



Analysing Verbal and Visual Indexes in Internet Memes on the APC-Led Administration and “Change” Slogan in Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper examines the complementarity relation of some verbal and visual signifiers in internet memes about the “change” slogan of the APC-led administration in Nigeria. The data comprised nine purposively selected internet memes transmitted through *Facebook*, *Nairaland* and *Twitter*, which were selected between February 2016 and January, 2017. The data was analysed using Kress’s (2010) approach of multimodal social semiotics. The studies revealed that all the memes were subversive in nature and were used to reflect negative dispositions of the text producers to the leadership style and agenda of the APC-president elect. The study concluded that the memes about the APC “change” slogan were used to express displeasure over the socio-economic realities in Nigeria and to dissuade viewers from voting for the APC in subsequent elections.

Key words: “change” slogan, memes, multimodal social semiotics, social-political protest, visuality.

Introduction

The use of memes to project popular ideas on the Internet has become a current practice in many political terrains across the globe (Kulkarni, 2017). Nigeria seems to be one of the countries with the fastest growing internet culture in the world. The country, which has an estimated population of 180 million, has 92.4

million active internet subscribers. A number of popular social media sites subscribed to by Nigerians thrive on the creation and circulation of memes. These tend to contain images or videos and texts, projecting cultural symbols or social ideas, which often go viral on the Internet.

The term “meme” is largely attributed to Richard Dawkins - an evolutionary

biologist, in his book *Selfish Genre* (1976). But the word “meme” originates from the Greek word *mimēnia* which relates to imitation. Shifman (2013, p.363) describes memetics as “the theoretical and empirical science that studies the replication, spread and evolution of memes”. A meme is characterised by its ability to go viral through copying and imitation. Internet memes are images that are used to transmit social and cultural ideas on the internet. The ideas in memes may be re-modified with the designers’ captions. Backhaug (2011, p.42) posits that “internet memes propagate among people by means of e-mails, instant messaging, forums, blogs, or social networking sites.” And are “inside jokes or pieces of hip underground knowledge that many people are on.” While some memes are observed to spread virally, some others have also been observed to fade off in a short while. Dennet (1993, p.205) notes that a meme “replicates at rates that make even fruit flies and yeast cells look glacial in comparison”. In contemporary times, Nigerians seem to have been actively involved in the use of internet memes to depict their stances on political administrations and government policies.

Memes as Artefacts of Humour and Ideological Positioning

Shifman (2007), reports that humour has co-existed with human activities for a very long time but changes in form, in order to suit socio-cultural and technological trends. Humour is intricately woven with emotional messages. From a Critical Discourse Approach, humour may have two

distinct forms – “reinforcing” and “subversive” effects as pointed out by Holmes & Marra (2002). This means that the intentionality of the deployment of political humour is either to reflect a solidarity relationship, as a reinforcing form, or challenge existing ideological position and power relations, as a subversive form. While the former intends humorous messages to censure political ideas, administrations or candidatures, the latter intends such to shut out prospective criticisms and establish commonality (Nilsen, 1990). Holmes & Marra (2002) posit that there is no neutrality in the appropriation of memes. This is echoed by Du Preez & Lombard (2014), who also note that all memes bear some form of ideological undertone. According to Adegaju & Oyebo (2015), memetic communication is one of the genres of political humour. Silvestri (2014) refers to memetic communications as the use of digital content to spread opinions on issues or individuals and, establish shared relationships and cultures. Tsakona & Popa (2013) argue that memes could be considered as unconventional forms of political humour because the producers of such memes are usually not media organisations but individual citizens who consider such a good platform for identity (re)construction, rather than mere amusement. Political humour, the focus of this work, is humour which is characterised by images and texts on an array of political themes or injunctions created either by politicians or political critics to invoke hilarity (Tsakona & Popa, 2013). The (new) media (internet, websites, blogs and all other social

media platforms) have not only contributed to the virility of political humour but have also been a major proponent for its creation (Corner, 2012).

Taiwo (2018, p. 320) opines that the use of memes in online interactions is a growing culture and that “although, they may appear like playful acts in online interactions, memes raise very serious socio-political issues, critique social ills and communicate messages, which fulfil citizens’ social responsibilities”. Thus, memes could be considered as writings or pictorial representations with humorous content and satirical thrusts. Wiggins & Bowers (2014) note that the use of internet memes have attracted works of several scholars who have made attempts to understand digital culture. According to Grundlingh (2018), internet users view memes as speech acts in which the semiotic resources are meticulously chosen to perform specific communicative functions in online discussions. For this reason, the visual and verbal modes in memes are either created or recreated to complementarily facilitate communication between a meme designer and the internet community.

Aguilar, Campbell, Stanley & Taylor (2017) examined the use of memes in communicating mixed messages in religious internet contexts. The study identified the common genres that characterise these internet memes by examining the techniques used to frame ideas in this genre of discourse. The study also emphasised the importance of internet memes as a way to better understand the different perspectives to

religion amongst a group of people who have a common culture.

De Cook (2018) studied the use of memes for propaganda and collective identity. From a discourse analysis perspective, the study examined the images and texts circulated by a fraternity-like group ‘Proudboys’ on ‘western ideals.’ The author examined how this group have employed memes to project their ideologies and propaganda on ‘western ideals’ through *Instagram* memes.

Du Press & Lombard (2014) examined the role of memes in the construction of *Facebook* personae. Focusing on *Facebook*, the study examined how the offline life of an individual may be reconstructed by online memes on social media sites. Because memes seem to bear connotative judgements on persons and issues, the study found out that the true identity of an offline individual is often exposed through internet memes.

Taecharunroj & Nueangjamnong (2015) conducted a study on the styles and types of humours and virality of memes on *Facebook*. The study examined the various styles and types of humour in 1000 memes shared on Facebook pages. The authors found out that self-defeating was the most effective style. In the case of virality, it further found out that sarcasm and silliness were most prevalent types of humours used in the meme.

The Rhetoric of Visuality

Pictorial representation emphasises the message of oral communication and even provide more than words could convey (Ademilokun & Olateju, 2015). The rhetorical strength of visuals as pointed out by Domke, Perlmutter &

Spratt (2002, p. 133-134) is seen in its ability to facilitate quick recollection of information, its iconic representation of themes or issues, its emotive effects, its aesthetics potentials and its instrumentality for political engagements. The points highlighted above explain the reason for the growing interest of netizens (or internet users) in the study of memes. The growing relationship between visuality and social protests in Nigeria could also be traced to the above. Netizens, in order to muster the spread of criticism against certain governmental policies, use images that they find appealing. The meme creator's intended message is presented in sensational captions or written somewhere beneath or above the visual images.

For instance, Hayes (2011) explored the impact of visual images in Omar Badsha's photo shoot pictures of the agitation against Apartheid in South Africa in the 19th and 20th century. Hayes' study found that Badsha's pictures were used to project the poor living conditions of the racialised South Africans and were also used to trigger revolutionary activities against apartheid. Similarly, Elebute (2013) examined the functionality of visual images in the Nigerian political situation of 1963, focusing on billboards, body paintings, television images and so on. Although the analytical coverage of these authors only relates to visual images in the television and print media, the rhetorical strength of visuals seems relevant in today's social media interventions.

Socio-political Protest Discourse in Nigeria

The expression of dissatisfaction in the Nigerian politics started during the pre-independence era with the activities of some nationalists such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Tafawa Balewa who spearheaded the campaign for self-rule in Nigeria. Political activism developed further when Nigeria attained independence in 1960. Agitations have since taken several forms ranging from riots, industrial actions and protests with the use of placards, bill board, online posts and the creation and circulation of memes on social media platforms. The language use in these forms of socio-political activism has served as data source for some multimodal discourse analysts and critical discourse analysts.

Studies on socio-political protests within Nigeria have been conducted using the frameworks of critical discourse analysis and pragmatics. Chilwa (2015), for example, was a critical discourse analysis of *Facebook* posts on fuel subsidy removal protests of 2012. In another study, Agbedo (2012) analysed the placards of fuel subsidy crisis in Nigeria. In addition, Chilwa & Ifukor (2015) examined stance and engagement in the *#BringBackOurGirls* campaign discourse on *Twitter* and *Facebook*. Finally, Igwebuike, Abioye & Chimuanya (2014) studied 'occupy Nigeria group' online posts on the 2012 fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria.

Beyond these studies that underscore mono-modality in political texts, there are a few works in which descriptive analysis of multimodal texts for socio-political purposes are carried out.

Ademilokun & Olateju (2015) explored a multimodal discourse of some visual images in the political rally of 2011 electioneering campaigns in Southwestern Nigeria. The study drew on the political visual artefacts used in the political rallies of the two strongest political parties in Nigeria – Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP). The analysis revealed that vests were the most common visual artefact used (compared with caps) and these were inscribed the banners and logos of the political parties for mnemonic purposes. The study further revealed that all the semiotic resources identified were significantly used to project political, cultural and social affinity.

Adegoju & Oyeboode (2015) also examined the patterns of humour as discursive practice in the 2015 online presidential election campaign in Nigeria. The study examined both the verbal and visual resources created and disseminated by netizens on *WhatsApp*, *Facebook* and *Twitter* about their positions and anxieties on political issues in Nigeria. The study revealed that nonce-formation, parody, pun, hyperbole, ironic sarcasm, metaphor and imagery were satirically appropriated to negatively represent the persons of the political aspirants.

Akpati (2018) also analysed the audio-visual and lexical choices used to project the ideologies of the protesters in the Nigerian social protest videos. The selected video clips were those on protests in relation to the fuel subsidy removal, Academic Staff Union of Universities’ (ASUU) strike and the #BringBackOurGirls# campaign

between 2012 and 2015. The audio-visual and linguistic resources deployed in the video clips were used to discredit the Nigerian government and express displeasures of the protesters on these issues. The study also revealed abusive and solidarity songs used to create both local and global awareness on these issues.

In spite of this plethora of studies, there is a dearth of research on the multimodal semiotic study of internet memes on the APC-led administration and ‘change’ slogan in Nigeria. Thus, this study seeks to explore how internet memes were deployed to express individuals’ social and economic experiences during the APC-led administration and to rethink the concept of ‘change’ in the Nigerian socio-political setting. The verbal and visual resources employed in the memes were considered to reveal how these jointly convey the experiences of the Nigerian masses and present the political realities in the country. Evidently, Nigerians consider the use of memes, a subtle and more convenient way of expressing political ideologies possibly because it guarantees anonymity of the source of the meme. Memes are useful when there is a need to avoid open confrontation with the governmental officials. Another possible reason for preference of this medium could be because it has a viral nature and has a tendency to reach the targeted audience within a short time. Also, the images in a meme accommodate a caption which helps to pass the intended message.

APC “change” Slogan in Nigeria

Slogans are instrumental phrases for championing a cause, for instance, campaign and marketing. In the political landscape, Awotayo (2018) opines that slogans are ideal where there are numerous ideas competing for attention. As catchy phrases, slogans are usually appropriated by political figures, corporate institutions and organisations as concise expressions of unavoidably lengthy agenda of these agents (Awotayo, 2018). Thus, slogans are deployed to create, drive and engrave the ideologies and interests of political parties or politicians on the minds of people.

Muhammadu Buhari ran for the presidential office in Nigeria in 2003, 2007 and 2011. In his 2014 declaration speech, Buhari and the All Progressive Party (henceforth, APC) portrayed themselves as crusaders of ‘change’ and won the Presidential election over the ruling People’s Democratic Party (henceforth, PDP) in 2015. Two independent political parties, Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and Action Congress of Nigeria (CAN), from the northern and southern regions in Nigeria respectively, formed a strong coalition which produced the APC that displaced the PDP in 2015. The party adopted the ‘change’ mantra to signal a need for political replacement of the then President Goodluck Jonathan (who accused of a failing in his ‘Transformation Agenda’) and the supposedly entrenched PDP government (which had been in power since 1999 – 16 consecutive years). The party adopted the ‘change’ mantra to stir an expectation of positive turn and

eradication of the security and economic problems ravaging the nation. This slogan contributed to Buhari’s victory in the elections. ‘Change’ has been the slogan of the APC in Nigeria since 2014, especially during the electioneering campaigns.

Between January 2015 and 2019 when the APC government was re-elected for the second term, the slogan – ‘change’ – has triggered several discourse and pragmatic implications in the national political debate. Before the general elections in 2015, this slogan was used as a powerful political tool for contesting the presidential seat. It was used by the APC to portray a sharp contrast in administration, especially in relation to previous ones by creating the feeling of a better life for the entire Nigerian public if APC won the elections. However, since 2016, the ‘change’ slogan has primarily been employed by Nigerians to express a negative disposition of Nigerians to the realities of this slogan. This study intends to see what ‘change’ actually means in the internet memes created and circulated on the APC-led administration. A study of this nature affords an opportunity to unmask the ideological layers in internet memes on the APC-led administration and ‘change’ slogan in Nigeria.

Methodology

Nine internet memes transmitted through *Facebook*, *Nairaland* and *Twitter* were selected. The selected memes were those which represented the perception of netizens on the APC-led administration and ‘change’ slogan across twelve months (February 2016 and January, 2017). This period is

critical because, at that time, the country was experiencing economic downturn, which was contrary to the 'change' slogan of the Buhari administration. Hence, the memes displayed aggressive and negative attitudes to the realities of the so-called 'change.' These memes match the purpose of this research since they generated the most views, comments and/ likes among memes in this category. The selected memes were observed to be laced with various visual and linguistic modes intended to make sense of 'change' in relation to the experiences of the Nigerian people during the APC administration and this was considered a crucial factor for analysis. The most dominant theme that characterised the selected memes is the socio-economic state of the country. Others were centred on the leadership style of the APC administration. This study adopts Kress' (2010) multimodal social semiotic approach to the effectiveness of the verbal and visual semiotic resources in the context of meaning production. Social semiotics

sees 'speakers and writers or other participants in semiotic activity as connected and interacting in a variety of ways in concrete social contexts' (Hodges & Kress, 1988, p. 1). Multimodal social semiotics views all semiotic resources (visual and verbal) as having social imports/representations, which are used to perform social functions including the transmission of values/beliefs, identity construction and social positioning/leaning (Kress, 2010; Van Leeuwen, 2005a). The study accounts for the meaning affordances of the verbal and non-verbal semiotic modes, following Kress' mode, genre, motivated sign and meaning potentials in relation to social structures and social relations. It examines how communicators couch and make meanings through multiple semiotic resources such as modes, genres, motivated signs etc. This approach is crucial because it offers sociological perspectives to the interpretation of semiotic resources.

Analysis and Discussion

(i) *The socio-economic state of the country*

Text1



(www.twitter.com)

Text 1 displays a meme portraying the side-view haircuts of two men. The semantic and visual representation serves as a cohesive blend for limiting the possible meaning of the meme, thereby relating the intention of the meme producer in multimodal modes. Text 1 is suggestive of the quality of life promised by the APC party during its campaign against the economic realities in Nigeria since the APC administration assumed office. To serve as an 'index', the verbal signifier "*The Change APC promised vs. what is presently obtainable because of the economy*" is strategically placed above the meme and written in appealing font. The verbal resource seems to be insufficient to generate the kind of emotive effect intended by the meme designer; hence is complimented with a visual mode.

This meme focuses on the quality of life that Nigerians have been living since the APC government took over power. The men in the memes are made to represent Nigerians. The image on the left is a projection of the mouth-watering kind of life that Nigerians were promised during the presidential campaign of the APC. It is the image of a young man with clean shaves in what looks like a classic barbing salon. The photograph of a young person on the right with an unfinished shave and popped out veins (a stress indicator), symbolises a life of hardship, suffering and financial crises that Nigerians have been exposed to in the APC administration. The incomplete haircut suggests that Nigerians face greater sufferings to come in the future. The background of the photograph on the left implies that the economy of the country has deteriorated during the APC

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administration, and that Nigerians could barely afford a hair-cut in a barber’s shop. These difficulties make them shave their heads locally. It also suggests that those who could afford to visit a barber’s shop get only half the quality of service for the price they used to pay before. This suggests that the income made by Nigerians at the moment can only afford them half the quality of life they used to live. The designer seems to have employed the image (on the right) to depict a fall in the Nigerian currency during the APC administration.

The colour of the skin of the men in the meme has possible implications. In the first photograph (on the left), the light, spotless, tender-looking face and scalp of the man is associated with good life. Conversely, the dark, coarse, unattractive complexion of the man in the second image may be associated with suffering and poverty. The contrast

portrays the campaign promises made by the APC as only a mirage compared to what actually obtains in the country. The indexical semiotic artefacts suggest that the experiences of Nigerians are at variance with the savoury promises made by the APC during its campaigns. However, taking a second look at the second photograph, the person on the right is seen smiling. This brings to mind the song of a popular musician in Nigeria, late Fela Anikulapo-Kuti - “suffering and smiling.” This is suggestive of Nigerians being able to comically relieve their tensions and amuse themselves despite the economic recession and harsh situations they go through. By using both modes, the designer is trying to reconceptualise the ‘change’ slogan. A comparison of the fantasised and realistic ‘change’ in the APC-led administration connotes the negative experiences of Nigerians.

Text2



(www.facebook.com)

Text 2 is a caricature of a legendary movie *Merlin*. *Merlin* tells the story of

young boy (Merlin) who is portrayed to possess magical powers and the ability

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to make things happen. In the movie, the destiny of a kingdom rests on his shoulders. He controls the turn-outs of events. In the movie, the boy (Merlin) is portrayed in the positive light.

In Text 2, there is also a cohesive blend of both visual and verbal modes in conveying the message of the designer. A verbal text which reads “*in the land of no fuel, in the time of no light, the destiny of a great nation rests on the shoulders of an old man*” is placed below the memes, couched in the form of a subtitle and dotted with emoticons for eye-catching effect. The designer considers the verbal text indexical to the interpretation of the meme. *Genre* (the choice of an edited movie cover) comes to play here as the designer replaces the head of the young boy (Merlin) with that of a 74-year old Nigerian president (Muhammadu Buhari). The clothing, gesture, and flash light of the old man’s hand in the caricature is identical to that of Merlin. The image communicates a lot of ideas about the events that have accompanied the APC administration since Buhari took office. inauguration. The meme suggests that the APC administration is responsible for all the turmoil happening in the nation. It is suggestive of the existence of a man who is being depicted as a power sorcerer, who can inflict hardships.

Unlike Merlin, President Buhari is portrayed in the negative light, possessing black powers, which has bewitched the nation and brought untold hardship on the citizenry.

Worthy of note is the verbal text “one chance” couched in diminutive red letters below the word *Merlin*. *One Chance* is a term used in Nigeria for robbery gangs that operate as commercial bus drivers. These gangs usually have fellow members of their gang posing as genuine passengers heading towards the same direction as unsuspecting passengers. This team thereafter dispossess their victims of their personal belongings at gun points and push them out of moving vehicles. The designer employs the term *one chance* to show that the APC administration is deceptive and has only succeeded in parading itself as the ‘messiah’ and ‘saviour’ to the numerous Nigerian problems in order to be elected. *One Chance* portrays the APC as mischievous and suggests that the several pledges of good governance during the campaigns were populist in their nature. The incumbent administration is considered “one chance” and that which has exposed Nigerians to untold sufferings, hardships and pains than the country had ever witnessed.

Text3



(www.facebook.com)

Text3 is a caricature of President Buhari and Asiwaju Bola Tinubu (an APC national leader - a business tycoon and former governor of Lagos state) engaged in a conversation. The meme mocks Tinubu, who is depicted as shabbily dressed (wearing a native Yoruba cap “Fila” and an English attire) without shoes on. He is sitting on a bucket with a lantern at the corner of his empty room. Tinubu has his lips tilted, head bent and right hand supporting his chin, which is a display of deep worry and anxiety.

The subtitle is presented in a conversational style to have a more persuasive effect on the viewer. The text producer’s choice of familiar faces is to

have emotional effect, showing that even the rich have not been spared in the hardship and sufferings ravaging the nation since the administration of the APC government. The complex noun phrase “*this Buhari’s period*” is used to depict hardship, torture, suffering, excruciating pain, scarcity and dryness. Also, the responsive verbal text “*It’s the new national anthem*” used in the captions connotes that all Nigerians (irrespective of financial status) have had their fair share of the sufferings in the APC-led administration. Ideologically, the text producer presents the much-anticipated change as a torturing one for both the poor and the rich in Nigeria.

Text4



(www.twitter.com)

Text4 communicates a set of ideas about Nigerians during the fuel scarcity period that occurred in 2016. The photograph is one that was taken during the fuel scarcity. It is a blend of verbal and visual modes intended by the text producer to further portray the deplorable state of things in Nigerians and the level of sufferings in Nigerians. Both modes are persuasively used to evoke emotions.

The woman in Text4 and the several empty gallons by her side are loaded with meaning. While the woman's outfit represents her low-class identity, the meme is generally used to symbolise the

suffering of the masses. The black kegs covered with dust are magnified in order to display long hours of waiting, which is most likely to elicit emotion and sympathy for Nigerians who had no choice than to wait for the fuel. The image has an accompanying verbal text "*when you remember say you follow scream Sai Baba.*" The interconnected blend of both modes suggests regrets and frustration. The designer uses this meme to portray the regrets of Nigerians in voting Buhari into power and by showing support by screaming "Sai Baba" during the campaign.

Text5



(www.facebook.com)

Text5 is a meme that portrays the perceptions and dispositions of Nigerians in the current administration. The meme shows a group of people running away with personal belongings. This scene suggests danger and the need to take cover and run for safety.

The meme is laced with a verbal text “in 2019, when Nigerians hear the word ‘change’”. Symbolically, the running individuals are Nigerians and what their reaction is when they now hear “change” and what is likely to be if the APC comes again with their “change” slogan in the 2019 elections. The meme connotes that Nigerians would not allow themselves to be cajoled and wooed again. The word “change” is here given a negative connotation in Nigeria as a result of the people’s experience in the current administration. As used by APC during the 2015 campaign, the notion of change suggests a transition from good

to bad. But with the current situation in Nigeria (lack of electricity, increase in pump price of fuel, lack of social high infrastructure, high rate of unemployment etc.), the meme suggests a breach of trust, disappointment and deceit.

This meme will now question whether the re-election of the Buhari administration in 2019 for another four years is really the people’s choice. Was this meme a product of the political enemies of the APC administration or was it an honest evaluation of the state of affairs in Nigeria? If indeed the average Nigerian feared the word “change,” as the above meme suggests, how did they vote the same APC administration to power for the second term? The implication of this meme would be that the 2019 presidential election was rigged in favour of Buhari and the ruling party.

ii. *The leadership style of the APC administration*

Text6



(www.nairaland.com)

In 2016, the Nigerian media reported a left ear infection (“meniere disease”) suffered by the Nigerian president. The text producer of Text6 uses the conditions of the disease to mock the health status and leadership style of the Buhari administration.

In Text6, the text written in Nigerian pidgin “no wonder Buhari no dey hear word” (no wonder Buhari doesn’t listen) strategically placed below the meme, makes fun of the report Buhari’s ear disease. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), where several modes are co-present, they are significant to the overall message in a text. Such occurs when the text producer considers the previous mode insufficient to convey the intended message (Domingo, Jewitt and Kress 2014). The persuasive effect of the shifts in modes presents an “order” of interpretations. While the anchoring verbal text “Buhari has cancelled his trip to Lagos over ear infection” reads like a sympathy, the

other verbal text “no wonder Buhari no dey hear word” lends an air of mockery to the meme. The meme mocks both President Buhari’s leadership style and his health conditions. It suggests Buhari is both physically (health-wise) and politically unfit to run the affairs of a nation like Nigeria.

The choice of a sepia as the background colour of the image is a motivated sign as it suggestive of the age of the president and thus, his frailty. Also, the text producer enlarged the president’s two ears to achieve a comic effect. Medically, “meniere disease” only affects one ear at a time and clears after treatment, but in the meme, the two ears are enlarged. This suggests soullessness and gross insensitivity of the president to the plights of the masses especially when interpreted in relation to the verbal text below the image. This suggests that the president’s personality gives no room for the suggestions of his advisers, which have brought untold hardship to

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the nation. Thus, the text producer portrays the Buhari's leadership style as a dictatorship bringing to mind that

Buhari was once Nigeria's military dictator, who came to power through a military coup in December 1983.

Text 7



(www.nairaland.com)

Text7 is a caricature of the Nigerian President standing in-between a heap of dirt. The president flings a broom towards Nigerians who run away from the approaching broom. The broom is the party emblem of the APC. The president expects that Nigerians would catch the falling broom.

The text producer employs this image to portray the president's deceptive role-shifts through the verbal text "change begins with you ...not me". This suggests that the proposed "change" has not come to play because Nigerians have not played their parts (as opposed to what was said during his campaign).

The running gaits and speed lines beneath the feet of the Nigerians in the meme connote the refusal of Nigerians to share responsibilities with the government on ensuring positive transformation in the country. The broom, assumed to be the tool for and cleaning and cleansing the society is flung towards Nigerians. During the campaigns, the APC had promised to rid the country of messy situations; hence, the broom as political symbol of good governance. Here, the text producer questions the credibility and capability of the APC administration to bring about the promised transformation, which the broom symbolises.

Text 8



(www.facebook.com)

Text8 is a meme of President Buhari and his vice - Professor Yemi Osinbajo. The image is a side-view shot of the two individuals comparing notes. The text producer employs a verbal caption in the form of a conversation between the two leaders. The meme's conversational style makes a mockery of the educational status / integrity of the Nigerian president. This is evidenced in the use of "dis" for "this" and the use of a small letter for "yemi" rather than "Yemi."

From the meme, President Buhari appeared to have forgotten or never really meant any of the promises he made during the campaigns. The designer either intends to present the president as a liar or as a deceitful politician, which are factors responsible for the hard times that Nigeria is facing today. In the image, the APC flag is seen folded up in a corner of the room. The message suggests that the President had since abandoned his promises and that the *change* slogan merely succeeded in getting the party to power.

Text9



(www.nairaland.com)

Text9 is a caricature of the Nigerian president performing a Chinese martial art (Kung Fu). In the meme, the President is dressed in a red Kung Fu costume. This hints at Buhari's vested anger and zero-tolerance to corruption in Nigeria. It also suggests that the culprits of corruption in Nigeria would definitely face law.

The focus of Text9 is on the corruption scheme proposed by the Buhari administration. Both the visual and verbal modes seem to be employed to reinforce verbal text in this meme "*am back from China ...*". The cohesiveness of the purpose "...to fight corruption", written in bold letters, with "*am back from China ...*" is striking in a rhetorical sense. Sarcastically however, the designer portrays the President with a handicapped right hand, which suggests

that even though the President has mastered the skills for tackling corruption like China, he might not be able to successfully implement this in Nigeria, because he lacks the political capacity to carry it out. The right hand symbolises strength and authority, but his is diminutive. The image is designed to make a mockery of President Buhari's promise to track down all corrupt leaders in Nigeria. Up till his second term in power, there were still accusations that his government is as corrupt as the ones before it.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the interplay between verbal and visual resources as markers of social relations in internet memes on the APC-led administration and 'change' slogan in Nigeria. It also investigates how text producers use the

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visual and verbal memes to reframe the APC 'change' slogan and express their attitudes towards the APC administration. This analysis demonstrates that the text producers made choices of *modes*, *genres* and *motivated signs* that could invoke the

intended emotive effect. The satirical thrust of the memes, suggests their subversive nature as they criticize the APC's administration and policies. Also, the memes were used to connote the sufferings of Nigerians.

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