

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF FALZ'S 'THIS IS NIGERIA'

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined how linguistic and other modes of expression, including the iconic, the visual and the indexical, served as a tool for ideological underpinning in the video to Falz's 'This is Nigeria', a song which has been understudied hitherto by linguistic scholars. As a qualitative research, this study adopted as its primary source the song 'This is Nigeria'. The method of data selection is purposive sampling in which the researcher carefully selected various expressions, images and representations with embedded ideologies. Against the backdrop of Fairclough's socio-historical approach and Kress' multimodality, this work explored how expressions, icons and other forms of representation become a site of embedded ideologies whose meanings are revealed when situated in context. The study, therefore, unveiled that the different ideological inclinations of the representations emanate from the socio-cultural, religious, economic and political factors prevalent in the society in which the song is set.

Keywords: Language Use, Ideology, Falz, 'This is Nigeria', Socio-historical Approach, Multimodality.

Introduction

Language is the most important means of interaction amongst humans. Human beings have thoughts, feelings, and needs and in order to share these emotions and ideas there is need for them to communicate through the use of language. Many definitions of language have been proposed. Wibowo (2001, p.12) posits that, "language is a system of symbols that are meaningful and articulate sound (generated by said tool) that are arbitrary and conventional, which is used as a means of communication by a group of men to give birth to feelings and thoughts" (*Emphasis ours*). Beyond day-to-day uses, language in diverse ways performs many communicative functions (Edem, 2005). Edem (2005, p.5) defines language "as a powerful tool for every day communication and situates it as indispensable in human existence and relationship" It is for example, the vehicle through which people describe who they are, define or label the things around them and how they perceive the world. Over time, there have been reasons to believe that there are ideologies embedded in the utterances of individuals. These beliefs, therefore, has ignited the interest of scholars who, in turn, have sought possible ways to explore ideological factors of power, gender, political and socio-economic relations embedded in various language forms.

Nevertheless, since language is used to perform various communicative functions, it can be said that language and music are interrelated. Music has been one of the earliest forms of

communication through the use of language. Clifton (1983) posits that music is an ordered arrangement of sounds and silences whose meaning is presentative rather than denotative. Music has the ability to portray emotions, and this ability to communicate meaning and mood is fundamental to its relationship with language. Consider the feeling you get while listening to your favourite song. Does the song 'speak' to you? Both music and language have profound impacts on society and are fundamental parts of the way humans connect and communicate with one another. Just as music can be used to unify people, it can also be used to spread messages of protest against a group, behaviour, social trend or attitude, cultural institution or others as a source of discontentment or ideology. Various African artists like Fela Anikulakpo Kuti, King Sunny Ade, Salif Keita, Onyeka Onwenu among others have expressed their ideologies in the language of music. The field of study that examines language and ideology is called Critical Discourse Analysis (Edem, 2024).

Critical Discourse Analysis is an offshoot of Discourse Analysis. Discourse Analysis was first introduced by Zelling Harris in 1952 as a way of interpreting speech and writing (Xia and Hamuddin 2012; Edem, 2020, 2024). For Harris, two key issues are important when describing discourse: "the examination of language beyond the level of the sentence and the relationship between linguistic and nonlinguistic behaviour" (Paltridge 2006, p.2). Nordquist Richard (2009) affirms that Discourse Analysis is a broad term for the study of the ways in which language is used between people, both in written texts and spoken contexts. In view of language as discourse and social practice and how language, ideology and identity interrelate with each other, various linguists in their studies of language have developed a model called Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA) (Edem 2020). van Dijk (1998, p.1) affirms that "Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a field that is concerned with studying and analysing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias". To put it simply, CDA aims at making transparent the connections between discourse practices, social practices and social structures as well as connections that might be opaque to the lay person. CDA consists of a number of schools, scopes and approaches. These approaches range from Fairclough's Socio Historical Approach, van Dijk's Socio-cognitive Discourse Analysis, and Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach among others.

Our understanding of the cognitive and essential underpinning of languages has traditionally been firmly based on spoken languages and on language studied as speech or text. However, in face-to-face communication, language is multimodal: speech signals as captured by (Enang and Edem 2022) are invariably accompanied by visual information on the face and in manual gestures, and sign languages deploy multiple channels in utterance construction. Kress (2009) affirms that multimodality is a theory which looks at the many different modes that people use to communicate with each other and to express themselves. Edem (2016) puts it more succinctly when he said that multimodality is a theory which looks at how people communicate not only through writing but also through speaking, gesture, gaze and visual forms.

Hence, this paper, with the use of Fairclough's Socio-historical Approach and the theory of multimodality as theoretical frameworks, explore the interconnectedness between language and ideology in Falz's 'This is Nigeria'.

Over the years, scholars have been preoccupied with the interconnectedness that is relative between language use and ideology in movies, novels, political speeches among others. Stanton (2001) examined the uses of language and ideology in educational phenomena. Wodak (1989) has also investigated language and ideology in political discourse. Johnson (2010) examines language ideologies and media discourse. Hung-Chun-Wang (2009) examines language and ideology and gender stereotypes in Taiwanese tabloid culture. Other related studies include Woolard and Schieffelin (1994), Irvine and Gal (2000), Edem (2024) which examined language and ideology in *Once Upon a Time in Niger Delta*, among others. These researches on the ideology imbedded in language use in different fields of study notwithstanding, there is also the need to examine how language is used to construct ideologies in the music genre. In view of this, work therefore makes an exploration into Falz's 'This is Nigeria' with a special focus on the relationship or interrelatedness between language and ideology.

Stanton (2001) explores language and ideology on aspects of education. He affirms that language ideologies are formed and embodied through multiple forms of mediation-including oral language and written texts. He further states that language ideologies can shape practices, but these practices also provide opportunities for individuals to articulate, contest, negotiate and rectify these ideologies.

Also, Milani and Johnson (2010) examined language ideologies and media discourse. They focused on the ideological dimension of language representation-and usage in the context of late modern-media discourse. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) in their view of language and ideologies posit that "ideologies of language are significant for social as well as linguistic analysis because they are not only about language. Rather, such ideologies envision and enact links of language to group and personal identity, to aesthetics, to morality and to epistemology". Language ideology is a mediating channel between social structures and different aspects of communication.

In the same vein, Hung-Chung Wang (2009) examines language ideology and gender stereotypes in Taiwanese tabloid culture. He discusses the interrelatedness between Taiwanese tabloid culture and social ideology. In a related development Milroy (2001) analysed language ideologies and the consequences of standardisation. He observed that certain languages including widely used ones such as English, French and Spanish are believed by their speakers to exist in standardised form and this belief affects the way the speaker thinks about their own language and about language in general. Similarly, Cameron (2006) in her review on language and ideology affirms that while most theorists of ideology implicitly or explicitly link it to language, the notion of language itself is often under-theorised. Edem (2024) examined language and ideology in *Once Upon a Time in Niger Delta*. The work appreciates the relationship between language and ideology and concludes that language is used to communicate the ideology of the people of Niger Delta and that the movie exposed viewers to the hidden dangers of the struggle for freedom. In the discussion of the relationship between language and ideology, scholars often fail to acknowledge that language is not simply a vehicle for other ideological process but is itself shaped by ideological processes

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts Fairclough's Socio-historical Approach to CDA and Kress' Multimodality as theoretical frameworks. Norman Fairclough is known as one of the prominent figures in the discussion of language, discourse and society. Fairclough (1989:18) proposes that "language is a part of society". Fairclough's theory was created to analyse how power is displayed through language; this may include the uses of texts, talks, videos, and any other ways of communication. For Fairclough (1995), one should not analyse a text on a fixed standard grammatical framework, but one should use the framework which is most appropriate to the social issue they are researching on. Social practices of discourse mediate the abstract social structures and concrete social events in stabilised forms of social activities. Social practices include action and interaction, social relations, the material world (i.e. persons with beliefs, attitudes, and histories among others) and discourse. To Fairclough, each discursive or communicative event has three dimensions or facets: it is a spoken or written language (text), it is an instance of discourse practice involving the production and interpretation of text and it is a piece of social practice (Elsharkawy, 2012).

Fairclough (1995) semiotically linked linguistic analysis with social analysis: languages are similar to social structure. Social practices are articulated into networks which constitute social fields, institutions and organisations and texts are broadly understood as social events. Fairclough's Socio Historical Approach to CDA analyses written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts (Hamidi, 2012).

Culture, history and society are produced through interactions between people living in an environment. Through this communication process it has become clear that the modes of spoken and written language are only some of a diverse range of modes involved in producing meaning and experience (Edem, 2022, 2023). The modes of spoken and written language have been joined by modes like gesture, gaze, composition and layout. Multimodal discourse analysis names a range of approaches to studying social interaction and meaning as multimodal that is produced with and through multiple modes (Pirini, 2019).

The idea of multimodality in language originated from Michael Halliday whose preoccupation was to prove the importance of overcoming the 'monomodality' of linguistic studies which originally analysed only the verbal aspect of communication. The multimodal approach does not only consider the language as a set of grammatical rules, but focuses on the interaction of different sign systems. The central notion of this theory is mode. It does not have a universally accepted definition yet, but generally, it is understood as a channel of representation or communication. A combination of visual image with a verbal text, a phrase with a gesture, a posture and mimics with a speech act, a video clip with a commentary may serve as an example of mode combination (Kress, 2010).

Multimodality aims at analysing and describing the various means of communication used by humans in different spheres, as well as understanding how these units are organised to create meanings (Edem 2020, Enang and Edem, 2022). It also contributes to the decision about which mode to choose for a particular presentation. Three interconnected theoretical assumptions underpin multimodality. First, is the assumption that representation and

communication draw multiple modes which contribute to meaning. Second, is the assumption that resources are socially shaped over time to become meaning making resources which articulate the social meanings based on the requirements of different communities Third, people achieve meaning through their choice and configuration of modes (Udofot and Edem, 2018, Edem 2020, 2022, Enang 2023).

In a nutshell, Fairclough's Socio-historical Approach and Multimodal Approach aim at analysing how social practices and ideologies are displayed through language and how different modes of communication like video clip, posture, gesture, amongst others are used in propagating various forms of messages.

Research Methodology

The research methodology is discussed under subheadings such as research design, method of data selection, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

Research Design

This study is descriptive and the data is subjected to qualitative analysis. The analysis aims at revealing the underlying rationale, notions and motivations behind the data under study. It further seeks to disclose the underlying ideologies in the selected discourse regarding corruption, dominance, insecurity among others.

Method of Data Selection

Nigeria as a country has attracted tremendous concerns in both language and literary based studies. Writers have written enormously in a bid to critically study the linguistic and extra linguistics activities therein, but this work has specifically chosen the music medium which seems to captivate and unarguably appeal more to the artist's present generation. Furthermore, with the use of purposive sampling technique, this research focuses on the discourses which showcase insecurity, corruption, injustice, oppression and so on inherent in Falz's 'This is Nigeria'.

Method of Data Collection

The primary source of data, in this research is the music 'This is Nigeria' and its secondary sources include library materials and relevant materials retrieved from the internet.

Method of Data Analysis

In the analysis of data, this research lays emphasis on Fairclough's Socio-historical Approach to CDA for the overall analysis and further draws insight from Multimodal approach to CDA. Fairclough's Socio-historical Approach aims at critically investigating the discursive sources of dominance, inequality, power, bias among others while the multimodal theory aims at showcasing different medium in which communication takes place.

Critical Discourse Analysis of Falz's 'This Is Nigeria' (Data Analysis)

This analysis examines how linguistic and non-linguistic representations are deployed to explore issues of insecurity, corruption, power and dominance, violence and social relations in Falz's 'This is Nigeria'.

Metaphorical Expositions of Insecurity

In the data under study, the artist employs a great deal of linguistic and non-linguistic metaphorical exposition and undertone to criticise the high level of insecurity in the country/setting. In the musical video, the young women wearing hijabs and dancing behind Falz at the beginning of the video symbolise the Chibok girls who were kidnapped from their school in Chibok in Borno State by Boko Haram militants, a terrorist group disturbing the Northern part of the country since the 2009 uprising. From the beginning of the song, the listeners are presented with a breakdown of the deplorable state of the country:

They are extremely and the medical facilities are poor.
We operate a predatory neo-colonial capitalist system
which is founded on fraud and exploitation
and therefore, you are bound to have corruption institutionalists.
Many criminal cases are settled in police stations albeit illegal.

From the above extract, the artist through “the fecundity of his mental construct” (Edem 2022, p.54) expresses the myriads of problems, the country Nigeria is going through ranging from kidnapping, mass killing of citizens by Fulani herdsman, robbery, bad leadership, conception, fraud, exploitation and so on. The artist uses the above lines to create awareness about the current state of the nation as the above mentioned themes have affected the way people feed and live including him. It also portrays the urgent need for a better Nigeria. Furthermore, the following lines show the height of insecurity in the country:

Police station dey close by 6 – security reason oh

This line basically means that even the police who are supposed to be protecting citizens are scared. They cannot protect themselves not to talk of protecting citizens. They run away from robbers and other criminals.

Linguistic Indices of Corruption and Injustices

Back in February 17 2018, a sales clerk, Madam Philomena Chieshe at the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), claimed 36 million naira of the boards funds had been swallowed by a snake. In one of the music scenes in the data, the video features a snake wrapped in a basket of naira notes. This captures yet another example of the absurdity of Nigeria's daily corruption. The writer further passes this message linguistically thus:

This is Nigeria, where that Madam Philomena?
Money vanish for your office, 36 million,
You talk say na animal swallow am!

Later in the song, Falz depicts how he was being stopped by Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). In this scene, while trying to explain to SARS that they are students coming back from a nightclub, a government official walks in, gives some money to the men and rescues his son, leaving behind the rest of the young men who had no one to bribe the SARS on their behalf. They were taken to the police station for incarceration. Thousands of Nigerians have shared their personal experiences under the hashtag ENDSARS, but cases of abuse, exploitation, torture and indiscriminate arrest continues. This is best captured in the following lines as seen in the song:

This is Nigeria, look at my nation oh
SARS stop me for road, any explanation,

You go talk am for station oh
(Sir I'm, Sir look I'm sorry, I'm just a student, I'm a student of the
University of Lagos, so, We're just coming from the club, okay, so, my
friend and I... No Sir, I have my ID to prove).

Here, Falz with the use of linguistic and extra linguistic activities requests the end of an inefficient criminal justice system which causes everyday corruption in Nigeria.

Falz through his music further explains that there is constant cry for lack of money in the economy, yet the leaders are always making away with huge sums of money; building, houses, buying cars, wearing nice clothes without receiving any form of query. These leaders or rulers still work around freely with the people's right to vote and be voted for. The artist expresses this ideology in the following lines:

This is Nigeria, never end the recession oh, when
looters and killers and stealers are still contesting
election oh politician wey thief some billions and
billions, he no dey go prison oh.

These lines express the ideas that, power has been given to the wrong people, hence the need to vote them out for better leaders to run the affairs of the country.

Again, Christianity should draw people to God through the attitudes, beliefs and practices of its practitioners but Nigerian clergies have used the name of religion to exploit people. They get money from the congregation, build schools and facilities that the members cannot afford to send their wards to such facilities because of the high fees charged. A scene in the musical video shows how a church minister sexually harasses a female member by placing his hand on her breast under the pretense that he is casting out a demon from her. Through the utterance of the artist, the corrupt practices in the religious circle in Nigeria becomes evident as shown thus:

Ah, this is Nigeria, praise and worship
We' singing out
Pastor puts his hand on the breast of his member;
He's pulling the demon out.

From the above expression, the artist through the use of language immediately exposes the hidden agenda of some Pastors in Christendom, exposes the hypocrisy and insanity of the same religious leaders who are taking undue advantage of the venerable members of the public who are yearning for solution from pulpit when the rulers have failed.

For instance, there is no law that allows you
To take money from the church involve in business
And privatize it. No
It is in Nigeria where you can take money from the church
Money contributed by poor congregation members
You go and set up a university that the members cannot attend
Cannot send their children to.

The above expression shows that the church is now a business organisation rather than a religious one. The author here castigates the flamboyant lifestyle of some new generation

church leaders who build houses and business centres with church money, yet, the poor ones in the society could not afford.

Unemployment and Lack of Social Amenities

Nigeria is noted for its high rate of unemployment. As in many other developing countries, most Nigerians cannot afford the so-called white collar job. Those without good productive employment, therefore, typically engage in various low productive and low paying tasks for survival. Even with the multiple jobs people do to survive, life is still very hard. The artist further speaks on the lack of electricity in the country which has given rise to constant use of generating plants. This he showcases in a scene where two young men are trying to put on their generators. Falz linguistically represents his ideology of unemployment in the following lines:

This is Nigeria (yea), no electricity daily oh (eh)
Young people are still working multiple jobs
And they talk say we lazy oh.

Furthermore, prostitution has been on a high rate because of unemployment. Youngsters now commit fraudulent acts (yahoo yahoo) just to make money and live a good life. This is depicted in a scene where two young ladies dance beside a young man spraying money on them. Through the utterances of the artist, the effects of unemployment come into play:

Yahoo yahoo don tear everywhere now and
We act like it's so cool
Casting the P and being castigated just for trying to be noble.

Here, Falz is indirectly attacking the government for not being able to provide employment opportunities for its citizens. Nigeria is known as the giant of Africa, yet its citizens lack basic amenities.

Signifiers of Violence

Falz depicts Nigeria as a country full of violence and chaos. In the opening scene of the music, one can see two young men fighting and attempting to eliminate each other. Also, a young man is seen breaking things with a machete, scattering everywhere and causing chaos. Furthermore, we find a scene in the video where a Fulani herdsman playing the Ukele, suddenly jumps up with a machete to attack a man. This projects the wanton destruction of lives and properties by Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria. The data also portrays the chaotic state of the country during election period. This issue is represented thus:

This is Nigeria (eh,eh), there's plenty wahalasha
Fulani herdsman still dey slaughter carry people dey massacre
This is Nigeria, bombs in my areas
This is democracy, political hysteria

During the election period, emotions become so strong that people behave in an uncontrollable way because of fear, anger, tension and insecurity, and so on.

Findings

In carrying out the data analysis, the researcher finds out that the artist, through the use of linguistics and extra linguistics devices, explore the sad realities and hardships of the country

bringing them all up in this song. The song which is mixed with Nigeria pidgin NP is more or less a wake-up call to Nigerians. It encourages Nigerians to talk openly about the issues facing the nation and what it takes to change the country for the better and the deployment of the Nigerian Pidgin such as 'wahala', 'dey slaughter', 'yahoo yahoo', 'pulling demon out', etc was the artist's way of demonstrating the problems of the nation in his song for clarity and for effect on his audience.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This is Nigeria' apparently draws inspiration from 'This is America' by US artist Childish Gambino. The song depicts challenges ranging from terrorist attacks to unemployment, insecurity, malnutrition, among others. The song is the challenge of social harmony and toothless regulators. Falz, in this song, urges Nigerians to fight for their rights and freedom, freedom from insecurities, violence, corruption, injustice, dominance, social relations and so on. Falz's 'This is Nigeria' critically employs both linguistic and social representations to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance and inequality. It has also made it clear the connections between discourse practices, social practices and social structures. This work compliments the ongoing discourse on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and is recommended to scholars in this field for further research.

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