

Online Flaming: An Analysis of the Semiotic Elements in Senator Dino Melaye's videos to his perceived Opponents in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper explores elements of flaming in three videos of Senator Dino Melaye (SDM) to his perceived opponents in Nigeria. The study sees semiotic elements in the videos as argumentative tools meant to draw the imaginary audience into his line of reasoning. Applying concepts from multimodality by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), and the persuasive theory by Demirdögen (2010), the study looks at the verbal and the kinesthetic of the videos and how they jointly cast the targets of the videos in a negative light. The aim of the study is to examine how the verbal complements the kinesthetic in casting the targets of the videos in a negative light. The objectives of the study are: to find out the persuasive techniques, mannerisms deployed in SDM's videos to cast the targets in a negative light; to establish how the verbal complements the kinesthetic in casting targets of the videos in a negative light. The justification for the study derives from the belief that meanings projected in the speeches of public figures especially those posted online can easily be taken as the ideal. The videos were downloaded from YouTube and transcribed. Some parts of the verbal aspects which were in the Yoruba language were transliteration into English. Snapshots of the kinesthetic were taken and analysed alongside the verbal. The study found that the eye contact with the imaginary audience, his aggressive body movement helped him to establish ethos—positioning him as being capable of carrying out all the threats in the video; the verbal complements the kinesthetic in a synchronized way, in that the kinesthetic matched each word he said reinforcing the threads and aspersions in the video; there are similar body movement in all the videos, like gesticulating with his hands, dancing to the tune of the song he composed and engaging in acts as if physically fighting with his opponent. The study recommends that, utterances which have the propensity to demean its target especially of public figures should be free of derogatory and abusive items.

Keywords: *kinesthetic, verbal, visual rhetoric, Senator Dino Melaye, imaginary audience*

Introduction

Among one of the things people enjoy in a democratic dispensation is the freedom of speech. The freedom to air one's views must be sacrosanct in a civil society. Free speech should be devoid of any offensive word or behavior capable of casting another in a negative light. The use of demeaning behavior and vulgar language in rhetoric has the propensity to fuel crisis in a polarized nation like Nigeria. This study, examines three videos of Senator Dino Melaye (SDM) with the aim of examining how the verbal complements the kinesthetic in casting the targets of the videos in a negative light. This, put in another way amounts to flaming. Abusive words against someone can demean and lower the morale of the victim. Online flaming comes in various forms; when you make unverifiable claims with the intent to ridicule, it can make the victim to loss face.

Freedom of expression and press grants that every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression including freedom to hold opinion and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference (section 39(1) of the constitution). In other words, freedom of expression

is the right to say whatever you like, whenever you like. However, when this freedom of expression has derogatory elements with the intent to ridicule, it becomes worrisome. Government has an obligation to prohibit the use of flaming devices and incitement. Banning the use of derogatory words or acts, amounts to restrictions which is justified, especially, if they protect specific public interest or the rights and reputations of others. Butler (1997) points out that the uses of derogatory utterances are linguistic acts with the ability to hurt and impose pain. Apart from the use of verbal, flaming in online discourse can also comprise the use of kinesthetic.

Flaming is defined in this article as the use of derogatory items in words and remixed songs complemented with kinesthetic in the videos analysed to cast the target in a negative light. People deploy various means to get their messages across to people. The multimodality theory and persuasive theory are deployed in this study in recognition of the need to explore what persuasive devices that can be used to propagate flaming in visual rhetoric. The identification of flaming elements and the likely impact on the audience in a democratic government where the use of derogatory words in public spaces has officially been banned meet the objective of this study as well as necessitate the adoption of the theories.

Arguments have been raised concerning the opinion that the use of semiotic systems other than the linguistic, characterized by different codes particularly makes it difficult for the analyst to be certain of the intended meaning. We disagree with this view, and aver that visual argument which comprises multiple semiotic systems will complement the verbal and aid the analyst to reveal most if not all of the intended meaning of the text originator; especially if they all jointly reinforce one another in creating meaning.

The view taken in this study is in tandem with the central argument pushed by Kjeldsen (2002) and other scholars that online visual rhetoric which combines verbal, complemented by kinesthetic is more effective in passing across views be it negative or positive, and also, have the propensity to be an effective tool of persuasion. Online platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter and so on have made it easy for the combination of semiotic resources in propagating all kinds of ideas and beliefs. This study focuses on how body movement and gestures reinforce verbal utterances in casting targets of the video analysed in a negative light.

Visual rhetoric is an important part of flaming, especially that found on the internet, where body language and words interweave in order to create meaning. This study is anchored on the premise that argumentation through visual and verbal semiotic elements is more effective in passing across ideas than through mere words. Senator Dino Melaye (SDM) whose videos are analysed in this study is a Nigerian politician, a Senator and was a member of the 8th Nigerian National Assembly, representing Kogi West Senatorial district. SDM is a member of the People's Democratic Party (one of the ruling party in Nigeria). SDM who represented Kogi West Federal Constituency generated much controversy surrounding his personality when he was a Senator. Though some people see SDM as a charlatan lacking in credibility, some others see him as a fearless person capable of challenging persons in constituted authority no matter the person's status or position. Right from Yahaya Bello the governor of his state (Kogi state), Akpabio (former governor of Akwa Ibom state) and President Muhammadu Buhari, he has openly challenged and cast aspersions on his perceived opponents. Part of his style in challenging his perceived opponents is through short videos which comprise remixed songs rendered sometimes in his Yoruba language and sometimes

in English complemented with kinesthetic. This study sees these videos as argumentative strategies by SDM to achieve his aim of casting targets of the video in a negative light.

Previously, rhetoric was on the use of words to persuade, but with the ubiquity of different communication channels enhanced by different social media platforms, rhetoric has broadened to include verbal with other semiotic elements posted on any social media platform. Researchers of visual and multimodal argumentation generally agree that a step of interpreting the image (plus verbal text or other mode) is necessary before the argument can be extracted from a multimodal text (Van den Hoven & Schilperoord; 2002).

Senator Dino Melaye's short hilarious videos are not always just to cast aspersions on his perceived opponents; some do eulogize e.g. the video for his new political party—People's Democratic Party (PDP), released after he cross-carpeted from the All Progressive Congress (APC).

The aim of this study therefore, is to examine how the verbal complements the kinesthetic in casting the targets of the videos in a negative light. This study is an attempt at providing answers to the following questions which capture the objectives of the study:

- What are the persuasive techniques, mannerisms deployed in SDM's videos to cast the targets in a negative light;
- How does the verbal complement the kinesthetic in casting targets of the video in a negative light? and
- What are similar kinesthetic elements in the three videos that assisted SDM to pass across his likely intentions?

Literature Review

Multimodal meaning making device primarily focuses on the combination of various semiotic resources in order to construct or address a specific audience in a certain rhetorical situation; also, the ubiquity of internet platforms and devices has also opened up vistas of communicative channels and modes for people. Some messages or ideas are spread through one means of communication like writing, some others use a combination of semiotic means to do same like the ones analysed in this study.

The study of multimodal argumentation has drawn attention to the role that the situational context and the genre of a given communicative activity play in the production and interpretation of visual arguments, a development which is in line with the growing interest shown also in the context of verbal argumentation (Van Eemeren, 2011; Van Eemeren and Garssen, 2012).

Wenzel (1990) suggests that one may adopt one of three perspectives in the study of argumentation; that is, a logical, a dialectical, or a rhetorical perspective. He notes that all three perspectives are necessary for a comprehensive study of argumentation. Irrespective of whether these three perspectives are understood as mutually exclusive, or as referring to a specific aspect of argumentation, the following is generally accepted to hold: from a logical perspective, the reasoning and inference process from premises to conclusion are central also, an argument can be analysed for its formal properties without necessarily needing to be conveyed in any natural language (Blair, 2012). From a dialectical perspective, the rules and

conventions that govern the procedure of arguing receive the most attention, only the reasonable means of gaining assent are considered; that is, those means which once “deemed true, probable, plausible or otherwise worthy of acceptance are considered to provide a reason(s) for thinking that some claim is true, some attitude is appropriate, some policy is worthy of implementation, or some action is best done” (Blair, 2004).

From a rhetorical perspective, the line of argument which this study towed, the focus lies on the effectiveness of argumentation in a given context and for a given audience. Any means of communication can, in principle, be analysed as an argument upon the condition that it functions to gain assent from an audience like SDM’s short videos, the rhetorical perspective most readily accommodate visual and other non-verbal means of communication as proper objects of analysis. Even though rhetoricians were the first, long before logicians and dialecticians, to acknowledge that arguments can be realised in other modes apart from the visual, the verbal one, Foss (2005) avers that there is no longer doubts as to whether visual and other non-verbal artefacts should count as an object of rhetorical analysis, as also the short videos analysed in this study.

Taiwo (2012) investigates the discursive forms and functions of flaming in two most popular Nigerian discussion forums: Nairaland and Nigerian Village Square. The data was taken from a 750,000 word corpus of Nigerian online discussion forum compiled between 2006 and 2009. Findings of the study show that the kind of topic and the personalities in the news determine participants' flaming behavior; that flaming occurred more in the context of political topics and participants frequently switched to the Nigerian Pidgin or any of the indigenous languages when expressing flaming behaviour. On the direction of flaming, 76 (56.7%) of the flames were directed at members, while 58 (43.3%) were directed at others. Name-calling and personality attack were the predominant flaming forms and political threads generate more flames than other kinds of thread. The study concludes that despite being branded as an impolite behaviour, flaming has become an exciting way for the youths to use the public sphere to influence political action in Nigeria.

Of late, researchers have begun to study persuasion in social media communication from a rhetorical perspective – and pathos was found to predominate. For instance, Fife (2010) found appeals to pathos in most Facebook profiles, that is, most face book profiles contain emotion rousing elements meant to persuade. Higgins & Walker (2012) point out that some examples of persuasive techniques to establish the credibility of the speaker are ingratiation, expertise, self-criticism, inclination to succeed, and consistency.

Blair (2015) notes that the verbal is to be understood as a ‘placeholder’ for the visual, not a ‘translation’ of it: ‘verbal reconstruction rarely captures all that is expressed in the visual argument, but is a placeholder for it and provides us with a reference for the use in evaluating the cogency of the visual argument’. Rather than seeking to place “visual argument” or “visual rhetoric” under a single perspective on the study of argumentation, we propose instead to begin by acknowledging that communication is multimodal, in the sense that, more often than not, messages are communicated by a combination of semiotic modes (Kress, 2010; Klug & Stöckl, 2016). Naksawat, Akkakoson, and Loi (2016) revealed that the Nigerian 419 scammers exploited basic human desires and needs, trust and appealing to pity (pathos) in order to deceive recipients into complying.

Kjeldsen (2016) studied visual argumentation and says that the verbal means do not actually suffice to capture the rich information communicated by images to an audience. Probably, if SDM had used only verbal in the videos, they may not have been as dramatic as they are. The kinesthetic, the remixed songs all jointly serve to captivate the viewer and the listener. Ironically, as Godden (2017, p. 409) remarks, “sometimes these supposed differences in content are used to support the skeptical claim that visuals lack argumentatively normative properties, while at other times these same differences are used to argue for the enthusiastic claim that visuals can be more effective as argumentative and persuasive devices” especially to ideologies.

The use of flaming devices is often classified based on either the intention behind the language use (Waldron, 2012) or its effect (Weber, 2009). The definition presented in this article emphasizes the potential effect of combination of semiotic resources on its audience; that is, the listeners of SDM’s videos. It is also important to emphasize in this article the possible impact of flaming devices in order to point out that language users are not only responsible for their utterances, but also for how their utterances may be perceived, and what actions the utterances may inspire.

Online flaming is not limited to language use that exclusively spreads the feeling of hatred towards a person or a group of people. It includes the use of kinesthetic that complements the verbal which has remixed songs. The persuasive devices in online flaming are not limited to *pathos* argumentation that targets the negative emotions of the audience; it is also expressed through *ethos* and *logos*. To the best of my knowledge there has not been any work that I know of that has focused on flaming in online videos with the aim of examining how the verbal and kinesthetic jointly pass across the intention of the sender. Also, the present work uses the multimodality theory complemented with the persuasive theory to establish the aim of the study, these immediately sets this work apart from others.

Theoretical thrust

This study adopts Multimodality theory by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and the Persuasive theoretical concept by Demirdöğen (2010). Multimodality is a theory of communication and social semiotics. It describes communication practices in terms of the textual, aural, and visual resources used to create meaning. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996:28), argue that in multimodal texts, meanings are assigned to all of the modes deployed, and that a unified interpretation makes a cohesive argument. The assemble of the modes used in a single act of communication, contributes to how multimodality affects different rhetorical situations, and increases the ways the audience receives the idea or view of the message sender. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996:157) explain further that, “semiotic modes have different potential, so that they afford different kinds of possibilities of human expression and engagement with the world, and through this differential engagement with the world, they facilitate differential possibilities of development”. In other words, semiotic modes have particular affordances that offer potential and limitations for communication and representation.

In addition to potential and limitations, modal affordances also impact the level of success the rhetorical appeals of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* have on readers/viewers. Kress and van Leeuwen, (1996: 135–53) say that the resource of point of view allows people, places and things to be depicted from above or below (or at eye-level), and from the front, the side or the

back. Point of view also creates a meaning potential and allows analysts to describe the kinds of meaning that aid image producers and viewers to create the kinds of symbolic relations between image producers/viewers and the people, places or things encoded in the visual resources. Images at eye-level according to Kress and van Leeuwen, (1996) create a relation of symbolic equality. In the case of horizontal angle, the relation will be one of involvement with, or detachment from, what is represented. Frontally allows the creation of maximum involvement. The viewer is directly confronted with what is in the picture. Multimodality theory is relevant to this study for the fact that it explains how pictures and moving images aside from oral speech encode great meaning potential which have the propensity to cue imaginary viewers into imbibing the messages in the visual display.

Demirdöğen (2010) notes that studying *the notions of ethos, logos and pathos* to can illuminate the efficiency of the speech. Persuasion is used in spoken and written communication to convince the audience to take appropriate actions or to support specific viewpoints. Demirdöğen (2010) firmly believes that pathos (emotion), logos (reason) and ethos (credibility) as means of persuasion. Previously, persuasive devices was focused on the study of speeches or discourse, but in contemporary times, it has broadened in scope to include the study of any kind of semiotic elements through which positive and negative meanings can be expressed. Persuasion theory has been chosen because it focuses on how people advertently and inadvertently make people change their opinion through what they see and hear.

Ethos, pathos and logos of persuasive elements in verbal and visual resources

Demirdöğen (2010) points out that logos appeal to reason which makes the “clarity and integrity of the argument” very important. Logos is a form of appeal that targets the audience’s reasoning. This form of appeal is characterised by arguments and reasoning that show what is true and untrue or probable or improbable. The probative force may be real or apparent. In flaming discourse, the probative force is mostly not factual, because it is often based on untruths, exaggerations and over-generalisations. In a rhetorical analysis, the appeal to logos can be identified from the use of argumentation, logic, warrants/justification, claims, data, and evidence/examples.

According to Demirdöğen (2010), pathos is an emotional appeal and involves “putting the audience into a certain frame of mind”. Gabrielsen & Christiansen (2010) reinforce Demirdöğen’s stand by saying that pathos persuades by using guilt, greed, pity and humour anger, insult, empathy, fear and confusion.” Higgins & Walker (2012) add that in an emotional appeal, the speaker shows identification with the “needs, values and desires of the audience. This is similar to Connors (1979) position that in a rhetorical analysis, appeal to preliminary ethos may be indicated by references to the intelligence, character, and goodwill of the person.

Appeal to ethos can take a negative form, such as reverse accusation, denial and negation when the purpose is to complain. Demirdöğen (2010) points out that ethos, also known as ethical appeal, is an appeal to the personal character of the speaker. Higgins & Walker (2012) reiterate this point as they aver that ethos refers to the “persona, or projected character of a speaker/communicator, including their credibility and trustworthiness”. Mshvenieradze (2013) underscores the importance of analyzing personal pronouns and other linguistic markers to reveal the ethos of the speakers. The singular first person pronoun reveals the persona of the speaker, whereas the plural first person pronoun shows attempts to identify

with the audience. These pronoun classifications are all visible in the videos analysed. A distinction is made between preliminary ethos (person-specific) and discourse (situation-specific) ethos:

According to Amossy (2000, p. 63, as cited in Mshvenieradze, 2013, p. 1940)

there are two types of Ethos: Preliminary Ethos and Discourse Ethos. Preliminary Ethos is the overall background knowledge the audience has about the speaker. Speakers often use the positive preliminary ethos to their advantage during a discourse. Negative preliminary ethos are assuaged through --- But in case if the Preliminary Ethos is negative the speaker does his/her best to revoke such an impression of people on him/her. As to the Discourse Ethos, it is the Ethos created immediately for the specific situation and during the discourse.

Methodology

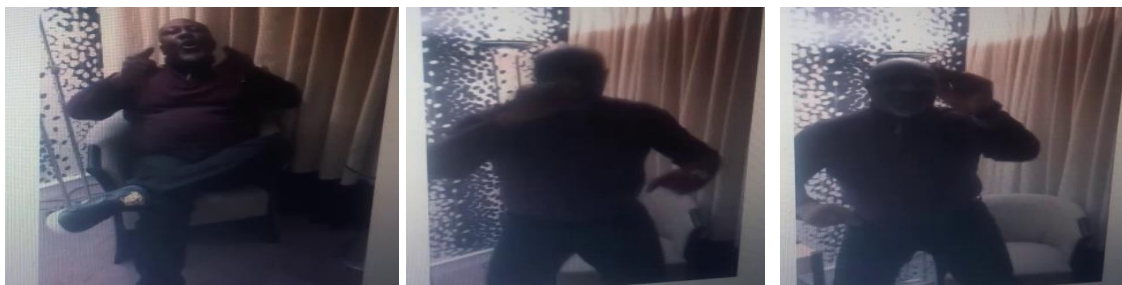
The data for this study are three recorded videos by SDM directed to his perceived opponents. The videos which constitute the data for this study were downloaded from the Instagram page of SDM and, transcribed into written text. After watching the videos, it was discovered that the videos contents had two segments: the beginning of the video has the verbal introduction followed by the part that has remixed songs. The verbal of the videos are in English and Yoruba. The transcribed verbal in English and Yoruba, and the kinesthetic all appear in a table with three columns. The original words in the Yoruba language appeared on the left hand side of the table, followed by the English transliteration, then the kinesthetic corresponding to the verbal described in the last column (all of these are at the appendix). The persuasive rhetorical elements of ethos, pathos, and logos and the multimodality concept of 'demand' are adapted as the instrument in analysing the videos. Video one is titled 'Ajeku Iya', directed to Yahaya Bello the governor of Kogi state. It is presented in English and Yoruba. The introduction is in English while the song is in Yoruba. Video two also directed to Yahaya Bello has the introduction in Pidgin, then the song in Yoruba. Video three directed to President Muhammadu Buhari is about poverty in Nigeria. Like others, the introduction is in English and the song in Yoruba. The visuals in form of snapshots of the videos are also presented to enhance the analysis.

Analysis

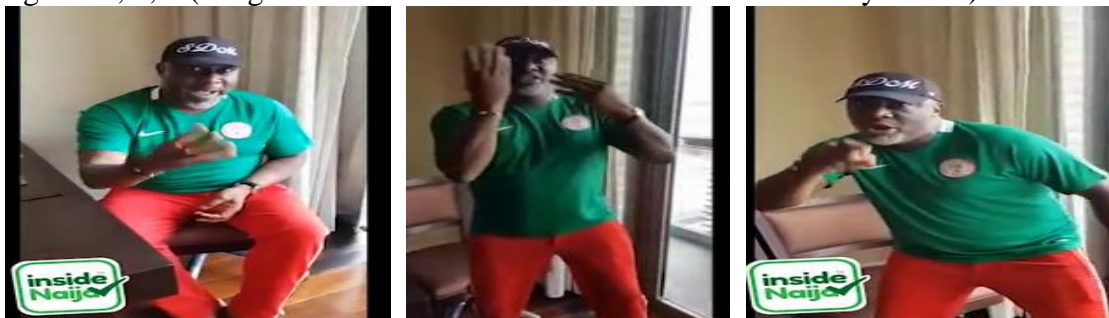
The similar visual/verbal features common to all the videos and differing visual/verbal features are presented in turns here, the verbal analysis comes after the visual:

Similar visual and verbal features in the videos

Point of view has meaning potential which allows analysts to describe the kinds of meaning they will allow image producers and viewers to create, in this case, the kinds of symbolic relations between image producers/viewers and the people, places or things is determined in the visual resources. In the visuals as well as the verbal, SDM maintains eye contact with the imaginary audience as can be seen in the visuals of all the videos below:



Figures 1, 2, 3 (images from the video 1 directed to Governor Yahaya Bello)



Figures 4, 5, 6 (images from the video 2 directed to Governor Yahaya Bello)



Figures 7, 8, 9 (images from the video 3 directed to President Muhammadu Buhari)

In the visuals, one can see similar kinesthetic as a way of trying to establish ethos, pathos and logos with the imaginary audience. In all the visuals, SDM establishes eye contact with the audience, thus creating what Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) refer to as 'demand'. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), images set at eye level has a relation of symbolic equality. In other words, SDM creates a relation of involvement with the imaginary audience, the viewer is directly confronted with the acts in the video, thus inviting the imaginary audience to reason with him. One can see rigorous dramatic acts as displayed in the snapshots. He reinforces the threats he makes verbally with his gestures. This way he seems to show his connectivity with the imaginary audience. Setting the videos at a level very close to the screen seems to help him also to achieve closeness to the audience, and invite the audience to reason with him.

Verbally, SDM established ethos in the introductory part of the video by introducing the primary target of the video, through the use of the first person pronoun; 'he', this likely is in order to awaken the curiosity of the hearer of the video to want to know who the 'he' is; as he switches to himself through the use of 'I', he further reinforces the ethos as the 'he' and I' sets up a sort of contrast. As he narrates further, he gradually unveils his mind-set towards the 'he'. By mentioning that Yahaya Bello has 'committed electoral fraud' he appeals to the

audience's negative emotions, he reinforced the appeal by further mentioning by implication that Yahaya Bello 'is awaiting trial' and obviously will soon go to prison'.

These expressions can be categorized as flaming elements, because they are derogatory terms, tying-in with the definition of flaming in this study, they are abusive words against Yahaya Bello. He reinforced these flaming elements by juxtaposing them with the dream he allegedly had about 'Yahaya Bello in prison uniform specially decorated with wonderful embroidery', this is logos, that is, argument based on untruths and over-generalization. In the second video, SDM established ethos as he uses a punchy pidgin introduction to captivate the audience 'make una come see ooo', this, in an ordinary man's parlance is a shouting phrase inviting the audience. It is also a rhetorical strategy that communicates a sense of urgency. By using 'una' which is 'you' in Standard English singular or plural, but in this case, the una is the plural 'you' further strengthening the ethos inviting the imaginary audience. He appeals to the emotion of the audience by repeating his name twice to sort of register it in the minds of his audience that he is not capable of the accusations leveled against him (say Dino carry money give thugs ...). He further exonerates himself (pathos) through negating the allegations using linguistic elements from Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa (the three major Nigerian languages). The phrase 'but make I tell una ooo' is a furthering of his ethos and a cue signal for the audience to listen and watch the oncoming message.

Senator Dino Melaye appeals to ethos in his song as he makes use of the first person pronoun, 'I' referring to himself and 'una' referring to the imaginary audience and inviting the imaginary audience to listen to his defense of the allegations leveled against him. To strengthen his ethos, he burst into a song complemented by corresponding body movement and gestures sitting and suddenly standing. He invites the imaginary audience through the phrase 'we know' seemingly believing that the introduction will act as cues for the audience to reason with him without questioning on the aspersions cast on Yahaya Bello. He described the allegation by the said 'them' (them say) in the introduction as a mere threat, adding that "the venom of a viper does nothing to the back of a tortoise". SDM established pathos through his use of pidgin (the language of communication of the common man) in the introduction before switching to Yoruba.

The third video opens with the introductory ethos of SDM being a serving Senator of the Federal republic of Nigeria. He furthers the ethos through a collective method of argumentation, inviting the imaginary audience "(let us) say no to poverty", "let us say no to hunger", adopting parallelised method of idea presentation. He furthers the ethos by boldly calling on the imaginary audience to collectively vote out President Muhammadu Buhari. Applying logos, he furthers his argument through saying that President Muhammadu Buhari's exit is the only way to end hunger and poverty. Thus reminding the listeners of information they can easily miss out, that President Muhammadu Buhari is responsible for poverty. This information is misleading, SDM did not provide any proof that poverty in the land will end with President Muhammadu Buhari's exit.

By saying "let us" he presents himself as part of the masses who are facing poverty; so, he does not really need much argumentation to support that view. This way, he shows his interests align with those of the masses. If you are able to help the audience feel that their interests are aligned with yours, they will be more open and receptive to your messages. By saying Buhari ló mú garri wón (meaning Buhari made garri to be expensive), garri belongs to everybody—the staple food for the common man, this way, he appeals to the audience's

logic, garri has been chased away out of the reach of the common man. The only way to remedy the situation is through chasing away the person responsible for the scarcity of the commodity. He used statistics to appeal to the emotion and reasoning of the audience--the three basic staple foods in Nigeria. The use of the collective pronoun (plural) reiterates Higgins and Walker (2012) view that speakers can establish their authority by appealing to their similarities with their audience or by showing deference or respect for the rights and feelings of the audience.

Senator Dino Melaye with the songs in the video, in order to make meaning of the multimodal presentation, cues the audience to actively transform the images into specific pieces of argumentation and thus form a main line of reasoning. Through questioning and answering method of argumentation, he reiterates the flaming elements made in the earlier part of the song, ostensibly with the belief that the audience will sing along with him since it is a popular Yoruba song he remixed (Kíló mú tómi wa ourere lo mú tómi wa ...). He deployed the rhythm and sound pattern of the popular song in his own song. The imaginary audience is implicitly encouraged to sing along with him. SDM subtly foregrounds the harsh economic condition of Nigeria under the present Muhammadu Buhari's led government through stating the high rise in the prices of staple food invariably leading to scarcity of commodities. The imaginary audience listening to the claims in the videos is explicitly invited to imbibe the claims without verification. For SDM, being a senator close to the government assumed to have more knowledge. In all the videos, one can see similar aggressive body movement ostensibly reinforcing his verbal utterances and helping him to establish himself.

Differing visual/verbal features in the videos



Figures 10, 11, 12 (images from the video 1 directed to Governor Yahaya Bello)



Figures 13, 14, 15 (images from the video 2 directed to Governor Yahaya Bello)



Figures 16, 17, 18 (images from the video 3 directed to President Muhammadu Buhari)

The differing verbal and thematic focus is also reinforced in the different body movement to reinforce the verbal. In the visuals above, one can see some displays which set each video apart. In figures 10, he is seen with hands akimbo, to reinforce the verbal questioning of Yahaya Bello; in figure 11, he demonstrates with his hands close to his mouth ‘...to senuwuye’ meaning, Yahaya Bello that talks carelessly. The kinesthetic of persistent pointing to the camera to an imaginary Yahaya Bello is likened to the physical pointing of one’s opponent in real life, this reinforced the verbal. He displayed all the mannerisms of someone in a verbal encounter with an opponent. In figure 12, the kinesthetic of an imaginary cut in the air with his right hand, reinforces what is said in the verbal, of cutting off of Governor Yahaya Bello’s head. The highpoint of the dramatic video ends with him punching into the air to an imaginary Yahaya Bello. The ethos element in the song, ‘the person whose head had been cut off and still is wagging his tongue’, expresses a condescending attitude— describing an adult with demeaning elements ‘wagging his tongue’. The derogatory remarks are further heightened by going to the extreme to further state that Yahaya Bello will suffer till death. To further demean Bello, he said that Bello is too small for him to beat and is standing on the way. The song when juxtaposed with the introduction sets up a seemingly reasonable argument why Governor Yahaya Bello whom SDM alleged to have committed electoral fraud deserves all the aspersions cast on him.

In figure 13, he raises his two hands above his head and forcefully pushes them out to reinforce the verbal of ‘tufiakwa’. ‘Tufiakwa’ is an igbo word to describe what is abominable. He also used the Hausa word, ‘Allah Kiaye’ and Yoruba ‘Oloun maje’ to reinforce the verbal that he is not capable of carrying out the allegations which he has been accused of. Senator Dino Melaye’s action in figures 14 and 15 of by pulling down his lower eyelids which is not performed in other videos reinforces all the negative aspersions in the introduction and in the song; through this act, he established pathos. The pulling down of his eyelids could also mean his ‘defeat’ of Governor Yahaya Bello. These actions according to the multimodality theory are demands (cue kinesthetic) from the sender of the message to the imaginary audience. His actions in figures 16, 17, and 18 are different from those in the two previous videos. In the two videos directed to governor Yahaya Bello, he sat down at the beginning of both and gets up in the middle do demonstrate his song, but in this video, he stood all through establishing very close contact with the screen as he makes his allegations against President Muhammadu Buhari. There was also no dramatic close in this video as in the previous ones. Instead, he dances back and forth probably to establish more contact with his viewers and to drive more the ideas in the verbal.

Discussion and Findings

First, in all the videos, SDM established preliminary ethos by being a Senator of the Federal republic of Nigeria that launches him into the view of the audience, probably if the videos

were posted online by an ordinary person, it may not have much weight or receive much attention as it did with SDM. He further reinforced the appeal through making use of the personal pronouns to refer to himself.

SDM uses humour quite effectively to put his audience in a positive frame of mind. The same sound lyrics of similar sounds seem to help SDM to actively get to the common man. By deploying known lyrics, he achieves more ontological rhetorical power—I suggest—compared with the use of only pure verbal argumentation. Probably if he had written the verbal contents of the video and posted it on any social media platform, it would not generate the same kind of humour the videos have generated. He deployed the sound lyrics of the talking drum—gangan. The gangan is also known as the ‘talking drum’, plays without words. It is used by the Yorubas for messages, praise singing and for entertainment in most occasions, but in this case it is deployed in a derogatory manner. SDM’s objective could be framed as one of affectiveness. He is attempting not to teach his audience new facts, or change what they believe, for the most part, but rather to change how they feel about something. Affective learning, when it is successful, typically has conative consequences; that is, when we succeed in changing the emotions, attitudes or values of an audience, they typically feel driven to do something as a result.

In all the videos, SDM opened with introductory ethos, by inviting the listener through explanation to follow his line of reasoning and argument. Some verbal utterances and body movement seem to strongly encourage the imaginary viewer to see the targets of the videos in the same negative light which SDM has portrayed them. The visuals are set at eye levels for the audience. By using either questioning or wondering, the complainer distances himself/herself from the action. Argumentative discourse may use linguistic links such as initially, later and finally (Mshvenieradze, 2013). By using the personal pronoun plural deictic “we”, SDM shows he shares in the feelings and position of the audience. Images have a much greater chances of bringing about affective change than words. Although the use of digital tools and visuals may be new objects of study in argumentation studies, the users of new modes of argumentation would likely crafting intricate logical arguments that would have virtually a higher probability of changing the way audiences feel and thus more likely to follow the sender’s line of argument.

In the introductory part of video three, he adopted parallelized ideas in the videos, to reinforce the argument he is pushing. The three persuasive tools function argumentatively by directing the viewer’s attention towards certain elements and offering patterns of reasoning. He deployed the question and answer method of argumentation, as he poses questions and answers them to cue the imaginary audience into reasoning with his line of argument. The study found that: the eye contact with the imaginary audience helped him to establish ethos, his aggressive body movement positions him as a strong person capable of carrying out the threats in the video; the verbal complements the kinesthetic in a synchronized way, in that the kinesthetic matched each word he said reinforcing the threads and aspersions in the video; there are similar body movement in all the videos, like gesticulating with his hands, dancing to the tune of the song he composed and engaging in acts as if physically fighting with his opponent.

Conclusion

The ubiquity of online platforms helps messages of whatever forms especially flaming to spread fast. Deploying concepts from multimodality, and the persuasive theory, this study has been able to highlight how visual devices in the form of kinesthetic complement verbal in passing across a sender's flaming aims. Persuasive devices especially in online platforms manifests in different ways with the ubiquity of multi-layered channels of communication, only through a thorough analysis can the multi-layered meaning in combinations of semiotic elements be disemboweled. SDM's deployments of the lyrics of common songs people are already familiar with in his dramatic monologue are also, I contend, among the most rhetorically effective kind of argumentation of persuasion.

The short videos of SDM's to some extent can be said to have achieved the persuasive function which he wanted; but at another level, the logos elements in the videos are based on unverifiable claims which seem to render the threats contained in the videos less effective. Each one mode deployed in the videos provides an essential link to the audience, persuading the audience to accept the message he is trying to express, and in turn, support the position he has established in the videos. He looks directly in the camera as he speaks. These clues all add up to the overall impression of SDM's ethos. SDM's videos are not mere illustrations they have persuasive functions and are an integral part of his reasoning, and they function as visual argumentative strategies.

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Dino Melaye denies gun running, lambasts Yahaya Bello
March 21, 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLHIDetAOkg>

See section 39(1), Constitution, Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as Amended in 2011

APPENDIX

Transliteration of some online videos posted by Senator Dino Melaye

Transliteration: Video 1

<p>INTRODUCTION (sitting): He is threatening that many members of the national assembly will eh, many members of the national assembly rather will not return in 2019, I begin to ask myself em why will any electoral mobile character sound and say speak like that, and if anyone is to talk like that, not a man that has committed electoral fraud who is awaiting trial and obviously will soon go to prison; and I had a dream recently where I saw Yahaya Bello in prison uniform specially decorated with wonderful embroidery ah em so – Yahaya Bello is already threatening people not to come back, one, he is not a voter in Kogi state, two, he cannot contest election in Kogi state in 2019, and yet, he is threatening that many members of the National Assembly will not return in 2019. That is laughable but what I want to say is, people like that have been taken care of by proverbial Yoruba songs; and the best one to give at this point in time is</p> <p>SONG (standing): kiló tú kù ti ó sọ Yahaya, kiló tú kù ti ó sọ, ẹni ta bẹ lórí tó ń senu wúyẹ, kiló tú kù ti ó sọ Yahaya, kiló tú kù ti ó sọ? ẹni ta bẹ lórí tó ń senu wúyẹ, kiló tú kù ti ó sọ? And finally Yahaya Bello àjẹkún iyà ní ó jẹ, àjẹkún iyà ní ó jẹ, ẹni tí ò tóninọ tí ń dènọdeni, àjẹkún iyà ní ó jẹjẹjẹ (he punches into the air with his right fist as he concludes)</p>		
YORUBA (SONG)	ENGLISH	Kinesthesia
kiló tú kù ti ó sọ Yahaya	What is remaining that you have not said? Yahaya!	Standing for emphasis and pointing with his two hands to the camera to an imaginary Yahaya Bello
kiló tú kù ti ó sọ	What is remaining that you have not said?	Dancing and demonstrating with his two hands
ẹni ta bẹ lórí tó ń senu wúyẹ	the person whose head has been cut off and is still wagging his tongue	Dancing and demonstrating with his two hands
kiló tú kù ti ó sọ Yahaya, kiló tú kù ti ó sọ	What is remaining that you have not said? Yahaya! What is remaining that you have not said?	Dancing with his two hands on his waist
ẹni ta bẹ lórí tó ń senu wúyẹ	the person whose head has been cut off and is still wagging his tongue	Dancing and demonstrating cutting off of head with his right hand
kiló tú kù ti ó sọ	What is remaining that you have not said?	Dancing and demonstrating with one hand pointing persistently with his right hand
àjẹkún iyà ní ó jẹ, àjẹkún iyà ní ó jẹ, ẹni tí ò tóninọ tí ń dènọdeni, àjẹkún iyà ní ó jẹ.	He will suffer till death, he will suffer till death this person who is too small for me to beat is standing on the way	Dancing and demonstrating boxing of is opponent, rounds off as he punches into the air with his right hand, a seeming demonstration of punching of Yahaya Bello

Transliteration Video 2

<p>INTRODUCTION: Make una come hear tori ooo, say Dino carry money give thug say make he go buy gun tufiakwa, them say Dino carry money give thug carry gun give thug say make them go they prepare for 2019, Oloun maje, them say me meet them for airport road Allah kiaye. My brother, the venom of a viper cannot do anything to the back of a tortoise, omo Melaye tilor, I don wakaa, but make i tell una ooo, Yahaya Bello, do you know Yahaya Bello</p> <p>SONG: do you know Yahaya Bello ma shẹwọn lẹhin jọba? (twice), I know Yahaya Bello ma shewo lehin joba. Do you know TYBello ma ma shẹwọn lẹhin jọba? (standing to dance). We know TYBello ma shẹwọn lẹhin jọba? Iwo Yahaya! You you Yahaya. Kiló tú kù ti ó sọ (twice) Ẹni tí mo bẹ lórí tó ń senu wúyẹ, Kiló tú kù ti ó sọ. Àjẹkún iyà ní ó jẹ, Yahaya Bello! Àjẹkún iyà ní ó jẹ (mumbled Ẹni tí mo bẹ lórí tó ń senu wúyẹ Kiló tú kù ti ó sọ, ntoor)</p>		
YORUBA	ENGLISH	Kinesthesia
Ọmọ Melaye ti lọ!	Melaye's son has moved on!	(sitting) raised his hand to reinforce the act of escaping

Do you know Yahaya Bello ma shẹwọn lẹhin joba? (twice)	Do you know that Yahaya Bello will go to jail after his tenure? (twice)	(sitting) pointing with one hand
We know TY Bello ma shẹwọn lẹhin joba.	We know that Yahaya Bello will go to jail after his tenure	
I know Yahaya Bello ma shẹwọn lẹhin joba.	I know that Yahaya Bello will go to jail after his tenure	
Kíló tú kù ti ó sọ	What else is there that he has not said	
Eni tí mo bẹ lórí tó n senu wúyẹ	The person whose head I have cut off and is still wagging his tongue	Points to himself demonstrating with one hand to reinforce the verbal of cutting of Yahaya Bello's head, at the same time pouting and wagging his mouth demonstrating the verbal
Kíló tú kù ti ó sọ	What else is there that you have not said?	
Àjẹkún iyà ní ó jẹ	He will suffer till death	Pointing to the camera to an imaginary Yahaya Bello, pulling down his lower eyelids in mockery of Yahaya Bello

Transliteration Video 3

<p>INTRODUCTION: There is poverty in the land, let us say no to poverty, let us say no to hunger by voting out President Muhammadu Buhari, that is the only way to end hunger, that is the only way to end poverty. Please Nigerians vote out the APC and that is the only way, these pretentious people these deceptive people can understand that we know that they are responsible for hunger:</p> <p>SONG: Kíló mú garri wọn? Buhari ló mú garri wọn. Kíló mú garri wọn? Buhari ló mú garri wọn. Ó lé iyán wọ gbó. Ó lé ẹbà wọ lé. Ó wá joba lórí iresi. Buhari ló mú garri wọn. Àbí bẹẹ kọọ o? Aaa bẹẹ nọọ ni.</p>		
Yoruba	English transliteration	Kinesthesia
Kíló mú garri wọn?	What made garri to be expensive?	Moves backward and suddenly forward as he starts dancing, demonstrating with his two hands
Buhari ló mú garri wọn.	Buhari made garri to be expensive	Moves backward and suddenly forward as he starts dancing, demonstrating with his two hands
Kíló mú garri wọn?	What made garri to be expensive?	Dancing moving backwards and forward
Buhari ló mú garri wọn.	Buhari made garri to be expensive	Dancing moving backwards and forward
Ó lé iyán wọ gbó.	He drove pounded yam into the bush	Dancing moving backwards and forward
Ó lé ẹbà wọ lé.	He drove eba into the ground	Dancing moving backwards and forward, points to the ground to reinforce the verbal of eba being drove inside the soil
Ó wá joba lórí iresi.	He now sat on rice and became king	Dancing moving backwards and forward demonstrating with one hand
Buhari ló mú garri wọn.	Buhari made garri to be expensive	Dancing moving backwards and forward
Àbí bẹẹ kọọ o?	Or is it not so?	Dancing moving backwards and forward demonstrating alternately with both hands
Aaa bẹẹ nọọ ni.	Yes, it is so	Dancing moving backwards and forward demonstrating alternately with both hands