A stylistic investigation of selected internet discourses as tools for national development
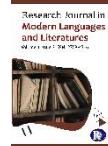
Research article

To read the paper online, please scan this QR code

Pamela Pam
Department of English, University of Jos, Nigeria
pampa@unijos.edu.ng
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7194-1375

Abstract
This study investigated Twitter and Instagram to explore the stylistic form of combining pictorial and verbal representations to create meanings and examined the extent to which these combinations of visuals and written texts in internet discourse serve as tools for national development. Data was sourced from Twitter and Instagram purposively, for their handling of national issues. The theoretical framework for data analysis rest on systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis (SF-MDA) - by (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996/2006), which considers the communicative function and effects of pictures, videos, arts (visual devices) in the media. Findings indicated that participants in internet discourse decisively expend the multimodal resources available to them on those platforms to communicate creativity, create awareness for goods and services available, share and create professional synergies, skills, and prowess, circulate news and information and also lend a voice to social and national issues that arise: quite often seeking for action or redress beyond the internet thereby fostering national unity, checkmating the activities of authorities and expanding youth empowerment and sector development in the nation. Verbal and visual elements pose a very high communicative value and enhance meaning making in internet discourse.

Keywords: internet discourse. multimodal. national development. stylistics.

Introduction

Life keeps evolving everyday; new inventions and innovations spring up with the help of technology, ushering in different and easier ways of communicating, doing things, and even keeping relationships. About three decades ago, only a few people in Nigeria had access to mobile phones and the internet. The print media, Television and grounded telephones were the most common source of news, information and communication. But today, communication has been made much easier, with access to immense technology; people around the world can connect, interact and converse from the comfort of their space on various issues, ranging from personal to national and even global issues. Thurlow et al aver that "Even though we often think about technology in terms of such modern innovations as space shuttles and DVD players, technology is also as old as the wheel and writing, and as simple as handwriting. However novel and exciting, the internet too is just one of the more recent developments in a long line of technologies." (37). Taiwo notes that, "the role of computer and computer- based technologies has been highly significant in modern communication." (58). Technology is indeed a great blessing and in the light of recent human revolution and technological advancement, the study of internet discourse has become very pertinent.

The internet is defined by Techopedia as "a network of networks that consists of private, public, academic, business and government networks of local to global scope, linked by a broad way of electronic wireless and optical technologies, with origins traced back to the 1960s when the Federal Government of the U.S.A commissioned a research for a means of securing information exchange in the event of nuclear war, while modern internet emerged in the early 1990s, taken up by academics as a means of information exchange. The internet has enabled new forms of interactions through various channels like instant messaging, internet forums and social networking, email, web- enabled audio/video conferencing, online movies and games, online shopping, financial services etc.

Social network service provided by the internet will be the scope of this study. Social networks can be described as internet websites which bring people with similar interest together. Mariza Gorgalou in an article defined social media as "internet-based sites and services which promote social interactions between participants through the exchange and sharing of user- produced content. Examples: blogs, microblogging (twitter), social network sites (Facebook) content sharing sites (YouTube, Instagram) wikis, podcasting, discussions etc." (1)

Internet discourse has given rise to some unique styles of communication and expressions. The language of internet discourse has gradually evolved into a class of its own with some peculiar characteristic features. Tia Baher describes the internet language as "a small and vibrant written dialect". Recent studies have explored different internet discourse platforms like e-mail, Instant messaging, Tumblr, Twitter, Text Messaging, Bulletin Board Systems etc. These studies were aimed at investigating the linguistic, stylistic and

sociolinguistic features of internet discourse. Not so many studies have looked into the visual and textual elements combined for communicative purpose on internet discourse. One of those styles of internet discourse this study will be concerned with is the fusion of pictures and videos for communication.

Some social network service platforms were purposefully fashioned for the sharing of pictures and videos. This study aims to look into that distinctive stylistic feature of internet discourse- to identify the relationship between visual elements and textual elements in internet discourse, to establish the communicative effects of meanings derived from multimodals in internet discourse and how they could serve as tools for national development. It is worthy to note that issues of national interest have taken upscale priority in internet discourses on social network platforms. These platforms have accorded the citizenry the opportunity to contribute to current national issues, voicing opinions and also lending in opinions or suggestions. The study is limited to Twitter and Instagram of Nigerian social media discourse platforms.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

i.   To identify the unique stylistic forms of internet discourse.

ii.   To identify the relationship between visual elements and textual elements in internet discourse.

iii. To establish the communicative meanings derived from multimodal documents in internet discourse.

iv.   To explore the extent to which the combination of visuals and written texts in internet discourse serve as tools for national development.

2.0.   Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

A Conceptual Review - Internet discourse (computer mediated communication/ electronic communication)

AbdulSa'aleek notes that "Researchers have used varieties of terms to refer to the language used by youngsters in the electronic communication. 'electronic discourse' (Davis & Brewer, 1997; Panckhurst, 2006), 'electronic language' (Collot & Belmore, 1996), 'Computer Mediated Communication' (Herring, 1996), 'interactive written discourse' (Werry, 1996), 'Netlish', 'Weblish', 'Internet language', 'cyberspeak', 'netling' (Thurlow, 2001), 'cyberlanguage' (MacFadyen, Roche, & Doff, 2004), 'netspeak' (Thurlow, 2001; Crystal, 2006), and 'virtual language' (Pop, 2008). According to Davis and Brewer (1997), (quoted by AbdulSa'aleek), "the term e-discourse concentrates on how individuals use language to share and exchange ideas and views", while Herring (1) defines computer mediated communication as "communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers." John December also defines Computer mediated communication   (quoted in

Thurlow et al (15)) as "a process of human communication via computers, involving people, situated in particular contexts, engaging in processes to shape media for a variety of purposes." Thurlow (120) further explains that "scholars interested in language and new technologies choose to refer to their sub-field as Computer Mediated Discourse." From these views and for the purpose of this study, internet discourse is communication that is initiated through computers via the internet, with an aim of interaction amongst participants to share and exchange information. This study can conveniently be placed within social media-based computer mediated discourse.

The Internet a Community?

The internet can be viewed from a sociolinguistics point of view as a speech community on its own, made up of a group of people who use language in a particular way, which is mutually acceptable between them. Thurlow Crispin et al (108) observe that, "the word community is used in various ways such as: 'the African- American community', 'the international community', 'the European community', etc. stressing how difficult it is to relate the meaning of the word community to the different ways it is used. They conclude that the word community is a convenient label for a whole range of feelings and ideas about people in a tight- knit, clearly identified, politically coherent collectives... also often used as a rhetorical device for communicating a sense of comforting or reassuring togetherness." The internet cyberspace is a place where people feel a sense of belonging; they feel united by some common interests and affiliations- most times they share personal experiences, grieves, achievements, struggles, worries, motivations etc. Mutual friendships are shared from offline (real life) in online (internet) interactions more like an extension of offline relations with people who are not physically close in proximity, so 'the internet community' can be added to the list of previously identified communities.

2.3 Stylistic Linguistic Forms of Internet language

The variety of language used on the internet has attracted the attention of a lot of study. Various researchers have examined the characteristics of the language used in different platforms of internet discourses like text messages, bulletin board systems, e-mails, instant messaging, Tumblr, twitter etc. it has been established that the linguistic written form of language used in internet discourse and computer mediated discourses have some unique characteristics, which have in recent times posed a lot of questions on how acceptable the forms are, and how they affect the offline use of language.

Milena Collot and Nancy Bellamore (Herring, 14) studied the language used in Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs) and came up with the descriptive term 'electronic language'. They observe that "Electronic Language is characterized by a set of situational constraints which sets it apart from other varieties of English. Messages delivered electronically are neither 'spoken' nor 'written' in the conventional sense of these words. There is an easy interaction

of participants and alternation of topics typical of some varieties of spoken English. However, they cannot be strictly labelled as spoken messages since the participants neither see nor hear each other. Nor can they be considered strictly written since many of them are composed directly on-line, thereby ruling out the use of planning and editing strategies which are at the disposal of even the most informal writer." The purpose of their research was, "because Electronic Language has unique situational features, it seems reasonable to assume that it embodies a distinctive set of linguistic features as well. If so, what are these features and how does this new variety of English differ from other varieties of English which have already been analyzed?" and at the end of the research, they concluded that, "Electronic Language displays some of the linguistic features which have been associated with certain forms of written language, and others which are more usually associated with spoken language. The genres which it most closely resembles are public interviews and letters, personal as well as professional". (21)

Eric Ketcham in an article opines that "sociolinguistic research has placed Internet Discourse (ID) at a midpoint on a continuum between Spoken and Written Discourses. While this accurately captures strong influences from both spoken and written forms of discourse, it fails to take into account the unique features of Internet Discourse. Instead of analyzing ID as a cross between Spoken Discourse (SD) and Written Discourse (WD), ID should be placed at its own corner in a triangular continuum. In this way, a three-way dynamic of influences is captured; showing that while each form of discourse has its own characteristics, communication can draw from all three forms". The research focused on instant messaging, aimed to show how spoken discourse influenced written discourse and also how the two (SD and WD) influenced internet discourse (ID) while internet discourse has its own set of features. He concludes that "despite the strong influences that Internet Discourse is under, Internet Discourse has a large number of features of its own, and has repossessed, as it were, some features of Spoken and Written Discourses. ID's semi-synchronous form and its ability to flexibly change words through new word formation and reduplication, create hybrid abbreviations, and its unique usage of punctuation all indicate that Internet Discourse should be considered its own corner in a triangular continuum with Spoken and Written Discourses". Atef Odeh presented nine salient written features of internet discourse.

a) Shortening, clippings and contractions: this involves dropping the final letters of words, removing the initial or last letter of the word and doing away with the vowel letter in the middle of the word. Examples: Bro (brother), til (till) gd (good).

b) Unconventional spellings: writing words as they sound not as conventionally spelt. Example: shud (should)

c) Word letter replacement: words get replaced by single letters. Example: y (why) u(you)

d) Word –digit replacement: a number digit used to replace a word. Example: 4(for) 2 (to)

e) Word combination: Crystal (2008) accent stylizations in which the internet users write the words in accord with informal local language. Example: lemme (let me)

f) Initialism: using the initial letters of words to make a sentence. Example: SMH (shaking my head)

g) Emoticons: symbols provided for through the keyboard to convey feelings such as anger, joy, love, sadness, surprise etc

h) Pictures and videos accompanying texts are a common feature of internet discourse. Some social media networking sites were purposefully built to accommodate this feature.

i) Participants in social media-based internet discourse (Twitter and Instagram for this study) are made of authors and followers. According to Crystal (34) "followers are people who have submitted an expression of interest in an author of a tweet for example". A participant could have millions of followers on Twitter and Instagram; the more popular the personality, the more the followers, which will invariably account for a high number of participants in discussions initiated by the author (a lot of likes and comments).

j) Language of internet discourse is usually characterized with brevity and conciseness. This is usually due to the character limitations of the platforms. Twitter for instance was created as an SMS (short message service) based platform, with 140 characters initially.

k) Use of symbols like @ and# is a common feature in internet discourse. These symbols followed by user name identify the origin of a particular thread of discourse and also signals a reaction to a tweet or post on that user's page.
   Other stylistic features of social media-based internet discourse as observed in this study some of which are peculiar to the Nigerian social media situation are as follows:

l) According to Baher, "language moves quickly on the internet and it is hard to talk about one definite 'internet language' when it is continuously changing." These languages are usually birthed by social happenings and once the event has passed or a new incidence comes up, the previous language or slang goes away. Examples: 'inconclusive'(birthed during the 2019 elections when results were declared in some states by the INEC chairman)

m) Nigerian internet discourse is not void of Nigerianisms; the use of pidgin and indigenous language in expressions whose meanings get to be generally deciphered and accepted in the context of use by everyone on the trail of discourse, irrespective of tribe. Examples: 'mbok', 'biko' (please in Ibibio, Efik and Igbo), 'japaa'(run in Yoruba), 'ko' (is that so? In Hausa). 'las,las we go dey alright' (eventually, all will be well).

Summarily, Bather notes that "internet discourse requires participation and imagination, it requires you to convey excitement and frustration and sarcasm using only words and symbols".

In Defense of Internet Language

Tia Baher reflects "the internet language as a small and vibrant written dialect. Dialects are characterized as deviations from the 'standard' version of a given language and are often dismissed due to their lack of prestige by standard users of the language." Hence the general misconceptions and bad blood for internet language. Some other misconceptions about the internet as pointed out by Crystal (14) are, "disappearing of languages and decline in spoken and written standards". But according to him, they are based on myths, citing the moral panic that came with the arrival of text messages.

Crystal in his defense of the uniqueness of internet language (which he based on text messages) but which also cut across various internet discourse platforms, noted that text message abbreviations are "not a modern phenomenon as many of these abbreviations date back to the era of chatroom before the mobile phone, while some date back to the pre-computer age of informal writing – using single letter to represent words '2' (to) 'b' (be). He also pointed out that some abbreviations like IOU have been in existence long before the advent of internet discourse and some short forms which involve the omission of letters example: msg (message) has been in the dictionary of abbreviation far back as 1942."

Standing in his position for internet discourse, Crystal thinks that it (internet discourse) has more advantages than the misconstrued misconceptions about it. He argues that "before you can write and play with abbreviated forms, you need to have a sense of how the sounds of your language relate to letters. You need to have a good visual memory and motor skills too. If you are aware that your texting behavior is different, you must have already initiated that there is a standard." Crystal considers internet language style as an intelligent use of language. Despite the ill thoughts that generally accompany the opinion about internet language and discourse, there is a positive side of it.

2.4 Twitter and Instagram Social Network Platforms

2.4.1 Twitter

This social network was co-founded by Jack Dosery, Biz stone and Evan Williams in 2006. It was earlier referred to as twttr by Noah Glass. The Social Network Site (SNS) platform was originally created as an SMS based platform to reach more people on the internet at the same time. It was designed with 140 characters (word limit) but by 2017, the limit was increased to 280. With the introduction of Twitter on the internet, new jargons emerged like the @symbol before a username to identify author user, #tags (hashtags), repost. Discourse initiated by author is called a 'tweet', participants get to like or join in the discourse by commenting on the post or re tweeting. Authors of tweets can upload pictures or video alongside short captions to start off a discourse.

2.4.2 Instagram (IG):

Instagram was developed in San Francisco by Kevin Systrom and Mike Keieger. It was pivoted to focus solely on communication through images. It was created with an idea of users sending a type of instant telegram. It is a photo and video sharing Social Network Site, edited with filters and organized with tags and location information. As of May 2019, there are currently 1billion users and still increasing. Source:

2.5 Theoretical Framework: Systemic Functional Approach to Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA)

SF-MDA is a fusion of Halliday's systemic functional theory and multimodal discourse analysis. Researchers in multimodal discourse, according to Wodak and Meyer(14) "put up a theory useful for looking into communicative potential of visual devices in the media... multimodality puts into consideration the semiotic communicative functions and/or effects of pictures, videos etc. (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996)." O'Halloran describes "multimodality as typically referring to the multiple modes (e.g. spoken, written, printed and digital media, embodied action, 3-D material and sites) through which social semiosis takes place." Kress explains that, "in a multimodal approach, all modes are framed as one field, as one domain. Jointly they are treated as one connected cultural resource for (representation as) meaning making by members of a social group at a particular moment. All are seen as equal, potentially, in their capacity to contribute meaning to a complex semiotic entity, a text, and each is treated as distinct in its material potential and social shaping." (38)

Halliday (1978)'s systemic functional theory is described by Eggins as "a social system that considers how we use language to achieve our everyday interactions." The theoretical claims of SFL pointed out by Eggins are: "language is functional; meanings are made by language functions; meanings made by language are influenced by social and cultural contexts in which they are expressed and the process of using language is semiotic, making meaning by choosing."

Halliday's language functions have been explained by Ventola et al as, "ideational: our ability to consume our experience in terms of what is going on around us and inside us. Interpersonal: interacting with the social world by negotiating social roles and attitudes and textual: the ability to create messages with which we can package our meanings."

"SF-MDA was first introduced by Micheal O'Toole (1994) The Language of Displayed Art and Kress and Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design. Halliday's SF theory provides a comprehensive framework for MDA because the metafunctional principle provides an integrating platform for multimodal theory and practice." O'Halloran. Citing van Leeuwen(2005), O' Halloran (2007) describes how he has "built on the work of Halliday, agreeing with his argument about the

grammar of the language not being a code but a tool for making meaning, by extending the idea to the 'grammar' of other semiotic modes and defined semiotic resources as the actions and artefacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically- with our vocal apparatus , with the muscles we use to create facial expressions and gestures etc. or by means of technologies- with pen, ink and paper; with computer hardware and software; with fabrics, scissors and sewing machines etc.".

"SF-MDA researchers use the theoretical principle of SF theory to: model other semiotic systems other than language; analyze text which instantiate semiotic systems others than language; analyze texts which instantiate a number of semiotic systems and theorize the interaction between different semiotic systems in texts." van Leeuwen (3).

This study adopts the SF-MDA theory and approach, since pictorial and verbal representation are a common feature in internet discuss especially Twitter and Instagram, the approach seems the most appropriate. The study aims to identify the unique stylistic forms of internet discourse and the relationship between visual elements ad textual elements in internet discourse, to establish the communicative effect and meanings derived from multimodals in internet discourse in order to explore the extent to which the combination of visuals and written text in internet discourse can serve as tools for national development.

Benefits of Social Media Based Internet Discourse

Just like the offline (real life communities), the internet community has its good and bad sides. It is important to note some of the benefits of social media discourse. They are quite numerous: these platforms facilitate the dissemination of information and news; Bloggers make a living by carrying news, helping the citizenry stay informed. The platforms have encouraged buying and selling of goods and services- participants actively use the medium of sharing pictures and videos to showcase wares and get patronage. The platforms help in keeping and reconnecting offline relationships that have been ongoing for years, between participants who may not necessarily be in close proximity. Taiwo also states that "the internet has become a space especially for young people, to hone their debating and discussion skills in regard to national issues, thereby giving them the opportunity to learn how to function successfully in a community. (7,8)

Methodology

Citing Lirola (2006), Mohammed Adenilokun favors a recent shift from mono-modality to multimodality, confirming that 'our society is influenced by the presence of new texts which are characterized by the dominance of visual mode.' Data for the study was obtained

purposefully from Twitter and Instagram social media handles. The study focused on the two handles because they were among the many social network platforms which use a lot of multimodal elements in their discussions- videos and pictures. Instagram is a photo and video sharing site- purposefully built so, edited with filters and organized with tags. The discourses selected were handpicked to help answer some of the research questions of this study e.g. Are there any communicative effects of the use of different modes employed in internet discourse, such as pictures and videos? How can such discourse on the internet serve as a tool for national development?

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section of the study interprets some selected semiotic resources in internet discourse; the focus being on the communicative value of the visuals, towards the goal of the discourse, which is to serve as tool for national development.

Data are classified into categories as follows

- Discourse channeled to seek redress for social issues
- Discourse channeled at professional creativity and synergies
- Discourse channeled to arts/ creativity sharing
- Discourse channeled at business, personal productivity and financial empowerment
- Discourse channeled at providing information and news updates on recent happenings.

4.1 Discourse Channeled To Seek Redress for Social Issues

**4.1.1 Success**

FIGURE 1   FIGURE 2   Figure 3

The videos in figure 1 and 2 show a little girl, smartly dressed in a brown school uniform carrying a black school bag, looking disgruntled and walking away at an 'unusual hour', with her background not looking like a school environment. The caption in figure 1 tells us a little girl has been captured on video after being sent home from school for owing tuition fees and her reaction has obviously been received with mixed feelings on this internet discourse platform- it is a mixture of sadness and hilariousness. The little girl later identified as 7year old Success Adegor was sent out of school for an unpaid school levy, mainly not her fault (her parents') but she felt pained because it was not a deliberate act on their part not to pay- as they did not have the means to do so at the time. Success was willing to suffer her own part of the punishment of being whipped rather than being sent home.

The video was posted online possibly to entertain the internet community with the hilarious remarks made by little Success who spoke fluently in Pidgin English, but the 8minute video became a sensation on internet discourse. This neatly dressed, well-articulated child; fluent in Pidgin English, bold and obviously disgruntled by 'a system' that was failing her by depriving her of something she was passionate about- learning; for a fault not, hers soon attracted a series of attention and internet discourses. Some of which, like figure 2 sought for someone to take action and responsibility of the little girl's plight. Figure 3 is another discourse with the little Success, this time neatly dressed in mufti, surrounded by a group of people and holding some money. The previous discourses had apparently drawn the attention of the government of her state and well-meaning Nigerians who reached out to her with succor. The pose in figure 3 seemed deliberate and the little girl appeared a lot at ease, unlike in figure 2. That 8minute video posted on Twitter had a ripple effect – on the entire education management in the state, the school and Success' life and family. The picture of the girl in all figures (1, 2 and 3), the accompanying verbal actions steered public and the government action(s): the girl got succor, thus empowering her to continue schooling; educate a girl child, educate a nation. The school got renovated, with better facilities provided for the pupils; the result of this internet discourse also empowered the girl's family by extension – poverty alleviation. Development thus comes when citizens are empowered and infrastructure are available.

4.1.2 Police Impunity

Figure 4

The cartoon in the discourse in figure 4 shows two scenes: one of an armed officer with a young lad faced down at gun point. The young man is obviously scared as he is being 'harassed' by an armed officer in uniform. The lad is being interrogated about his personal belongings- laptops, IPhone, cash and his appearance (dreadlocks). From the nature of the interrogation, it is evident that those were the likely reasons he was accosted. In the second scene we see a picture of a fully armed officer taking to his heels at the sight of an armed herdsman attending to his cattle. The caption is: 'The Domain of Power.' The images show that there is apparently a misplacement of power- it poses a question of whether the powers of the police are being channeled appropriately or not; if they are neglecting the vices and chasing down the 'innocent' citizens based on looks and personal effect. The initiator of the discourse has a written text above the cartoon, which he tags the Nigerian Police, calling them to look into the activities of their men. The cartoon was placed to emphasize the point of the writer, calling for an action with the hash tag #endimpunity. The picture in figure 4 and the accompanying verbal actions steered the police authority to look into the activities of its men out in the field, especially reevaluating the special anti-robbery squad (SARS), calling for its cancellation. When public office holders do their jobs excellently, without any fear or favors for the betterment of the nation at large and impunity especially from security agencies is taken care of, and they begin to do the needful by fighting crime and criminality instead of innocent citizens, development will naturally ensue as the society will be free of crime and individuals free to go about their normal schedules

4.2 Discourse Channeled Towards Professional Sharing and Synergies
4.2.1 A Genius Teacher (Obianorydavid)

FIGURE 5   **FIGURE 6**   **FIGURE 7**

Figures 5 and 6 show pictures of a classroom with students; a teacher 'unusually' dressed in a white apron, holding a tea cup on a saucer, serving a pupil while pointing at the interactive board for reference. These pictures show clearly that the setting is a class with learning in session. The teacher dressed in that way was just a fun way to get his pupils interested and excited about the topic he was going to be teaching them. Below the picture is the caption: 'serving them a hot bowl of DECIMALS' This inspirational and sensational teacher just shared an exciting way he has learnt to teach his pupils decimals on the internet; tagging his fellow teachers too. In figure 7, this video (picture) shows pupils dressed like surgeons in their scrubs, but not in a theater but in a classroom, singing and dancing to Adele's song while learning. The video (picture) portrays how fun learning can be and how learning through play is memorable for children, as they will rarely forget such an experience. This kind of discourse builds sharing of ideas on creative ways of teaching amongst teachers to enhance easy learning for pupils and in the long run, bettering teaching methods and introducing varieties of ways to motivate pupils to enjoy learning and also make teaching impactful. The accompanying pictures, videos and verbal actions are in the big picture a means of helping to create synergy amongst teachers, coming together to find better methods of teaching by sharing personal experiences in the classroom. Development in the educational sector will be enhanced when teacher goals of impacting knowledge is achieved.

4.3 Discourse Channeled to Arts and Creativity Sharing
4.3.1 Multi-Talented (Broda Shaggi - 'Oya Hit Me')

FIGURE 5

This shirtless pose on Instagram communicates a multi-talented brand of comedy, music, art and acting all in one. It has come to be associated with the slogan 'oya hit me' (go ahead and ask me). This picture also represents a showcase of creativity displayed on internet discourse; one amongst many. This pose and picture represent a brand of hard work and creativity among the youths making use of internet discourse positively for self-expression, empowerment and showcase of talent. With a followership of about 2.2 million, this brand can influence the younger generation to work hard and encourage creativity. National development comes when the youth are engaged positively with hard work, expressing and putting creativity to good use; thus empowering themselves financially and becoming role models for others, rather than indulging in vices. Crime rates are reduced to a large extent.

4.3.2 An Artist Par Excellence (Eli Waduba)

FIGURE 6

Figure 6 shows a pencil drawing of a popular American comedian and actor, Kevin Hart drawn (right) by a Nigerian Artist (left). Eli Waduba posted the drawing he made on Twitter with a message tagging the actor and comedian, hoping he would see it. The art was seen and acknowledged two days later with an interest to buy and a request for more. Aanu Adeoye reports: 'a painting done by a young lad in Kaduna, received global attention. It showcased creative work using pencil, charcoal and oil to produce hyper realistic art. This art is made popular by the power of social media, opening up the Nigerian art circle.' The picture of the painting and the accompanying verbal actions brought a local artist to international limelight. He made a lot of money from the purchase of his artwork and the hyperrealism art was showcased to the world.

4.4 Discourse Channeled at Business, Personal Productivity and Financial Empowerment
4.4.1 Ankara Terrain (Per Yard Ankara shop)

FIGURE 7

FIGURE 8

Figure 7 shows a display of beautifully printed and colorful 'ankara' fabrics, alongside dress styles to encourage anyone who is interested on what to use the fabrics to make. This page is an 'online ankara shop', the owner sells fabrics ('ankara'). She displays them very often with details of how to make purchase and also the prices. This has made shopping a lot easier lately; once a selection is made, account details are forwarded and delivery is made.

### 4.4.2 Coconut in Different Forms (kkaavi)

FIGURE 9

FIGURE 10

A display of homemade, handmade, organic hair, body and beauty products made from coconut. The products include shampoo, hair detangler, hair moisturizer, hair oil. The pictures of different hairstyles, suggesting that the hair products have been put into use at various times and the results speak. This page speaks of entrepreneurship. The pictures in figures 7, 8, 9 and 10 and the accompanying verbal actions steer followers to patronize the owners of the pages. A lot of merchandises are sold on Instagram, ranging from clothing, beauty products, foot wears, bags, household utensils, food, cars etc. Economic development comes when small scale businesses and entrepreneurs get the chance to thrive and contribute to the nation's economy.

4.5 General Discourse Channeled at Providing Information and News Updates on Recent Happenings.
4.5.1 Bus Leak?
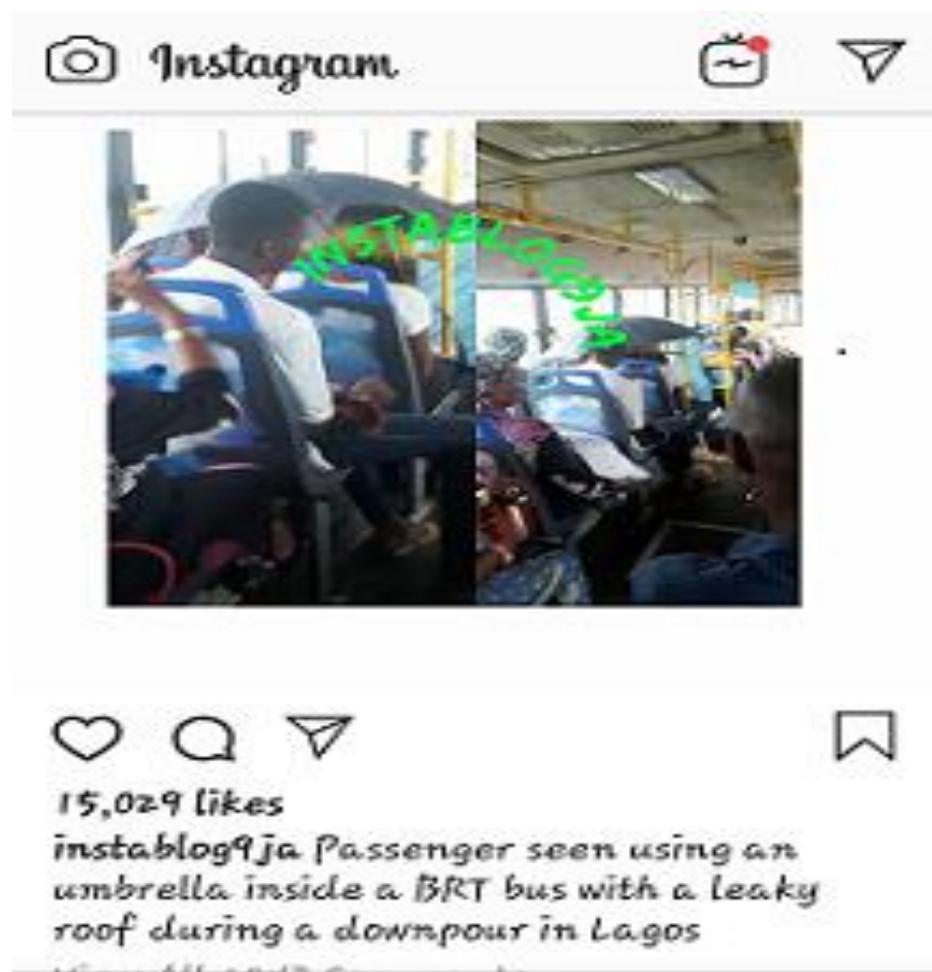
FIGURE 11

This picture shows a bus filled with passengers seated. Something odd captured was a passenger holding up an umbrella while sated in her chair. This raises a question, why would an umbrella be needed in a bus? Possible scenarios- rain, leak bus roof. This picture and the accompanying verbal actions steer up a chain of comments and opinions about the state of affairs (BRT buses are run by the state government). If a bus is not in good shape, why should it be on the road, instead of in a mechanic shop getting fixed? It brings to light the value placed on maintenance culture. Development will flourish better in an environment with a healthy maintenance culture, where structures and facilities are kept in good shape and properly taken care of, changed or replaced to keep serving the people.

4.5.2 What Went Wrong?
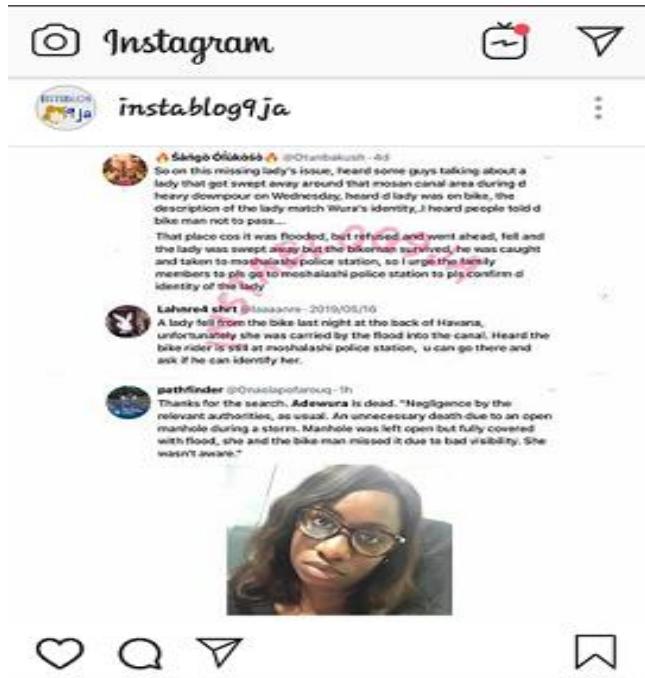

FIGURE 12
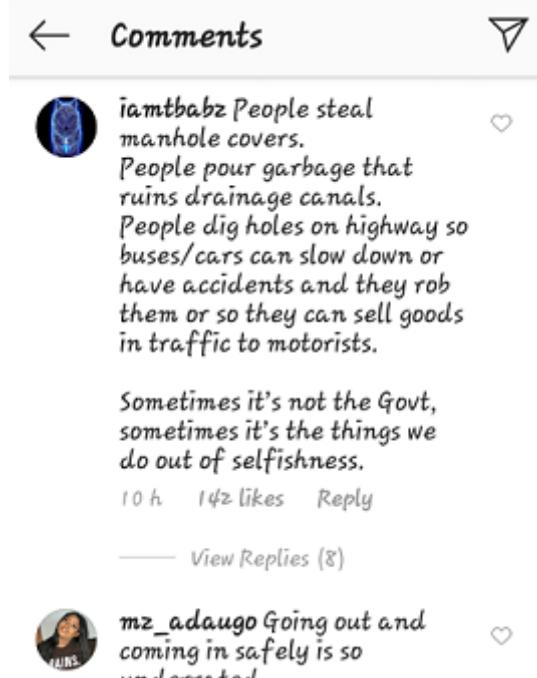
FIGURE 13

A picture of a pretty lady wearing glasses, the discourse leads to discovery that she died recently from an accident resulting from an open manhole during a storm. Discussions ensue and opinions and blames are passed on to the greedy citizens who vandalize national properties to the government who is supposed to be swift in action of maintenance. The picture in figure 14 and the accompanying verbal actions in figure 15 have steered discourse towards the responsibility of citizens and the role of the citizenry towards national development. The citizenry has a role of helping to protect the infrastructure put in place by the government for the good and benefit of all. National development is not the role of the government alone; the citizens have a part to play. Some internet discourse participants are majorly a source of news e.g Instablog, Tatafo bellanaija etc. helping to keep the citizenry informed and updated on recent happenings around the country.

Conclusion

This paper explored some verbal-visuals aspects in internet discourse (Twitter ad Instagram) and how meanings expressed through these communicative modes can serve as tools for national development. The paper showed how internet discourse has been used purposefully by participants, who take advantage of their followership to initiate actions beyond the internet into real life, giving the citizenry the chance to lend their voice on issues happening every day and also to share opinions about governance, calling out (tagging) appropriate government officials and bodies, seeking for action and answers to national issues. The internet discourse can be seen as a platform where formidable forces are formed, who rally round issues to seek for real life solutions. For instance, starting up a 'go fund me account' for

a cause to raise money and in some cases offering professional and material help to people in need. This is fostering national unity, for the greater good of the nation; citizens being each other's keeper. Young people are positively engaging in internet discourse, using it as a means of showcasing their talents, creativity and doing business to make a living. Internet discourse is promoting self-reliance, youth personal developments and in the long run financial independence. Professional synergy is finding a platform to grow through internet discourse, creating the room for sharing of methods, ideas, experiences etc. for the building of various sectors of the economy. Visual elements possess a high communicative value in internet discourse; these stylistic forms of internet discourse can serve as an effective tool for national development.

References

Sa'aleek, A., & Atef, O. (2015). Internet Linguistics: A Linguistic Analysis of Electronic Discourse. *International Journal of English,* 5(1), 27, 135.

Mohammed, A., & Olateju, M. (2015). A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Some Visual Images in the Political Rally Discourse of 2011 Electioneering Campaigns in Southwestern Nigeria." *IJSCL,* 4(1), 4

Baher, T. (2013). Your Ability to Can Even: A Defense of Internet Linguistics. Internet, 20

Collot, M., & Belmore, N. (1996). Electronic Language: A New Variety of English." *Computer Mediated Communication Linguistics, Social and Cross- Cultural Perspectives,* edited by Susan Herring, John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Crystal, D. (1997). *Internet Linguistics: A Student Guide.* Routledge Taylor & Francis e-Library.

Davis, B. H, and Brewer J. *Electronic Discourse: Linguistics Individuals in Virtual Space.* Sunny Press.

December, J. (2003). "Notes on Defining Computer Mediated Communication." *CMC Magazine,* 11 April, Online, www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/jan/december.

Eggins, S. (2005). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics.* Continuum.

Gorgalou, M. (2016). "Social Media Discourse." *Discoure Analysis, 8th Semester, spring.* Department of Language and Linguistics, Faculty of English Language and Literature National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. www.marizageorgalou.com.

Herring, S. C. (1996). *Computer Mediated Communication Linguistics, Social and Cross- Cultural Perspectives.* John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Instagram: Classical Knowledge at https:/bitly/eudaimoniachanne

Ketcham, E. (2011). Internet Discourse: The Application of a Discourse Analysis to Instant Messaging Communicating. *Honours Thesis Heather Littlefield, PhD, advisor Linguistic Program, Northern Eastern University.* Fall 2010- Spring

Kress, G. (2012). "Multimodal Discourse Analysis." *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse, Analysis,* edited by James Paul Gee and Michael Handford, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 35-50

Lirola, M. (ibid). A Systemic Functional Analysis of two Multimodal Covers." *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses,* 19, 249 -260

O' Halloran, Kay, L. (ibid). Multimodal Analysis and Digital Technology. *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Multimodality: Theory and Practice,* edited by Baldary A. and E. Montagna, Campobasso: Palladino.

Peter, M. & Eija, V. (2010). Grammar: A Neglected Resource in Interaction Analysis. *New Adventure in Language and Interaction,* edited by Jürgen Streeck, John Benjamins.

Taiwo, R. (2013). Emerging Trends in English Language in the New Media: A Case Study of Satire in Nigerian Text Messages. *Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association*, 16(1), 58.

Taiwo, R. (2018). Beyond the Text: Critical Discourse Analysis and the Quest for Meaning in Cyberspace Interaction. An Inaugural lecture delivered at Oduduwa Hall, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Thurlow, C., et al. (2004). *Computer Mediated Communication: Social Interaction and the Internet.* SAGE Publication Ltd.

Twitter: www.lifewire.com//history of twitter 3288854

van Leeuwen, Theo. (2005). *Introducing Social Semiotics.* Routledge.

Wodak, R., & Micheal, M. (2015). *Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory and Methodology.* SAGE Publication Ltd.

www. techopedia.com