

# VISUAL DISCOURSE OF LIFE AND GODLINESS IN SELECTED CHRISTIAN HANDBILLS: A MULTIMODAL APPROACH

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## Abstract

Communicating programmes that pertain to life and godliness has been a burden which the church has uniquely relieved semiotically by means of drawings and designs on their handbills. Scholars have contributed to research in language use with stint considerations for visual and impressive communication in religious discourse. This study, therefore, investigated selected visual discourse of Christian handbills with a view to examining communication as a necessity to life and godliness in the world of human beings. Using qualitative descriptive design, Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal approach was deployed in analysing four randomly selected handbills. Churches that know their trade do not take language for granted in projecting programmes for proselyting purposes. Various linguistic and non-linguistic resources such as graphics, drawings, colours and letterings were discursively manipulated to project their ideologies and motifs. These encased ideological meaning signifiers were unpacked through multimodal and representational scrutiny with the conclusion that communicating issues pertaining to life and godliness transcends the use of expressive language forms.

## Introduction

Communication is a necessity in the world of human beings, and it is an ever-continuing process. It is as vital to human existence as life itself (Onugu, 2019). The need for communication is as fundamental as the hunger for food and drink, perhaps even more (Onugu, 2019). Communication is the name we give to the countless ways by which humans keep in touch, not just with words or music, pictures and prints, nods and becks, posters and plumages, but every move that catches someone's eye and every sound that resonates upon another's ear, Miller (2005). Given the above, language is thus to be seen as a system of communication in human existence, and this includes the acquisition, development and maintenance of the set of rules used to describe human interactions. The process of semiosis, in terms of signs and their particular meanings, all depends on language. Human languages have the properties of productivity and displacement and rely entirely on social convention and learning (Agha, 2006).

Bloomfield (1914) describes language as a "formal system of signs governed by grammatical rules of combination to communicate meaning." Chomsky (1957, p. 1972) sees language as a system of communication that enables human beings to exchange verbal or symbolic (non-verbal) utterances." Unlike conventional human languages, a formal language is a system of signs for encoding and decoding information. Several features set human language apart from other known communication systems, such as those used by non-humans (animals) (Clarke, 1990). Therefore, the use of language is deeply entrenched in human culture. According to Austin and Sallabank (2011), Gorgias argued that "language could represent neither the objective experience nor human experience, and that communication works hand in hand with truth", while Plato submits that "communication is made possible through language, representing thoughts, feelings, ideas and concepts that function as an entity." The foregoing definition is to the end that language is not only "expressive" but also "impressive", as made available in semiotic terms under multimodality.

## Background to the Study

If it is true, as stated in Comrie (2009), that human language is unique and special in directing abstract concepts to imagine hypothetical events as well as events which happened in the past or will happen in the future, the point of engagement must, therefore, be to perceive communication, with all its discursive elements, as an important tool in discoursing life and godliness in all ecclesiastic settings and the field of evangelisation. In the view of theologians, ecclesiology points to the church as having a symbolic and operational communicative value that links man to God (Heyns, 1988, p. 16). According to this perspective, the church symbolises both an encountered and encounterable field of reality for interaction between the divine and the human (Bentele and Bystrina 1978). As a reality avenue of expectations for spiritual encounters, the church has made Christians who, through prayerful sacrifices, fix themselves into the nature of spiritual activities filled with signs and symbols in the physical realm.

Different symbolic worlds are formed through the conscious reinterpretation by humans of what is to signify an alternative understanding of reality (Bergman, 2003). Each symbolic word exists as a secondary field of reality – a linguistic or conceptual interpretation of the objective lived through reality within which humanity is bodily and boldly embedded. Symbolic worlds consist of several signs to generate a stable system of signs within which to interpret reality (Berklof, 2002).

Divine encounters are well known by people who visit one church or the other in a quest to receive answers to their physical and spiritual needs. In Nigeria today, there are so many churches with captivating names claiming to be centres of divine encounters and solutions. These churches develop different programmes every week, month or any period they deem fit, with captivating themes to woo. One can perhaps say there is so much competition among churches regarding the number of programmes held daily, weekly and monthly. The growth of some Christian churches, most often, depends on the themes and topics given to their church programmes. The churches churn out handbills with captivating themes and images to communicate these programmes to their members and the public.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Undoubtedly, many scholars have contributed to research in language use with stint considerations for visual and impressive communication in religious discourse. Douglas (2000) investigated the language used in Christian banners, handbills and posters from the perspective of semantics in his work “A Semantic and Pragmatic Study of the Language of Christian Handbills and Posters in English.” He investigated the linguistic and semantic features of the verbal texts in his data and apparently ignored the non-verbal components.

Chiluwa's (2008) work analysed how vehicle stickers construct individual and group identities, people's religious faith and social vision in Nigeria's context of religious assumptions and practices. His data analysis was done within the post-structuralist discourse analysis model framework that left out such vital aspects as a visual social semiotic approach.

Noke, Nwankwegu and Nwode (2014) examined the features of language use in advertising discourse. The study focused on church advertisements as displayed on handbills, posters and billboards to raise the readers' awareness with its adopted pragmatic theoretical approach. Despite their perceived lacuna, the foregoing studies provide necessary inspiration for discourse analyses that embrace multimodality. We thus have a discourse study which, in a nutshell, seeks to scrutinise communicative signs and symbols not only in terms of the expressive use of language but also in terms of impressive non-linguistic signs such as drawings, images and colours along with available linguistic discourse resources in a multimodal scholarly approach that sees language and communication as the whole essence of life.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to investigate, from a multimodal perspective, the forms of meaning signifiers, contexts and the ideologies behind selected Christian handbills, with a view to uncovering their multimodal and representational features.

Given the above aim, the general objectives of the study are to:

- i. Identify the forms of meaning signifiers in the selected Christian religious handbill texts;
- ii. describe the semiotic contexts that have produced the selected Christian religious handbill texts; and
- iii. explain the ideologies behind the production of the selected Christian religious handbill texts.

## **The Significance of the Study**

The uniqueness of studies such as this is clearly signalled by the intention to explain the forms, the semiotic contexts and ideologies or reasons behind various churches' use of text and images in handbills. Besides, this study is capable of benefiting individual Christians, scholars, semioticians, religious leaders and religious text analysts, bringing to their awareness the most important things to look out for in Christian handbills. It also promises to foster professional insights for graphic designers in their branding and rebranding business.

## **Literature Review**

Semiotics is a vast discipline. In scope, semiotics is very far from basic humanities; that is, the breadth of semiotics enterprise transcends a single discipline, and it is too multifaceted and heterogeneous to be reduced to a "method." But its unity is derived from covering and offering acceptable conclusions to signs and systems. According to Jakobson (1971, p. 698), every message contains signs which are related, "the science of signs termed semiotics" handles, and is directed at revealing, the general fundamental assumption which serves as a basis of structure to all signs, whatever is the feature of utilisation within a message as well as "the specifics of the various sign systems and the diverse message using those different kinds of signs. Everything from the semiotic perspective is a text. So, a semiotic approach is one to a text fixed on its sign nature and tries to explain and interpret it in a phenomenon of language.

To explain the relationship between semiotics and communication, Danesi (1994), in his "An Introduction to Semiotics", supposed that semioticians' priorities are to study signification first and communication second. Therefore, communication is transferring data and – or meaning from one source or receiver as efficiently and effectively as possible. For the purpose of understanding, the receiver ought to be able to decode data, that is, code or message being the centre of the communication process, and as a result, make meaning out of it.

The core of semiotics is communication, whose essential point is message and meaning. Semiotics joins the linguistic and non-linguistic facts or signs from the personal and cultural domains to strengthen and highlight meaning or communication in society. The trans-linguistics of semiotics hence inform its function with psychology. Saussure study (as cited in Hawkes, 1977, p. 123) states that communication theory includes sociolinguistics and semantics (Wales, 1989, p. 416), which are the components of semiotics.

### **a. System, Subsystem, Message:**

According to (Littlejohn and Foss, 2005), a system is a set of interacting components that together form something more than the sum of the parts. It is the object of semiotic investigation, limited by its dependence on the other parts, the interdependence which organises the system itself. For instance, a school is a system comprising several departments and classes. A subsystem is a small group of elements within a larger group. For example, a university is a system within which the subsystems of faculties, departments, levels, and so on operate. A message constitutes the total meaning content of

what communication is all about, and it can be meaningfully tested or achieved within the context of other elements, which are all interactive and interlinked (Watson and Hill, 1993, p. 116).

Peirce believed that the universe is made up of signs and that every sign is connected with three things: the sign, its object and the interpretant. Peirce also developed different ways of classifying signs according to their categories, proposed as a “triadic structure of tracheotomies.” The sign is the focus of study in semiotics. It refers to “something” which stands for or refers to, some other thing in a different and meaningful way. Peirce (cited in Alabi, 1995, p. 19) opines that it is ‘something’ which stands to somebody for something in some capacity or respect.” To Peirce, signs include pictures, symptoms, words, books, objects, sentences, signals, orders of command, microscopes, libraries, musical concerts, theatre performances, films, legislative representatives and others (Peirce, cited in Gorlee, 1994, p. 50).

#### **b. Icon, Index and Symbol:**

These three types of signs are related to the area of performance. An icon is a sign that refers to the object it denotes only by virtue of its characters. That is, anything in existence is an icon of something as far as it resembles its object in some ways (Peirce cited in Alabi 1995, p. 23). Visual signs are good analogies of icons, such as photographs, maps, diagrams and onomatopoeic words, in the case of language. An index is a sign connected directly to its object in some way (casually or existentially). For instance, a sneeze signifies a cold and symptoms are indices of diseases (Lawal, 1997, p. 15). On the other hand, a symbol is the sign in which the relationship between the sign and its object is arbitrary. Its connection with its object is a matter of convention, rule and agreement amongst users. Watson and Hill (1993, p. 291) explain that a symbol “means something beyond itself,” and symbols are always culture-bound—for example, traffic lights.

#### **c. Genre, Medium and Theme:**

Genre is the category that signs belong to. Genres are identified by the recurring patterns of style and subject matter (The Encarta Encyclopaedia, 2006). For instance, literary genres of prose, drama and poetry, films, adventure, comedy, musical, horror, etc. Thus, every phenomenon has its genre. Medium is the substance or means through which communication is transmitted. According to Ajibade (1994, p. 30), messages are carried through media, and, in his communication theory, he opines that “the medium is the message.” The theme is the prominent idea, the subject matter of signs and sign systems. Therefore, the central message that the signification process would bring about is the theme, which means that different media and genres can be used to buttress a theme.

#### **d. Context, Sub-text and Inter-text:**

The syllable ‘con’ in context is a Latin prefix that means ‘with’ or ‘accompanying.’ Therefore, context is the information or understanding that is not spoken, written or seen but is necessary to fully understand what is spoken, written or seen. In other words, context is the point at which communicative events occur or a term used to provide links between linguistic items and communication's social and situational factors. For instance, a material in the school context may be a book, but at a construction site, it is a tool and, in politics, may mean a credible, popular and qualified person for an electoral position.

Sub-text refers to the hidden meaning of a text. It does not operate at the denotative or surface meaning but can only be obtained through inferences harvested from both the context and co-text. To exemplify this, the sub-text of the expression “what is the time now?” might be “I want to leave now.” Inter-text refers to the framing of texts by other texts in various ways. It is applied when the current text can be traced back to the previous text. In essence, intertextuality, according to Kristeva (1986), can be seen as the ways in which texts refer to and build on other texts to derive their meaning. Inter-text are basically utterances, signs or text in relation to other utterances, signs or text (Wales, 1989, p. 259).

Following Halliday's (1978, p.5) more concise but comprehensive definition of context as the total environment in which a text unfolds, Oyeleye and Oduola (2016) clearly state that the context of a text is the dynamic environment in which participants interact, and their linguistic expressions are adequately understood. It is, therefore, evident that context is a social construct as well as the product of language choices made by participants in a communicative event. The choices, in turn, consolidate, control, manipulate and maintain the social order of the context (Oduola, 2017, pp. 64-65). Consequently, a multimodal approach which permits the contextualisation of Christian handbill texts, getting us to the root of how language use in religious contexts leads to the formation of ideologies that animate social and organic growth is necessarily required. Our kind of visual discourse investigation is, thus, set to show that the selected Christian religious handbills have the ability to build a mental picture of reality and to, through ideational meanings, deal with how we represent reality in language.

### **The Nature of Christian Handbills in Nigeria**

A handbill is a small printed advertisement or other notice distributed by hand used to advertise a particular company, service, or event. Christian handbills are very common non-verbal means of communication in our society today, especially in the church. Clearly put, handbills are very important forms of social and visual communication. They present images with meanings lying behind them (Afolayan, 2011). The use of language for communication through handbills reveals the expectation of the coiners, and the expressions are meant to communicate different meanings to different individuals based on their belief in the power of the Supreme Being, God. Christian handbills can reach far and wide; that is why they are assumed to be very useful tools for evangelisation because they can reach target audiences of children, youths, men and women. They can be accessed by both the literate and illiterate poor masses. On the other hand, handbills can equally be used to send written messages to literate and rich people in society.

Most of these handbills contain names and addresses of the churches holding the programmes, host pastors or coordinators, venue, time, themes including pictures with underlying meanings, and those of the people to perform the actions of each specified day and time. The handbills might as well carry some expressions, phrases, clauses and sentences concerning the expected events, with the particular aim of inviting people to their churches to fellowship with them or make them permanent church members.

The titles are intended to draw readers' attention to such church programmes to facilitate speedy answers to challenging personal or corporate societal issues. In this regard, language and images are used to form such expressions.

### **Methodology**

Four handbills were purposively collected from different churches, numbered 1 to 3, for effective presentation and analysis. The handbills were purposively selected based on those containing enough linguistic and visual resources. The research design for this study is a descriptive survey design, while qualitative data analysis is adopted in the presentation of data. The qualitative tools and analysis are non-numerical and deal with data content analysis for interpretation, description and presentation of the meaning and implication within the context of church tradition (ideology).

### **Theoretical Framework**

In the semiotic field, multimodality involves language in its multiplicity within one medium. Multimodality provides a soft landing for all communicative modes. As a result, every item, from the presentation of images to the organisation of the contents to the method of meaning, communication requires multimodality. This is the result of a shift from the isolated text being depended on as the basic source of communication to the image being utilised more frequently in the digital age (Lutkewitte, 2013). Multimodality describes communication practices in areas of the textual, aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual resources used to compose messages (Murray, 2013). Gunther Kress's scholarship on multimodality is canonical within social semiotic approaches and has a considerable influence on many

other approaches as well. Kress sees mode in two ways. First, a mode “is a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning. Image, writing, layout, speech, moving images are examples of different modes” (Kress, 2010). In the second, “semiotic modes, similarly, are shaped by both the intrinsic characteristics and potentialities of the medium and by the requirements, histories and values of societies and their cultures” (Kress and Leeuwen, 1996).

Thus, every mode has a different modal resource, which is historically and culturally situated, breaking it into different parts because “each has distinct potentials (and limitations) for meaning” (Kress, 2010). For example, breaking down writing into its modal resources would be grammar, vocabulary, and graphic “resources.” Graphic resources can be divided into font size, type, line spacing, paragraphs, and others. These resources are not deterministic, however. In Kress’s theory, “mode is meaningful: it is shaped by and carries the ‘deep’ ontological and historical as well as social orientations of a given society and its cultures along with every one of its signs. Mode enumerates the material resources shaped in long histories of social endeavour (Kress, 2010).

In social semiotic accounts, the medium is the substance in which meaning is realised and through which it becomes available to others. Mediums include video, image, text, audio, etcetera. Socially, the medium consists of semiotic, sociocultural, and technological practices such as film, newspaper, billboard, radio, television, theatre, a classroom and others. Multimodality makes use of the electronic medium by creating digital modes with the interlacing of image, writing, layout, speech, and video. Mediums have become modes of delivery that take the current and future contexts into consideration. Accounts in media studies overlap with these concerns, often emphasising the value of media as social institutions for distributing particular kinds of communications.

Approaches to digital media from the perspective of multimodality address, in particular, the fact that multimodality and multimodal communication are now progressively evolving. Due to the growing presence of digital media over the last decade, the central mode of representation is no longer just text. Recently, the use of imagery has become more prominent. In its current use for internet and network-based composition, the term “multimodality” has become even more prevalent, applying to various forms of text such as fine art, literature, social media and advertising. An important related term to multimodality is multiliteracy, which is the comprehension of different modes in communication – not only reading text but also reading other modes such as sound and image. Therefore, multiliteracy describes how a message is understood.



## Billboard 1: Deeper Life Bible Church

### Analysis and discussion

#### Deeper Life Bible Church



### Meaning signifiers in the handbill texts

#### Linguistic meaning signifiers:

From the above handbill, the church's name is "Deeper Life Bible Church." The main message is "plug into ... The Resurrection Power At the National Deeper Life Easter Retreat." "Receive power for total freedom from sin, sickness and Satan" is the co-text of the main text. The time frame is "April 18 – 21, 2019." The crusade venue is "DEEPER LIFE CAMPGROUND, km 6, Oyo-Ibadan Expressway, Oyo." The handbill has an anchorage: "come and feel the power." The theme: has the grammatical form of a "sentence" with subject elision "...plug into ...The Resurrection Power."

The arrangement of the linguistic items also reflects meaning, as the different font sizes and shapes show different levels of prominence. For instance, "Resurrection", with twelve (12) alphabets, receives a near same space as "power", having five (5) alphabets. This shows how important the word "power" is to the crusaders. Also, the linguistic arrangements in the forms of words, groups, clauses, and sentences (are either morphological, syntactic or semantic) as well as the analysis of the logos, pictures and images, create a textual context for the handbill, and as such reinforces the followers or member belief in the church.

#### Visual meaning of the Handbill signifiers include:

1. The image of Jesus Christ coming out from an enclosure.
2. The lines of lightening; the star-like bright light beside the image of Jesus Christ.
3. The stone-like covering of the enclosure at the left-hand side of Jesus Christ standing on a step.

4. **The picture of pastor W.F. Kumuyi.**
5. **The logo of the Deeper Life Bible Church.**

The colours used in the handbill communicate their own meanings: **'White'** conveys holiness. **'Red'** conveys the blood of Jesus Christ. **'Blue'** connotes peace.

### **The Semiotic Contexts of the handbill**

This handbill displays a mixture of linguistic and pictorial contexts.

#### **Linguistic context**

The linguistics displays different projections in font size and type, which clearly reveals that the material is a handbill.

#### **Pictorial Context**

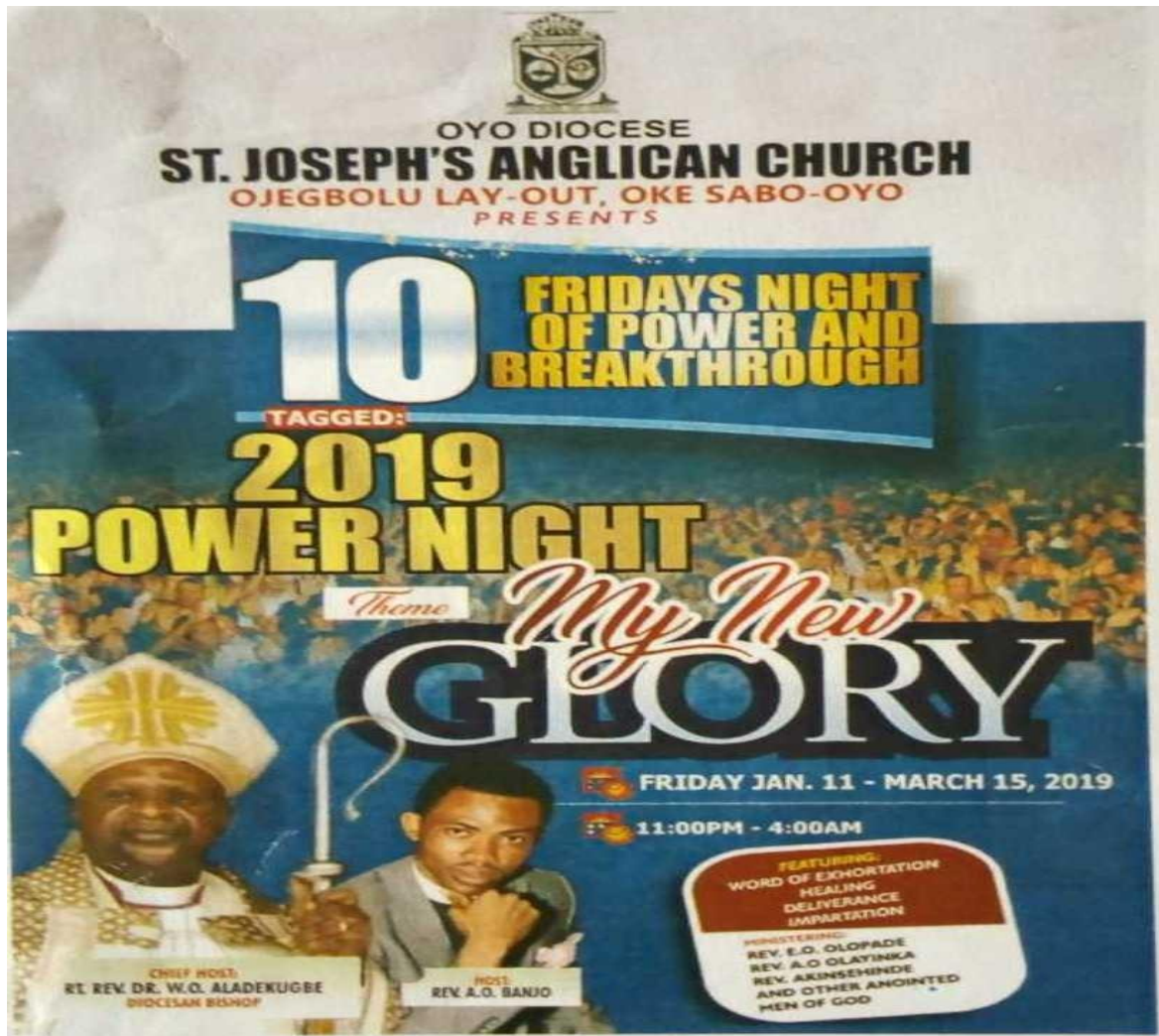
Pictorially, the presence of the Deeper Life Bible Church logo, the picture of Jesus Christ and that of Pastor Kumuyi contextually identifies the datum as a Christian religious handbill.

### **The Mission and Ideology of the Handbill**

The mission of the Deeper Life Bible Church is to empower, teach and train every believer for effective evangelism and to live a life of perpetual victory over sin and temptation. The ideology behind the handbill reflects the mission and vision of the church that produced it for their Easter retreat through the linguistic structuring and visual resources deployed in the handbill.



Billboard 2: St Joseph's Anglican Church, Ojebolu Layout, Oke Sabo, Oyo



## Meaning Signifiers in the Handbill

### Linguistic Meaning Signifiers:

From the above handbill, the church's name is “**St. Joseph’s Anglican Church.**” The main message is “**10 FRIDAYS NIGHT OF POWER AND BREAKTHROUGH.**” TAGGED: “**2019 POWER NIGHT**”, which is a pre-text to the theme: “**My New Glory.**”

The time frame is “Friday, Jan. 11 – March 15; 11.00 pm – 4.00 am.” The venue is implicit as it was not generally stated on the handbill. The handbill contains the features of the programme, namely: “WORD OF EXHORTATION, HEALING, DELIVERANCE AND IMPARTATION,” including the names of the ministering pastors: “REV. E.O OLOPADE, REV.A.O. OLAYINKA. REV. AKINSEHINDE AND OTHER ANOINTED MEN OF GOD.”

The theme has the grammatical form of a group, “**My New Glory.**” The texts are structured into segments and layers, using different typefaces, font sizes, cases (upper and lower), as well as colours to enhance the structure and semantic discrimination. For example, “**10 Friday’s Night ...**” emphasises the number of Fridays the programme will hold. The font sizes and shapes also show different levels of prominence. “**Glory**” with five letters of the alphabet being placed to signify meaning right under the group “My New”, with five (5) letters of the alphabet indicating generally the

importance of the word “**Glory**” to the producers. All the linguistic items are structured into words, groups, clauses, numbers, figures and symbols to project meanings.

### Visual Meaning Signifiers

These include the image of a large number of people raising their hands; the picture of Rev. A. O. Banjo; the picture of Rt Rev. Dr. W.O. Aladekugbe in his full regalia; the logo of the Anglican church at the top of the handbill; and the number “10” written in Arabic numeral. The handbill's use of colours “blue, black, yellow and red” is meant to achieve aesthetics and thematic focus, while the use of a calendar and time smiley indicates the programme's date and time.

### The Semiotic Contexts of the Handbill

This presents a combination of linguistic and pictorial contexts.

**Linguistic context:** The linguistics clearly reveals that the material is a handbill from the representations of the pictures and logo as well as the graphological arrangements of the text in terms of font sizes and types.

**Pictorial context:** Pictorially, the presence of the Bishop's photograph in full regalia and the church logo explicitly presents contextually that the handbill is from an Anglican Church parish.

### The Mission and Ideology of the Handbill

The church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) is committed to pragmatic evangelism. To achieve the ideology of the handbill, the linguist elements and visual resources reveal the biblical view of the handbill as one from an Anglican Church parish.

### Billboard 3: Harvest Fire International Assembly



### Meaning signifiers inherent in the handbill

#### a. Linguistic meaning signifiers:

From the above handbill, the name of the Church is “Harvest Fire International Assembly, Family of God Charismatic Ministries Worldwide Inc.” The main message is “Healing Miracle Crusade.” The time frame is 8th – 10th July, 2018. The crusade venue is “SUPERNATURAL LIFE CATHEDRAL, 22/24 Salvation Road, Araromi, Oyo, 6 PM Daily.” The handbill has an anchorage: “Your change is now;

**Jesus Christ makes you whole!"** The exclamation mark is used to show emphasis as it accompanies the anchorage.

The theme has the grammatical form of a "sentence" with the subject elision "... Rise and Be Healed." The texts on this handbill are structured into a segment of words, groups and clauses, sentences, numbers, figures and symbols organised to project meanings in the handbill.

### **Visual meaning signifiers**

These include:

1. **The image of a wheelchair and a person standing with hands raised, facing a bright light.**
2. **The picture of Bishop Gift Chuks Nnaji.**
3. The use of colours: **"brown, white, grey, black, yellow and red."**
4. The use the symbol "@" to indicate the text word **"at"**
5. The use of the symbol "&" to indicate the text word **"and"**

### **The Semiotic Contexts of the Handbill**

The semiotic contexts in the handbill are representations of linguistics and pictorial context representations.

**Linguistic context:** The linguistic context displays the arrangement of the expressions according to the font sizes and types. The expression **"HEALING MIRACLE CRUSADE"** is all written in capital letters. In contrast, the expression **"Rise & Be Healed"** is a mixture of upper and lower case letters "&" and "@" are symbols representing **"and"** and **"at"** in linguistics.

**Pictorial context:** Pictorially, the presence of the Harvest Fire Internationally Assembly logo, the picture of Bishop Nnaji and the image of a man standing in front of a wheelchair contextually describes the handbill as one for a healing miracle in a church where Bishop Nnaji is the General Overseer.

### **The Mission and Ideology of the Handbill**

Harvest Fire International Assembly's divine mandate is to teach the world the power that can set her free. Therefore, the handbill has been produced to expose to the general public the miracle that the power of God can do. The presence of the wheelchair and the man standing is a bait to attract people with some form of challenges to attend the church programme and a testimony that the church is performing miracles.



**Billboard 4: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Jesus Embassy Zonal and Axis Headquarters, Oyo Province 7**



### Meaning signifiers in the handbill

#### Linguistic Meaning Signifiers

From the above handbill, the name of the church is “the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Jesus Embassy Zonal and Axis Headquarters, Oyo Province 7.” The main message is “Praise Extravaganza.” The time frame is “Friday 26th April 2019, 9.00 pm.” The concert venue is “RCCG Jesus Embassy, Behind Shepherd Field School, Along Odo-Eran Road, Oyo”. The ministering choirs are: “Jesus Embassy Choir and other anointed voices.” The names of the Pastors in Charge, Jesus Embassy Zonal Headquarters, Oyo Province 7 “A. A Adejumbi Ph.D, Pastor in Charge, Oyo Province 7 Pastor Vincent. A. A Abu and PASTOR E.A. ADEBOYE, General Overseer.

The theme has the grammatical form of a “sentence” with subject elision “...SHOWFORTH GOD’S Praise”. The arrangement of the linguistic items also reflects the meaning, as the different font sizes and shapes show diverse levels of prominence and emphasis. For example, “Praise,” with six (6) alphabets, occupies a near-similar time-space with “Extravaganza”, which has twelve (12) alphabets. This shows how important the word “Praise” is to the programme's organisers. In addition, the linguistic arrangement and the analysis of the logo, pictures and images create a textual context for the handbill (either in morphology, syntax or semantics and, as such, reinforce the members’ belief in the church.)

#### The visual meaning signifiers

These include:

1. The image of a saxophone in the word ‘praise’ represents the letter ‘l’.
2. The images of people dancing.
3. The image of another set of people in a smaller box raising their hands.
4. The logo of the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

## 5. The symbol “&” used in the handbill text.

## 6. The semiotic contexts of the handbill

The handbill carries a combination of linguistic and pictorial contexts.

**Linguistic Context:** The linguistic displays different styles in font sizes and types. For example, the word ‘praise’ is given prominence by using the saxophone to represent the letter ‘i’ and ‘praise’ in the expression “SHOWFORTH GOD’S Praise” is used to attract attention through its fanciful graphology.

**Pictorial Context:** Pictorially, the images of dancing people in the background and in the small box and logo contextually relate the datum to a Christian church handbill talking about music comprised of African praise and Western praise.

### The mission and Ideology of the Handbill

The Redeemed Christian church intends to take as many people as possible to heaven. And because many people love music, the production of handbills for a Christian praise extravaganza is one of the avenues to achieve this goal. That is to say, the ideology behind this handbill is workable through both the linguistic structuring and visual resources, which help reveal the biblical view of the church, possible historical information, the philosophy behind the church’s activities, and the personalities behind the church.

### Conclusion

On the whole, and in the final analysis, we have had a discourse study with the main preoccupation of scrutinising communicative signs and symbols both in expressive language use and impressive non-linguistic signs such as drawings, images and colours along with available linguistic discourse resources in a multimodal scholarly approach that sees language and communication as the whole essence of life. Thus, the church has been observed as a unique domain of language use, visually ‘discoursing’ life and godliness. It is, therefore, found that linguistically, Christian handbills are usually expressed through the medium of English, the official language of communication in Nigeria (this, however, depends on the targeted audience. If it is a mixed audience, handbills may be produced in both English and the language of the environment which, in most cases, is the mother language) and sometimes complemented with the language of a particular locality. The expressions are constructed in words, phrases, clauses and sentences.

In the multimodal term, resources such as images, logos of churches, pictures of church leaders and ministering pastors, and pictures of liberated individuals and excited crowds are all used for communicative purposes. The resources also include graphological structures in terms of font sizes and types, which also signify meanings.

Also, regarding semiotic contexts, the handbills displayed a mixture of linguistic and pictorial resources in the contexts of the various churches that have designed and produced them. The ideologies behind the handbills are reflections of the different beliefs, missions, philosophies, tenets and visions behind the constitution of the churches producing the handbills.

This study has revealed that handbills are veritable tools for evangelisation. They are deployed to create awareness of church programmes, invite the general public to such programmes, and attempt to win their souls to God and convert them to become their members. Finally, this study has reinforced the belief that communication is an essential part of human existence, and it is carried out through the use of language, both verbal and non-verbal.

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