Visual pragmatics and the #EndSARS movement

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Abstract
There is a paradigm shift in the study of language use from a purely verbal perspective to a multimodal viewpoint. This is the scope of visual pragmatics; it attempts to investigate linguistic and semiotic features from a pragmatic angle. This study is an attempt of such broadened pragmatic analysis, as it investigates the deployment of verbal and visual elements in the Nigerian #EndSARS movement. Extant researchers have also applied concepts of visual pragmatics in other multimodal discourses. This present study employs Mey’s (2001) Pragmatic Act Theory and Hoye and Kaiser’s (2007) Visual Act Theory to analyse the deployment of verbal-virtual elements in the 2020 #EndSARS protest. The data for this study are twenty-seven #EndSARS visual images, obtained using Google search engine. Twenty of the images are categorised into seven memes: stained flag, feminism, placards, neo-nationalism, Soro soke (Speak up), solidarity, and analysed qualitatively. The visual practs identified in the data are of describing, informing, lamenting, hoping, charging, appealing, demanding, encouraging, associating, stating, warning, instructing, reminding, commanding, vowing, praising, saluting, condemning, and challenging. The practs identified are of charging, stating, commanding, reminding, naming, and describing. The study observed the use of visual elements such as colour, facial expression, metaphor, inference, reference, shared situational knowledge, symbolism, gesture, contrast, satire, costume, and environment. It revealed that visual pragmatic acts and pragmatic acts complement each other in multimodal communication.

Keywords: #EndSARS, multimodal communication, pragmatics, visual.

Introduction
Communication can involve the use of both linguistic and visual elements. The scope of pragmatics is verbal communication through spoken or written expressions, while that of semiotics is visual communication through icons, indexes, symbols, images, charts, or pictures. Pragmatics and semiotics are interrelated in the study of discourse and reality. These fields of linguistic analysis are fundamentally concerned with the various prevailing factors responsible for the production (encoding) and reception (decoding) of meaning in human communication. They serve as theoretical tools for examining and analysing meaning, context, signification, speech participants, and society. Hence, it seems logical to say that pragmatics and semiotics complement each other. While the goal of pragmatics hinges on how utterances convey meaning, semantics focuses on how signs contribute to communication.

Odogwu (2021) distinguishes between these forms of communication; she notes “Visual communication entails the use of symbols for expressing meaning and intent... verbal communication has to do with spoken words/words of mouth in communicating intent”. These strategies of communication are aptly deployed in the #EndSARS movement to encode and disseminate information, generate meaning and ideology, and influence the decision and behaviour of others. The youth movement tactically used words of mouth alongside placards, illustrations, icons and symbols, online memes, billboard adverts, etc. to encode their message to the government and to strengthen their ideologies. Since images, pictures, and other forms of visual representation can convey linguistic meanings, they may also subjected to
pragmatic analysis. Osisanwo (2003:57) explains that the goal of pragmatic theories [is]:

“to explain how utterances convey meaning in contexts, how meaning is decoded from utterances in contexts and in particular situation, how contexts contribute to the encoding and the decoding of meaning, how speakers say one thing and mean something else, and how deductions are made in context with respect to what meaning have been encoded in a particular utterance”.

The crux of this paper, therefore, is to explain how visual and verbal elements are encoded to convey meaning in the #EndSARS context and to analyse the connotations, deductions, and interpretations of selected visual representations deployed in the #EndSARS movement.

The instrumentality of multimodal communication has tremendously increased in the 20th century as predicated by the emergence of various technologies and social media interventions. This does not strike as a surprise though, as “all communications have always been multimodal” with “at least two of these modes of communication” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Kress, 2002) cited in Odogwu (2021:2). Language users can use visuals to capture images and stories that cannot be expressed in plain words. Omolabi and Durosimi (2017:2) agree with the assertion of Barret and Barrington (2005) that visual messages can be more influential on assessment of individuals or events than verbal ones. This is true and supports the general claim that “pictures are worth a thousand words”. This study attempts a visual pragmatic survey of the #EndSARS movement, adopting Mey’s (2001) pragmatic act theory (PAT) and Hoye and Kaiser’s (2007) visual act theory (VAT).

Background to the study
The #EndSARS movement started in 2016 at a gradual pace to speak against the brutality, ill-treatment, and impunity perpetrated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). SARS was “a branch of the Nigerian police created to fight violent crimes including armed robbery and kidnapping” AI (2016:8). Its operations began in 1992 as a response to the increasing crime rate in Lagos State. SARS operatives were always undercover before an arrest, as they did not use marked police vehicles and often did not wear police uniforms or name tags. Every state of the country later had a SARS unit, which operated under the criminal investigations department of the police force. The secretive nature of their operations led to an abuse of power by its officers, who acted with impunity and disregard of fundamental human rights. Even problematic was the fact that these rogue SARS officers were difficult to identify in the community.

The #EndSARS movement began as a national movement in Nigeria, and later gained international attention and recognition. The movement have elicited global sympathy and support from prominent people such as the 45th President of the US Donald Trump, the 67th US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the 70th US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, and international celebrities like Kanye West, Anthony Joshua, Mesut Ozil, Beyonce, and others.

The hash sign (#) or “hashtag” affixed is “a phenomenon conceived by Chris Messina [an American blogger] and popularised by social media network...
Twitter, as a way to direct conversations and topics amongst users” (Wikipedia (n.d.a)). Its use stuck with the phrase “#EndSARS” because of the active conversation and demonstration of the pro-#EndSARS advocates on Twitter over the years. Hence, a simple search of the keyword “#EndSARS” will provide numerous interactions and visuals on the subject matter on Twitter and other online search engines. The term #EndSARS (hashtag #EndSARS) “was first used in 2018 to raise awareness of allegations of violence and exploitation by SARS officials” (Uwazuruike, 2020:2).

The supporters of the #EndSARS movement have raised certain pressing issues of the unethical practices of the SARS unit to the Federal Government of Nigeria (AI, 2020). These practices range from pervasive torture and ill-treatment of Nigerian citizens (especially of the youth) to extortion and stealing of money and property. They also accused the government of ineptitude, injustice, and violated of basic human rights. Amnesty International, a global movement for human rights, have interviewed 44 victims of SARS brutality, and have received 58 reports, petitions and complaints about torture and other ill-treatment of detainees in SARS custody from human right organisations, lawyers and victims of torture (AI, 2016). The organisation documented over 82 cases of abuse and extrajudicial killings by SARS operatives between 2016 and 2020.

In 2020, the movement sparked up a major protest across the country, both online and offline on the streets and major roads of various states. According to Wikipedia (n.d.b), #EndSARS protests were recorded in Lagos, Abuja, Oyo, Delta, Anambra, Abia, Kwara, Osun, Rivers, Ogun, Enugu, Ebonyi, Edo, and Plateau states. The youth took to the streets with placards in hand to air their displeasures regarding certain societal issues, especially the wanton killing of their peers and loved ones. In addition, there was heavy engagement online through tweets, images, illustrations, and memes. Kazeem (2020) notes, “the #EndSARS hashtag yielded 28 million tweets... according to social media analytics from, Afriques Connectées”. The 2020 #EndSARS protests have been described as “decentralised” because they were not actually organised or directed by one leader or specific activists. Though, the feminist group, Feminist Coalition, played a major role in fund-raising for the protest and welfare of protesters. On October 11, 2020, the #EndSARS movement demanded for the following in their #5FOR5 demands:

“immediate release of all arrested protesters, justice for all deceased victims of police brutality and appropriate compensation for their families, setting up of an independent body to oversee the investigation and prosecution of all reports of police misconduct (within 10 days), psychological evaluation and retraining of all disbanded SARS officers before deployment, and an adequate increment of police salary”. (see Vanguard, 2020)

This study mainly considers verbal-visual elements deployed in the 2020 #EndSARS protest.

**Literature review**

The scope of visual pragmatics spans across pragmatics and semiotics. In recent times, discourse analysts have shown great interest in examining pragmatic features in discourse; others have been interested in interpreting visual elements in certain
context. In the literature, some related works on the interpretation of pragmatic features or visual element of discourse are (Odebunmi et al, 2009; Ademilokun & Olateju, 2016; Osisanwo, 2017; Lamidi, 2018; Adediran, 2020; Odogwu, 2021).

Odebunmi et al. (2009) investigated the use of proverbs in Soyinka’s Death and the King’s Horseman employing Mey’s (2001) pragmatic act theory and insights from the literature on proverb studies. They closely examined the 57 proverbs in the text and discovered that 17 yielded practs of encouraging, 13 practs of assuring, nine practs of scolding, five practs of justifying, four practs of persuading, and three practs of challenging, praising, and warning each. Their work was especially unique because it contributed to the study of proverbs in African literary works.

Ademilokun and Olateju (2016) employed Halliday’s (1985) systemic metafunctions and Barthes’ (1977) concepts of anchorage and relay to examine selected political visual artefacts from political rallies across the six South-western states of Nigeria with the purpose of analysing the meaning expressed through them and exploring aspects of visual representation in Nigerian political rally discourse. They identified visual artefacts such as vests, caps, and Ankara, and affirmed that these artefacts reflect the identity and ideologies of the political parties and level of loyalty/commitment of politicians and political supporters. Their study revealed that visual artefacts are of great importance in political rallies to communicate inherent political, cultural, and social values.

Osisanwo (2017) investigated into the choice of words of the inaugural speech of President Muhammadu Buhari delivered on 29 May 2015 in order to identify the pragmatic acts involved and the functions of the acts. He identified 99 acts in the speech, which were categorised into 19 pragmatic functions. These functions include proposing (20), acknowledging (17), promising (10), thanking (10), stating (9), assuring (6), remarking (4), appealing (3), reminding (3), instructing/calling (2), advising (2), and others, such as saluting, hoping, charging, informing, extending, identifying, describing, and defining, occurring just one time.

Lamidi (2018) analysed the pragmatic presupposition in Facebook-sponsored advertisement. 10 sponsored advertisements were subjected to analysis using the pragmatic theory of presupposition. She discovered that advertisers employ existential, factive, and lexical presuppositions to create product awareness, consumer demand, and inform consumers of their ability to satisfy the demand created, and create driving response and sales. She further revealed that advertisers construct declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences as well as noun phrases with multiple adjectives to achieve the purpose of the advertisement.

Adediran (2020) identified the pragmatic functions inherent in humorous illustrations in selected sermons of E. A. Adeboye and D. K. Olukoya. 15 sermons were purposively sampled and six excerpts replete with humorous expressions were analysed guided by a combination of Mey’s (2001) pragmatic act theory, Meyer’s (2000), Wilkins and Eisenbraun’s (2009), and Scheel and Gockel’s (2017) approaches to the humour theories of incongruity, superiority, and relief, and Jauregui’s (1998) humour types. She discovered that out of the six excerpts, two were encouraging with Irish and situation humour while the other six were teaching, warning, affirming, and condemning with linguistic, grim, satirical, and grotesque humour.

Odogwu (2021) conducted a pragmatic investigation of photo captions on
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the Amotekun security outfit of Southwest, Nigeria using the pragmatic act theory of Mey (2001) and the visual act theory of Hoye and Kaiser (2007). She attempted a qualitative analysis of eight photos sourced from Twitter with the aim of exposing the opinions of the masses and their level of acceptance of the newly introduced security outfit in the right. She discovered that five of the photos yielded assertive allopracts, two expressive allopract, and one directive allopract.

These works were greatly impactful to the present study in the application of pragmatic theories and the interpretation of visual element in discourse. However impactful they were, this study contributes to the literature by exploring the lonely paths of #EndSARS discourse in an attempt to extract visual pragmatic features.

**Theoretical framework**

Here, the pragmatic act theory propounded by Jacob Mey in 2001 and the visual act theory contributed by Francis Hoye and Ruth Kaiser in 2007 are adopted.

*Mey’s (2001) pragmatic act theory*

Mey’s (2001) pragmatic act theory is an emendation of Austin’s (1962) speech act theory. His main objection is that:

“Speech, by itself, does not act: strictly, there are no speech acts since, ultimately, all speech acting crucially depends on the situation in which the action takes place. Hence speech acts, in order to be viable, have to be ‘situated’” (Mey, 2006:6).

The pragmatic act theory explains language from an outside-in approach; it considers “the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as on what is actually being said” (Mey, 2001:221). PAT is a theory of action, which situates speech acts in their appropriate socio-cultural context. Odebunmi et al. (2009:3) note that PAT is focused on the pragmeme (the general situational prototype) rather than the necessary and sufficient conditions for performing individual acts (the nub of SAT).
In Mey’s scheme of pragmeme (represented in Figure 1), the pragmeme consists of two co-dependent parts: the activity part and the textual part. The interaction between these two parts results in a pract. Odebunmi et al. (2009:4) explain that the activity part is so-named because “it presents us with a list of acts that can be performed on the part of interactants as they engage in communication”. The interactants may choose from any components/acts of the activity part. These acts are optional in a discourse, as the choice of one does not totally exclude another. On the other end, the textual part consists of “a list of components that make up the context (or co-text, as the case may be)” (Odebunmi et al., 2009:5). They are INF (inference), REF (reference), REL (relevance), VCE (voice), SSK (shared situational knowledge), MPH (metaphor), M (metapragmatic joker). The textual part is therefore the context (or co-text) in which the acts performed are realised.

In this study, the components of speech acts, indirect speech acts, conversational acts, psychological acts, and physical acts on one end and the components of INF (inference), REF (reference), REL (relevance), VCE (voice), SSK (shared situational knowledge), and MPH (metaphor) on the other are of analytical importance.

Hoye and Kaiser’s (2007) visual act theory Hoye (2009:188) opines, “as a powerful philosophically rooted, contextually driven, socioculturally attuned perspective on (verbal) communication, pragmatics could surely be extended to encompass the visual-verbal interface”. The effort to broaden the scope of pragmatics beyond the analyses of verbal communication and into analysing visual or multimodal communication led to the visual act theory of Hoye and Kaiser (2007) (see, Hoye & Kaiser, 2007; Hoye, 2009). The visual act theory addresses the dearth of scope within Mey’s pragmatic acts.
theory. Hoye (2009) describes the notion of *image acts* or *visual pragmatic acts* as “the visual corollary” of Mey’s pragmatic acts and “a way of [viewing images] as dynamic instruments of communication rather than as fixed representational statements”. The argument is that since visual elements can be manipulated to convey multiple meaning, the encoder and specific context determine the meanings. Odogwu (2021) opines that “to understand visual representations, one must take into consideration the whole situation in order to grasp the encoder’s viewpoint when they make use of visuals”. The visual act theory is therefore appropriate to examine the deployment of visual elements in the #EndSARS movement.

![Fig. 2: Hoye and Kaiser’s schematic representation of the visual act theory](image)

Adopted from Odogwu (2021:4).

**Methods**

This paper will adopt a qualitative approach of data analysis. The data for this study were purposively sourced from various websites relying on Google search engine result page (SERP). The following keyword queries were used on November 12, 2020: #EndSARS movement, #EndSARS logo, #sorosoke, and #EndSARS memes to collect 27 images related to the #EndSARS discourse. This technique was efficient because “the results [on the result pages] are normally ranked by relevance to the query” (Wikipedia, (n.d.).c). Out of the images collected, 20 were subjected to pragmatic analysis. These images or visuals were among the widely shared images of activities during the 2020 #EndSARS movement.

**Data analysis**

The 20 images are divided into seven for a systematic analysis; these are stained flag, feminism, placards, neo-nationalism, Soro soke (Speak up), solidarity, and memes. The analysis of these images is targeted at interpreting the pragmatic functions and visual practices deployed in them.

*Stained flag*

**Visual practices:** describing, informing, and lamenting.
Image 1 was one of the most shared visual sequels to the Lekki massacre of October 20, 2020. It shows a man wailing and holding a presumably blood stained flag of Nigeria. A closer look at the image reveals that there are other people surrounding the bereaved man and that the event happened in evening/night hours. The vertical positioning of the flag infers (INF) that the country is in a troubled, imbalance state. The blood refers (REF) to the current situation at the time and is a metaphoric (MPH) of the “alleged” killing of peaceful #EndSARS protesters at the Lekki tollgate, which may have been the same period the image was taken. Also, note the physical act reflected by the man’s facial expression (though half-seen). Supporters of the #EndSARS movement who at the time were deeply passionate and emotional about the turn of event because of the share situational knowledge (SSK) were obliged to forward the image on various internet platforms.

Feminism
Visual pract: hoping, charging, appealing, demanding, encouraging, and associating.
Pract: charging.

Image 2 is the logo of the feminist group known as Feminist Coalition. It was a symbol of hope, feminism, unity, and solidarity during the 2020 #EndSARS movement. The yellow background signifies vitality and hope, while the raised encircled clenched fist signifies feminism and solidarity. The white in the circle signifies neutrality, while the black portrays the Africa heritage. It is a simple logo with a
multiple interpretations. It especially uses relevance (REL) of symbolism to appeal to the subconscious of the protesters, especially online protesters. The clenched fist aligned with the common practice of these protesters, thus infers (INF) commitment to the feminist cause.

*Image 3: Aisha Yesufu pose* (source: time.com)

Image 3 shows Aisha Yesufu, a co-organiser of the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) movement, in the frontlines of the October 10, 2020 #EndSARS protest in Abuja. This photo was one “shared widely as a symbol of the protest” (Haynes, 2020), as other protesters with shared situational knowledge (SSK) aligned with her bravery. It was uncommon to find a Muslim woman openly speak up in situations as this, thus this image voiced (VCE) the silence of those women who could not speak for themselves. The pink emblem on her dress also captures the relevance (REL) of the BBOG movement to the current #EndSARS campaign. The background image shows other protesters with raised fists and placards, thus inferring (INF) their support and solidarity of intent.

*Image 4: Soro soke billboard* (source: bbc.com)

Image 4 shows a billboard advert, which reads “SORO SOKE AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY”. The use of capitalised letters lays reference (REF) to the weight of the message as it charges tiring protesters to “speak up”. The use of Aisha Yesufu protest pose is relevant (REL) to the statement as it amplifies its message. A closer look at the billboard advert shows a silhouette of other protesters which refers (REF) to the purpose of their protesting.

**Placards**

*Visual practs:* stating, warning, instructing, reminding, appealing, commanding.

*Practs:* assertive (stating), directive (commanding), reminding.
Image 5: placard 1 (source: dailyprincetonian.com)

Image 5, focusing on the visual details of the placard alone, performs an assertive and directive speech act. This is reinforced by the tone of voice (VCE) which is daring and unapologetic. A closer look reveals the use of metaphor (MPH) to ridicule the “Lazy Nigerian youth” comments of President Muhammadu Buhari and carved a new identity for the young protesters as “Fearless Nigerian youth”. The element of red as used also signifies the passion of the protesters and impending danger for the authorities.

Image 6: placard 2 (source: #EndSARS diary.com)

Image 6 performs the speech acts of reminding and commanding. The statement is boldly written and employs the visual element of red to refer (REF) to the core messages which are “stop”, “killing”, and “#ENDPOLICEBRUTALITY”.
Image 7: bullet face (source: indie-mag.com)

Image 7 shows a young female protester holding a “#EndPoliceBrutality” graphics. Her message is reinforced with a facial makeup of a bullet wound and battered nose which infers (INF) to the many casualties of SARS brutality. Her physiognomy also appeals for a saviour.

Image 8: placard 3 (source: teenvogue.com)

Image 8 shows a man holding a board, which reads “YOUNG, NOT CRIMINAL”. It thereby lays inference (INF) to the senseless motives of the SARS officers to apprehend some well-dressed and “supposedly” rich youth and label them criminals or fraudsters. The design of the text reflects the metaphors (MPH) of colour signification: green, red, and black signifies nationalism, passion, and the African heritage. On the surface, however, the three colours have a perfect contrast with the white background.

Neo-nationalism
Visual practs: vowing, charging, commanding, associating, encouraging.
Practs: commanding, stating.

Image 9: shirtless flag bearer (source: dailyprincetonian.com)

Image 9 shows a shirtless man with the Nigerian flag in one hand and a clenched fist in the other. The identity of the man is unknown as only his back is visible; a closer look also reveals that his face is covered with white clothing. The image refers (REF) to a nationalism without an ethnic face, protesting for a singular cause. The man stands on a high platform as a metaphoric
indicator (MPH) of the commitment of the protesters.

Image 10 carries the same message, but with a different frame of context. The anonymous man stands atop a police checkpoint, surrounded by other protesters, raising two flags. The white flag with the inscription “#ENDSARS” is placed above the Nigerian flag, thus infer (INF) that the movement is beyond the shores of the country.

Image 11 shows another protester holding a Nigerian flag with the words “END SARS NOW”. However, here, the identity of the holder is known, thus openly associating with the #EndSARS movement.
Image 12 shows a model, Miss Chiamaka Udeh, dramatising with a red-stained Nigerian flag in the Miss Africa Russian pageant, thus making a bold statement in an international event. The model also associates with the movement by referring (REF) to the events of October 2020, and is seen wrapped with the flag as a metaphorical indicator (MPH) of the situation of Nigeria, which she represents.

*Sorọ soke (Speak up)*

**Visual practs:** informing, praising, and charging.

**Practs:** charging, naming.

Image 13 is the icon of *Soro Soke RADIO* which was launched in the heat of the 2020 #EndSARS protest to “[urge protesters] to speak up, air their views and grievances against any unjust system” and also as “a platform to report missing persons” (Lawal, 2020). The icon performs an indirect directive speech act of charging by making reference (REF) to the popular Yoruba phrase “Soro soke” used in most parts of the country which means “Speak up”. The illustration is information; it bears a raised fist holding a megaphone emitting sound waves enclosed a shades of green circles, thus metaphorically (MPH) refers (REF) to everything the protest represents: hope, nationalism, solidarity, and collective ideology.
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Image (14): sọrọ soke generation (source: twitter.com)

Image 14 praises the protesters by naming (REF) them the “Soro Soke Generation”. It also depicts a charge to speak up, metaphorically (MPH) represented in the microphone-held clenched fist illustration.

Solidarity
Visual practs: encouraging, saluting, informing, charging.
Pract: stating.

Image 15: #EndSARS Twitter emoji (source: twitter.com)

Image 15 is an emoji created by Twitter in solidarity with online #EndSARS protest; it accompanies any mention of the #EndSARS hashtag on Twitter. It became a symbol for online protest on Twitter. Kazeem (2020) reports that, “the #EndSARS hashtag yielded 28 million tweets”. The icon aptly illustrates the greens and white of the Nigerian flag and solidarity of the movement. It performs the act of saluting the tenacity of the youth in Nigeria and other supporters by means of mixed metaphorical indexes (MPH).
Image 16: names of casualties (source: wimbart.com)

Image 16 equally salutes and pays tribute to some casualties of police brutality in Nigeria. The graphics shaped with the names: Jimoh Isiaq, Ayomide Taiwo, Sleek Sunday, Chika Ibeku Peter Ofurum, Samman, Chibuike Ozor, Anita Chinedu, among others, thus referring (REF) to the many young lives that have been terminated by the broken police system in the country. The visual element of green, white, red, and black also signifies and serves as metaphoric (MPH) reference (REF) to Nigeria, justice, the dangers of SARS/SWAT, and the African heritage, respectively.

Image 17: red fist (source: gofundme.com)

Image 17 also shares (SSK) the ideology of the other two images. It equally performs an assertive act of stating as it reads, “We’re not criminals”. The use of the first person pronoun “We” refers (REF) to the young generation of Nigeria. The clenched fist is amplified by a stroke of red, which stands for (MPH) the passion, and grit of the young protesters.

Memes
Visual practs: condemning, challenging.
Pract: describing.
Image 18 is a photo of an annoyed man used with a caption that reads, “How #9japolicestares at you when they realise all your papers are complete, plus you even have fire extinguisher”. It performs an act of describing while referencing (REF) the Nigerian police force. Reference to the police is relevant (REL) in the #EndSARS context and the image creates a satirical effect by condemning the unprofessionalism of the police force.

Image 19 shows an infant deep in thought, but in the comfort of her bedside. It metaphorically (MPH) describes the ease of online protesting that the various internet platforms offer. In another light, it condemns and challenges online protesters, and liken (REF) them to troubled infants incapable to effect real change.
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Image 20: lament meme (source: unkleaboki.com)

Image 20 shows a man with a facial and body demeanour that performs the act of lamenting. The picture is accompanied by a caption that reads “SARS just carry Emeka (my guy)... When Dem open e gallery na #EndSARS screenshots full am.” This caption and visual element refer (REF) to the tension that existed between protesters and the SARS officers, thus describe the unfortunate predicament of being caught with protest materials.

Conclusion

Hoye and Kaiser (2007) opine that “what the visual image means and does are determined by specific users, in specific contexts, in historical and material world”. This paper has attempted a visual pragmatic analysis of the #EndSARS movement, especially with reference to events of the 2020 #EndSARS protest online and in most parts of Nigeria. Visual images that represent stained flag, feminism, use of placards, neo-nationalist ideology, the Soro soke movement, solidarity, and memes have been subjected to qualitative analysis.

The study discovered that visual practices and practices complement each other in multimodal communication as deployed by #EndSARS protesters. Oftentimes, visual elements reinforce and broaden the meaning of verbal elements. The visual elements may involve the use of colours, facial expression, metaphor, inference, reference, shared situation knowledge, symbolism, gesture, contrast, satire, costume, and environment.

After components of Mey’s (2001) pragmatic act theory and insights from Hoye and Kaiser’s (2007) visual act theory were analytically applied, the following were discovered. (1) The stained flag performed visual practices of describing, informing, and lamenting. (2) Feminism ideals were expressed through visual practices of hoping, charging, appealing, demanding, encouraging, and associating, and performed practice of charging. (3) Placards were used visually to state, warn, instruct, remind, appeal, and command, and expressed practices of stating, commanding, and reminding. (4) Neo-nationalist ideology was strengthened through visual practices of vowing, charging, commanding, associating, and encouraging, and expressed practices of commanding and stating. (5) The Soro soke movement thrived through visual practices of informing, praising, charging, and performed practices of charging and naming; solidarity was achieved through visual practices of encouraging, saluting, informing, and charging, and performed the
pract of stating; and memes expressed visual practs of condemning and challenging, and pract of describing.

This work adds to the literature of #EndSARS discourse and, of course, pragmatic perspectives to the study of multimodal communication. It is, however, inconclusive in the investigation of visual pragmatic features of #EndSARS movement.

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Appendix
6. Image 6: placard 2 (https://#EndSARS diary.com/)
12. Image 12: Chiamaka Udeh (http://saharareporters.com/2021/06/18/#EndSARS-model-speaks-
receiving-threats-insults-displaying-bloodstained-nigerian-flag)
18. Image 18: #9japolice meme (https://unkleaboki.com/2020/10/#EndSARS -#EndSARS protest-#EndSARS now-3/)

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