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The Context of Election Memes: A Study of Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Elections

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Abstract

Internet memes, deployed for various purposes during the Nigerian 2015 presidential election, manifested in different media, including Nairaland Forum. Existing studies on 2015 presidential elections focused on campaign strategies, hate speech-related issues and socio-linguistic features, paying little attention to the use of Internet memes in projecting issues raised by the election. Therefore, this study investigates the deployment of Internet memes in the discourse on Nigeria's 2015 presidential election on Nairaland Forum, to determine the contexts evoked. Kress and van Leeuwen's Multimodal Theory and Mey's Pragmatic Acts Theory was adopted. 12 out of 24 data samples were purposively selected for analysis. The contexts evoked includes the historical-religious context referring to history and religion as solutions to the leadership problems of the country. The war context depicted violence as a recurring feature in Nigeria's election. While the educational context exposed the inadequacies of a candidate's academic qualifications; the economic context exposed the country's economy. The sporting context engaged showed the electoral process as a competition; whereas the socio-political context projected the electorate's involvement and enthusiasm during and after the election. Verbal and non-verbal modes were identified to include text structures, colour and gaze. They form the basis for the communication and comprehension of the relevance of the Internet memes, hence, projecting how memes can be deployed to project the state of affairs of a nation during elections.

Keywords: Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Election, Nairaland, Multimodality, Context, Memes

Introduction

Political campaigns precede elections. The outcomes determine the people who lead. Politicians vying for elective posts invest a lot of time, money, and energy in winning over voters; these campaigns garner attention and effort. As a result, it is typical to see billboards, banners, posters, and memes intended to project particular politicians or political parties for popular approval. Their persuasive use of multimodal resources distinguishes them. Scholars have focused on this facet of political communication (Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013; Awonusi, 1996; Opeibi, 2006).

Like many other nations, some Nigerian presidential election participants used visual aids like headgear, dancers, vests, and surrogate language to convey meanings in the political discourse. The central idea of these techniques was to support particular politicians or political parties. Analysts have been particularly interested in Internet memes as a significant message style. A meme is a picture or video summarising an author's sentiments and thoughts. They are a global social phenomenon that plays a significant role in social engagement and quick marketing (Ademilokun and Olateju, 2016). Shifman (2013) believes that though memes are generally humorous, they point at various messages: religious, political, sociological, and economic.

The prevalence of visual elements in contemporary human communication has facilitated the expansion of studies on visual communication. Despite the typical humorous nature of memes (Shifman 2013), they encompass various messages with religious, political, sociological, and economic implications. Memes offer a significant advantage in fostering increased engagement and can inherently convey ideological viewpoints (Holmes and Marra 2002). Internet memes have played a crucial role in shaping

social life by contributing to forming opinions. Among their various functions, their ability to convey information effectively is a prominent one. In numerous political arenas around the globe, it has become customary to disseminate prevalent beliefs through the Internet (Kulkarni 2017).

The era from the twentieth century onwards has been distinguished by various forms of computer-mediated communication, such as graphics, captions, music, and colours, which convey information. Isbulan (2011) asserts that "communication is increasingly leaning towards computer usage, and most communication needs are fulfilled through the utilisation of email, social chats, graphics, and other modes of computer-mediated communication." Olateju and Oyebode (2014) and Stein (2006) attribute this characterisation to the shift in global communication from traditional speech and writing to computers. There is a need to examine the contextual affordances of selected Internet memes on Nigeria's 2015 presidential election on the Nairaland Forum. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the deployment of Internet memes in the discourse on Nigeria's 2015 presidential election on *The Nairaland Forum* to determine the contexts where the memes are situated and the modes utilised.

Scholars have attempted to look into the 2015 presidential elections from various angles. Sunday (2021) attempts a critical sociocognitive analysis of hate speech in the 2015 Nigerian presidential election campaigns. Tella (2018) also investigates the deployment of memes to reflect the Nigerian political situation during the 2015 general elections. In light of this, Onanuga and Ajao (2017) assert that spreading offensive memes may have caused the former President's loss in the 2015 general elections. Yékú (2018) investigates how Nigerians played a part in the 2015 electoral process through memes. Olowojolu (2016) explores the role of media in the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria.

Existing studies on the 2015 presidential elections focused on hate speech-related issues and linguistic features, with little attention paid to situating Internet memes in context and identifying the modes used. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the deployment of Internet memes in the discourse on Nigeria's 2015 presidential election on the *Nairaland Forum* to determine the contexts and the modes utilised.

Internet Memes

According to Castaño (2013), Internet memes are creative media structures and information units that spread throughout the Internet as images, videos, catchphrases, or hyperlinks. Typically, the images in these memes represent ideologies representative of actual social events and experiences. As a result, memes can now be used in sociopolitical conversations online, as seen by the actions on the Nairaland Forum during Nigeria's 2015 election campaign. The term "meme" was created by biologist Richard Dawkins, who felt that cultural concepts were similar to DNA. According to him, cultural ideas proliferate and change as they go from one brain to another (Dawkins 1976). This explains why Nigerians are ready to use memes to express their opinions about people and organisations that are part of many landscapes, including the political landscape. As a result, more and more memes are being used daily to convey opinions regarding the sociopolitical climate in Nigeria.

In many political arenas worldwide, using memes to convey popular beliefs online has become commonplace (Kulkarni, 2017). Several well-known social media platforms that Nigerians frequently use to communicate occasionally thrive on producing and disseminating memes, typically composed of text, images, or videos projecting cultural icons or societal concepts and which frequently go viral on the Internet. According to Holmes and Marra (2002), appropriating memes is never neutral. Du Preez and Lombard (2014) concur, pointing out that all memes have an

underlying ideology. According to Taiwo (2018), memes are becoming increasingly common online. Despite their seemingly lighthearted appearance, they address important sociopolitical issues, criticise social injustices, and spread messages that uphold citizens' social obligations. Memes are texts or visuals with sarcastic overtones and hilarious substance.

Modes

Modes refer to assemblages of materials that facilitate the exchange of information through multiple modes of communication. These modes can be categorised into two distinct types: verbal and non-verbal. However, it is important to note that the nature of these modes varies among individuals and across different cultures. The definition of "mode" is crucial in discussing multimodality, yet it is a notoriously challenging task (Forceville 2006, Elleström 2010). Kress (2006) advocates for a dynamic perspective, positing that determining what qualifies as a mode is contingent upon the needs and conventions of a particular community. In essence, a mode is defined by a group of individuals' recognition and application of a specific set of characteristics. Consequently, a social semiotic theory of mode establishes the requisite attributes and functions that officially define a mode. Social and online communication has led to the prevalence of multimodal texts over time, rendering the identification of non-multimodal texts increasingly arduous. While multimodal texts existed before the Internet era, the emergence of digital technologies has made it more accessible for most individuals to create and disseminate such texts at a relatively low cost. Consequently, attention has been drawn to aspects that were previously overlooked.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) state that "all texts are multimodal. Language must always be realized through and occur alongside other semiotic forms. According to Stivers and Sidnell

(2005), human social interaction results from several modalities intricately interacting. According to Kress et al. (2001), meaning is created independently in each mode but is also the result of all modes working together. Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) describes the study of language in conjunction with other resources such as pictures, colors, scientific symbolism, gestures, action, music, and sound as "an emerging paradigm in discourse studies" (O'Halloran 2011). Multimodal discourse occurs when two or more modes work together to generate the meaning of the entire discourse. Resources that satisfy the meaning-making process include images, colors, sounds, and actions.

Multimodality emphasizes two analytical concerns: understanding that all texts are produced and encountered not only as words but also as images, colors, textures, layouts, and designs and that social interactions are simultaneously embodied in spoken language, gesture, posture, dress, or movement. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) demonstrated that in order to investigate deeper meanings, a variety of modes, such as pictures, layout, and color, need to be taken into account in addition to text and writing. Kress hypothesizes that multimodality involves the analysis of communication in all its expressions. Still, he focuses specifically on texts that integrate two or more semiotic resources or modes of communication. He says that a multimodal analyst must be curious about how semiotic resources are used to monitor meaning in texts. Semiotic resources are bodily resources such as gestures.

Pragmatic Acts

Human activity is not a personal prerogative, according to Mey. Instead, the person is positioned inside a social context, which implies that the parameters of their social life both empower and constrain them. This is a deterministic viewpoint that leaves little room for unique approaches. For Mey, pragmatic acts are not defined by "wording" but by context and extralinguistic elements.

Furthermore, he asserted that "...indirect speech acts derive their force from the situation in which they are appropriately uttered, rather than from their lexico-semantic build-up." Mey emphasizes the significance of context, situation, and extralinguistic elements in creating and comprehending meaning. However, the context in which linguistic terms are used and the extralinguistic elements they are paired with play an equally significant role in determining their meaning.

The study of pragmatics focuses on how individuals utilize language in context and everyday life. In pragmatics, the utterance serves as the unit of analysis, whereas semantics focuses on words, phrases, and sentences. In pragmatics, one analyzes how language is used to accomplish various tasks and how it is affected by time, place, and the social interaction between the speaker and hearer. Pragmatics is the study of the meaning of utterances based on their context and usage.

A pragmeme is a model adopted my Mey and it is divided into two parts: the textual component, which refers to the context in which the pragmeme operates, and the activity component, designed for interactants. INF stands for "inference," REF stands for "relevance," VCE stands for "voice," SSK stands for "shared situation knowledge,", "metaphor." and "metapragmatic joker." A pract or an allopract is produced by interacting the textual and activity portions.

Method

Kress and van Leeuwen's Multimodal Theory and Jacob Mey's Pragmatic Acts Theory (textual part) serves as the theoretical framework for the study. The two theories are used because one accounts for the modes while the other, the context, twelve out of twenty-four Internet memes posted between 16th November 2014 and 1st April 2015 that projects the presidential election, were selected purposively from the politics section of the Nairaland

Forum because it is the largest online forum in Africa. The selected memes were analysed using the qualitative approach, and an in-depth discussion of each meme was carried out.

Data analysis

In the case of Internet memes, context is evoked by authors of the memes and it becomes easier for them to send messages to all viewers who would be able to draw inferences for the full comprehension of the messages. Subsequently, every meme projected contextual issues to give deeper meaning to them and how they relate to the society. There are six contexts constructed in the selected Internet memes of 2015 presidential election, and they are:

- historical-religious;
- educational;
- war;
- economic;
- sociocultural;
- sporting contexts.

The analyses of the Internet memes were therefore carried out based on each of these contexts and addressed with at least one meme.

Historical-Religious Context: Internet memes ride on the portrayal of history and religion to viewers as the solution to the problem of the country. For the viewer to understand the message of the memes, he/she would have a shared situation knowledge about history and religion. Within this context, the viewer would be able to interpret indirect representations and draw references from multimodal choices made by the author.



Figure 1. Military and Pastoral combination against Boko Haram

The main participants are the two prominent figures: the General (Muhammadu Buhari) in military attire and the Pastor (Yemi Osinbajo) in clerical clothing. The General is dressed in military uniform, suggesting his role in physical combat. The Pastor is in clerical attire, indicating his role in spiritual matters. Both figures are looking directly at the viewer, creating a demand and engaging the viewer directly. The close-up shots in the image create a sense of intimacy and direct engagement with the audience. The frontal angle conveys equality and authority, suggesting direct communication of the message. Textual elements at the top provide context that complements the visual composition, while the contrasting colours, green for "Best Team" and red for "Boko Haram", highlight the central message. The tight framing of Buhari and Osinbajo emphasizes their partnership and significance in the fight against Boko Haram.

Situated within Nigeria's ongoing struggle against the militant group, the image conveys a dual strategy that combines military and spiritual efforts. The accompanying text functions as a declarative statement, positioning Buhari and Osinbajo as the "best team" to confront the insurgency. Buhari, portrayed as a General, represents military strength, while Osinbajo, depicted as a Pastor, symbolizes moral and spiritual authority. This combination presents a holistic solution to national security challenges, appealing to the audience's trust in both physical and spiritual

leadership.

The image's tone is authoritative and persuasive, projecting unity and strength through the blend of military and religious symbolism. The slogan "A GENERAL & A PASTOR" serves as a metapragmatic device that blends seriousness with subtle playfulness, reinforcing the duo's combined power. Within Nigeria's political and cultural context, the image resonates strongly, addressing both the physical violence and ideological conflict posed by Boko Haram. The audience is expected to recognize the cultural respect for military and religious leadership as vital in confronting terrorism.



Figure 2: Burial of PDP

The historical-religious context in figure 2 is hinged on the narrative that the past government must be buried in a religious way to usher in a new government. Through shared situation knowledge it can be inferred that the PDP is the incumbent party and that the citizens who are now in support of their opponents are completely tired of them, thereby wishing for the total eradication (burial) of the party.

The participants in the plate are unknown but can be inferred to be supporters of the APC party as they intend to bury the PDP party despite the historical exploit of the party. The author introduces religion when the coffin bears the cross, which means the party is intended to be buried in a Christian way. One of the participants at the far left is seen with a support poster for Buhari, for whom they were canvassing. They are all in the reality section. Therefore,

the historical and religious contexts are embedded in the political context. All these are inferred to project the APC representative as equal to the task of leadership and massive representation and take them away from the state of death where PDP has placed the country. Metaphor is engaged as the PDP labelling is more projected than the APC party they represent at the rally.

War Context: The creators of memes construct a war context to show viewers that the candidates have taken the electoral process beyond the face level to a real fight, resulting in the use of weapons, including power, at their reach. The readiness for war and the sense of getting to power, by all means, is modeled by visual modes such as guns and swords to establish the war context.



Figure 3. GMB ready for war

In this image, there is no explicit written text directly embedded. However, the implied textual element can be interpreted through the symbols and imagery present, which convey a strong narrative and message. The character is dressed in a modified Captain America suit but adorned with the Nigerian national colours and symbols. The shield prominently displays the Nigerian coat of arms, and the character's helmet has the letter "N" (likely representing Nigeria). The image portrays a figure resembling Captain America, but the character is outfitted in the national colours of Nigeria and features the Nigerian coat of arms. This

visual representation recontextualizes the familiar superhero archetype within a Nigerian framework, portraying a protector or saviour figure for the nation. The imagery evokes strength, heroism, and national pride, positioning the character as a defender of Nigeria. The confident posture and heroic attire create an inspiring and engaging depiction, while the direct gaze conveys determination and emotional connection. By using recognizable superhero imagery, the design promotes empowerment and hope, implying that Nigeria possesses its own heroes capable of overcoming adversity.

The composition centers the character against a dark, stormy background that enhances the dramatic tone. The green and white colours of Nigeria stand out vividly against the darker backdrop, reinforcing national identity and emphasizing the character's transformation into a symbol of Nigerian heroism. This arrangement directs the viewer's attention toward both the national symbols and the heroic stance. Interpreted within the context of Nigeria's ongoing challenges, particularly issues of security, governance, and identity, the image fuses global superhero iconography with local cultural symbols to express collective desires for protection and strong leadership.

The image asserts Nigeria's capacity to produce its own heroes and leaders who can address national challenges. It invites viewers to recognize and celebrate resilience, heroism, and unity, functioning within the nation's sociopolitical landscape to translate the global appeal of superheroes into a local narrative of strength and self-determination. The figure becomes a metaphor for Nigerian leadership and citizens' aspirations for effective governance and security, embodying national pride and a vision of collective empowerment.



Figure 4: GEJ Ready for War

Like in the previous plate, since the other candidate is ready for war, the participant (Jonathan) in this plate is also portrayed by the author as being equally ready for war. The presidential seat became a point of combat that has to be fought for before the winner emanates. The two vectors here are the direction of the participant's gaze and his arms (one holding a gun and the other in his pocket), indicating authority as the participant was the incumbent president; this is known through shared situation knowledge (SSK). The Action here is non-transactional, and the reactional process is transactional, too, indicating that the battle is not between the participant and the viewer but something else outside the picture.

The represented non-human participants are depicted as belonging to the participant, i.e. the gun (political battle) and hat (tribe). They are seen as possessive attributes and fit together, indicating a structured analytical process. The image act here is not directed at viewers (Offer); hence, there is no gaze contact between participants. This means there is no demand from viewers to be part of the war the participant is getting ready for; therefore, a detachment is established. This is also reflected in the size of the frame, which is medium-sized. Metapragmatic Joker (J) comes into play here when the whole meme is made to look like a movie advert showcasing the main actor, although the electoral process is a serious one.

Educational Context: The discourse of education in Nigeria plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of leadership and eligibility for public office. In this context, the meme's creator highlights one of the presidential candidates as lacking educational certification, thereby questioning the candidate's credibility and competence. Viewers readily grasp the intended critique due to their familiarity with the structures and expectations of the Nigerian educational system. These include uniformity as a means of identification, the duration of formal learning, the organization of teaching, learning environments among others.



Figure 5. School Attendance

The meme features two men in matching school uniforms, with one face digitally superimposed to resemble Muhammadu Buhari, the former President of Nigeria. The accompanying text, "WHO TALK SAY I NO GO SCHOOL? OKON IS MY WITNESS," written in Nigerian Pidgin English, conveys an informal and humorous tone. The juxtaposition of adult faces with school uniforms produces a striking visual incongruity that captures attention. This contrast serves as a visual metaphor, satirically referencing debates surrounding educational qualifications. By situating the figures in a school context, the meme draws on shared cultural understandings of education as a marker of social status and legitimacy. The humorous phrasing and the reference to "Okon" introduce an interpersonal and communal dimension that reinforces the meme's informal voice and accessibility.

The meme adopts a conversational and defiant tone, implicitly challenging societal judgments about education and political credibility. Through the recognizable image of a public figure, it critiques perceived inconsistencies or falsifications in educational claims. The school uniform becomes a metaphor for superficial or performative educational achievement, while humour functions as a rhetorical "joker" that softens the critique and encourages engagement. By using laughter to broach sensitive political issues, the meme makes its criticism more relatable and less confrontational.

Within the broader sociopolitical context, the meme resonates strongly in societies where educational credentials are closely tied to leadership legitimacy and where political figures are frequently scrutinized for misrepresenting their qualifications. Its impact depends on the audience's familiarity with the political figure and their cultural valuation of education. Through shared humour and cultural references, the meme fosters a sense of community while delivering incisive social commentary. Its combination of design elements, cultural symbolism, and performative language transforms it into a powerful medium for political and societal critique.



Figure 6: Certificate probing

In figure 6, the questioning of Buhari's certificate, known through SSK, also aroused the creation of the meme above as it was one of the requirements for the Presidential Election. The first participant, Raji Fashola, is a renowned APC chieftain. This is an

introduction of satire as he's not meant to hear from external forces what is happening in his party. The second participant is Buhari, who was also offered to the viewers. His gaze is directed to the first participant with whom he converses on the certificate issue.

The locative circumstance, that is, the setting, is a political meeting. The second participant holds a paper which the author of the meme sarcastically described with the text as he uses the accent of the northerners to refer (REF) to the level of education Buhari has, evidently corroborating the non-existence of the certificate in question.

The vector of their hands indicates that the two of them are really embedded in the conversation so as to get a way out. The plate contains no framing, as the images are not separated from the text. In the meme, gazes of the two participants are employed and directed at each other and not the viewers. For the participants in the plate, it is Demands, while for the viewers, it is Offers to show that the viewers are not involved in the certificate issue at hand while they work assiduously to fix things. The caption of the meme structured at the bottom reveals practical information about the image act, thereby an attempt to authenticate his schooling.

Economic context

The memes in the economic context suggest the economic state of the country. The country's youth are expected to be responsible citizens, promoting peace and stability from a sound mind. Creators of memes frown at embezzlement, which results in fuel hikes and hunger. In the economic context, the creators focus on the consequences of the bad economy on the country. Awareness is created about the economy's awry state to propose a choice to the people to be careful with their choices and selection of leaders.



Figure 7. Promise to fight corruption after engaging in it

The meme features an image of former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, with text in a speech bubble that reads: "Me? I have no hand in the missing $20 billion, it was Diezani and Ngozi's idea… Please vote for me, give me another chance. I promise to fight corruption, terrorism and create 2 million jobs yearly…." The image shows Goodluck Jonathan in a serious, possibly defensive pose. In the meme, Goodluck Jonathan is depicted in formal attire, symbolizing his role as a statesman. His earnest expression contrasts sharply with the incredulous and ironic tone of the accompanying text. The speech bubble employs irony and skepticism, referencing high-profile controversies such as the missing $20 billion, corruption, and unfulfilled job creation promises. The clear positioning of the text attributes the statements directly to Jonathan, enhancing the satirical force of the critique. This visual-textual relationship underscores a perceived dissonance between Jonathan's public image and his political performance.

The meme adopts a critical and sarcastic voice, reflecting skepticism toward Jonathan's credibility and promises. It implies disbelief in his ability to fulfill campaign commitments, portraying his denials and assurances as emblematic of political insincerity. The juxtaposition of Jonathan's composed appearance with exaggerated, implausible statements heightens the meme's humour and irony. The humour functions as a rhetorical strategy,

softening the critique while exposing political disingenuousness. The meme's effectiveness relies on the audience's awareness of Jonathan's administration, particularly controversies surrounding financial mismanagement and economic stagnation during his presidency. Through visual and textual contrast, the meme frames Jonathan as unreliable and untrustworthy. The meme can be seen as a pract, a communicative act that mobilizes irony, inference, and shared situational knowledge to convey political criticism.



Figure 8: Economic effect on mental health

Figure 8 projects the state of the economy as one who is sick because of the decision of his brother. The locative circumstance of the plate is inferred to be a hospital where sick people are cared for. The participant in red is inferred to be the doctor, and the other man is a patient who is currently diagnosed with mental illness. The doctor (Actor) engages the vector of hand and direction of his look (gaze) as he uses the stethoscope to examine the breathing rate of his patient and his hand to place on the patient (goal). The two of them gaze into space as they do not direct it at any other participant, whether on the plate or outside, at the viewer. There is no reactional process present here.

The metapragmatic joker in the plate is the statement of the patient who is experiencing mental illness because of another person's choice of voting for Buhari again after their experience

during the military era when he ruled the country. The gaze (offers) indicates a detachment from the viewer as the viewer is not involved in the plate in any way. Even the information value in the plate is limited to the two participants as the thought balloons between them reflect the conversation on the current electoral process. The patient is, however, projected to have a ray of hope of getting well because of his contact with the doctor, as the author places thought balloons against a black background.

Sporting Context

In related instances, internet memes extend this political critique into the realm of sports. By portraying presidential candidates participating in sporting activities such as football and wrestling, meme creators metaphorically represent political competition as a literal contest of strength and endurance. These depictions highlight the perceived desperation of candidates to win at any cost, framing political ambition as aggressive and unwholesome. Through such imagery, memes transform familiar sporting scenarios into arenas of political satire, using humour to comment on the competitiveness and intensity of Nigeria's electoral politics.



Figure 9: PDP and APC in a football contest

The meme visually imitates the familiar format of a UEFA Champions League broadcast, a globally recognized sporting event associated with intense competition and prestige. In this recontextualization, the logos of the People's Democratic Party

(PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) replace traditional team crests, positioning the political parties as rivals in a high-stakes contest. The inclusion of the Champions League branding and the *Estádio da Luz* stadium name enhances the illusion of an authentic sports event, lending grandeur and entertainment value to the depicted political rivalry. The central activity is the portrayal of politics as a football match, symbolizing political competition as a spectator-driven contest where tactics, performance, and strategy outweigh policy substance. The stadium setting further implies that this rivalry unfolds as a public spectacle rather than a purely civic process.

The meme's voice is ironic and critical, employing the accessible and relatable context of football to underscore the performative and entertainment-driven nature of Nigerian politics. By equating political rivalry with a sporting event, the meme satirizes how electoral competition often prioritizes image, rivalry, and public theatrics over governance and accountability.

The meme's effectiveness relies on the audience's shared understanding of both global sports culture and local political dynamics. For Nigerian viewers, the juxtaposition of PDP and APC logos within the familiar framework of a football broadcast immediately evokes the country's intense and often theatrical political rivalries. This meme effectively employs the representation of political parties as football teams in a Champions League match, highlights the performative and often superficial nature of political rivalries. The meme uses humour and irony to engage viewers in a critical reflection on the prioritization of spectacle over substance in political discourse. By drawing on shared cultural references, it makes a powerful statement about the current political climate and the need for a more genuine and issue-focused approach to governance.



Figure 10: PDP and APC candidates in a boxing ring

As in the previous plate, the competition continues in earnest with the vectors used to display a wrestling competition tournament that is very serious, with both parties determining to win. This is a clear model of a sports context as veiwers are able to draw inference from the competition that is ongoing. These vectors, that is, the direction of their looks and the position of their hands and legs, show deep opposition. The direction of the supporters' look, on the other hand, and the raising of their hands show their involvement and expectation of the wrestling's outcome. A wrestling ring in a stadium with fans is the locative circumstance, and there is a physical spatial relation between the participants as they target each other.

The non-represented human participant here that strikes a chord is the wrestling outfit that is worn, which makes it possible for the viewer to infer what is going on and why alongside the parties represented. It is inferred that the two candidates will go to any length to win the election. This is further emphasised through metapragmatic joker as those who are meant to be examples to the country at large are the ones who are engaging in a public fight. The metaphor (MPH) here is that they still get supporters who go to any length for them and mostly see nothing bad in what they do.

The APC and PDP candidates, as interactors, display a

transactional bidirectional action since they appear to want to fight each other, and the gaze of their supporters is at them, too. This explains how minimal, if not totally insignificant, the participation of the electorate is in the electoral processes in the country. The thought balloons situated at the top of the image show that the utterances are essential and reveal the ideal state of their mind towards each other. The colours engaged are indications of the party represented by participants.

Socio-Political Context: Socio-political markers characterise several memes. The socio-political context becomes prominent because a man is not without a society. The memes, therefore, become understandable by the viewers because of the existing relationship with their environment. The meme creators use different modes that the viewers can draw inferences from. Socio-political context is used to mean ideas not being able to stand alone, but existing closely to the culture, society and political environment where it is used. It is illustrated below:



Figure 11. The home coming of the President

This meme, which depicts a man with suitcases facing a crowd and the accompanying text "My People, See My Life Oooo I Don Return to Otuoke Ooooo," draws upon sociopolitical themes to create a poignant yet humourous commentary. "My People, See My Life Oooo") is a phrase that conveys a sense of dismay and

resignation. The use of "Oooo" adds an emotional and colloquial touch, indicating a lament or complaint directed at an audience presumed to be familiar with the speaker's plight. ("I Don Return To Otuoke Ooooo") implies that the person has returned to their hometown, Otuoke, which is commonly associated with Goodluck Jonathan, former President of Nigeria. The repetition of "Ooooo" emphasizes a sense of disappointment or anticlimax.

The image depicts a man viewed from behind, carrying multiple suitcases that symbolize burden, transition, and retreat. His posture conveys exhaustion and reluctance, suggesting a forced or unwelcome return. The blurred crowd in the background appears indifferent, emphasizing the man's isolation and underscoring the disconnect between individual struggle and public reception. The surrounding water body and urban landscape reinforce themes of boundary crossing, transformation, and departure, situating the scene within a broader narrative of change and loss.

The composition makes the man the focal point, drawing attention to his predicament while the indistinct crowd provides contextual contrast. This framing highlights solitude amid collective detachment, inviting viewers to interpret the image as a commentary on personal consequence within political transitions. The voice expressed in the meme is both personal and political, conveying emotional weight while resonating with national narratives. The audience is encouraged to infer that the man's journey, interpreted as a return to Otuoke, represents an involuntary retreat or symbolic downfall, referencing Goodluck Jonathan's post-presidency experience. The use of suitcases metaphorically captures the end of political power and the return to private life, evoking both humour and empathy. Through this imagery, the meme blends satire with social commentary, using familiar cultural symbols to critique the transience of political success.

The meme's effectiveness depends on the audience's shared knowledge of Jonathan's political career and the significance of Otuoke as his hometown. The image and text work together to convey a powerful socio-political message. The meme taps into shared cultural and political knowledge, using metaphor and humour to engage the audience and provoke reflection on the personal impacts of political careers.



Figure 12. The home coming of the President and his wife

In line with the plate above, the locative circumstance is on a river, showing how the participants are returning on the water to Otueke, as little or no development took place there during their office tenure. There are two opposing vectors here. While the vector of the movement of their hands showed their movement as going forward, the direction of the look of the wife showed they were still trapped in the past as she looked back but made statements to those in front that they were going to meet. The reactional process, therefore, is transactional as glances are made towards something outside the frame of the picture, which is not the viewer. The thought balloons reflecting their utterances show the husband directing his gaze at the wife, trying to tell her to focus on the new terrain in their lives and avoid complicating matters.

In the plate, the non-human participants are depicted as belonging to the couple and their environment. The bushes, the canoe, the luggage, the river and the trees are part, as Possessive Attributes,

of the landscape as Carrier. With a medium close-shot frame, the viewer is left at an arm's length relationship. It can be inferred that the First Lady was still caught up in the enjoyment of the luxury leadership had to offer them and didn't want to leave. Through shared situation knowledge it is obvious that they are returning to Otueke, which is a riverine area. Still, the duo made no effort to make it motorable for the citizens. This act of theirs makes it metaphorical because they did not think of returning one day; if they had, they would have done something to make the lives of inhabitants better showing regret.

The position of the text on top of the image shows an ideal but is contrasting in that it is disconnected from this same image by thick borders and frame lines, which shows a disconnection or detachment. The text in the middle serves as the nucleus of information, and this is exactly the purpose served by the texts in the thought balloons. Gaze is directed towards something outside the frame of the picture, which is not the viewer; hence, Offers are established. The red-coloured choice of the author for the text in the thought balloons shows the danger embedded in the next phase of life as they refused to develop their community but also a ray of hope with the white-coloured text as there is no place like home.

Observation and Conclusion

In this article, we have examined multimodality and context in selected Internet memes on Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Election on the Nairaland Forum. A multimodal analysis of selected Internet memes was employed to gain deeper insights into the contexts, representations and modes deployed and anchored by the theoretical models of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's Multimodal theory and Jacob Mey's Pragmatic Acts theory. The study projects how the Internet memes in the 2015 Presidential Election employed different representations and multimodal resources to raise the electorate's consciousness. The study is

situated in political discourse, especially the electoral discourse, which resonates with previous studies that have examined the 2015 elections (Sunday, 2015; Tella, 2018; Campbell, 2015; Isma'ila & Othman, 2015; Onanuga and Ajao)

It has been established that the historical-religious context drew on military uniform and pastoral costume to refer to history and religion as solutions to the country's leadership problems. The war context built on shields, swords and guns to depict violence as a recurring feature in Nigeria's election. While the educational context relied on school uniforms and food baskets to expose the inadequacies of a candidate's academic qualifications; the economic context used embezzlement meme to expose the economic state of the country. The sporting context was marked by a football pitch, showing the electoral process as a competition; whereas the socio-political context projected the electorate's involvement and enthusiasm during and after the election. The Internet memes, therefore, can be used to project the state of affairs of the country during the election period as grey.

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