



A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS POSTERS IN GHANA

Benjamin Sennie

Department of Akan-Nzema, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

Email: bensen1991@hotmail.com

Abstract

This paper focused on the various roles multimodal posters play in the three major religions in Ghana i.e. Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religion, and also tried to investigate how these multimodal posters influence the lives of the general public. The researcher used primary sources to gather the data. Photographs of religion related posters were taken from church, shrine, mosque etc. premises or roadsides. Using purposive sampling the researcher employed semi-structured interview as the data collection strategy. This study works within the framework of Kress (2011) Multimodal Discourse Analysis theory; thus, it was used to analyze the multimodal posters employed by three religions in Ghana. The study revealed that posters involving multimodal resources specifically depicted the kind of faith or religion, and also performed symbolic functions which relate to persons differently based on their experiences. Again, this paper revealed that multimodal posters served as reinforcers, reminders and source of steadfastness in the faith. The research also showed how these posters influence the lives of the general public, such that symbolic information is shared, and also serve as a marketing tool for the religious denominations.

Subject Area is Sociolinguistics.

Keywords: Linguistic Landscape, Multimodality, Semiotic Resource, Religion, Ghana

1. Introduction

This paper is within the domain of Linguistic Landscape. Lamidi (2017) posits that contact linguistics is the study of relations between languages in contact and outcomes thereof. This possibly means when two or more languages meet, the ripple linguistic consequences cannot always be predicted. According to Myers-Scotton (2002) as cited in Lamidi (2017, p.105), contact linguistics examines many instances of language contact, the phenomena that emerge, and the interaction of linguistic and environmental factors in determining these outcomes.

With the rapid advance of science and technology, the ways of human communication have changed greatly. We live in an increasingly visual culture. Images, colour and as well as other non-verbal tools are no longer used mainly to entertain and illustrate, rather, they are becoming significant in communicating and meaning-making. Today people are exposed to texts with sophisticated visual imagery, unconventional story patterns, intricate design components, and distinctive forms more frequently (Goldstone, 2004; Kress, 2003; Serafini, 2011). This brings into bare the concept of multimodality. Adami (2017) argues that texts and communication events that include different semiotic resources or modes, such as still and moving images, voice writing, layout, gesture, and/or proxemics, are referred to as multimodal. The present paper sought to examine the various roles multimodal posters play in the daily or weekly activities of these religions and explore how impactful these strategies are to members of the Ghanaian society.

Much scholarly work has been done on the various use of multimodality under the broad domain of linguistic landscape. Studies such as the following have contributed to literature on the current topic under discussion: Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study (Landry & Bourhis, 2013); Multimodal Code-pairing and Switching of Visual-verbal Texts in Selected Nigerian Stand-up Comedy Performances (Lamidi, 2017); Both Aning (2021); Amoakwah and Mensah (2022) have analyzed the roles of multimodal posters in Ghana Health Service related to COVID-19 fight; Nyame (2020, unpublished) has researched on multimodal strategies in some alcohol advertisement in Ghana. However, it appears little has been worked on the roles multimodal posters play in religion in Ghana. This study will look into the use of textual and semiotic modes to influence and shape the reader's perception of the visuals. These diverse multimodal posters as a strategy will be subjected to a qualitative analysis using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress, 2011) as a theoretical framework. The study examines both textual and visual approaches of Christian, Islamic and Traditional posters used at vantage points in public places and in various institutions. A qualitative, descriptive research design was employed for this study as the most suitable for the attainment of the study objectives. It will pay attention to poster with its sub-divisions to create a multimodal phenomenon as a means of conveying a message.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Religions in Ghana

Mbiti (1975, p.40) believes that 'all African peoples believe in God' and such belief is at the center of their existence. To deny this realization could bring onto man 'death, calamity, and forces of nature (such as thunderstorms, earthquakes, mighty rivers and great forests) which man could not control, or could control only in a very small way' (Mbiti 1975). Lugira (2009, p.8) shares the opinion that Africans 'turn to superhuman powers for help' and that most often than not, 'they address their prayers to a God, either directly or indirectly, through lesser gods or spiritual go-betweens.' Ghana is multi-religious nation with Christianity estimated to have [71.2%](#) of the population, 18% of the population is Muslim, 5% practices native or animistic religions, and the remaining 6% is either a member of another religion or has no religious affiliation. Smaller religious organizations, like the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Eckankar, and Rastafarianism (*See International Religious Freedom Report for 2018*). This study will focus on the three major religions in Ghana, i.e. Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion.

Mbiti (1975, p.299) believes Christianity and Islam have 'a claim on African peoples, particularly invading the areas of traditional religions since the nineteenth century' He argues that 'Christian missionaries from Europe and America penetrated into the interior of Africa either shortly before, or simultaneously with colonial occupation' and that the 'image that Africans received, and to a great extent still hold, of Christianity, is very much colored by colonial rule' (p. 302). No wonder subconsciously, metacognitive mention of the name 'Jesus Christ' to almost every African is the image of a 'White Jesus' instead of a 'Coloured Jesus.' Gyekye (1996) asserts that the concept of an ultimate being was not an importation from the West as purported by some European writers. In his opinion, references to the existence and nature of a superior entity, in myths, proverbs, and the drum language attest to the antiquity of the African idea of one God (p.3).

Copious scholarly work has shown that both similarities and contrasts exist among the various religions of the world. For instance, there are many dogmas, doctrines, practices, and rituals that are common and can be found in them all, i.e. faith in a Superior Being, designated places of worship, rituals, etc. (Mbiti, 1975; Gyekye, 1996).

However, to the African Traditionalist, 'to have a conception of God as the creator of the universe and humankind is natural to the human being' and 'man sees himself as a created being' and therefore there is the need to give reverence to the creator through worship' (Gyekye, 1996, p.5). This is not the case with Christianity and Islam. According to Gyekye, 'their divine truth is believed to be revealed to an individual who becomes the founder' (p. 5) and others get to know God only through these founders. Christians believe the only way to God is through Jesus Christ, and not Muhammad or the traditional 'lesser' gods. To them, the Bible is the holy scripture in which guidance, hope, and

salvation can come about through the continuous proclamation of Jesus as the son of God. In Ghana, Christianity has many denominations such as Presbyterian church, Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal churches, Churches of Christ, The Wesleyan Church, Adventist Church, etc. (Mbiti, 1969, 1975; Gyekye, 1996; Meyer, 2004)). Islam, on the other hand, has Prophet Muhammad SAW as the founder and Quran is the holy scripture in which Allah guides them.

In recent years, owing to the advent of technology, religions have seen a rise in the usage of ICT in the various religious worship. Religious members use online and offline means to communicate their worship. This trend can be observed especially in religion-related activities, i.e. advertisements for conferences and other activities. Multimodal strategies play a pivotal role in this regard. The use of ICT became more relevant especially in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic where billboards, banners, posters, etc. were employed to create awareness of the virus (Amoakwah & Mensah, 2022). This research will investigate how multimodal posters are employed and also try to explore the influence on the general public.

2.2 Linguistic Landscape

The concept of linguistic landscape has gained much attention especially in the realm of language representation and usage. The social setting in which there are multiple languages present is referred to as the linguistic landscape (Gorter, 2006, p 1). This deals with the usage in speech or writing of a language or multiple languages. Landry and Bourhis (1997, p.23) define the concept as a language's prominence and visibility on commercial and public signage in a particular area or territory. They posit that the language can include 'public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings (p.25)'. This affirms the notion that linguistic landscape of a certain territory, region, or metropolitan agglomeration is made up of such several elements. Gorter (2006) argues that linguistic landscape can also be referred to as linguistic cityscape.

Landry and Bourhis (1997) are of the view that linguistic landscape may serve two purposes or functions, i.e. informational function and a symbolic function. They opine that 'the most basic transformational function of the linguistic landscape is that it acts as a recognizable indicator of the geographic area inhabited by a certain language community (Bourhis, 1992 cited in Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p.25). In essence, the linguistic landscape educates members of the in-group and out-group of the region's linguistic traits, geographic bounds, and linguistic boundaries. It entails both private and government signs. Private signs like 'signs on storefront and business institutions, commercial advertising on billboards, and advertising signs displayed in public transport and on private vehicles' on the other hand, "government signs" are "public signs used by national, regional, or municipal governments in the following domains: road signs, place names, street names, inscriptions on government buildings, including ministries, hospitals, universities, town halls, schools, metro stations, and public parks (p. 26).'

Linguistic landscape also serves a symbolic function as earlier indicated. When language has become the most significant aspect of ethnic identity, the symbolic function is most likely to be prominent (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1990 cited in Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 27). This function may signify the presence or absence of use of a language. It could tell the domination of one language over the other in a linguistic landscape setting. Landry and Bourhis believe that rival languages' presence or absence in particular linguistic landscape domains might represent the strength or weakness of opposing ethnolinguistic groupings in an intergroup context (1997, p.28).

2.3 Semiotics and multimodal resources

Multimodality is a theory that was established and introduced in the past two decades to take into account the various tools employed in communication to represent meaning (Adami, 2017, p. 451). She argues that research in the area of multimodality views representation and communication as reliant on a variety of modes, all of which have been socially established as tools for meaning-making (p. 451). In the view of Kress (2010, p.79), a mode is a 'socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resources for making meaning.' Such modes include gesture, colour, sound, image, etc. Lamidi (2017, p. 107) is of the view that 'communication, whether verbal or visual, requires the use

of a code and at least a mode' and that a code 'is the language or variety' (citing Clyne, 2003). Multimodality as a research field attends to various tasks. It seeks to look at each mode's possible meaning (including, through a multimodal lens, speech and writing) and to describe how each mode has historically evolved in various cultures and societies to carry out particular functions (Adami, 2017).

Lamidi affirms that the mode is the channel through which the message is presented, i.e. written, oral, graphic (in forms of symbols, cartoons, caricature or symbols) or gestural (2019, p. 107). Amoakwah and Mensah (2022, p. 32) assert that a mode is a 'social semiotic resource for communication' and it 'allows a shared socio-cultural knowledge about the semiotic resource.' Kress and Vanleeuwen (2001) cited in Benderbal (2017) are of the opinion that multimodal text is concerned with three ways to express image meaning: representational, interactive, and compositional meaning. This means that multimodal texts are important part of meaning-making. Adedun and Hammond (2013) affirm that language which is part of someone's culture must have the ability to shape their way of life which includes uniqueness and importance attached to signs and symbols in cultural contexts. They further posit that the poster panels (which we frequently see alongside highways and in other heavily populated areas) and printed bulletins are significant types of billboard advertisements (p. 82). Communication can be monomodal, bimodal, or multimodal. Lamidi asserts monomodal involves the use of one channel of communication as in 'a news bulletin', bimodal could involve 'oral and visual communication' while multimodal entails multiple channels as in 'language, images and symbols' (2017, p. 106). Language is part of culture and every culture is characterized by conventional symbolic systems that the participants of that culture use to relate meaning to one another (Adedun & Hammond, 2013). We observe this unique use of linguistic symbols and cultures in the various channels of communication usually serving informative or symbolic functions. Kress (2010, p.82) asserts that the 'uses of mode constantly reshape its affordances along the lines of the social requirements of those who make meanings; that ensures that mode is constantly changed in the direction of social practices and requirements.'

Amoakwah and Mensah (2022, p.32) citing Jewitt (2013) acknowledge the point that multimodality proves that communication is not only done through spoken or verbal means for knowledge to spread but it drives on these three assumptions, i.e. first 'communication is a concatenation of modes'; second, 'by cohesion, these multiplicities of modes contribute to one meaning and purpose' and finally 'multimodality is a social framework that seeks to draw its meaning from within the socio-cultural ambiance of that particular text.' These modes, on the other hand, could have sub-channels that are unique and valuable in their own right within a social setting. For example, written texts may include varied colors for headings, images of various sizes, font styles and sizes, and so on.

It is predictable that more of these strategies of communication have been largely adopted by private and commercial businesses in Ghana and among religious sects as well. This current study paid attention to poster with its sub-division to create a communicative channel to convey a message or messages. We focused on religion-related posters used in Twifo Praso, Central Region of Ghana. A poster is 'a temporary promotion of an idea, product, or event put up in a public space for mass consumption' and it may be 'both graphic elements and text' (Amoakwah & Mensah, 2022, p. 33). Posters are usually posted in public spaces serving varying functions. They can be seen on walls, church premises, notice boards, in public transports, shops and supermarkets, etc. The researcher acquired data from some of these public places with permission from the necessary authorities. It may be observed that some Ghana's religious organizations adopt multimodal semiotic strategies like images, logos, color, design, shape cues and accompanying text to relay their specific message to the public.

2.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical orientation adopted in this study is Kress (2011) Multimodal Discourse Analysis model (MMDA). This theory posits that different modes give potentials for making meaning. Kress affirms that multimodal discourse analysis is cross-cultural, affects several other

modes such as text, semiotic resources, etc. He proposes that a text should be coherent. The coherence of a text is determined by the social milieu in which it is created or projected; it is realized through semiotic techniques. MMDA also recognizes semiotic work in terms of mode and agency. There is also an ensemble of modes which highlight the meaning intended, i.e. layout, color, writing, image, font, etc. He establishes that the goal of MMDA is to develop tools that can shed light on the relationship between a community's meanings and its semiotic representations. The proper use of modes for the implementation of textual discourses in a given circumstance is a key issue in MMDA. A multimodal approach starts with the premise that language, whether spoken or written, is just one among many accessible ways for representation and meaning-making. That presupposes that the meanings disclosed by DA methods that rely on speech or text analysis are always only "partial" meanings. The meanings created collectively by all the modes in a book are where the overall meanings of the text's maker are found.

The data were transcribed and relevant portions are analyzed below through content analysis.

3. Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative research approach and its design was descriptive. Based on the research objectives, the methods which were used for data collection were photography and semi-structured interviews. The photography focused on the various modes adopted in creating the poster whilst the interviews highlighted the impact the posters had on the general public. Ten religion-related posters in total were gathered and examined in an effort to address the research questions. The study focused on the poster and its divisions in order to establish a multimodal phenomenon as a way of message delivery. The religious posters that were used in this study had a variety of modes that worked together to deliver the desired message.

Observation was audio-recorded using TM1 laptop while the photographs were taking using iPhone 7 (128GB). The source of data was primary and six (6) research consultants were interviewed. Data were collected from places in the Twifo Praso township. Specific data sites were the premises of Winners' Chapel International (Twifo Praso, Yewodze Junction), Christ Apostolic Church International (Twifo Praso, Central Circuit), The Methodist Church (Twifo Praso), Faithful Jesus Fellowship (Twifo Praso, PIS), Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry (Old Charity, Twifo Praso), Wiase Nsem D[soo Spiritual and Herbal Healing Centre (Twifo Praso – Akyempim Road). These areas were public spaces which several used. However, permission was sought from the various authorities and leaders of these premises before pictures of the posters were taken. Also, six (6) participants were interviewed (two (2) females and four (4) males) about the sense they make from the posters obtained. The participants were selected purposively, and the interview was conducted face to face. They include a teacher, two students, a church leader, a religious member, and a nurse. The responses gathered were analyzed to show the various roles posters play in their religious activities and the impact the posters had on them.

3.1 Research Site

One of the larger cities in the Twifo Atti-Morkwa area in the Central Region is Twifo Praso. In Twifo Praso, there are roughly 10,000 people. It is situated southwest of Merciful. (*see [Twifo Praso Map - Ghana - Mapcarta](#)*). The people are dominantly farmers and traders. As a multilingual speech community, i.e. there are speakers of Akan (Asante Twi, Fante, Wassi), Ewe, Nzema, etc. and a polytheistic community, it is a hub for socio-economic activities. It has major types of religion as earlier discussed. Several denominations of Christianity, two mosques and a handful of shrines are found in the town.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

The analysis of the data entails how the cultural background of the perceived target audience influences the interpretation of the text, images, semiotic resources displayed in the posters. The contents are analyzed in line with the research questions.

4.1 What are the roles multimodal posters play in religions in Ghana?

This research question was to ascertain the roles multimodal posters play in the three major religions in the country. The study found the following as some of the reasons why some religious organisations adopt multimodal posters:

Poster as an avenue to show the specific type of faith

Fig. 1.0 Poster showing Christianity



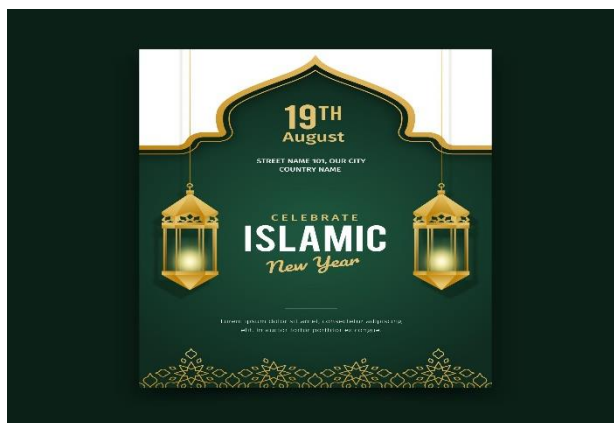
Fig. 1.1 Poster showing Traditional Religion



Source: Faithful Jesus Fellowship, Twifo Praso

Twifo Praso-Akyempim Road

Fig. 1.2 Poster showing Islam



Source: Islamic New Year, Twifo Praso

Fig. 1.0, Fig. 1.1 and Fig. 1.2 identify the type of faith practiced. Fig.1 shows an image of a man, his name beneath the image, smiling with a hollow object around his head. This depicts the holy nature of the Christian founder (Jesus Christ) they follow. He (Jesus) was seen as the only man borne of a woman who was without sin, blameless, and holy. Thus, the image signifies the anointing nature of the leader and the fellowship. The texts ‘Faithful Jesus Fellowship’; ‘TGOTS (The Gathering of the Sons)’; ‘Theme: Gather to Hearken’ etc. are all signifiers of the Christian faith. a picture of people perched atop the poster invites believers to gather to worship, listen to the ‘word’ and commune as one. The logo on top shows a burning sword on a book (The Bible) which is on top of the globe (world), indicating the powerful nature of the faith. The text also includes fellowship program details which attest to the type of faith they belong to.

Fig. 1.1 also establishes the traditional religion. The image on the right of the poster portrays a man in a smock, a hat, a bead necklace around his neck and an ‘animal tail’ in his hand. This whole emblem is a complete set to showcase the traditional or cultural nature of the place. It incentivizes the naturalness or the relatability of ‘Africanism’. The animal tail depicts the divine priesthood he is believed to have. The text ‘WIASSE NSEM DɔSɔO SPIRITUAL & HERBAL HEALING, CENTRE’ indicates the name of the location; written in block letters with red color background for it to be in cohesion with the image on the right, i.e. to show seriousness and power. The text also indicates that

‘priests, rainmakers and other ‘special persons’ who function as intermediaries, no doubt turn to God at many more occasions than the common people; and these, being in the intermediary status, keep mankind in constant liturgical contact with God and the spiritual world’ (Mbiti, 1969, p. 94). Again, the text includes all the help the man purports to offer: ‘Specialist in All Kinds of Spiritual Problems & Sickness/Diseases’, followed by the motto: ‘WIASE NSEM DJSOO *‘The World is Full of Mysteries’*’ and contact details like telephone numbers are added. There is an arrow sign (←) pointing to the left, indicating the exact location of the shrine. The background color is green indicating goodness or efficacy of the traditional herbal and spiritual medicine.

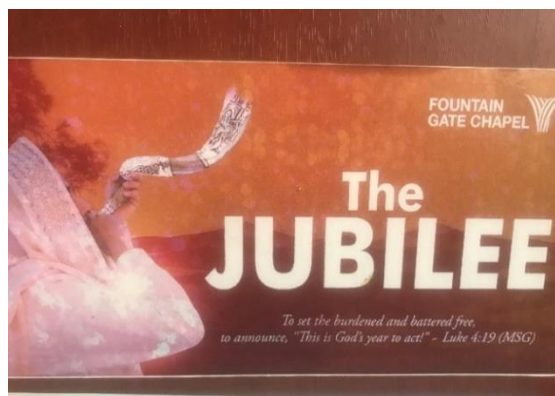
Fig. 1.2 identifies the Islamic religion. The text ‘CELEBRATE ISLAMIC new year’ affirms the type of faith, thus, ‘ISLAMIC’ all in uppercase letters and boldened to lay emphasis on the religion. On the left and right of the poster captures two emblems hanging (two lanterns). The lanterns are associated with the holy day of Ramadam, signifying call to other to join in with the celebrations. The background colour, green, was revealed symbolize nature and life. Etymologically, it also signifies the Holy Prophet’s immortality. Again, white colour above the green, which signifies purity. An image of the top of a mosque was revealed to serve as a ‘place of prostration’, a place where prayers are said. Beneath the poster are symbols of many stars which symbolizes light and knowledge.

Poster as an advertisement strategy to persuade new members to join.

Fig. 2.0 An ad inviting new members



Fig. 2.1 An ad inviting new members



Source: *Winners’ Chapel International, Twifo Praso* *Fountain Gate Chapel, Twifo Praso*

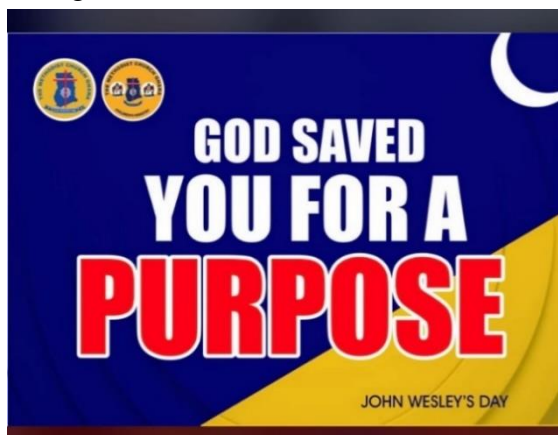
The study proved that posters serve as an advertisement strategy purposely to persuade or invite new members for service. In fig. 2.0 image of the leader is largely shown on the left side of the poster. Smiling, in red tie on white long sleeves; he exudes the energy of welcoming new converts. The accompanying texts have warm and welcoming meanings ready for new members. The texts ‘WINNERS’ CHAPEL INTERNATIONAL, TWIFO PRASO, YEWODZE JUNCTION’ establishes the name and location of the church; ‘Turnaround Era, It's Your Turn To Rule, and HOME OF SIGNS AND WONDERS’ all admonishes new members to visit. Underneath the image are the texts indicating the days they meet and their respective church activities. On the bottom-right is the contact details (numbers and website address) in a red background which emphasizes the seriousness attached to the call. The blue background of the poster signifies hope for new members. Again, the background contains the magnified form of the church logo, which also is miniaturized at the top of the poster. The logo represents the world (containing the continents) and a shield representing the World of Faith message and its protective influence against all vices of the devil, with a red flame on top of it, signifying the work of the Holy Spirit.

Fig. 2.1 has an image of a man dressed in white apparel, blowing a horn, calling on people to hear his message about God. As a call to action, the horn gives a message to believers to be cautious in their faith, to get ready, for the end time is near and therefore should not relent in their worship. In the background of the poster is a tree (with flowers) on a desert, indicating the hope and beauty of their faith, which is in coherence with the man’s apparel which signifies victory. The texts

‘FOUNTAIN GATE CHAPEL’; ‘The JUBILEE’, with ‘JUBILEE’ all in uppercase shows the result of the believers’ victory; ‘*To set the burdened and battered free, to announce, “This is God’s year to act” – Luke 4:19 (MSG)*’ admonishing members to submit to God’s will. The research revealed that the logo on the far right at the top of the poster signifies All-sufficient God who makes rivers in the desert.

Poster as reinforcers, reminders and source of steadfastness in the faith

Fig. 3.0 Information on motivation and hope Fig. 3.1 Information on supremacy of faith



Source: Wesley Methodist Society, Twifo Praso



Faithful Jesus Fellowship, Twifo Praso

Fig. 3.2 Information portraying ‘miraculous’ encounter



Source: Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry (CEM), Old Charity Twifo Praso

In both figs. 3.0 and fig. 3.1 we find that the oneness and supreme nature of God was the principal focus in the posters. In fig. 3.0 we find the text ‘GOD SAVED YOU FOR A PURPOSE’ is written in uppercase highlighting the meaning of the text; with a blue background symbolizing hope and gold symbolizing richness in their heritage with the hope of having a share in the ‘city of Gold’. The text drums home hope to the reader as ‘purpose’ is written in red color, as a strong reminder to always remain focused. The text ‘JOHN WESLEY’S DAY’ beneath the poster is reinforcing the importance of the day, in remembrance of the founder of the Methodist Church. There are two logos at the top the poster. They indicate a circle with gold background having Ghana Map (blue color) at the center which indicates anticipation of the whole nation becoming believers of the Christian faith. In the middle of the Ghana map is ‘Nyame Dua’ symbol as a reminder that the concept of God was existent before the missionaries; embossed in the middle of Ghana map is a red cross, stretching of the four corners of Ghana establishing that the faith goes beyond the borders of the country.

Fig 3.1 also introduces the text ‘THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD’ in uppercase letters emphasizing the need to be steadfast in the faith. Again, you see the world (Earth) sitting on a chair which reinforces the supremacy of his power. The logo on top shows a burning sword on a book (The Bible) which is on top of the globe (world), indicating the powerful nature of the faith; right below is

a logo for Facebook which has a text 'LIVE' in red background indicating the program will be aired live on the channel. The text also includes fellowship program details, i.e. the date, time and name of the enforcer.

Poster as a symbolic function

Fig. 4.0 Poster showing power of the word



Fountain Gate Chapel, Twifo Praso

Fig. 4.1 Poster showing power of the word



Faithful Jesus Fellowship, PIS, Twifo Praso

Symbolic meaning is at the center of almost every verbal and non-verbal communication in the Ghanaian society. Both fig. 4.0 and fig. 4.1 have intense symbolic connotations or functions. In the first poster, we see splashes of water scattered all over the poster, in blue background in the form of the ocean. This symbolizes power and life in Christ and the many blessings he brings forthwith. In the middle is a sword signifying the power or dominion of Christ. The name of the church is captured on top, with texts 'SPEAK THE WORD'; 'Matt. 8:8'; '2013' captured beneath the poster, alluding to the great commission.

The second poster employs an image of a man, dressed in a bright, red suit on a white long sleeve shirt, with burning flames in the background, symbolizing the powerful state of the faith and supposed spiritual wonders it has. On the right is a text 'TONGUES of FIRE'

4.2 What impact does multimodal posters employed in religions in Ghana have on the general public?

This research question sought to find out from respondents the various impacts multimodal posters have on the general public. The participants statements below illustrate the effects multimodal posters used in religious activities have on the general populace:

Posters identify the social class of the religious leaders

Some responses yielding from the interview pointed to the fact that religion-related posters showed the calibre of leaders or guests gracing the occasion. Often times prominent or popular evangelists, bishops, prophets, pastors, etc. are invited to the religious program, as a result, the image of this person on the poster alone fetches a lot of new members, old members and other popular persons in the society as well. To the religious leaders, posters is an avenue to rake in more members in order to rank in more financial benefits. Again, the mixture of modes employed to make the poster can show the kind of religious activity is going to be. This could mean that the target audience will be middle to upper class members. A nurse interviewed had this to say:

When you look at these big, big churches in the cities, especially in their three-day or seven-day programs they organize, they tend to invite other 'big men of God' for these events. Not only them, sometimes, images of popular movie actors who are pastors and Gospel musicians are seen on the posters. Basically, it's an invitation to everybody, but usually we all know not everyone can go.

Posters provide symbolic information

Participants revealed that religious posters oftentimes give many symbolic details that resonate their souls and this affects their decision-making. They told the researchers that when images of red, fire, sword, etc. appear on the poster, they feel inclined to go there and fellowship in order for their problems to get solutions. They purport that many times they are swayed by the colourful, fanciful and stylistic nature of the poster. Some signs and symbols appeal to them, give them meaning of hope, motivation, and give them the edge to visit. Again, some readers cannot decode the written text on the poster so they fall on the semiotic resources on there to arrive at the same meaning. Since semiotic meanings are cross-linguistic and culture specific, people relate to them differently. For instance, a participant revealed that they related more to symbols and colours whenever they saw posters revealing 'miracle-related' images like fire. He affirmed this when he said,

A lot of the time it (referring to the poster) doesn't represent the faith that when people come in to the event, flames, or fire or whatever you see on it will be manifested in reality but they do these things to portray how powerful they (referring to the pastors) they are even though most of them are fake. They put things on the poster to capture your attention.

Another participant shared a similar view, as expressed in this response:

For instance, they may use images of a new iPhone, new bills and others. I believe these are all fake and they do them to woo clients into getting their money. However, there are others who don't showcase or advertise in that manner, especially some good 'Mallams' who will not use scary posters or use fanciful dressing to deceive, and sometimes, can solve people's problems. They are not part of the traditional religion though.

Poster shows the marketing strategy of the religious denomination

Responses from the interview revealed that multimodal posters exhibit a branding or marketing style of religious institutions. It was established that how these posters were designed or captured was a major persuasive tool or avenue to rake in some financial income, especially at the end of the religious program. Leaders of religious sects used text, semiotic resources, colour, images, etc. to target specific kinds of audience. Images of some animals, iconic emblems, and text conveyed meanings of power, hope, enlightenment, success, etc.

A teacher interviewed confirmed this when she said,

On the poster how spiritual he or she is or how powerful he she is. Sometimes they (referring to leaders of the church) will say on the poster 'come and experience some spiritual encounter'. Often times they do this as a form of branding, just to capture the attention of the readers

5. Conclusion

In this study, the role of multimodal posters employed in selected religions in Ghana have been discussed. Poster as a show of faith, reinforcers or reminders, a symbolic function, persuasion strategies are some of the roles of multimodal posters. In this study, permission was taken from the various authorities and so photographs of the posters were obtained by the researcher. The introduction of this study was made known in the section one of the study. In the next section, the methodology embraced in the information gathering process. In the next section, discussion on multimodality by scholars like (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Gorter, 2006; Machin 2007; Adedun & Hammond, 2013; Kress 2010, 2011; 2013; Adami, 2017; Benderbal, 2017; Lamidi, 2017; Amoakwah & Mensah, 2022) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress, 2011) was the theoretical framework for this study. The data analysis was thoroughly discussed in the section four of the study. The analysis centred on, text, still images, and symbols which are embraced to communicate effectively in religion-related activities.

6. References

- Adami, E., (2017). *Multimodality: The Oxford Handbook of Language and Society (452-)*. Oxford Press
- Adedun, A., E., & Hammond, C., (2013). Some analysis of selected billboard advertisements in Nigeria and Ghana. *Journal of African Cultures and Languages*. 2(1), (82-92)
- [Africa: prevalence of Christianity by country | Statista](#)
- Amoakwah, R., & Mensah, C. E. (2022). The role of multimodal posters in curbing COVID-19 in Ghana. *Journal of Linguistics and Foreign Languages*, 3(1). Retrieved from <https://royalliteglobal.com/jlfl/article/view/772>
- Aning, E., (2021). An Analysis of Covid-19 Poster of the Ghana Health Service: A Semiotic Approach. *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies* (Vol. 9, No.6, pp.56-67) ISSN: 2055-0146 (Online <https://doi.org/10.37745/ejells.2013>)
- Benderbal, H., A., (2017). A multimodal discourse analysis of local election posters in Algeria. (*Dissertation, Master's Degree in languages science*) University of Mostaganem, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Department of English
- Goldstone, B., P., (2004). The postmodern picture book: A new subgenre. *Language Arts*, 81(3), 196–204.
- Gorter, D. (2006). Introduction: The study of the linguistic landscape as a new approach to multilingualism. *Linguistic Landscape: A New Approach to Multilingualism*, 3(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853599170-001>
- Gyekye, K., (1996). *African Cultural Values: An introduction*. Sankofa Publishing Company, Accra Ghana.
- International Religious Freedom Report for 2018 United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
- Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: Asocial semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G., (16 Nov 2011). *Multimodal discourse analysis from: The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* Routledge Retrieved from: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203809068.ch3>
- Lamidi, M., T., (2017). Multimodal Code-pairing and Switching of Visual-verbal Texts in Selected Nigerian Stand-up Comedy Performances. *Legon Journal of the Humanities* (105 - 129)
- Lugira, A., M., (2009). *African Traditional Religion* (3rd ed.) Chelsea House Publishers, New York
- Mbiti, J., (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*. New York: Praeger.
- Mbiti, J., (1975). *Introduction to African Religion*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, London
- Nyame, E., K., (2020). Multimodal Strategies in Some Alcohol Advertisements. *University of Education, Winneba* (Term Paper, unpublished)
- Serafini, F. (2009). Understanding visual images in picture books. In J. Evans (Ed.), *Talking beyond the page: Reading and responding to contemporary picture books* (pp.10–25). London: Routledge.
- Meyer, B. (2004). Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33(2004), 447–474. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.33.070203.143835>