

## A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ADVERTISEMENT OF MALARIA DRUGS

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APA Citation: Olowu, A. & Akinkurolere, S. O. (2015). A multimodal discourse analysis of selected advertisement of malaria drugs. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 3(2), 166-173

Received: 11-04-2015

Accepted: 25-04-2015

Published: 01-06-2015

**Abstract:** This study identified and analyzed the visual and linguistic components associated with the selected advertisement of malaria drugs. This was with a view to describing the essential communication devices the advertisers of such drugs have employed. Data for the study were drawn from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source for the study comprised 4 purposively selected posters, stickers and drugs literature advertisement on malaria. Analysis of the data followed the framework of Kress and Leeuwen's Multimodal Discourse Analysis. The results showed that such visual resources as colour, pictures, symbols and icons, gaze and posture enhance the semantic quality of the advertisement. In the whole, the study emphasizes the vitality of visual and linguistic elements as important communication devices in advertising.

**Keywords:** *multimodal discourse analysis, visual elements, communication devices, visual grammar.*

### INTRODUCTION

New drugs are released almost on weekly basis. When these drugs come, the manufacturers will engage in massive advertisement. The reason is to impress the drugs into the consciousness of the people. Advertisement of drugs can take a number of forms which include advocacy, comparative, cooperative, informational, direct-mail, outdoor advertisement, persuasive, etc. This type of advertising is commercial. It is basically consumer advertising which pervades our society because it involves the promotion of such drugs to potential buyers.

Drugs are advertised through several media which include television, radio, print media such as magazines,

leaflets, flyers, handbills and periodic reports. Other media include billboards, workshops, seminars and other health books. Television stations usually enjoy much patronage from Drug marketers. Pharmaceutical companies rely so much on television advertisement to promote their drugs. The reason for this is not far-fetched. Television is multimodal in nature in that it relies on multiple semiotic modes or resources (language, visual imagery, gesture, movement, colour, music, sounds and so on). Woods (2006) describes television advertising as the form of multimodal communication par excellence (i.e communication through various and multiple semiotic modes and resources). It establishes a

double communicative connection: one between the people represented in the advert, also called represented participants (Kress and Leeuwen 2006), and one between the sender, that is the advertisement makers or copywriters and the receiver (the viewer) of the advertising message.

Essentially, we are considering new malaria drugs which have enjoyed heavy advertisement recently. These are coatal tamether, artrin, arenax plus, artecxin, p-alaxin, camosunate, pemametre, lufart, amalar plus, amatem and lonart. A detailed multimodal analysis of these advertisement will be carried out.

#### *Visual images: A general overview*

In every imaginable public space, visuals are presented for viewer's consumption. The young and old alike are bombarded by a cacophony of imagery in traditional print, books, magazines and newspapers, through totalizing mass media formats and inside the expanding e-work of the internet. On almost every public space available, images confront viewers. Kress and Leeuwen (2006) assert that:

Images are produced in the context of real social institutions, in order to play a very real role in social life-in order to do certain things to or for their readers, and in order to communicate attitudes towards aspects of social life and towards people who participate in them, whether authors and readers are consciously aware of them or not (p. 115).

In "Rhetorics of the Image", Roland Barthes writes that "the viewer of the image receives at one and the same time the perceptual message and the cultural message" (Barthes 1977: 36). He then explains that the "confusion in reading" stemming from this corresponds to the function and the communicative power of the mass image. This ultimately

suggests that images are never innocent. However, their messages often are naturalized by being associated with a given perceptual object. In analyzing images, then, it is necessary to account not only for their cultural norms, but also for their perceptual qualities. Visual texts differ from verbal texts because they are communicative across cultural codes while also carrying culturally specific meaning. Roland Barthes (1977) uses a linguistic approach for the study of visual communication, claiming that visual signification can be articulated into the two separate levels of denotation and connotation. The level of denotation corresponds to the literal meaning of an image, the immediate meaning relating to what is objectively represented by the image. The level of connotation corresponds to the symbolic or ideological meaning of an image, which corresponds to the meaning - or range of possible meanings - inscribed by cultural codes. The same denotative meaning can be associated with different connotative meanings according to the historical, and cultural contexts in which the message is produced and interpreted.

Theo Van Leeuwen and Gunther Kress are pioneers in the analysis of the visual dimension of printed texts. They consider texts from "a multimodal perspective" to include semiotic modes that accompany language or through which language is realized (Harrett and Bell in Fairclough 1995:14). Textual analysis must describe the interplay between the verbal and the visual, and effectively analyse visually exposed meaning (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996:186-7). The trend towards a multimodal appreciation of meaning making centres around two issues: first, the de-centering of language as favoured meaning making; and second, the re-visiting and blurring of traditional

boundaries between the roles allocated to language, image, page layout, document design etc. (Iedema 2003:58). According to Jewitt and Oyama (2001:134), who draw heavily on the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen, "social semiotics of visual communication involves the description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images (and other visual means of communication) and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted".

Meanwhile, with the late 20th century's explosion of imaging and visualizing technologies (digitization, satellite imaging, new forms of medical imaging, virtual reality etc.), it is suggested that everyday life has become "visual culture" (Lister & Wells 2001:62). Still on the proliferation of images, Castwright & Sturken (2001) assert that our modern condition is often characterized as an image saturated society with an intense image flow.

Indeed, visual components are often more influential than words. Messaris and Abraham (2001) argue this point:

Viewers may be less aware of the process of framing when it occurs visually than when it takes place through words. Consequently, visual image may have the capacity of conveying messages that would meet with greater resistance if put in words, but which are received more readily in visual form (P. 125)

As a cultural creation, images are often utilized to praise cultural values. Michael Griffin (1999) explains that images are "celebrated on a more abstract plane as broader symbols of national valour, human courage, etc. (P. 131). Hariman and Lucaites (2007) note the emotional act of images:

The photo's combination of emotional display and visual interpellation creates a strong sense of moral crises, a point at which the audience must decide where it stands (P. 143).

The intensity of emotion within images adds rhetorical richness to texts, resulting in added power within the overall meaning of a text.

Hence advertisers of drugs make generous use of images to capture audience's attention. They struggle to minimize the use of words. Though most of the advertisement come with verbal anchorages, the images are the centre of attraction and they carry more messages than the verbal expressions.

## METHOD

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) is 'an emerging paradigm in discourse studies which extends the study of language to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, colours, scientific symbolism, gestures, action, music and sound' (O'Halloran 2011:1). Multimodal discourse analysis is the study of the 'intersection and interdependence of various modalities of communication within a given context' (Snyder 2009:1). Researchers in this area seek to 'identify the influence of mode on meaning within a given context, focusing on co-occurrence interaction between multiple semiotic system' (Baldry and Thibault 2006:31). Multimodal discourse analysis is essentially concerned with the theory and analysis of semiotic resources and the semantic expansions which occur as semiotic choices combined in multicultural phenomena. The "inter-semiotic' relations arising from the interaction of semiotic choices, known as intersemiosis, is a central area of

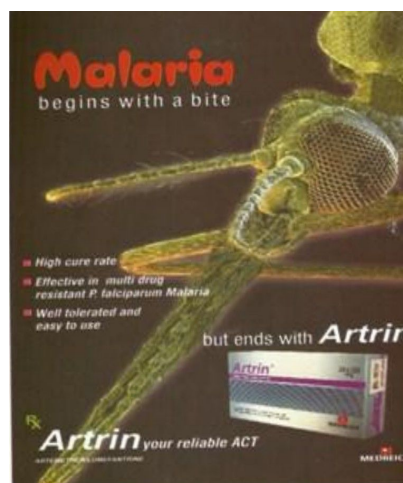
multimodal research (Jewitt 2009:14). Multimodal discourse analysis is also concerned with the design, production and distribution of multimodal resources in social settings (Leeuwen 2008:32).

The theory is also concerned with the concept of 'visual modality'. In Bell's second variable based on the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), it can be defined as "the represented realism of an image" (Bell 2001:30). It concerns also whether an image is portrayed as realistic and lifelike, or as something that can be classified as either a fantasy or caricature. The term 'modality' is a linguistic one and refers to the value or credibility of statements about the world. Modality is interpersonal rather than ideational in that it does not express absolute truth or falsehoods, it produces shared truths aligning readers and viewers with what they hold to be true for themselves, while distancing from others whose values they do not share (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996:160). In terms of visual modality, visuals can represent people, places and things as though they are real. Here too, modality judgements are social and dependent upon what is considered real in the social group for which the representation is primarily intended. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:256) modality results from:

.....the degree to which certain means of pictorial expressions (colour, representational detail, depth, tonal shades, etc.) are used. Each of these dimensions can be seen as a scale running from the absence of any rendition of detail to maximal representation of details or from the absence of any rendition of depth to maximally deep perspective.

Reality is based upon the frequency of these factors within a specific image, the less they appear the more "abstract" the image, while the more prevalent they are, the more realistic the image can be said to be. However, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:256) argue that "modality is context dependent." The domains they distinguish include scientific/technological, abstract, naturalistic and sensory. This theory is therefore suitable in the analysis of these colour advertisement.

## RESULT & DISCUSSION



### Text A

In this image, there is a monster-like picture of a mosquito. The picture covers substantial part of the image. Below the picture, there is a picture of a drug which is being advertised. Here the picture of the mosquito is a signifier. It is deliberately presented like a monster. This is also significant. Scientists believe that Malaria is mainly caused by female anopheles mosquitoes. Hence, the picture of the mosquito signifies Malaria disease. The picture presents Malaria as a deadly monster which can cause death if not attacked. Consequently, the image sees Artrin as a remedy to the Malaria monster.



Text B

This image has a picture of three people; a woman, a man and a young girl who look like a family. The man appears to carry the girl. This ostensibly shows that the represented participants are a family. Below them are the different pictures of the drug being advertised. From the advert, we can see the various presentations of the drug. It is presented as tablets, syrup suspension and drops for infants. Above the represented participants, we see the word Malaria written on the red background. Also, there is a drawing of a mosquito encapsulated in a 'stopped' sign.

The family presented here looks healthy and happy. It is assumed that they have taken Pamametre as their family Malaria drug. The advertisers of the drug want us to see the effect of the drug in this family. It is significant that the drawing of the mosquito is encapsulated in a 'stopped' sign. The message here is very clear. Pamametre stops mosquitoes. If it does, it consequently stops Malaria since mosquito is the major cause of Malaria fever.



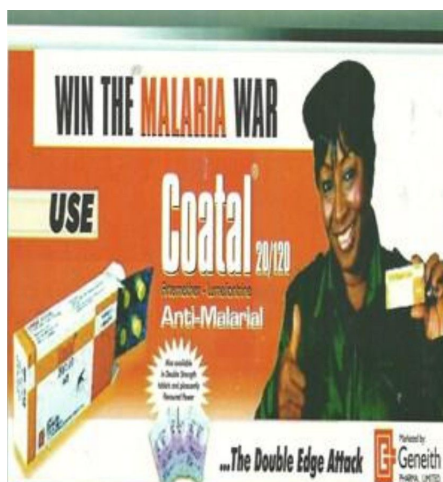
Text C

In text C, there is a picture of some children embedded in a map of Africa. The name of the drug is written in bolded letters above them. Below the map, we see the picture of the drug. It is significant that these children are embedded in the map of Africa. This means that the continent that is worst hit by Malaria fever is Africa. Also, the category of people suffering most from the disease is children. This is very true in consideration of report of World Health Organisation (WHO) on the Malaria scourge in Africa. It is estimated that about 7 million children die of Malaria in Africa yearly. Consequently, WHO established the programme "Roll Back Malaria in Africa". This project is aimed at eradicating Malaria fever in the continent and jointly founded by WHO and the nations of African continent.

The children on our image represent the bulk of several million children who are victims of Malaria disease in Africa. These children are spread all over the underdeveloped nations of Africa. Most of these nations cannot boast of adequate health facilities to combat Malaria scourge. They lack adequate systems in terms of facilities, infrastructure and



trained personnel. Hence, they feel highly incapacitated as Malaria continues to wreak havoc especially among children. It is also worth of note that the advertisers catch on the programme of WHO in this advertisement by using the phrase 'Roll Back Malaria' adequate health systems in terms of facilities, infrastructure and trained personnel.



**Text D**

This advert features a woman who is as a celebrity. The woman in the image is Patience Ozokwo who has held sway many years as an enviable actress in *Nollywood* movies. She holds a packet of the drug advertised, 'Coatal' in her left hand and thumbs up with the right hand.

The use of Ozokwo in the advert is intentional. She is well known and admired by millions of *Nollywood* lovers across the globe. The advertiser intends to give real popularity to their advertisement. It is certain that the advertisement will catch the fancies of many people with the picture of this woman in it. Moreso, a close look at this image shows that the woman gives her approval to the effectiveness of the drug in combating the Malaria scourge

### *Analysis of other visual elements Colour*

In Text A, the word 'Malaria' in this advert is written in red colour. This is highly significant. Red colour in this part of world means danger. Hence, the intention of the advertiser is to present Malaria disease as a dangerous phenomenon. In text B, the lexical item, 'Malaria' is written against a red colour background. Also, the 'stop' sign is in red colour. As stated earlier, colour red means danger. This ultimately means that Malaria is a danger which must not be allowed.

In Text C, the visible colours in this image are red, green and white. The use of green and white colours in the image is significant. The map of Africa is coated in green and white colours. Also, the lexical item 'Africa' is written in green colour. This shows that although the map is that of African continent, the advertisers are particular about Nigeria. The colours of Nigerian flag are white, green and white. This is highly connoted in the use of colour in this image. It is apparent that the words 'weapon' and 'Malaria' are written in red colour. The red colour, as stated earlier means danger in this part of the world. A weapon is an instrument used either in the defence or offence against enemies. The red colour brings out the semantics of the lexical item. In this case as dangerous as Malaria is, Artecxin drug is presented as dangerous weapon to attack it.

### *Graphology*

According to Olaosun (2001), the graphological features of written texts are carriers of their phonological information of meaning. Hence, some aspects of linguistics in the verbal anchorages shall be foregrounded in this section with the aim of seeing how they

have been employed by the advertisers to communicate their messages to the viewing/reading audience.

In text D, it is observed that the whole sentence “win the Malaria war” is written in block letters. Meanwhile, there is semantic importance attached to this sentence. The viewer is made to believe that Malaria has declared a war on its victims. Hence, if we must win the Malaria war, *Coatal* is highly indispensable. The word ‘ACT’ is written in block letters. This is to lay emphasis on the semantics of the word. Also, the name of the drug, *Artrin* is bolded. This is also for emphasis. The whole advertisement centres on the drug.

The use of rhetorics is also noticeable in this advert. There is a question mark on the word ‘Malaria’. The import of this is quite interesting. The advertisers are asking a question which can literally be expressed thus ‘Is Malaria your problem?’ If it is, you don’t need to worry, just ‘ask’ for Pemametre. This message is clear. With Pemametre, Malaria is no longer a problem.

#### *Use of compound sentence*

The advertiser use compound sentence ‘Malaria begins with a bite but ends with Artrin’. The use of the conjunction ‘but’ which joins the negative part of the sentence with the positive part. The advertisers technically direct the attention of the reader/viewer to the latter part of the compound sentence.

#### *Posture/gaze:*

The picture of the mosquito in Text A is fearful and dreaded. This signifies the nature of Malaria disease. It is presented as a dreaded and destructive disease. In Text B, it is deliberate that the participants are gazing directly into the audience. This is to bring the

reader\viewer into active participation in the advert. The central image here is this family. The interpersonal system of centrality functioning at the level of relation between sections established the integrity of the image. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:206) when discussing the issue of centrality of image suggest that ‘for something to be presented as the central means that it is presented as the nucleus of the information which all other elements are in some sense subservient’. This is true of text A and B. In text D, the posture of Mrs Patience Okonkwo in this advert calls for attention. She really succeeds in involving the audience in this job through her smile. Okonkwo’s gaze as the only participant in this advert demands something from the viewer. It demands that the viewer enters into some kind of imaginary relation with her.

#### CONCLUSION

Multimodal discourse analysis has made it possible to account for visual and linguistic components of this study. This is made possible by the theoretical framework we have used in this study. However it is instructive to note that interpretation of images is by its very nature subjective, and an image can carry multiple messages depending upon the nature of the visually interpreting culture. Just as Kress and Van Leeuwen suggest that “.....social interactions and social relations can be encoded in images so that we are instructed silently regarding a set of implicit norms” (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996:153). In all, we hope that this study has contributed to an array of scholarly works in media discourse in Nigeria. The study emphasizes the vitality of visual elements as important devices in advertising. It reveals the deployment of various visual resources such as colours,

gaze, posture, etc. in impressing the messages of the advertisers into the consciousness of readers/viewers and convincing them of the potency and efficacy of the advertised drugs. Also, this study reveals very strongly and establishes the potentials of visual images to convey meaning beyond the verbal language in any human society.

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