

**A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF NIGERIAN PIDGIN IN BETTING
MEMES**

BY

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APPROVAL PAGE

I, **JAMANI OMOVAZE GREATNESS**, a student in the department of linguistics studies, University of Benin, with the matriculation number **ART2100780** have completed the requirements for course work and research for the Bachelor of Arts degree of the University of Benin. The research work contained in this project is a product of my personal effort and does not contain any previously written or published material that has been submitted in any other degree or diploma program from any university or higher institution of learning.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, who has given me grace and strength to carry out this research. I also dedicate this work to my elder brother and sister, whose love and support have brought me this far.

CERTIFICATION

I, **JAMANI OMOVAZE GREATNESS**, a student in the department of linguistics studies, University of Benin, with the matriculation number **ART2100780** have completed the requirements for course work and research for the bachelor of Arts Degree of the University of Benin. The research work contained in this project is a product of my personal effort and does not contain any previously written or published material that has been submitted in any other degree or diploma program from any university or higher institution of learning.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to examine how Nigerian Pidgin is used in betting memes to communicate meaning. While its specific objective is to identify the type of message communicated in Nigerian Pidgin. For this study, the primary data collection method was online research. A total of 30 betting memes were collected from two social media platforms, Twitter and Whatsapp. Semiotic theory and Social semiotics were the two theoretical frameworks used for the analysis of the provided data. Using these frameworks, the study was able to identify how meaning was created through the relationship between signifiers and signifieds in the memes, and how these memes reflect social realities, emotions, and shared experiences of Nigerian youth. The frameworks helped to interpret both the linguistic and visual elements of memes, showing how Nigerian Pidgin was used creatively to express humour, frustration, and identity in betting culture. The findings revealed that Nigerian Pidgin played a key role in communicating humour, frustration, and shared experiences among betters, while also reflecting social realities such as hope, loss and resilience. The memes combined language and images to express the everyday emotions in betting in relatable ways. The study concluded that Nigerian Pidgin serves as a powerful cultural and communication tool in digital betting spaces, strengthening social connection and self expression through humour and creativity.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the study

This study focuses on the semiotic analysis of Nigerian Pidgin as it is used in betting memes and how meanings are created through both language and images. In recent years, social media has become a space where people express their thoughts and emotions using memes. Betting has also grown to become very popular, especially with platforms like Bet9ja, Sportybet, and 1xbet. People no longer just play for fun, they also share their experiences online. Memes have become one of the most popular ways of communicating on social media, especially in promoting betting and engaging audiences. Many memes make use of Nigerian Pidgin, which is widely spoken and understood across different ethnic groups in Nigeria. In Nigeria, one of the areas where memes have gained much attention is in the world of sports betting.

Sports betting has become very common among Nigerian youths. Brands like Bet9ja, SportyBet, and 1xBet have turned betting into part of

popular culture. As a result, online spaces are now filled with memes that talk about the joy of winning or the pain of losing bets. Most of these memes are written in Nigerian Pidgin because it is the language that connects easily with young people. Nigerian Pidgin is simple, expressive, and full of humour, which makes it perfect for creating memes that people can relate to.

The use of Nigerian Pidgin in this study is because pidgin is often seen as the language of everyday communication making it more relatable than English or indigenous languages when it comes to betting where informality and humor are key. By mixing images, text, and humor, memes serve not only as a source of entertainment but also as a persuasive tool to influence consumers behavior. The purpose of this study is to find out how people use pidgin to express things like winning, losing, luck, frustration or exaggeration when it comes to betting.

The focus of this study is to look at these betting memes closely and understand how meaning is made through the combination of words and pictures. Semiotics, which is the study of signs and meanings, was used to explain how language and images in these memes communicate ideas. For example, a meme that says “Sporty dey among wetin spoil my life” with a

crying image shows sadness and humour at the same time. The text and the picture work together to create humour at the same time. The text and the picture work together to create a deeper meaning.

A semiotic analysis is useful in understanding how signs, symbols and language are combined in memes to pass across deeper meanings. Through semiotics, this will analyze how Nigerian Pidgin in memes portrays cultural values and humour. This makes it possible to see how language works in visual communication and how betting brands and people use memes to attract attention, advertise betting or shape how people think about it.

By studying these memes, this research aims to show how Nigerian Pidgin functions as a creative tool for communication in the digital space. The use of Pidgin in betting memes also reveals how language, humour, and culture reflect the realities of Nigerian youth especially their struggles, dreams, and coping mechanisms.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Even though memes and humour have become very common in Nigeria, not much study has been done on how Nigerian Pidgin is used in them. In Nigeria, betting has become a common part of youth culture. To pass messages, many betting brands use memes in Pidgin. These memes are everywhere on social media, and they are usually funny and relatable. While they entertain people, they also communicate ideas about winning, losing, luck and frustration.

Most existing studies on Nigerian Pidgin focus on its grammar, history, or sociolinguistic roles, but very few examine how it functions in visual and digital texts like memes. The challenge, therefore, lies in understanding how Pidgin, as a language of everyday life, creates meaning when mixed with images, facial expressions, and betting symbols.

Betting memes have become a common way for Nigerian youths to express social realities such as frustration, hope, and survival. They also show how humour serves as a coping strategy for everyday struggles like unemployment and economic hardship. Since most of these memes are

written in Pidgin, they represent how language adapts to fit social needs in digital culture.

Also, while betting memes entertain and connect people, they also reveal deep social issues like economic hardship, addiction, and hope for quick success. There is a need to understand how these meanings are constructed and shared. This study filled that gap by using semiotic analysis to interpret the symbols, words, and images in Nigerian betting memes.

This study therefore needed to analyze the meanings behind Nigerian Pidgin betting memes, show how language and images work together and explain how humor and exaggeration communicate messages to people online.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What kind of messages do Nigerian Pidgin betting memes communicate?
2. How do Nigerian Pidgin memes influence how people think or talk about betting?
3. In what ways do the images and pidgin words work together to send messages in the memes?

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Research

The aim of this study is to examine how Nigerian Pidgin is used in betting memes to communicate meaning.

The objectives are to:

1. Identify the types of messages communicated in Nigerian Pidgin betting memes.
2. To find out how memes influence how people think or talk about betting.
3. To explore how images and Pidgin words work together to send messages.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is important for a lot of reasons. First, it adds to knowledge about Nigerian Pidgin showing how it is not only used for daily conversation but also for online expression like memes. It will also help to explain how humor works in language and how it connects to culture. The finding will be helpful to advertisers and marketers who want to understand the role of local language and humor in connecting with Nigerian audiences.

The work will also show how semiotic analysis can be used to study memes. It will help people understand how humour and culture are used to influence consumers. The study will show the link between language and popular culture.

1.5 Methodology

This study focused on meaning and interpretation, not numbers. The data for the study used 30 betting memes collected from both Twitter and Whatsapp. These memes were chosen because they contain Nigerian Pidgin and are commonly shared by people online.

Each meme was examined using semiotic analysis, focusing on the relationship between the text (signifier) and meaning (signified), and how the combination of images and Pidgin expressions produces humour or emotion. The study also applied Social Semiotics to connect the findings to the Nigerian social and cultural environment where betting and meme creation occur.

1.6 Language and its Speakers

Nigerian Pidgin is one of the most widely spoken languages in Nigeria. It is a mixture of English and different local languages, and it has become a common way for people from different ethnic groups to understand each other. Nigerian Pidgin does not belong to one tribe, it is spoken across the country, especially among young people. Today, Nigerian Pidgin is used in music, entertainment, social media and everyday communication.

Nigerian Pidgin has become more than just a casual language, it is now a tool of identity and creativity. In social media spaces, especially in memes, Pidgin gives users a way to communicate humour, sarcasm, and emotion in ways Standard English might not express. This makes it suitable for betting memes where feelings of excitement, loss, or hope are easily understood by anyone who speaks pidgin.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews materials related to the study of Nigerian Pidgin, memes, social media marketing, and semiotics. The review provides a background that supports the study's focus, which is to analyze how Nigerian Pidgin functions in betting memes as a meaning-making tool. The chapter is divided into conceptual reviews, previous studies, and the concern of the present study.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs and how they create meaning. The term comes from the Greek word *sēmeion*, meaning “sign.” It deals with how people understand messages and interpret symbols, images, or words in communication. Semiotics is all about how something stands for something

else. Everything from language, pictures, gestures, and even colours can serve as a sign (Danesi, 2007).

Ferdinand de Saussure (1983), a Swiss linguist, is often seen as the father of modern semiotics. He described language as a system of signs made up of two parts: the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the physical form of the sign, like a word, image, or sound, while the signified is the mental idea or meaning that the sign refers to. For example, in a betting meme where a man is crying with the caption “Sporty dey among wetin spoil my life”, the image of the crying man is the signifier, while the idea of frustration from betting loss is the signified. Together, they create a sign that communicates emotional meaning to the viewer.

Another important figure in semiotics is Charles Sanders Peirce (1958), who proposed a three-part model of signs: icon, index, and symbol.

- An icon represents something by resemblance. For instance, an image of a football in a betting meme stands for real-life football matches.

- An index has a direct link or cause-and-effect relationship with its object. For example, a meme showing a man holding a “lost ticket” directly indicates failure or disappointment in betting.
- A symbol represents meaning through cultural agreement or convention, such as the Bet9ja logo or phrases like “cut my ticket”, which are understood by Nigerian audiences because they are culturally shared.

Both Saussure and Peirce believed that meaning does not exist naturally in objects but is created by people through social and cultural understanding. This is especially important in analyzing memes, which rely heavily on shared meanings, cultural jokes, and context. Memes often use a mix of words, visuals, and emotions to express humor, criticism, or social commentary, which makes semiotics the right approach for studying them (Barthes, 1977; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

Semiotics also helps explain how meaning is built through relationships between signs. In memes, the combination of text (language),

image, and emotion creates layers of meaning. For example, a meme showing a man dancing with the caption “My mood after I carry short game win” uses visual joy (the dance) and linguistic humor (the Pidgin phrase) to express happiness after winning a bet. This mix of sign systems (visual and verbal) makes the message more powerful and entertaining.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), communication in modern times has become multimodal, meaning that people use different forms of expression (words, images, emojis, and gestures) to pass on meaning. Semiotics helps decode these combinations by showing how each part contributes to the overall message. This makes it especially useful for studying social media content like memes, where visuals and language work together to express ideas quickly and humorously.

Barthes (1977) extended semiotic theory by explaining how signs can operate at two levels: denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to the literal or basic meaning of a sign (e.g., an image of a man crying simply means sadness). Connotation refers to the deeper, cultural, or emotional meaning (e.g., in a betting meme, crying may connote regret, financial loss,

or frustration). Understanding both levels helps reveal the social and cultural meanings hidden in Nigerian Pidgin betting memes.

In summary, semiotics offers a way to understand how meaning is made and shared through signs. It allows researchers to go beyond what is directly shown or said, to uncover the deeper messages within communication. In this study, semiotics is applied to analyze how Nigerian Pidgin and visual signs in betting memes combine to express emotions, humor, and social realities. It helps reveal how these memes use ordinary signs to represent people's struggles, hopes, and experiences in the betting culture.

2.1.2 Nigerian Pidgin

Nigerian Pidgin, often called "Naija Pidgin" or simply "Pidgin," is one of the most widely spoken languages in Nigeria today. It serves as a lingua franca, helping people from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds communicate with one another (Faraclas, 1996). Nigeria has over 500 indigenous languages, and Pidgin plays a vital role in bridging

communication gaps between people who do not share the same mother tongue (Igboanusi, 2008).

According to Elugbe and Omamor (1991), Nigerian Pidgin developed during the period of trade between Europeans and Africans along the West African coast. The earliest form of contact was with the Portuguese traders in the 15th century, which led to the introduction of words like pikin (child) and sabi (know) into local speech. Later, during the British colonial period, English became dominant, and the contact between English and local Nigerian languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, and Hausa resulted in what we now know as Nigerian Pidgin.

Structurally, Nigerian Pidgin is based largely on English but also contains words, idioms, and grammatical patterns borrowed from Nigerian languages. It is therefore described as an English-lexified creole (Faraclas, 1996). For example, in the sentence “I no go fit come today”, the words come from English but the grammar follows local Nigerian patterns. Pidgin simplifies English sentence structures and uses fewer inflectional endings, making it easier for people to learn and use.

Nigerian Pidgin has spread across different parts of the country, though it varies slightly from one region to another. Elugbe and Omamor (1991) note that there are regional varieties such as Warri Pidgin, Lagos Pidgin, and Port Harcourt Pidgin, each influenced by local languages and cultures. Despite these variations, the different forms remain mutually intelligible across regions.

In recent years, Nigerian Pidgin has grown in prestige and usage. It is no longer seen as a “low” or “broken” version of English but as a vibrant form of expression that reflects Nigerian identity and creativity (Igboanusi, 2008). It is used in radio, television, music, advertisements, comedy, social media, and even politics. Pidgin is especially common among Nigerian youths, who use it to express humor, solidarity, and street wisdom in everyday conversations.

Online and on social media, Nigerian Pidgin plays a major role in memes, jokes, and online marketing. Because of its informal, humorous, and relatable nature, many brands use Pidgin to connect with their audiences. Betting companies like Bet9ja, SportyBet, and others often use Pidgin

expressions in their online posts to appeal to young Nigerians. Expressions such as “Na who go cut my ticket” or “I go cash out today” are widely understood and used among bettors, showing how deeply Pidgin has entered modern urban culture.

From a linguistic point of view, Nigerian Pidgin combines both creativity and economy of expression. It allows speakers to express emotions and cultural meanings using short, catchy phrases. Scholars like Faraclas (2013) describe Pidgin as a “language of the people,” capable of carrying complex emotions and ideas even with its simple structure. This makes it especially powerful in visual media like memes, where brief words must carry strong meaning and humor.

In semiotic terms, Nigerian Pidgin functions as both a linguistic and cultural sign. Its use in memes not only communicates a message but also signals identity, showing that the speaker belongs to a specific social group or community. The mix of humor, irony, and cultural references found in Pidgin betting memes makes it an ideal subject for semiotic analysis, as it reflects how language, image, and culture work together to create meaning.

In summary, Nigerian Pidgin has evolved from a contact language used in trade to a fully developed and dynamic language that represents modern Nigerian life. It expresses the realities, struggles, and creativity of ordinary Nigerians. Its widespread use in online memes and brand marketing demonstrates its importance not just as a means of communication but also as a symbol of Nigerian culture and identity.

2.1.3 Memes

The term meme was first introduced by the biologist Richard Dawkins in his book “The Selfish Gene (1976)”. Dawkins used it to describe how cultural ideas, symbols, and behaviors spread from one person to another, much like genes transmit biological information. According to him, a meme is a “unit of cultural transmission” that evolves as people share and adapt it. Over time, the word meme has come to refer to humorous, creative, and easily shareable pieces of media, especially on the internet.

In today’s digital culture, an internet meme is any image, text, or short video that spreads rapidly online, often through social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp (Shifman, 2014). Most

memes are created for entertainment, but they also serve deeper social and communicative functions. They often express public opinion, emotions, political ideas, and cultural identity.

Milner (2016) explains that internet memes have become a major form of participatory culture, a way for people to interact, share opinions, and feel part of a larger community. In Nigeria, memes are used not only for humor but also to comment on social and political issues, including sports, relationships, and everyday struggles. Many Nigerians use memes to react to national events, football matches, or economic challenges in a way that combines humor with social criticism.

Linguistically, memes are important because they combine text and visuals to create meaning. This makes them multimodal, meaning they use more than one mode of communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). A meme often includes a picture (the visual mode) and a caption (the linguistic mode), and both work together to convey humor or emotion. For example, a meme showing a man crying with the caption “Sporty dey among wetin

spoil my life” uses both visual and textual signs to express disappointment and frustration about betting losses.

Memes also rely heavily on shared cultural knowledge. For a meme to be funny or meaningful, the audience must understand the context behind it. This makes memes a strong tool for studying culture, communication, and identity. Nigerian memes, for instance, often use Nigerian Pidgin English, slang, and cultural references that are immediately understood by Nigerians but may confuse outsiders. This shared understanding helps create a sense of belonging among meme users.

From a semiotic perspective, memes are systems of signs that represent ideas and emotions. The image in a meme acts as a signifier (the physical form that the viewer sees) while the meaning or feeling it conveys is the signified. The combination of both produces meaning (Saussure, 1983). For example, in a betting meme showing a man with his head in his hands, the image (signifier) represents loss or regret, while the text “and they warn me say make I use the money chop o” (signified) gives that emotion a linguistic and cultural context.

Social media memes have also become powerful tools for marketing. Brands and businesses use memes because they are relatable, funny, and can quickly attract attention. Nigerian brands like Bet9ja, SportyBet, and PalmPay often use Pidgin-based memes to appeal to younger audiences, especially those active on social media. These memes make advertisements feel less formal and more personal, creating a friendly relationship between the brand and its customers (Adewumi, 2020).

In this study, memes are important because they reflect how Nigerian Pidgin is used as a medium of communication and identity. Through humor, exaggeration, and shared cultural references, Pidgin memes about betting reveal the emotions, attitudes, and values of young Nigerians. They show how people use language and images not just to laugh, but also to express frustration, hope, and belonging.

In summary, memes are more than just jokes; they are modern tools of social expression. They combine language, images, and culture to create meanings that spread rapidly through social media. Their multimodal nature and their ability to represent cultural experiences make them valuable for

semiotic study, especially in the context of Nigerian Pidgin and online betting culture.

2.1.4 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing refers to the use of online platforms and networks such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp to promote products, brands, or services to a wide audience. It allows companies to reach people directly, interact with them, and build brand awareness through content that is engaging and shareable (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Unlike traditional advertising methods, social media marketing encourages participation, conversation, and feedback between brands and their customers.

In the Nigerian context, social media marketing has become one of the most powerful tools for reaching young people, who make up the largest group of internet users in the country (Statista, 2023). Companies now use humor, storytelling, and relatable language (often in Nigerian Pidgin) to connect with audiences in ways that feel personal and familiar. Betting companies such as Bet9ja, SportyBet, and NairaBet have especially taken

advantage of this strategy, using memes, jokes, and witty posts to advertise and engage with customers.

Social media marketing depends on content that attracts attention quickly. This includes pictures, videos, short texts, and especially memes. Because memes are humorous, visual, and easy to share, they help brands connect emotionally with consumers. When people find a meme funny or relatable, they are more likely to share it, giving the brand more visibility (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). For example, when a betting company posts a Pidgin meme that says “Na only Sporty fit turn my 100 naira to 100 million”, it not only entertains but also advertises the brand’s promise of huge winnings in a playful way.

Language plays a big role in social media marketing. Brands often use informal and culturally relevant language, rather than formal English, to sound authentic. In Nigeria, Pidgin English is commonly used because it connects with people emotionally and represents everyday speech (Igboanusi, 2008). When brands use Pidgin, they show that they understand

their audience's way of thinking and speaking. This linguistic familiarity helps build trust and identification between the audience and the brand.

Social media marketing is also interactive. Customers can reply, react, or even remix content. This interaction gives brands insight into what their audience likes and how they think. It also helps build an online community where users feel included. As Chaffey (2019) explains, social media marketing goes beyond selling products, it focuses on creating relationships and experiences that make people feel connected to a brand.

In the betting industry, this interactive aspect is especially visible. Many Nigerian betting companies post memes about football matches, wins, and losses because these are common experiences among their target audience. The memes allow bettors to express their feelings (whether joy or frustration) and to relate to others going through the same thing. In this way, social media becomes not just a space for advertising, but a social environment where language, humor, and culture come together.

From a semiotic point of view, social media marketing is also about signs and meanings. Every post, emoji, hashtag, or meme carries a message.

The combination of text, image, and cultural references works together to communicate values such as fun, success, or belonging. The use of Nigerian Pidgin in betting memes, therefore, functions as a cultural sign that signals informality, humor, and solidarity among Nigerian youths.

In summary, social media marketing has changed the way companies communicate with the public. It has shifted marketing from one-way advertising to two-way interaction. In Nigeria, it has become a space where language, culture, and creativity meet. Through the use of Nigerian Pidgin and memes, betting brands have found a way to market themselves while also reflecting the social realities, humor, and resilience of their audience.

2.2 Previous Studies

Several studies have explored the relationship between language, media, and meaning-making, especially through the lens of semiotics. Although not many studies have focused directly on Nigerian Pidgin in betting memes, there is a growing body of research that helps to explain how language, culture, and visual communication work together in online spaces.

Adeniyi (2016) carried out a study on semiotic interpretation of political cartoons in Nigerian newspapers. The study examined how visual and textual elements in cartoons create meaning and shape public opinion. Using Peirce's model of icons, indexes, and symbols, the research showed that semiotic analysis helps to reveal hidden meanings that ordinary readers might overlook. This study is important to the present research because it demonstrates how semiotic tools can be used to decode meaning in visual materials like memes.

Similarly, Odebunmi (2017) studied language use and visual representation in Nigerian advertisements. The research revealed that advertisers often use local languages, including Nigerian Pidgin, to appeal to emotion, identity, and cultural familiarity. The study concluded that language choice in media is not random, it reflects power, creativity, and the desire to connect with the audience. This supports the present study's focus on how betting brands use Pidgin memes to build connection and humor.

In another study, Shifman (2014) explored memes in digital culture, explaining how memes spread ideas, humor, and social messages through

repetition and remixing. Her work showed that memes act as a form of participatory communication where users are both consumers and producers of meaning. This is relevant to the present study because Nigerian betting memes also rely on shared humor and user participation to spread online.

Faraclas (2013) focused on the structure and function of Nigerian Pidgin, describing it as a language of unity, creativity, and resistance. He argued that Pidgin allows Nigerians to express themselves freely and creatively, especially in informal settings. His findings align with the use of Pidgin in betting memes, where humor and emotion are expressed in a relaxed, relatable way.

Adewumi (2020) investigated the use of memes in Nigerian social media marketing, with special attention to how brands engage customers through humor and language. The study found that memes are effective because they make advertisements entertaining and familiar. Adewumi's research is closely related to this present study, as it also deals with digital content that blends humor, visual signs, and local language to influence public engagement.

In a similar line, Nwosu (2021) examined the semiotics of online youth communication in Nigeria, highlighting how symbols, emojis, and slang form part of a new digital language among young Nigerians. The study revealed that Pidgin English and humor dominate online interactions, showing that language functions as both communication and identity. This directly supports the present research's interest in how Nigerian Pidgin operates in memes related to betting and youth culture.

Internationally, Milner (2016) studied memes as participatory media, arguing that they create shared experiences and reflect group identity. His findings are also relevant because betting memes do not only entertain but also unite people who share similar experiences of winning or losing bets.

From all these studies, it is clear that language, signs, and visuals play important roles in shaping how people communicate online. However, few studies have combined semiotic theory and social semiotics to analyze Nigerian Pidgin memes in the specific context of betting culture. This gap is what the present research seeks to fill. By examining how Nigerian Pidgin is used semiotically in betting memes, this study provides insight into how

humor, identity, and culture are expressed through both language and imagery in Nigeria's digital space.

2.3 Concern of the Present Study

From the review of existing studies, it is clear that many scholars have examined how language, images, and culture work together to create meaning in media communication. However, very few studies have focused on how Nigerian Pidgin functions semiotically in online betting memes, especially within the context of social media marketing and youth culture. Most of the earlier works have concentrated on political cartoons, advertisements, or general memes, but have not explored the growing betting culture in Nigeria as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon.

This study is therefore concerned with filling that gap by analyzing the semiotic features of Nigerian Pidgin in betting memes that circulate on online platforms such as Twitter and WhatsApp. The study focuses on how these memes use signs, symbols, and cultural references to express emotions like frustration, excitement, and hope among Nigerian youths who engage in betting. It also aims to show how the combination of language (Pidgin) and

visual elements (images and emojis) helps create humor and shared meaning in digital spaces.

While previous studies like Adewumi (2020) and Nwosu (2021) have discussed memes and youth communication, they did not specifically examine the linguistic creativity of Nigerian Pidgin in betting contexts. This study goes further by using Semiotic Theory (Saussure, 1983; Peirce, 1931) and Social Semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) to explain both the structural and social meanings of the memes. Semiotic Theory helps in identifying the relationship between signs (such as images, texts, and symbols) while Social Semiotics explains how these signs reflect real-life Nigerian experiences and values.

The concern of this study is not just to describe the memes but to interpret how Nigerian Pidgin is used as a tool of communication and identity in the betting community. Betting memes have become a new way through which Nigerians express their frustrations, hopes, and humor about daily life, especially economic struggles. By studying these memes, the

research highlights how digital communication mirrors social reality through creative language use.

Finally, this study contributes to knowledge by linking linguistics, semiotics, and digital culture in a unique way. It shows that Nigerian Pidgin is not just a spoken language but also a visual and cultural symbol used to express ideas in modern online environments. The study therefore provides a fresh understanding of how language and images combine to shape meaning, identity, and social interaction in Nigeria's digital betting culture.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presented the theoretical frameworks that guided the study. Two frameworks were used: Semiotic Theory and Social Semiotics. Semiotic Theory provided tools for breaking down the parts of each meme (the words, pictures, and symbols) to see what they stood for. Social Semiotics helped to explain how those parts were used in real social situations, why people chose certain words or images and how audiences read them in online spaces. Together, the two frameworks made it possible to explain both the internal make-up of memes and their social meanings in Nigerian betting culture.

3.1 Semiotic Theory

Semiotic Theory dealt with the basic logic of signs, like how forms (like words or pictures) came to represent ideas. Two classic views were especially useful: the Saussurean sign model and Peirce's sign types.

Saussure's model separated a sign into two linked parts: the signifier (the form perceived by the senses, for example, a Pidgin phrase or the picture in a meme) and the signified (the mental concept the form brought to mind). In practice, this meant that each meme was read as a set of form–meaning pairs. For instance, a short Pidgin caption such as “Na Chelsea don kill my game” functioned as a signifier; the thought of disappointment about a lost bet was the signified. Using Saussure helped to map out the direct correspondences between what viewers saw and the simple ideas those elements suggested.

Peirce's framework added a different angle by classifying signs into icons, indexes, and symbols. An icon resembled what it stood for, for example, a photograph of a crying person visually resembled sadness. An index pointed to something by causal or physical connection, a torn betting slip or a Bet9ja logo pointed to real betting activity or to a particular platform. A symbol relied on learned, cultural agreement, certain Pidgin phrases, betting jargon, or brand images had meaning because users in that culture accepted them as meaningful. Applying Peirce's categories allowed the analysis to show how different parts of memes worked in different ways:

some parts appealed by resemblance, others by association, and yet others by cultural code.

A few additional semiotic ideas were also used. Roland Barthes's distinction between denotation (the literal surface meaning) and connotation (the cultural or emotional associations) was applied to show the deeper layers of memes. For example, a crying face denoted sadness but could connote financial loss, shame, or comic exaggeration depending on the caption. The notions of syntagmatic (how signs were arranged together) and paradigmatic (the set of alternative signs that could have been chosen) were used to explain why a meme used Pidgin instead of Standard English, the choice carried social signals about tone, belonging, and informality.

In relation to the study, Semiotic Theory was used mainly for micro-analysis. Each meme was broken down into its visible parts (text, image, logos, emojis) and each part was labeled as signifier/signified and as icon/index/symbol where appropriate. This made the reading transparent and traceable: claims about meaning were tied to particular sign elements rather than to vague impressions. Semiotic tools therefore served to reveal how

Pidgin expressions and images combined to form compact, expressive messages in betting memes.

3.2 Social Semiotics

While Semiotic Theory focused on the structure of signs, Social Semiotics focused on how signs were used in social life. It treated meaning as something created through social use rather than fixed in a sign itself. This perspective stressed who used signs, for what purpose, and in which situations.

Key ideas from Social Semiotics that were applied included multimodality, context of use, and social action. Multimodality meant that meaning was produced by combining modes such as, language, image, layout, color, and even platform-specific features (like retweets or replies). In the memes, language (Pidgin) and visual elements were not separate: they worked together to perform social actions such as venting, joking, boasting, advising, or recruiting. The context (whether a meme was shared in a private WhatsApp group or posted publicly on Twitter) changed how it was likely to be read and why it was produced.

Social Semiotics also emphasized the user's role in meaning-making. That is, the same sign could be read differently depending on who saw it. For example, a brand's Pidgin meme could be read by young bettors as friendly encouragement, while regulators or older viewers might read it as irresponsible promotion. This view helped the analysis to move beyond what a meme literally showed and to discuss likely audience responses, social functions, and cultural implications.

For this study, Social Semiotics provided the macro-level interpretation. After identifying signs and their immediate meanings through semiotic micro-analysis, the study used social semiotic reasoning to explain why those meanings were meaningful in Nigeria's online betting culture. This included showing how Pidgin signaled group belonging, how humor functioned as a coping strategy, and how memes could both reflect and shape attitudes toward betting. Social Semiotics thus linked the sign-level findings to broader social themes such as youth identity, economic aspiration, and informal advice networks.

3.3 Conclusion

The two frameworks worked together to give a rounded reading of the data. Semiotic Theory allowed for precise, element-by-element readings of each meme, identifying signifiers, signifieds, and the types of signs involved. Social Semiotics then placed those readings into social context, explaining why particular sign choices mattered to users and what social functions the memes performed. Together, they enabled the study to show how Nigerian Pidgin in betting memes was not merely decorative language but an active resource for expressing feelings, building identity, and performing social actions online.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected for the study. The data consists of betting memes written in Nigerian Pidgin and shared on social media. The analysis is based on semiotic theory and social semiotics. Through these frameworks, each meme is examined to identify how words and images worked together to create meaning. The goal is to explain how Nigerian Pidgin serves as a linguistic and cultural tool for expressing emotions such as hope, frustration, humor, and social reflection in betting related contexts.

4.1 Data Presentation

The data for this study consists of 30 memes collected from Twitter and WhatsApp between 2023 and 2024. These platforms were selected because they are widely used by Nigerian youths who actively share betting-related content. The memes were selected purposively based on three conditions:

1. They contained Nigerian Pidgin expressions.
2. They were directly related to sports betting or betting experiences.
3. They include textual or visual signs that could be interpreted semiotically.
4. The memes are grouped into four major categories:

4.1.1 Memes expressing loss, regret and disappointment

Figure 1: So na like these the season won be chai Chelsea no fit score one goal!!!



Figure 2: Season never start



4.1.2 Memes expressing hope, joy and excitement about winning

Figure 3: Knowing that EPL is back



Figure 4: Normal 2-0



4.1.3 Memes reflecting humor, sarcasm and social commentary

Figure 5: How Man U open mouth swallow chelsea



Figure 6: Excited ke



4.1.4 Memes using family, everyday life, or identity to reflect betting culture

Figure 7: Abeg, chill small



Figure 8: Toney dey try force tears



Each group is analyzed using semiotic theory (signifier/signified) and social semiotics to explain how the memes communicate meaning through both language and culture.

4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 Memes expressing loss, regret and disappointment

These memes show emotions of pain, regret, and disappointment caused by losing bets. Nigerian Pidgin is used to express these emotions in humorous but realistic ways.

Figure 9: Sportybet dey among wetin spoil my life



Meme 1: “Sportybet dey among wetin dey spoil my life”

The meme contains the Pidgin text “Sportybet dey among wetin dey spoil my life” and an image of a man crying. The text and the image together communicate a sense of regret, sadness, and helplessness. In Nigerian betting culture, Sportybet is a popular betting platform, and the speaker used humor to express how betting had negatively affected him. In this meme , the signifier is the written or spoken phrase, while the signified is the deeper meaning which is that betting had caused emotional or financial harm to the speaker. Using Peirce’s model, the image of the crying man worked as an icon because it visually resembles the emotion of sadness being expressed. It also acts as an index, pointing to the cause of his sadness, that is the losses from Sportybet. The name “Sportybet” itself acts as a symbol, since its meaning depends on cultural understanding. Anyone familiar with Nigerian betting culture would immediately associate “Sportybet” with gambling, risk, and loss. Together, these signs create humor through exaggeration, the idea that a betting site was among the things “spoil” someone’s life. It was not meant literally, but it metaphorically highlighted how frequent

losses can frustrate bettors to the point of jokingly blaming the platform for their problems.

From a social semiotic perspective, the meme shows real social experiences among Nigerian youths. Betting is often seen as both a form of entertainment and a potential means of financial breakthrough. However, it also causes stress and disappointment when expectations are not met. By combining humor with sadness, the meme reflects how young people use Pidgin to share their frustrations in a relatable way. The meme also reveals the collective identity of online bettors who understood this kind of humor. It showed how language and visuals work together to express emotions that are not openly discussed, such as guilt or regret about gambling. Through humor, the meme helps the speaker and the audience laugh at a shared struggle.

Figure 10: And they warn me say



Meme 2: “And they warn me say make I use the money chop o”

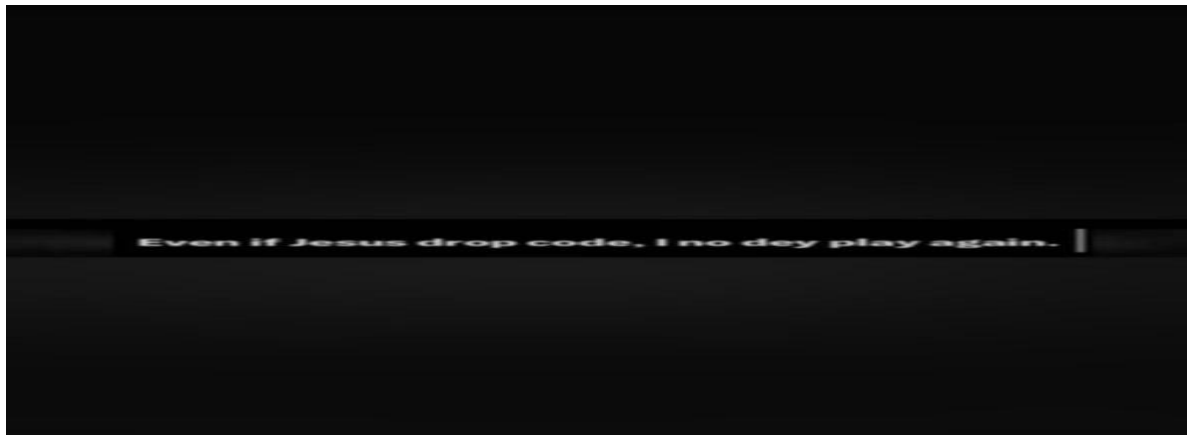
The meme contains the Pidgin text “And they warn me say make I use the money chop o” and an image of a man crying. The message expresses regret and self-blame. The speaker is reflecting on how people had advised him to spend the money on food or something useful instead of betting, but he ignored the warning, placed the bet, and lost everything. Using Saussure’s model, the Pidgin phrase acts as a sign that combines a signifier and a signified. The signifier is the phrase “And they warn me say

make I use the money chop o”, which literally meant that the speaker had been warned to use the money to eat. The signified is the regret and realization after losing the money to betting. From Peirce’s perspective, the crying man in the image acts as an icon of sorrow that is a visual representation of the emotion being described in the text. His tears indexed (or pointed to) a specific experience and loss from betting. The words “they warn me” adds a symbolic meaning that draws on the shared experience of being advised but refusing to listen, something many Nigerians can relate to. The humor in the meme came from exaggeration and irony. The combination of the crying image and the remorseful words created a scene where the speaker’s regret became almost comically relatable.

From a social semiotic angle, this meme reflects how Nigerian youths communicate real emotions through humor and irony. The use of Nigerian Pidgin gives the message a local and emotional tone. Phrases like “make I use the money chop o” carry deep cultural meaning “chop” in Pidgin means “eat,” but in a broader sense, it represents basic survival needs. So, the meme revealed a social contrast between necessity (eating) and risk (betting). The meme also reflects a common cultural narrative: ignoring

advice, acting on impulse, and later regretting the outcome. In the online betting community, such humor helps to ease the pain of losing and strengthens social bonds. By sharing this meme, bettors expressed regret and self-awareness in a way that others could laugh at, even when the situation was serious. The crying image symbolizes both emotional pain and social recognition as a way to say, “I made the same mistake too.” This shared meaning makes the meme powerful as a cultural and emotional statement.

Figure 11: Even if Jesus drop code



Meme 3: “Even if Jesus drop code, I no dey play again.”

This meme consists only of text “Even if Jesus drop code, I no dey play again.” It has no image, but the words alone carry strong emotional and

humorous meaning. In Nigerian betting language, a “code” refers to a special combination or prediction believed to guarantee a win. The meme expresses deep frustration from continuous losses, saying that even if Jesus Himself provides the game code, the person would no longer bet. Under Saussure’s semiotic model, the phrase works as a linguistic sign combining a signifier and signified. The signifier is the written or spoken Pidgin phrase itself. The signified is the feeling of final disappointment and loss of faith in betting. The expression “Even if Jesus drop code” functioned as a metaphor and a hyperbole. The use of the name “Jesus”, a symbol of divine perfection and trust exaggerated the speaker’s frustration. The meme implied that no matter how certain or holy a prediction might appear, the speaker’s experience had destroyed his belief in winning.

From the social semiotic perspective, this meme represented a social truth within Nigerian youth culture: the frustration and fatigue associated with betting losses. It reflected how young people use Pidgin and humor to manage emotional pain. The statement “I no dey play again” captured a common feeling among bettors who swear to stop gambling but often end up returning later. The use of Pidgin also grounds the message in Nigerian

reality. It carried the rhythm, tone, and informality typical of everyday conversations. The language shows belonging to a specific community, that is, those who bet, lose, and share similar experiences online. The humor lightens the mood, transforming disappointment into something laughable. In this way, the meme is not only a complaint but also a coping mechanism. It shows how people use jokes and exaggeration to express serious emotions. Through social semiotics, it could be understood as a digital performance of resilience and shared frustration.

Figure 12: Season never start, you don't already lose 9 slips — Benz plan don't turn Keké plan 🤔🚗➡️🚚



Meme 4: “Season never start, you don already lose 9 slips, Benz plan don turn keke plan”

This meme has an image of a football player looking weak and tired, almost as if he is about to collapse. The text, written in Nigerian Pidgin, said “Season never start, you don already lose 9 slips, Benz plan don turn keke plan.” The message expresses disappointment and frustration over repeated betting losses. The bettor had big dreams symbolized by “Benz” (a Mercedes-Benz car) but due to losing so many times, those dreams had been downgraded to a “keke” (a tricycle), which represents something much cheaper and less prestigious. Under Saussure’s semiotic theory, the meme is made up of signs that carry both signifiers (the words and the image) and signifieds (the meanings they represent). The phrase “Season never start” is the signifier representing the beginning of the football betting period. Its signified meaning is that the speaker has already suffered several losses even before the games had properly begun. The phrase “Benz plan don turn keke plan” is another strong signifier of failed aspirations. The signified meaning is that the dream of wealth or luxury from betting had turned into

disappointment and lower expectations. The image of the exhausted football player works as an icon of fatigue and defeat; he looks like someone who had been emotionally drained, just like the better in the text. It also acts as an index, pointing to the psychological effect of betting losses. The footballer's weakness visually represents the better's loss of hope and energy.

From a social semiotic perspective, this meme goes beyond language and humor; it reflects a real part of Nigerian social life. Many young people view betting as a possible escape from unemployment and financial hardship. The meme captures this economic hope and frustration perfectly. The use of Pidgin makes the message accessible and relatable. Expressions like "Benz plan don turn keke plan" sound natural, funny, and emotional. It is how Nigerians talk about their struggles in a playful way. The meme shows how Pidgin is not just a means of communication but a tool for expressing social truths and coping with disappointment. The humor in the meme is what makes it powerful. By exaggerating his loss from a Benz dream to a Keke reality, the speaker turned his pain into laughter. Social Semiotics explains this as a way of negotiating meaning in a community

where shared language and humor allow people to express collective frustration.

Figure 13: When the bet enter but I remember say



Meme 5: “When the bet enter but I remember say una go still collect am back if I stake again”

This meme has an image of a man doing the “calm down” hand gesture, showing a mix of excitement and restraint. The Pidgin text “When the bet enter but I remember say una go still collect am back if I stake again” expresses the feeling of a bettor who just won a bet but immediately

remembered how betting platforms often “collect” back the money through future losses. The humor comes from the irony of celebrating a win while knowing it might not last. The signifier here is the Pidgin sentence itself, along with the calm-down gesture in the image. The signified is the cautious realization that betting wins are usually temporary and the idea that the same platform that pays today might take everything tomorrow.

The image of the man is an icon, because it resembles a real person expressing calmness or self-control. His gesture is an index, directly pointing to the emotion of trying not to get too excited. The Pidgin text acts as a symbol, since it depends on shared cultural understanding among Nigerian betters who recognize the cycle of winning and losing.

From a social semiotic perspective, this meme represents the emotional pattern common in Nigeria’s betting community. It revealed a shared social experience, temporary success and eventual loss. The Pidgin language used is informal and familiar, which makes the message relatable. The phrase “una go still collect am back” is directed at the betting company in a joking, conversational tone, showing how bettors give human traits to betting apps or companies as if they had personal motives. This way of

talking reflects how Nigerian youths make sense of uncertainty in a humorous way. By using Pidgin, the meme carried social intimacy and it also spoke to “insiders” who understood the humor of constant wins and losses. The calm-down gesture in the image added another level of meaning. It visually communicates restraint and awareness, reinforcing the textual message. Together, they showed how visual and linguistic modes combine to form a complete semiotic text.

Interpretation of the Category:

Overall, these memes used crying faces, disappointment, and exaggeration as symbols of failure. The combination of Pidgin text and emotional images represented loss in a way that was both painful and funny. Through semiotic analysis, these memes show how Nigerian Pidgin serves as a language of shared frustration, while social semiotics showed how betting losses are normalized and turned into humor among peers.

4.2.2 Memes expressing hope, joy, and anticipation

This category focuses on memes that portray the emotional high and optimism that come with betting, especially before or after a win. In these memes, Nigerian Pidgin serves as a lively and expressive tool that captures joy, humor, and the shared dreams of bettors. The combination of images and text creates a playful yet socially meaningful commentary on how people find excitement in betting.

Figure 14: My mood afta I carry short game win



Meme 1: “My mood afta I carry short game win”

The meme shows two girls dancing happily with the caption “My mood afta I carry short game win.” In Nigerian betting slang, a “short game” refers to a simple or sure bet. The meme represents the joy and relief of winning after several possible losses. The Pidgin phrase “I carry short game win” is the signifier, and the signified meaning is the success and happiness from a betting win. The dancing girls act as icons, directly resembling joy and celebration. Together, the image and the text work as a complete sign, expressing fulfillment and excitement. The dancing image is also an index, pointing to the result of the event which is a successful bet. The text is a symbol, since only those familiar with betting and Pidgin could decode its real meaning. The humor came from the exaggeration of comparing a small betting win to a huge personal celebration.

From a social semiotic perspective, this meme reflects how betting creates moments of social excitement. The use of Pidgin made the meme sound natural and relatable, using familiar expressions that reflect the speaker’s environment. The dance symbolizes victory, while the Pidgin text carries a playful tone that connects with other betters who have felt the same joy. This meme shows how humor and celebration help Nigerian youths

build a sense of belonging. Winning a “short game” might not be a life-changing event, but it still becomes a reason to celebrate online.

Figure 15: EPL don come back



Meme 2: “EPL don come back, joy don set, Bet9ja go soon drop 5k bonus for my aza”

The meme shows the image of a man jumping for joy, with the Pidgin text celebrating the return of the English Premier League (EPL) and the hope of getting a bonus from Bet9ja. The signifier here is the Pidgin text filled with betting and banking slang “joy don set” and “for my aza.” The signified is the feeling of excitement and anticipation for new betting opportunities. In Peirce’s terms, the image of the man jumping symbolizes

hope and readiness. His body movement serves as an icon of happiness and as an index pointing to emotional excitement. The mention of “5k bonus” acts as a symbol, representing the reward system that betting platforms use to attract players.

From a social semiotic view, this meme reflects how Nigerian Pidgin combines humor with modern slang. The word “aza” (which means bank account) showed how internet slang, street language, and betting culture blend in online communication. The meme revealed how language evolves through social interaction. It also reflects a shared anticipation for a new football season and betting are deeply tied to Nigerian social life. The meme celebrates both entertainment and economic hope, using humor and visual energy to express collective excitement.

Figure 16: Na only sporty fit turn my 100 naira to 100 million.



Meme 3: “Na only sporty fit turn my 100 naira to 100 million. Make una clear road”

The meme is an image of a luxurious car with the Pidgin text “Na only sporty fit turn my 100 naira to 100 million. Make una clear road.” It expressed confidence and exaggerated hope. The signifier is the written Pidgin text, and the signified is the dream of turning a small amount into a fortune through betting. The image of the car worked as an icon of success and wealth, while the entire meme functioned as a symbol of ambition. In Peirce’s model, the humor arose from the unrealistic contrast between 100 naira and 100 million. The meme combines wishful thinking with confidence exaggerating betting optimism in a funny but meaningful way.

Socially, this meme captured a major part of Nigerian youth betting culture that is the dream of instant wealth. The phrase “Make una clear road” reflects boastfulness and playful pride, a tone common in Nigerian street talk. It shows how Pidgin is used to express bold emotions in a humorous way. The meme revealed how betting functions as both fantasy

and entertainment. It showed how people turn impossible hopes into social jokes, expressing ambition without shame.

Figure 17: See as local baby dey happy



Meme 4: “See as local baby dey happy, dey charge go new betting season.”

The meme shows a happy baby running with excitement. The text “See as local baby dey happy, dey charge go new betting season” used humor to describe bettors’ joy at the start of a new season. The image of the running baby is an icon representing joy and energy. The Pidgin phrase is the signifier, and the signified is human excitement toward a new opportunity to win. The word “charge” (meaning to be pumped up or ready) indexed enthusiasm and optimism.

Through Social Semiotics, the meme reflects how Nigerians often use humor and exaggeration to describe motivation. The use of “local baby” made the meme sound playful and communal. It is a way of saying that everyone, regardless of status, feels the same anticipation. The meme showed how Pidgin naturally mixes childlike imagery and adult humor to express emotions. It turned a simple act of joy into a shared online joke, showing how humor builds connection.

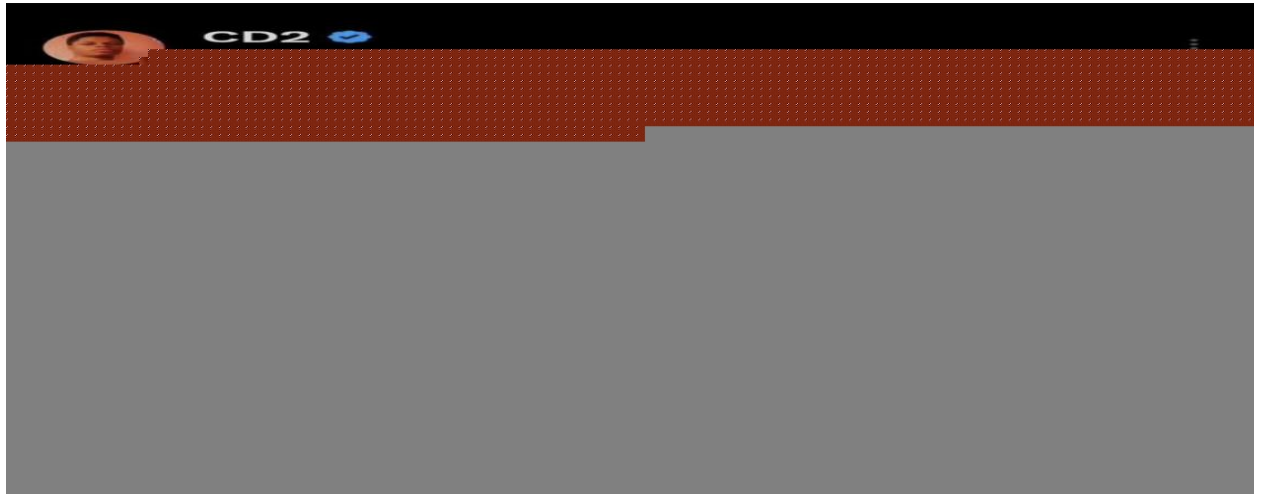
Interpretation of the Category:

These memes reflected the hopeful side of betting culture. Through Pidgin, betters shared joy and optimism, using language that felt natural and collective. Socially, they showed how betting created a sense of belonging and excitement despite economic challenges.

4.2.3 Memes Reflecting Humor and Sarcasm

This category includes memes that use humor to mock, tease, or exaggerate betting experiences.

Figure 18: From Sporty go Spotify



Meme 1: “From Sporty go Spotify.”

Here, the image of a tired man with headphones symbolizes defeat. The text played on word similarity, making “Sporty” and “Spotify” sound alike. Semiotic analysis showed wordplay as a major humorous strategy. Socially, it reflected how people use jokes to ease disappointment.

Figure 19: Na who go cut my ticket

Meme 2: “Na who go cut my ticket I go fight today.”

The man waiting angrily represents frustration mixed with comedy. The “breaking news” caption exaggerated the seriousness of the situation. This meme combines humor and aggression to express disappointment while still making light of it.

Figure 20: So na like dis the season won be



Meme 3: “So na like dis the season won be, chai Chelsea no fit score one goal!”

The crying man image represents emotional breakdown, while the text expressed disbelief. The humor comes from exaggeration. Socially, it showed how football failures are tied to emotional identity among bettors.

Figure 21: Play 200 naira to win 200k

Meme 4: “Play 200 naira to win 200k, slip cut I tell people I lose 200k.”

The meme relied only on text but carried irony. The signifier was the exaggeration of loss, while the signified was pride in pretending to have lost big money. Socially, it reflected self-mockery and the playful exaggeration common among bettors.

Interpretation of the Category:

These memes used humor and irony to turn disappointment into laughter. Semiotics explained how signs like tears, sarcasm, and exaggeration built humor, while social semiotics showed that this humor served as a coping mechanism for economic frustration.

4.2.4 Memes Using Family, Everyday Life, or Identity to Reflect Betting Culture

Figure 22: See person wey suppose advice me

Meme 1: “See person wey suppose advice me”

This meme shows a father and son betting together with the caption “See person wey suppose advice me.” The signifier is the family setting and the caption expressing irony. The signified is the moral confusion which is the father, expected to warn the son, joins him instead. The image of both smiling represents acceptance of what should have been criticized. In Peirce’s model, the father and son are icons of family, while their action

serves as an index of cultural change. The text becomes a symbol of how social roles shift under modern pressures like gambling and entertainment.

This meme reflects family identity and shared behavior. It uses humor to expose a deeper truth which is that betting has become part of normal family interaction. The Pidgin sentence sounds casual and familiar, which helps the humor land naturally. Socially, the meme highlights how moral authority has weakened in some contexts, and how humor is used to make that message easier to digest.

Figure 23: Sporty gimme money for my textbook now

Meme 2: “Sporty gimme money for my textbook now”

The meme shows an image of a young man with his fists raised in anger, as if ready to fight. The Pidgin caption, “Sporty gimme money for my textbook now”, expresses frustration after losing money that was meant for something important. In Saussure’s semiotic model, the signifier is the text and image combined with the angry expression and the demand for money. The signified is the feeling of regret and helplessness that comes after losing money through betting. Using Peirce’s model, the angry pose of the man serves as an icon of frustration, while it also acts as an index pointing to the consequences of gambling. The betting platform “Sporty” becomes a symbol of misplaced hope and dependency. The meme blends humor and irony as the bettor demands his lost money back from an app that cannot hear him, showing the emotional side of betting through exaggerated reactions.

From a social semiotic point of view, the meme reflects a common Nigerian experience using money meant for essentials, like school or food, for betting. The use of Pidgin makes the message sound like a street-level outburst, creating humor while exposing social truth. The meme portrays how financial pressure and the search for quick wealth shape youth

behavior. Through humor, it also highlights personal accountability and the irony of blaming betting companies for one's choices.

Figure 24: Girl wey sabi bet” / “Me

Meme 3: “Girl wey sabi bet” / “Me”

The meme displayed a man and a woman, with text labels “girl wey sabi bet” (girl who knows how to bet) and “me.” The man appears to admire the woman, suggesting attraction or respect for her skill in betting. Using Saussure's model, the words “girl wey sabi bet” and “me” are signifiers representing the idea of attraction and shared interest. The signified meaning

is admiration toward someone with similar interests. The image of the man looking at the woman worked as an icon for romantic or social interest. In Peirce's view, the phrase "wey sabi bet" acted as a symbol of intelligence, awareness, and modern identity. Within the betting community, knowing how to bet carries social prestige. The humor came from turning this into a lighthearted romantic statement.

From a social semiotic standpoint, the meme expressed how shared hobbies create identity and social bonds. Betting, though serious, becomes a topic for jokes and flirtation. The use of Pidgin made the language of attraction simple, playful, and authentic. It reflected how Nigerian social media users use humor to build community and express modern relationships. The text on top also signifies how Non-nigerians also identify with Nigerians through pidgin as the composer of the text is not a Nigerian.

Figure 25: Toney dey try force tears.



Meme 4: “Toney dey try force tears. Person wey him GG & ov 2.5 don enter.” / “So sorry for people who don’t understand pidgin and betting.”

This meme appeared as a post and a reply. The first post describes a bettor “forcing tears” of joy after winning, while the second comment mocked outsiders who couldn’t understand betting slang or Pidgin. The text “Toney dey try force tears” was the signifier, while the signified was the exaggerated act of pretending to cry from joy. The humor comes from the overstatement of emotion after winning a bet. Using Peirce’s model, the words and betting slang like “GG” (both teams to score) and “ov 2.5” (over

2.5 goals) functioned as symbols they require insider knowledge to decode. The interaction between both posts acted as an index of group belonging; only those who understood the code could enjoy the joke.

From a social semiotic angle, the meme highlights how online language builds social identity. The reply “So sorry for people who don’t understand pidgin and betting” drew a line between insiders (bettors who get the joke) and outsiders. The meme reflects how Nigerian online communities use shared slang to create belonging and humor. It showed that betting culture has its own coded communication, where Pidgin acts as both a linguistic bridge and a gatekeeper.

Interpretation of the Category:

These memes highlighted how language and culture meet in online spaces. Through Pidgin, people communicated shared identity, community, and commentary on social issues. Semiotics revealed how symbols of youth, language, and sport merged to reflect Nigerian digital culture.

4.3 Summary of Findings

The analysis showed that Nigerian Pidgin served as the main tool for expressing collective emotions in betting memes. It allowed users to communicate complex feelings like loss, hope, and humor in simple and relatable ways. Semiotic theory helped identify how text and images formed meaning through the signifier-signified relationship, while social semiotics revealed how these meanings connected real social experiences.

Overall, the memes reflected the realities of Nigerian youth culture, economic struggles, humor as coping, and the use of Pidgin as both a social and cultural identity marker. Betting memes therefore became more than jokes; they were social commentaries that represented the shared life of many young Nigerians.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of the entire research, presents the major findings, and concludes the study. The work explored how Nigerian Pidgin is used in betting memes to express humor, frustration, identity, and everyday struggles. The study relied on Semiotic Theory and Social Semiotics as its guiding frameworks, and data were drawn from online memes that use Nigerian Pidgin within betting contexts. This chapter therefore revisits the main ideas discussed in the previous chapters and highlights what the study revealed.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study set out to examine the semiotic and linguistic features of Nigerian Pidgin as used in betting memes circulating on social media. The research was guided by the desire to understand how language and images combine to create meaning and humor among Nigerian youths who engage

in sports betting. The focus was on identifying how Nigerian Pidgin serves as a language of identity and self-expression within the online betting community. The first chapter introduced the study by providing background information on the growth of betting culture in Nigeria, the spread of Nigerian Pidgin as a unifying language, and the emergence of memes as a creative form of communication. The problem of the study was stated as the lack of scholarly attention to how Nigerian Pidgin operates as a semiotic tool in online betting memes. The second chapter reviewed related literature, focusing on key concepts such as semiotics, Nigerian Pidgin, memes, and social media marketing. Previous studies on memes and humor were also reviewed to situate this work within existing scholarship.

Chapter Three presented the theoretical framework and methodology. The study adopted both Semiotic Theory and Social Semiotics to interpret how meaning is produced and understood in memes. Semiotic Theory provided tools for analyzing the relationship between signifiers and signifieds, while Social Semiotics emphasized how context and culture shape meaning. The data were collected from online platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp and analyzed qualitatively. Chapter Four focused on data

analysis. The memes were grouped into categories such as Memes Expressing Loss and Frustration, Memes Showing Hope and Anticipation, Memes Using Humor and Sarcasm, and Memes Reflecting Everyday Life and Identity. Each meme was analyzed using the theoretical frameworks to reveal how language and visuals work together to communicate emotions and experiences related to betting.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study revealed that Nigerian Pidgin plays a major role in expressing emotions, humor, and shared experiences within the online betting community. It shows how bettors use Pidgin creatively to tell stories of wins, losses, and expectations in ways that connect with others. The use of Pidgin not only makes the memes relatable but also builds a sense of belonging among young Nigerians who see betting as part of their social reality.

Semiotically, the memes combine text and images to form signs that carry multiple layers of meaning. The text (signifier) in Pidgin connects to ideas of hope, frustration, or sarcasm (signified), while the images

strengthen these meanings through visual cues such as facial expressions or body posture. Social Semiotics further revealed that the cultural context particularly youth identity, economic hardship, and entertainment plays a strong role in how these memes are interpreted. Another key finding is that humor serves as both a coping mechanism and a form of social commentary. Even though betting often leads to loss, the memes use laughter to manage disappointment. In doing so, they expose broader issues like unemployment, the desire for quick wealth, and the creativity of Nigerian youths in making meaning from their struggles. Overall, the study found that betting memes are more than just jokes. They are rich semiotic texts that reflect the linguistic, social, and emotional realities of everyday Nigerians. They show how language, especially Nigerian Pidgin, operates as a bridge between personal expression and collective experience.

5.3 Conclusion

This study concludes that Nigerian Pidgin serves as a powerful semiotic tool in the creation and interpretation of betting memes. Through the interaction of language and image, memes communicate complex

emotions and reflect the social experiences of Nigerian youths. The analysis confirmed that Semiotic Theory helps to identify the signs and their meanings, while Social Semiotics explains how these meanings depend on social context and cultural understanding. By examining betting memes, the study contributes to existing knowledge on digital communication, Nigerian Pidgin, and semiotics. It also shows that humor and creativity remain central to how Nigerians engage with modern challenges. In essence, the study highlights the power of ordinary online expressions to capture deep aspects of culture, identity, and collective experience.

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APPENDICES

Additional Memes Collected for the Study:

The following memes were part of the data collected for this study but were not included in the main analysis presented in Chapter Four. They still reflect the humorous and expressive nature of Nigerian Pidgin in online betting culture. Each meme combines text and image (where available) to communicate emotions such as frustration, excitement, humor, or disappointment among bettors.

1. “Na only the day I bet u dey post about betting, and d game dey always later cut.”

Description: The image shows a man with a sad expression holding a bottle of alcohol.

Interpretation: The meme expresses the frustration of a bettor who feels that each time a particular friend posts about betting, his own game ends up failing (“cutting”). It humorously links personal misfortune to superstition or coincidence.

2. “Politics ankasa you just have to be brilliant and smart. See how Mahama spoke pidgin because he was talking to the youth concerning betting.”

Description: No image attached.

Interpretation: This meme connects political strategy and popular culture. It highlights how politicians use Nigerian Pidgin to communicate with young people, especially on

relatable topics like betting, showing that the language is now part of social and political discourse.

3. “Na this kind thing dey make you swear off betting.”

Description: The image shows a list of several betting losses.

Interpretation: This meme captures the repeated disappointment bettors experience after losing. The phrase “swear off betting” suggests a temporary vow to quit, but it is often said humorously, reflecting the addictive and emotional nature of betting.

4. “As the bet enter, na so I forget myself next thing, house don dey burn.”

Description: The image shows a man using a bucket of water to put out a house fire.

Interpretation: This meme uses exaggeration to show how bettors lose self-control when they win. The humor lies in the overreaction while celebrating so much that something important goes wrong.

5. “Chelsea don kill my game.”

Description: The image shows a man who looks beaten up, with the caption “Breaking news: Local man is not doing again.”

Interpretation: The meme uses physical exhaustion and “breaking news” parody to dramatize the pain of losing a bet because of a football team (Chelsea). It humorously expresses how emotionally attached bettors can be to their teams.

6. “Premier League don dey load, I don already hold my Bet9ja slip like certificate.”

Description: The image shows an animal holding onto an object tightly.

Interpretation: This meme reflects anticipation and hope. The bettor’s excitement for a new football season is humorously likened to someone holding a certificate to a symbol of achievement and future success.

7. “Knowing that EPL is back dis week, no more dull weekend.”

Description: The image shows a happy child smiling, with a Yoruba phrase “inimikandun” (meaning “I’m happy”).

Interpretation: The meme shows how football and betting seasons bring excitement to Nigerians. It uses a mix of English, Pidgin, and Yoruba to reflect linguistic creativity and local identity.

8. “Nobody sabi odds like us.”

Description: The image shows a cartoon man surrounded by money, holding cash and a bag full of money.

Interpretation: This meme celebrates betting expertise and portrays bettors as skilled risk-takers. It uses exaggeration to create a humorous sense of confidence and community pride among bettors.

Note: All memes were sourced from Twitter and WhatsApp between 2024-2025. Each meme reflects the creative linguistic and visual strategies that characterize Nigerian online betting culture.