition showed the president in the middle of the mess. The president's gaze forms a vector in a unidirectional manner as he looks at the cow droppings. His fixed gaze draws the attention of the viewer to the new information given by the cow droppings on the right indicating the new mess by the APC.

Cartoon no. 3 "War Against Corruption"

The above cartoon named "War against corruption" depicts the fight against corrupt government officials by a corrupt official. However, the tool used in fighting corruption is equally made of wood and seen to be

one of them. The officers therefore, are comfortable and relaxed, assured as they cannot be harmed by a fellow 'woodie'. The tags on the trees indicate that all facets of government establishments are occupied by corrupt officers. The cartoonists humorously condemns these acts of corruption by government officials

Cartoon no. 4 "You can keep fighting for your heroes" (30th June, 2018)

The Cartoon titled **"You can keep fighting for your heroes"** signifies the level of bitterness and rancour among the populace due to the seeds of discord sowed in them by the political class. The political leaders are seen standing at an elevated height, sign of power and superiority looking down on the people who are busy fighting. Ironically, they use their umbrellas and brooms, symbols of their political parties as weapons of war while the leaders are seen having fun at the scene. This obviously is an oppressive situation where the people are pitched against one another in a fierce battle while the political class stands aloof watching. It is a condemnable act that the cartoonist tries to depict through the cartoon.

Cartoon no. 5 "Jos Crisis"

The cartoon captioned **"Jos Crisis"** depicts the present political landscape in Nigeria where there is mass killing of the farmers, the owners of the land by the Fulani herdsmen who try to dispossess them of their lands for grazing. The agonized mother in the cartoon whose son was killed beckons on the President who is seen majestically walking away and gazing ahead (distances himself) from the scene. The woman reminds the president of his statement at inauguration that he "belongs to all and belongs to nobody in particular", an indication that he would be fair and just to all. However, due to his appeared insensitivity to the situation, the woman further declares "we are "nobody", an ironical expression that a human being is nobody. The vector formed with her outstretched hand is in an appeal to a superior authority while the

armed hand pulls her back retrogressively from her only source of hope – the President. She lies positioned between danger and the President, holding her bleeding son.
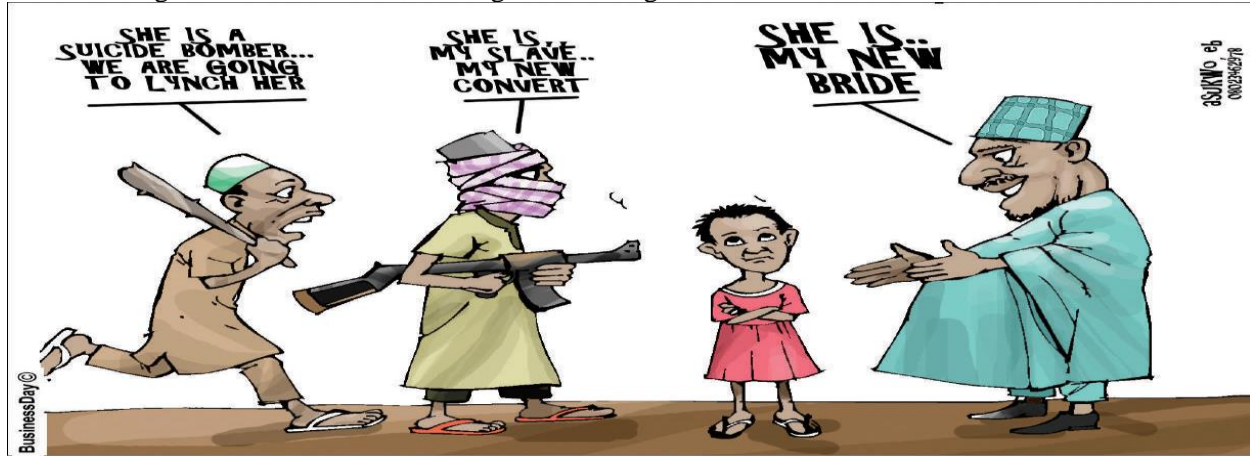

Figure 6 "the Northern girl-child"

The above cartoon has no title but I captioned it the "Northern-girl child" because it depicts the fate of the girl child in the northern part of the country. The naïve looking girl is found in the presence of three men representing different facets of the society. The politician sees her as one he can easily take as a young bride, the age notwithstanding. The religious fanatic sees her as his convert and a slave to him. On the other, the representative of the society sees her as a suicide bomber that should be lynched. This is the fate of the child often married off to men old enough to be her grandfather. She is neither safe in the society nor with the religious practices in the society.

Analysis
Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) in their analytical approach consider the application of composition in multimodal texts to be of great importance. This includes the information value, which is realized through the placement of the elements of a composition either on the left or right margins or in a centralized position for effects. Salience refers to how some elements in an image are given prominence and made to stand out in the eyes of the viewer while framing enables the artist give separate identity to elements or represent them as belonging together (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001). In applying this model as an analytical approach to the cartoons of Mike Asukwo, these components of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) social semiotics were taken into consideration. The cartoon data analysed in this paper are reactions to recurrent issues affecting the Nigerian society. They are believed to have already been reported in other media outlets, more especially in the BusinessDay Magazine and the internet. For the purpose of this study, only five cartoons were purposively selected for analysis out of the 124 cartoons downloaded from 2015 to 2018 on-line publications of Mike Asukwo's political cartoons. The cartoons carry a variety of social themes including corruption, economy, political malpractices, insecurity, and governance style among others. The selected cartoons are representational and they portray recurring political themes and issues that critically affect Nigeria as a nation especially as pertains to corruption and violence. They also show how images combine with verbal text to produce meaning. The images are "… acerbic, caustic, mnemonic, humorous, creatively apt and wicked, mordant, sarcastic and mischievous" according to the cartoonist (Asukwo, 2018). The cartoonist tactically crafts his discourse to present familiar issues in this unique way with the messages evoking emotions of anger, fear, desperation and hopelessness in the readers.

The table below indicates the percentage rate of occurrence of thematic contents of the political cartoons.

Major themes	Rate of occurrence	Percentage of occurrence
Government	8	6.5%
Violence	29	23.4%
Corruption	55	44.4%
People and Economy	20	16.1%
People and infrastructure	5	4.0%
Governance	4	3.2%
Policies	3	2.4%
Total	**124**	**100%**

The analysis from the above table indicates a 44.4% rate of corruption which has the highest number of occurrences. It is evident of the corrupt nature of the nation as corruption has often been described as cancer which has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation called Nigeria. It is closely followed by violence which has become an endemic problem in the society with a 23.4% rate. Violence exists in all spheres of life ranging from religious to domestic and high spate of kidnapping in the nation. Political and economic issues ranked third with a 16.1%. Governmental issues ranked fourth with a 6.5% while people and infrastructure ranked fifth with a 4% rate. Governance and policies ranked sixth and seventh respectively at the rates of 3.2% and 2.4% respectively.

Discussion of Findings
Every object in the cartoons under analysis is a signifier representing certain phenomenon in the life of the nation. The findings of the study demonstrate how cartoons are used in the media discourse to comment on current socio-political issues in order to transform people, keep them informed and abreast of topical issues that affect their lives. They equally see the effort by the cartoonist through his ideological stance to address the core values that are gradually eluding us as a nation.

The analysis of the six selected cartoons indicates that certain socio-political and economic issues have remained endemic and the themes keep recurring on the Nigerian political scene. They include the themes of violence, corruption, government policies, infrastructural development and the nation's economy. The cartoon in figure 1 shows the lawmakers with their mouth stuffed with vehicles. The have their gazes fixed with eyes wide open unable to swallow the vehicles. The vehicles stuck in their mouths are bribes to "shut" them up from being vocal especially in matters of corrupt practices. The cartoonist criticizes the hypocritical nature of the ruling party in the second cartoon. The President is seen clearing the stable, symbolic of the Nigerian nation of the dung deposited by the erstwhile PDP which was acclaimed to have messed up the nation within its sixteen years of governance. While the President clears the mess, the horse, symbolic of the APC government drops more mess in the stable. The third image indicates the high level of corruption in many government establishments. Above all, the agent for fighting the corruption is seen to be made of same stuff. It therefore makes the fight almost impossible. The fourth cartoon captioned "fighting for your heroes" shows the masses pitched against one another while their leaders are celebrating with drinks. The image in the fifth cartoon is an indication of the state of insecurity in the nation. It represents the current face-off between the Fulani herdsmen and the Jos farmers with the mass killing of the land owners. The President is shown walking away from the scene while the woman clutching her dying son beckons on him for help. His mien and disposition indicates his being uninterested in the spate of killings in the middle belt region of the nation. The Nigerian landscape is depicted as a place where people live in fear as shown in the sixth cartoon. The little girl is seen between three men who relate to her differently. One wants to possess her as a bride her age notwithstanding. The other wants her as his slave as she was forcefully converted from Christianity to Islam while the society want her lynched as she has become agent of suicide bombing for her captors.

How was meaning produced in the political cartoons
Pictures tend to catch attention first in a multimodal text. The pictures represent an understanding of world shared by the group members. They tell different stories. Vectors are elements that help to realize the types of relationships that are represented in images. A vector shot between two connected subjects, such as two humans looking at each other, would serve to draw the viewer's attention to this particular aspect of the image. The cartoonist made effective use of vectors in his cartoons. The lawmakers could be seen staring at a direction which attracts the attention of the viewer. The vectors formed by their gazes depict a demand from a higher authority but they were unable to respond as their mouths are stuffed with the vehicle. The woman in figure five beckons on the president with an outstretched for assistance. She is seen being pulled back forcefully by another arm with a gun whole the president is seen walking away from her. In figure five, the people were depicted as ones whose lives could be sacrificed for the political gains of their leaders as they engaged one another in a fierce fight while the leaders leisurely watched on. The little girl shown in figure 6 seen terrified as she surrounded by the men. Most of the cartoons used for the analysis took the narrative structure in their representations. The visual vectors presented the actors as doing something or involved in a communicative event The movement of the vectors help in the narrative process as meaning is read into the cartoons though the direction of the vectors. Gaze is another important aspect of multimodal analysis. Gaze is a form of direct address (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). The President fixed a gaze at the cow in figure 2 in utter amazement with the mess piling up. His gaze helps in the narrative process as the focus is taken away from the information indicating the sixteen years of rule by the PDP, "given" to a "new" action by the APC on the right. The facial expression by the little girl in figure 6 equally tells a story. She looks up demanding for help while the fierce looking men approach her for different motives. The one that looked kind, rather had an ulterior motive behind his kind looks.

In the same manner, the woman with a dying son appeals to the president while he looks away in an impersonal manner. One can easily read a state of helplessness from the gazes on the faces in the cartoons. Salience is achieved by the cartoonist as some of the elements were foregrounded. The large eye balls of many characters in the cartoons depict surprise. Visual and linguistic elements complement each other in multimodal studies. In figure 2, the sign on the heap of dungs helps explain how long the PDP government was in power. The exclamation "KAI" by the President was in utter surprise as the cow was depositing a new set of dungs. The expression is culturally bound as it meant "what?" in the Hausa language. In figure 3, the utterances by both the masses and the leaders explain the reason for the confusion as the people engage in a "free-for-all fight". The people use the Pidgin language, which is the language of the masses as one of them utters the word "…you de craze?", meaning "are you crazy?" on the contrary, the elite political class use the mesolect as one of them declares, "my supporters are fiercer than yours". Prominence is also given to the linguistic elements that of importance in the cartoons.

The cartoonist made effective use of satire in his work. The lawmakers in figure1are seen almost choking in the process of swallowing the vehicles given to them. The eye balls could be seen popping out from their sockets. The woodies in figure 3 equally have different facial expressions depicting their dispositions towards the anti-corruption exercise. The cartoonist was able to humorously depict these scenarios while passing on important messages through the cartoons.

To what extent do the cartoons align with the cartoonist's vision for Nigeria?
Cartoons are sites for visual information. They reveal features of the society that are not usually observable through other sources. The cartoonist has used his cartoons to reveal his ideological inclination. He criticizes the social malaise in the nation. One could read palpable fears through the empty gazes on the faces of some of the images shown. The girl in figure 6 has fear written all over her. The cartoonist condemns acts of violence in the society. He further condemns the spate of corruption in the nation. Through the cartoons, Mike Asukwo tries to re-echo the need to uphold the chore values of the nation which are gradually eluding us as a people.

Conclusions

This paper has demonstrated how cartoons are used to accomplish communicative tasks in Nigerian electronic media. The cartoons were creatively used to provide political commentary and to mirror the social realities of the time. The study has shown how the artist skilfully and humorously depicted issues that need attention aimed at shaping people's understanding to bring about positive change in society. Thus, Nigerian political cartoons are used by the media specifically to build up public attention, reorient people and initiate social and political reforms in Nigeria. This paper posits that political cartoons constitute a potent multimodal genre comprising linguistic and non-linguistic devices which are used to convey meaningful messages. Visual images are linguistic tools that are rich in meaning and they could bring to fore easy interpretations and understanding that are strong and powerful, especially when sensitive issues are involved. The satirical presentation of the images also provides avenues for relaxation for the stressed populace. This study will serve as a springboard for further research in the cartoon genre considering the importance of multimodality in the contemporary society

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