

Linguistic analysis on the construction of satire in Nigerian political cartoons : The example of newspaper cartoons.

Abstract

Political cartoons constitute a form of media text whose verbal and visual elements have made them an interesting research field across academic disciplines. The 21st century has witnessed a considerable research on political cartoons. This increasing research interest indicates that political cartoons have successfully constituted a distinct multimodal genre within media discourses. Political cartoons are used to express opinions, construct valuable arguments and provide specific knowledge on contemporary social issues. However, the analysis of the cartoons from linguistic perspectives remains under-researched. This paper aims at contributing to the knowledge of political cartoon research by analyzing the linguistic elements used in the cartoon written texts to illustrate how Nigerian cartoonists specifically use language to construct satire as a means that could be used perhaps to initiate positive social and political reforms in Nigeria. The method of analysis used in this paper as its framework of analysis, comprises of perceptual theory of satire and linguistic analytical framework within the realm of critical discourse analysis. Semiotic discussion on semiotic modes of the cartoons has also been incorporated in the analysis. From the findings of the study, a distinct lexical topology for identifying lexical items and their distribution in the cartoon written texts has been developed. The topology comprises of five items as follows: loan word, coinage, word class, denotation and connotation. Additionally, Nigerian cartoonists use interjections frequently in the cartoon written texts to create satirical impressions about political leaders, because interjections are used to express strong emotions or feelings. Given the linguistic and nonlinguistic elements contained in the cartoon texts, cartoons could be harnessed to provide additional insights on how language is specifically used in media discourse.

Keyword: Linguistic analysis; Political cartoons; Satire; Newspapers; Genre; Media discourse.