

## **Representational Meaning of Action and Reaction Processes of Insecurity Cartoons Used in *Daily Trust Newspaper*: A Multimodal Approach**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates the multimodal resources employed in selected *Daily Trust* newspaper cartoons in socio-cultural domain. Its objective is to substantiate the cohesion and correlation among all the action and reaction processes of the represented participants (RPs) and how they are used to convey meaning in the cartoon news. The research has chosen only representational meaning of the three layers of meaning (i.e. representational, interactive and compositional); and investigates the inter-semiotic relations between image and text as well as attainable contextual factors that buttress the cartoon images. The representational aspect focuses only on narrative structure under representational layer of meaning. Therefore, in order to examine the aforementioned features and their visual elements in the cartoons, the study adopts multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The methodology used are observation and purposive sampling techniques. Hence, four (4) *Daily Trust* newspaper cartoons were selected as data for the research to account for various areas portraying the use of insecurity in the cartoons nationwide. The findings of the study reveal that *Daily Trust* newspaper uses predominantly action and reaction processes which present the cartoons as so active in demonstrating the insecurity situation in the country under narrative representations. Also, the study shows that the use of multimodal resources in the cartoons is a veritable tool in aiding viewers to understand the composition of the cartoons. Moreover, it discovered that, careful selection of linguistic and nonlinguistic elements such as images, colours and texts correlate to produce a cohesive and an enticing meaning of the composition. Thus, it is regarded as different types of modes which fulfill meaning making.

### **Introduction**

This paper analyses different ways in which action and reaction processes express meaning representation by represented participants in the cartoons that visually communicate social, political and security issues etc. and messages in newspaper cartoons published in the *Daily Trust* newspaper. Thus, understanding language in its various links with media enables us to appreciate more on how represented participants actively communicate purposes which include information dissemination, a sense of mutual understanding and knowledge about social, economic, political, security and other related events that make up our social life in a society. In order to demonstrate the central arguments, the analysis of cartoons from *Daily Trust* newspaper are presented. ‘‘Cartoons are pictorial representations that employ visual rhetoric to convey messages that reflect what happen in the society. These messages are

usually constructed in such a way that they identify images of individuals, group or events and describe them according to the ways they refer to real-world events” (Elkins, 2003:17). The paper intends to highlight how cartoons present the actual nature in which it reveals the meaning and ideologies of security through actions and reactions of the represented participants visually acted in the cartoons. Thus, the narrative process which include both actions and reactions of the RPs are regarded as different systems or possible ‘channels’ which achieve meaning making practices are identified as semiotic modes. Thus, some meaning making practices or communicative events present the multimodality.

### **Multimodality**

Multimodality is the employment of more than one semiotic mode to convey meaning. It explores how various semiotic modes are combined within a sociocultural domain to create a semiotic product or event (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2001). The modes in non-linguistic field may be static or dynamic. Communication over the past few decades has become increasingly multimodal and literacy is considered to be beyond language. The underlying idea behind multimodal communication is that multimodal message is more convincing (Messaris 1996). Language is only part of the process of communication and therefore an exploration of the various modes is essential (Kress, 2010). This implies that all the discourses are multimodal (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Halloran, 2004). According to Lim (2004: p12), “we live in a multimodal society, which makes meaning through the co-employment of semiotic resources.” Nowadays, multimodal communication, instead of monomodal communication has become the mainstream of communication by human beings. Most newspapers and magazines add visual images concerned with the contents of newspapers and magazine articles. These visuals such as pictures, photos, and caricatures, etc. are adopted to transmit the information of newspaper and magazine articles. Multimodality is one of characteristics embedded in these pieces of discourse.

### **Action and Reaction Processes**

Action process occurs when one participant from which vector departs is named ‘‘Actor’’. If visual images only include one participant, it is usually an Actor. The process is non-transactional in which action has no Goal and ‘‘is not ‘done to’ or ‘aimed at’ anyone or anything’’ (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:63). However, the transactional structure consists of both Actor and Goal. Goal is ‘‘the participant at whom or which the vector is directed’’ (p.64) while the Process is reactional in which ‘‘the vector is formed by an eyeline, by the direction of the glance of one or more of the represented participants’’ (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 67). It contains two components: reactor and phenomena. Reactor is one who conducts the looking behavior. It could be human or human-like animal. Phenomenon is ‘‘the participant at whom or which the reactor is looking’’ (p.67).

### **Perspective of Insecurity in Nigeria**

Since 1960, when Nigeria gained independence from Britain, the country has faced instability and violence. Apart from the fact that the country experienced several military coups between 1960s and early 1990s, which almost destabilized and forced the country to its knees, the

demand from various pressure groups from different parts of the country also pose threats to the nation thus contributing significantly to the country's present heinous security situation. Regrettably, some of the security difficulties have resulted in widespread loss of lives and properties (Awodola & Oboshi, 2015) and environmental degradation with catastrophic implications for Nigerians and neighboring states. As Kah (2017) noted, the continent's acute food problem or insecurity is partially the result of these costly conflicts and bad governance.

Many researches have been conducted on Multimodal Discourse Analysis of newspaper cartoons using different perspectives to convey meanings. Some of them are: Abubakar (2024), Ibrahim (2022), Mowaffy (2022), Makinde (2023), Edogbanya (2023), Awoniyi (2023), Salamatu (2022), Omosebi (2021), Aljarrah et al. (2021), Oluremi (2019), Danja (2019), Elfalaki (2019), Jabeen (2018), Salihu (2017), Amore & Atoloye (2016), Baker (2016), Yang & Zang (2014), Aryuni (2012), Medubi (2003) among many more research.

This study seeks to examine the representational meaning of action and reaction processes of insecurity cartoons used in *Daily Trust* newspaper from multimodal perspective. A few research have been done on newspaper insecurity cartoons with special consideration on the multimodal resources attached to the cartoons to make meaning. These few works were conducted by Abubakar (2024) who investigates multimodal discourse analysis of insecurity cartoons used in *Daily Trust* newspaper. His study reveals that careful selection of linguistic and nonlinguistic elements such as images, colors, and texts correlate to produce a cohesive and an enticing meaning of the composition. Muhammad & Terver (2020) investigates the representation of Nigeria's insecurity situation in selected online cartoons using multimodal approach. He is of the opinion that the study of multimodal discourse extends from the study of language in isolation to the study of language in combination with other resources such as images and scientific symbolism. For obvious reasons, cartoonists use incongruity and multimodal resources in their semantic engagement with their target audience not just as tactics for humour production but also for strategic communication. Abada and Ngwu (2019) opine that corruption fuels insecurity in the Niger Delta region and remark militancy in the regional elections. These criminals, who were unemployed after the elections, sought employment via militancy, which ultimately evolved into the bombing of oil sites and abduction of foreign oil employees for ransom, therefore increasing the incidences of oil theft. According to International Crisis Group (2018), the 2014 abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in Borno State and a slew of other security incidents over the last few years demonstrate that securing towns and communities across the vast northeastern region affected by Boko Haram insurgency or within militant's striking range, as well as states where kidnapping and other vices are rapidly becoming the norm, is a massive challenge for the Nigerian government and security forces. This may explain why insecurity is seen as a hydra-headed monster in the nation and why all-inclusive action is advocated daily. Also, Abdulkadir (2017) dwelled on the causes and incisive solutions to the widespread of kidnappings in Nigeria, while Abdullahi (2019) wrote on rural banditry, regional security and integration in West Africa. Also, stories abound on national dailies on the activities of Boko Haram and bandits across the nation

## Methodology

The focus of this paper is to study the representational meaning of action and reaction processes in meaning making of insecurity cartoons used in *Daily Trust* newspaper. This research uses purposive sampling technique and observation for data collection. The data for this research were sourced from *Daily Trust* newspaper cartoons of the years 2019-2021. A total number of four (4) insecurity cartoons were purposefully selected. This is because cartoons are embellished with different actions and reactions which are meaning making strategies in communication. The data were analysed using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) which combines both action and reaction processes.

## Theoretical Framework

The study adopts multimodal discourse analysis theory as proposed/modified by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) as its theoretical framework. The focus of the theory considers how multimodal texts are designed and how semiotic tools such as colors, framing, focus, and positioning of elements contribute to the making meaning in these texts. It involves examining the ways in which modes like images, videos, sounds, and pictures combine with words to construct meaning (Paltridge, 2012).

The multimodal has four basic assumptions, such as: images and other semiotic resources do not support meaning, rather they contribute to it; language alone presents a partial view of what is expressed; various forms of modalities were selected by people while constructing a meaning; meaning creating modalities are social (Jewett, 2009). The theory analyzes images based on semiotic principles describing meaning as representational. In a nutshell, multimodal discourse analysis seeks to examine how various kinds of modalities interlink to create a unified text.

Based on the assumptions, the framework is categorized under three headings namely: representational (ideational) meaning, interactive (interpersonal) meaning, and compositional (textual) meaning appropriate for analysis of multimodal texts. Hence, this research chooses narrative representational meaning aspect being the catch all term for all the three.

Thus, “any semiotic mode has to be able to represent aspects of the world as it is experienced by humans. In other words, it has to be able to represent objects and their relation in a world outside the representational system” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 42). Again, narrative representation refers that “when participants are connected by a vector, they are represented as doing something to or for each other” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 59). Such kind of vectorial patterns focus on illustrating “unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangement” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.59). Also, action process basically deals with the vector formed by represented participant’s action (actor) while reaction process deals with vector formed by an eye-line of the represented participants (reactor).

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the processes under representational meaning link “visual participants” to each other. The presence of vector, formed by some part of the represented participant or by an abstraction such as arrow, signifies narrative process. These processes in turn may be transactional involving an actor (from whom the vector emanates) and a goal (towards which vector is directed), or they may be non-transactional, involving only an actor. A distinct kind of narrative process is the “Reaction” signified by an eye-line vector. It may also be transactional, involving Senser/Reactor (the one who looks) and the phenomenon (the one looked at), or non-transactional involving only a vector.

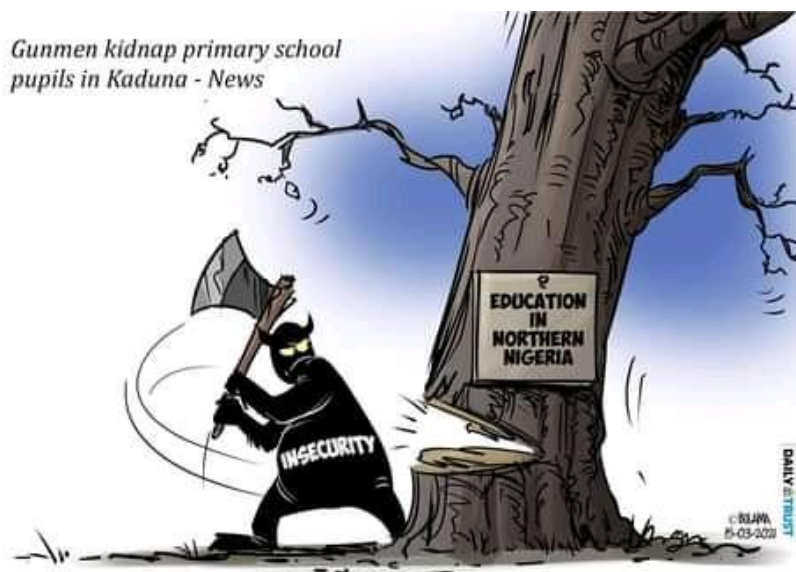
The focus of this paper is to study action and reaction processes of insecurity cartoon used in *Daily Trust* newspaper.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

This section discusses the presentation and analysis of the sampled data. Data is presented based on the objectives of the study. Also, the samples of the data are presented to describe, explain, discuss and analyse both action and reaction processes for meaning construction through narrative representations

#### Sample 1

In sample 1, an image of a very big tree nearly to be cut down with a tag EDUCATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA is shown at the right side of the cartoon while at the left side of the cartoon is an image of a devil-like (caricature) holding an axe with a tag INSECURITY hitting the tree continuously with the aim to cut it down completely.



Sample 1. *The Daily Trust*, March, 17<sup>th</sup> 2021

#### Narrative representation of S1

The cartoon sample is narrative representation with transactional processes. It is mainly concerned with action, experience, and events, mainly including action process, reaction processes. Thus, they will be analysed as follows:

### **A. Action Process**

Action process is seen in the caricature representing gunmen (bandits) tagged with the word INSECURITY cutting a tree. The vector is formed by action directed at the tree. The person is the actor while the tree is the goal. The action process in this visual is transactional since there is an actor which the vector is directed at. The image conveys the meaning that the cartoonist tries to show how insecurity killed education by more than 70% (percent) as seen in the visual where the devil-like (caricature) represents the devils that are responsible for destroying (*action process*) education in the North as represented by a tree.

### **B. Reaction Process**

Reaction process is with the same person tagged with INSECURITY looking at the tree. The vector here unlike in the action process is formed by an eye-line directed at the tree tagged EDUCATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA. The person is the Reactor while the tree is the Phenomenon. The devil's eyes that were seen cutting the tree (Northern Nigeria) indicate mercilessness towards killing education.

Also, the looking behaviour formed by the devil's eye-line (*reactor*) indicates their seriousness/target towards destroying (*vector*) education in the north (reaction process). This is clear as many students/pupils were kidnapped at the doorsteps of their classes. This led to almost total collapse/closure of the education system in northern Nigeria (as many schools were shut down then) with almost everybody showing concern about the issue. Also, this concurred with Sani (2012:11) who asserts that "Nigerian political cartoons set social agenda by mainly encapsulating current and sensitive issues that people have much concern about". Thus, the entire portrayal i.e. tree (*phenomenon*) representing north and the devil's action against it, describes the whole cruel acts to destroy education in the north.

## **Sample 2**

Furthermore, this cartoon sample gives a vivid description of security challenges in Nigeria and Chad and how both countries deal with the situation. Therefore, in the cartoon, we can see a long, thick, black standing tree tagged with BOKO HARAM at the centre of the image while from the right is a representative of a Chadian army seriously dealing with Boko Haram in an amazing way. Also, from the left are three (3) people representing Nigerians: two men standing and a woman lying down on the ground both of whom are praising the job well done by the Chad forces while slamming the effort of Nigerian army for their poor performance in dealing with the BH (insecurity).



Sample 2. *The Daily Trust* 1st April, 2020

### Narrative representation of S2

Thus, this cartoon sample too, is a narrative representation with transactional processes that include action process and reaction processes. Hence, the processes will be analysed as follows:

#### A. Action Process

In this sample of the cartoon, multiple action processes are portrayed by RPs (Chad forces and 3 Nigerians). The first transactional action process could be noticed from the side of Chad forces as they are clearing/firing/cutting the tree representing Boko Haram (BH). This is clear as so many damages could be observed. Thus, it could be noted how action emanates from the Chad forces (*actors*). The Chad forces are regarded as the actors while the tree (BH) is the goal. And the action of holding the axe/gun is regarded as the vector. Yet another action process could be seen from the three (3) people representing Nigeria as they engaged themselves in different activities in an amazing way. Also, the multiple signs of bullets against the tree represents war (crisis) and indicates that if Nigeria does not take urgent action the whole country would be washed away. The first among the two Nigerian men from the right was seen yelling /stretching his hands in the air (*action process*) Hence, an action (*vector*) could be noticed which emanates from one of the RPs at the right side (*actor*) in transactional way. Another action can be noticed from the other RP (the one from the left) and a vector emanates from him as he is seen browsing the photo news from his phone (*action process*). Therefore, the man is the actor, while the phone is the goal that also caused the emanation of the vector in transactional way.

Similarly, another transactional action process is seen from the other RP (female Nigerian) while her hands stand to be as an actor, her jaw stands to be a goal. Hence, the coming together of both actor and goal is what makes it transactional. Again, an action (*vector*) of

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supporting hands with the jaw that emanates from the actor is the vector and further represents her emotion on how Chad forces dealt with B.H. (*goal*).

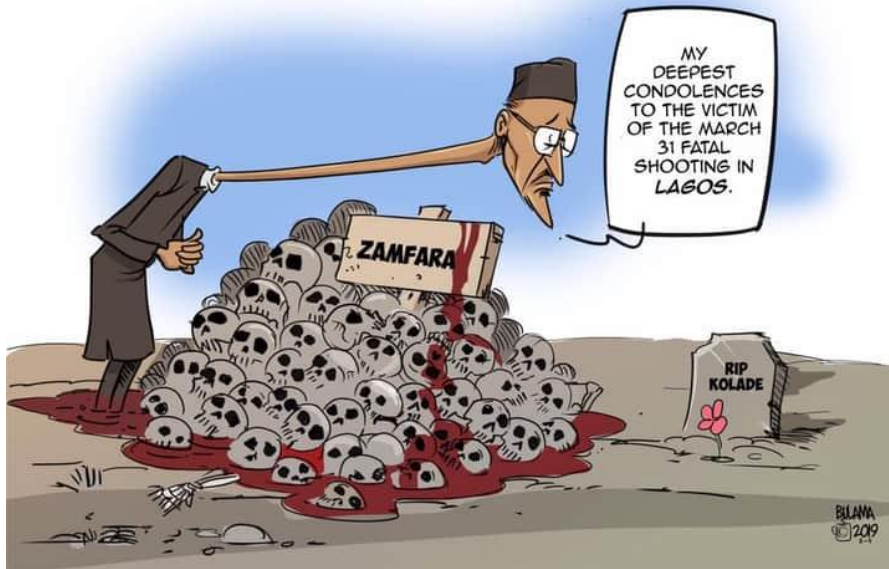
### ***B. Reaction Process***

Similarly, reaction process is noticed from the gaze of the RPs directed at BH and Chad forces. It is considered as transactional reaction process since the vector departs from Nigerians' eye-lines and directed at Chad forces who are seen firing against BH. The Nigerians here, are the Reactors while Chad force(s) is the Phenomenon which the looking behaviour is directed at. More so, the cartoonist further portrayed to Nigerians how serious the Chad government and its forces are when compared to that of Nigeria. This is done by indicating a huge success in the fight against the insurgents on the side of the Chad forces given that they caused more on damages to B.H than the Nigerian troops. This could clearly be noticed from the action (*vector*) formed by their (*reactors*) eye-line against the tree representing BH (*phenomenon*).

Generally, the portrayal conveys the meaning that the cartoonist tries to draw the attention of Nigerians to show them a way in which their persistent insecurity will come to an end as he, (the cartoonist) pictured how Chadian forces dealt with the gang of BH by taking the war to their doorsteps and finished them (*action process*). Furthermore, the cartoonist describes the Nigerian government and its forces as 'useless' (through one of the RPs in verbal process) since they failed to bring such insurgency to an end. Again, from the side of Nigerian men and woman (in the visual), the cartoonist also shows how they are eager to see that peace is restored in their country. Consequently, the cartoonist depicts the quest by Nigerians to leave the country for another neighboring countries either in search of greener pasture or in search of peace as thought/dreamt by one by one of the RPs in the cartoon (i.e. the female Nigerian).

### **Sample 3**

Again, this sample of the cartoon image gives a description of a long-neck President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) condoling a single victim of a fatal shooting in Lagos while neglecting the loss of many lives in Zamfara State. Zamfara people are seen in a serious bloodshed caused by gunmen without receiving any condolence from him (PMB) while he condoles the loss of a single life of one Kolade in Lagos.



**Sample 3. *The Daily Trust* 16th March, 2019**

### **Narrative Presentational Meaning of S3**

The image depicts narrative representation with transactional reaction processes that consist of only a reaction process. Hence, the process will be analysed as follows:

#### **A. Reaction Process**

Reaction process is also noticed in the gaze of the RP directed at Kolade's grave. This is also transactional reaction process as the vector departs from PMB's eye-line directed at Kola's grave. The standing RP (i.e. PMB) is the Reactor while the other RP Kolade's grave is the phenomenon which the looking behaviour is directed at.

The underlined message the cartoonist wants to pass to the public or viewers is that PMB (*reactor*) shows more concern to the southerners than the Northerners as observed from his gaze (*vector*) towards Kola's grave (phenomenon) which is representing the south. This is a clear indication in the cartoon as how (PMB) refuses to condole the loss of many souls in Zamfara who were left in bloodshed as the red color symbolizes. However, PMB only condoled a single life loss in Lagos. He (the cartoonist) in the visual, further shows that a single life in the south is more worthy than that of hundreds of the Northerners, where PMB comes from. This is clearly indicated in the cartoon image and confirmed by Jabeen and Ahmad (2018:17) that communicators select and choose the semiotic resources that disseminates desired meanings.

### **Sample 4**

In addition, sample 4 displays a group picture which consists of top government officials among which include the President Muhammadu Buhari, A'isha Buhari (PMB's wife), PMB's spokesman, Garba Shehu, Abba Kyari, Adamu Adamu among others. The first lady is

seen stretching hands shouting against CABALS. The CABALS and PMB are seen busy complaining about the multiple problems facing the country which include economic problem, poor educational quality coupled with acts of terrorism (Boko haram, kidnapping, insecurity).



Sample 4. *The Daily Trust* 18th August, 2019

#### Narrative representation Meaning of S4

This is narrative representation with transactional action process and reaction processes. Thus, the items are analysed as follows:

##### A. Action Process

The action process is seen from one of the RPs, (*actor*) who posed second from the left (i.e. Garba Shehu) whose writing activity (*vector*) was directed at the book (*goal*) he was holding. This is transactional action process because a vector that departs from his hand and directed at the book. Yet another action is seen from the first lady (A'isha Buhari, as an actor). This is also a transactional action process as an act of speaking departs from her mouth (*vector*) and directed at the Cabals (*goal*). Thus, the first lady is the Actor while Cabals are the Goal. Again, another action process is seen in the verbal process from all the representative participants in the cartoon as each of them verbalized into dialogue balloons. Hence, arrows like protrusion which form the vector that connects the RPs as the sayers to the utterances enclosed in the dialogue balloon are seen.

##### B. Reaction Process

Reaction process is also seen in the gaze (*reaction*) of the other RPs (*reactor*) directed at the bunch of papers (*phenomenon*) in the boxes marked 'Insecurity', 'Kidnapping', 'Boko Haram', 'Economy', 'Education', etc. This is also transactional process because vectors

depart from their eye-lines directed at the papers/files. The RPs are the Reactors while the files are phenomenon. Furthermore, the first lady (*reactor*) with her hands stretched out (*vector*) also forms another vector that is connected to other participants (Cabals) especially as she directly addresses Garba Shehu to get out of the way. Her gaze (reaction) against the cabals portrays how bored she gets with the cabals (*phenomenon*) in her husband's administration.

The image conveys the meaning that this cartoon indicates how few cabals (*Actors*) hijacked PMB's administration. Thus, this is vividly seen and clarified in first lady's speech (*vector*): "Garba Shehu, get out of the way". Furthermore, the aim of the cartoon is to expose how the first lady is worried about cabals around her husband (PMB) who she specifically considers as obstacles to herself and her husband's administration from many important angles of human development in the country (Nigeria). These important aspects of human development that are strangled by the cabals include education, infrastructures, economy, security, (*goals*) etc.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study examined representation meaning of action and reaction processes of some security cartoons in *Daily Trust* newspaper. The finding of the study revealed that images and other semiotics through action and reaction processes do not only support meaning, rather they contribute to it and language alone present a partial view of what is expressed. Also, the study attested that the assertion made by Paltridge (2012) that text and semiotic tools such as colors, framing, focus, positioning of elements are designed to contribute to the meaning making (of these texts). The study indicated that visual (actions and reactions) elements play vital role in meaning construction as asserted by Messaris (1996) which posited that the underlying idea behind Multimodal messages is more convincing. Language is only part of the process of communication and therefore an exploration of the various other modes is essential (Kress 2010).

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