


Chapter 1

A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Cartoons on the 2022 ASUU Strike in Nigerian Public Universities

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ABSTRACT

This study carried out a multimodal critical discourse analysis of selected cartoons on the 2022 ASUU strike in Nigeria, intending to explore the ideologies and meaning-making resources used to visualise the strike. Using van Leeuwen's social semiotics and van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of critical discourse analysis, the study conducted a qualitative analysis of thirty-five purposively selected cartoons to investigate their visual and discursive strategies. The social semiotic analysis revealed that semiotic resources such as spatial arrangement, gaze, and composition portray students as victims, and recontextualise the strike as a ritual sacrifice. The critical discourse analysis demonstrated that ideological strategies such as positive-self and negative-other representation were employed to express resistance and anti-welfarist ideologies, thereby emphasising our good deeds and

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foregrounding their bad deeds. The paper offers insights into how multimodal texts engage with socio-political issues within the context of Nigerian public universities' industrial actions.

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian citizens have had reasons for protest, ranging from corruption, the need for infrastructure, law and order, and perceived insecurity. Before the country gained its independence in 1960, during the colonial era and till now, there have been protests leading to strikes and boycotts by citizens to express their grievances about economic and socio-political issues in the country. In the education sector, for instance, lecturers have embarked on various protests in the form of strikes and boycotts to drive home their demands which include funding for the revitalisation of public universities, payment of earned academic allowances (EEA), reconstitution of the FGN/ASUU 2009 Renegotiation Committee and proliferation of universities, among others. Different individuals and groups show their stance toward these strikes through multimodal resources deployed in images, thereby revealing their ideologies, projecting their worldviews, and lampooning authorities through humorous posts (Monogbe, 2019). Previous studies have explored the critical discourse aspects of language use in media reports on industrial actions in Nigeria and their ideological representations, using the 2013 ASUU strike as a case study (Ellah, 2014; Ugwuona, 2016). Additionally, some have examined conceptual metaphors and discursive features in media reports and online reader comments on the 2013 labour conflict between ASUU and the Federal Government of Nigeria (Akinwotu, 2019). However, these studies have not investigated the socio-cognitive resources present in multimodal texts, such as political cartoons, in relation to the 2022 ASUU strike. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (a) what ideologies and attitudes are expressed towards the strike through these cartoons? (b) how are socio-cognitive resources exhibited in the cartoons? In answering these research questions, this chapter analyses how the multimodal resources in cartoons are used as forms of protest for or against the 2022 Academic Staff Union of Universities (hereafter ASUU) strike in Nigerian public universities and how these cartoons project the effect of the strike on the Nigerian education sector.

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