

A VISUAL-PRAGMATIC STUDY OF SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS' PHOTO NEWS ON HERDSMEN AND FARMERS CLASHES

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Abstract

The study explores the various pragmatic acts performed with photo news on insecurity in Nigeria, especially the construction of acts or meaning through visual codes. The study drew insight from Mey's (2001) aspects of Pragmatic acts and Hoyer and Kaiser's (2007) visual acts as the theoretical framework underpinning the study. A total of eight (8) photo news reports relating to herdsmen and farmers' attacks were purposively selected from two Nigerian newspapers (*The Punch & Daily Trust*) and analysed. These papers were selected because they were across the six Geo political zones, and they have online presence. The study revealed that photo news are capable of performing many of the same complex pragmatic acts of urging, indicating, condemning, and accusing, protesting, challenging, warning and shaming which are often suggested in the captions of photo news. The study also revealed that photo news in Nigerian newspapers is far from being straightforward. It goes beyond choosing and placing specific photographs forgetting readers' attention, or for authenticating verbal news. That is, some pragmatic acts are craftily performed through the photo news and are meant to surreptitiously influence readers' evaluation, opinion and action about herdsmen and farmers' attack on insecurity in the country. The paper concludes that a visual-pragmatic approach has the potential of helping readers decode journalists' messages through photo news.

Key words: Photo News, Visual Pragmatics, Pragmatic Acts, Herdsmen, Farmers

Introduction

The use of photo news is becoming very prominent because it is capable of presenting the news story or situation live and able to generate diverse interpretations. The press is also using photo news more than ever because it is capable of meeting the needs of various categories of the audience. The illiterates or semi-literates could view events represented in photo news. Photo news is also getting more space and attention in media discourse because of the need to present news stories in pleasurable and catchy fashion. Photo news is often ambiguous. However, the press benefits from the pseudo ambiguity as it increases patronage. In other words, different categories of the audience get different layers of meanings from the complexity of photo news. Jacobs (1996, p.378), reported that photo news is far more 'news worthy' than other forms of representation. Barret and Barrington (2005) also affirm that photo news can be more influential on assessment of individuals or events than verbal ones. They, however, assert that recipients of media messages are information processors with a 'limited capacity of processing' (p.101). However, when pictures become journalistic, they become historical and popular icons and they have strategic pragmatic meaning directed towards achieving both informative and persuasive functions of the newspaper (Perimutter, 2008). In fact, news photographs are often 'cropped', that is cut to fulfil certain objectives, that is, the space requirements of page, to maximise impact and to serve aesthetic or ideological criteria.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) present a system of networks adapted from the work of Halliday (1994), providing a means for visual analysis that is essentially functionalist in nature. Similar to the semiotic coding of language, the semiotic coding of images also "represents the world (whether in abstract or concrete ways) ... plays a part in some interaction and, with or without accompanying text, constitutes a recognizable kind of text" (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p.140). In other words, the analogical bridge drawn between Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design (GVD) can be described in terms of the meta-functions

that operate simultaneously via the patterns of experience, social interaction and ideological positions that both linguistic and non-linguistic types of representation encode.

Studies on how readers interpret visual images suggest that photo news is essential parts of news texts because believing is seeing (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; van Leeuwen 2005, Barret & Barrington, 2005; Perimutter, 2008). Also, pre-existing ideology and prejudices affect the type of pictures or images placed in Nigerian newspapers and how they are placed. News pictures often undergo digital retouching – a process whereby computer technology is used to combine, retouch, or recreate photographs (Hill & Watson 2006). Software such as PhotoScape could be used to edit or crop pictures. All this affects what meanings readers get and influences they draw from news photos in newspapers. This is especially so when journalists, editors, or page designers manipulate and place in newspapers pictures that confirm or reinstate strongly held notions but which critical analysts consider as conspiracy at work.

Through visual coding, Nigerian journalists control the way newsmakers are perceived, received, liked, and the kind of people they appeal to. Images are trickier than words because their contents are in large measure ‘emotional and visceral’ (Kaib & Saivetz, 2007, p.60). They succinctly capture so many layers of meaning in a confined space. Thus, the reporter may cunningly express his or her biases and judgment on newsmakers through visual representations. In other words, news photo is strategically used to perform certain pragmatic acts. Every news picture connotes a value which is present as an implication or implied meaning, depending on the connotational positioning. Through news pictures, power and ideology are made to signify in Nigerian newspapers. Messari (1998, pp.72-75) remarks that photo news can be used as ‘an elusive means of audience manipulation’. This is why many researchers in the field of visual rhetoric strongly refute the assumption that pictures merely signify realities (Morris, 1993; Huxford, 2001; Kenney & Scott, 2003). They argue that images can also express all kinds of non-literal, symbolic, and pragmatic

meanings. Similarly, social semioticians (e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001) regard pictures as capable of realising many of the same complex meanings as verbal language. According to these scholars, the visual mode possesses a kind of 'grammar' which determines how visual elements combine into a meaningful whole.

Bignell (1997, p. 81) opines that 'news is not just facts, but representations produced in language and other signs like photographs.' A photograph (shortened as photo) is a picture produced through the chemical action of light-on-light sensitive film. It is a medium of recording reality that is iconic as well as indexical. Although a photograph resembles or imitates something, making it iconic, it achieves this through the use of light from the subject, therefore making it less arbitrary and indexical. In other words, the signifier is directly linked to the signified, be it physically or casually. This indexical property of photographs leads observers to make a judgment that a photo is an objective medium of record as there is a little difference between the signifier and the signified. However, a photograph is a representation of a particular moment and situation in time. Barthes cited in Bignell (1997, p. 98) expresses his view that a newspaper photograph is, 'an object that has been worked on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms which are so many factors of connotation.' There are many decisions taken by the photographer such as focusing, lighting, angle that produce various representations, and readings, of the same moment creating different connotations. According to White (1998), the size of the photograph and the position it takes in the newspaper is an important code for the reader as it affects the attention given to the paper. The front page is often seen as the major selling point of the paper; it is what attracts the potential reader to buy the paper and to read further. The size and position is also an important signifier of the importance of the story and the image itself. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to examine a visual-pragmatic study of selected Nigerian Newspapers' photo news on herdsmen and Farmers clashes.

Theoretical framework

The study relied on Jacob Mey's (2001) pragmatic Act Theory and Hoyo and Kaiser's (2007) Visual Pragmatic Acts as its theoretical framework.

Mey's Theory of Pragmatic Acts

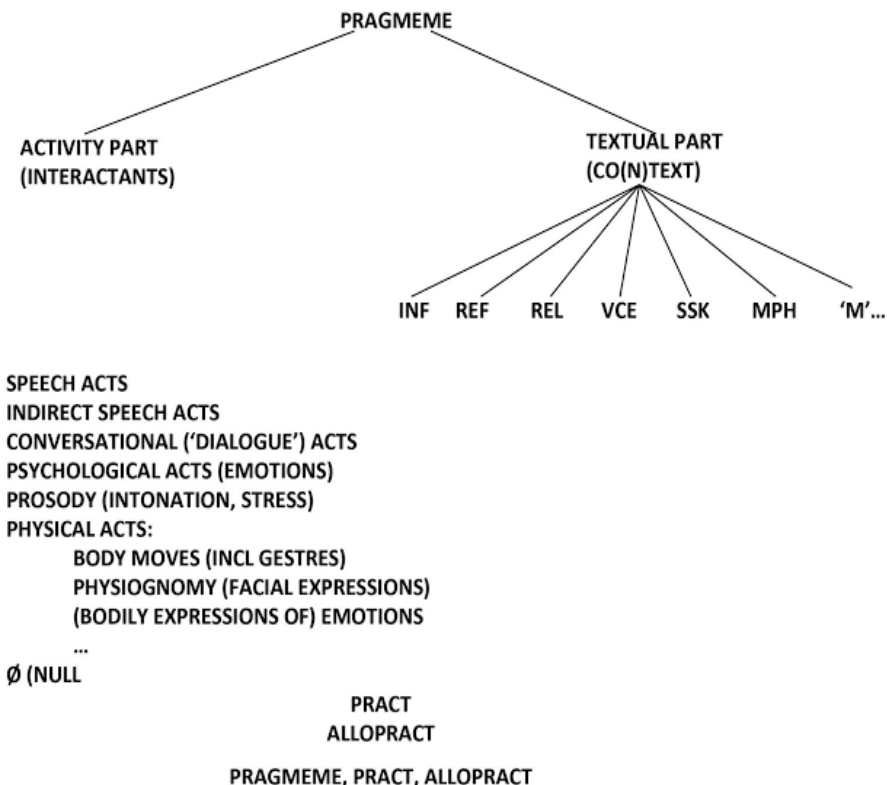
Mey (2001) agrees that in uttering a speech act, the speaker does something with his or her words. He, however, disagrees with earlier scholars on the nomenclature 'speech acts' and the idea of speech act verbs (SAVs). His argument is that there exists asymmetry in the relationship between speech act verbs (SAVs) and speech acts (SAs) proper. Mey argues that not all SAs are represented by a specific SAV but rather they may be represented by several verbal items (except the pure, strictly institutionalized SAs such as to baptise). For example, the SA of 'ordering' may be expressed in various, often, indirect ways. Also, not every SA has a corresponding, custom made SAV of its own. Mey adds that SAVs are not really needed since performativity is all over the verbal spectrum. Thus, as a result of the problems noticed in SAs and SAVs, Mey came up with the idea of pragmatic act to which speech act is just a part. Mey's theory of pragmatic act offers a solution to the problems that were noticed with speech act theory. Mey's objection to the speech act theory is on the insistence on the abstract idealization of the intentional speaker and hearer and not on social reality (Hoyo & Kaiser, 2007 cited in Ogungbe 2012). Mey (2006) argues that the speaker/writer and listener/reader cannot be isolated from societal reality. He argues that they cannot be isolated as they are not dummies but rather real-world users of language. Mey (2006 p.6) also observes that "speech by itself does not act: strictly speaking there are no speech acts since ultimately all speech acting crucially depends on the situation in which the action takes place. Hence, speech acts, in order to be viable, have to be situated". As Odeunmi (2006, p.157) succinctly puts it, the emphasis in pragmatic act "is not on conditions and rules for an individual speech act but on characterizing a general situation prototype, capable of being executed in the situation". Hence,

pragmatic acts unfold within a particular context and are conditioned by it (Hoye & Kaiser, 2007). The basic idea about pragmatic act, as differentiated from speech act, is the fact that pragmatic act does not depend solely on the actual words being used but rather on the circumstances that led up to, and accompany those words. Thus, the explanatory power of pragmatic act theory lies in its focus on use, users, and context.

Mey (2001) labels the prototype or generalized pragmatic act as a pragmeme and its instantiation in a particular situation as a *pract*. He also submits that pragmatic act can be approached from two points of view: 'agent' and 'act'. As far as the individual 'agent' is concerned, his or her class, gender, age, education, and previous life history will affect his or her communication. Mey adds that such factors also constitute a set of affordances (action possibilities latent in the context, enabling the speaker/writer to act in accordance with his or her capabilities) imposed on the individual in the form of necessary limitations on the degree of freedom that he or she is allowed in society. From the point of view of 'act', the interest is in the representation resources (language, gesture, or visual image) that are used in performing a pragmatic act. And from the point of view of the 'agent', the emphasis is on the user's intention and attitude to the language and visual image deployed, for example, especially as determined by his or her gender, class, status, experience, position, and education. Thus, Mey sums up by affirming that the pragmatic act can be considered as adapting oneself linguistically and otherwise, to one's world.

Mey (2001) observes that pragmatic act engages the whole communication activities, not just the speech or linguistic portion. It also involves body language and visual images (not as simple supplement or aid to verbal language but taking part in the communication process). According to Mey (2001, p.223), pragmatic acts are essential in 'establishing and maintaining the meta-communication function of framework for communication'. The theory is schematized in fig. 1 below.

Fig. 1: Mey’s model of pragmatic acts (Mey 2001, p.222)



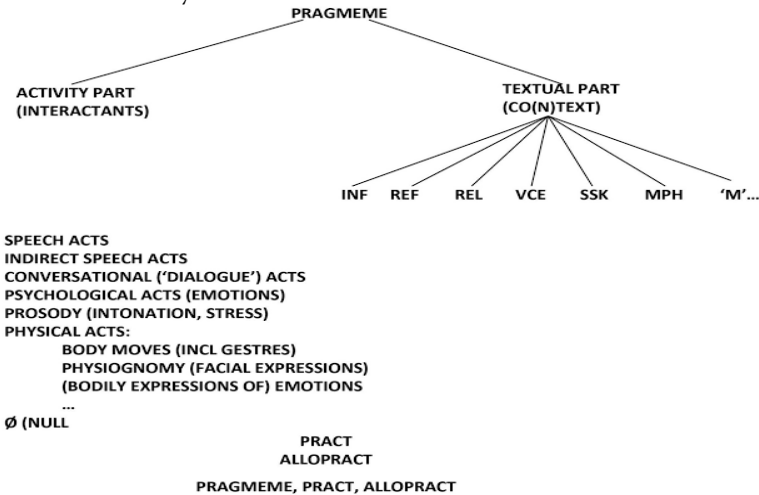
Pragmeme, Pract, Allopract

Figure 1 above shows that there are two parts to a pragmeme: activity part, meant for interactants and textual part, referring to the context within which the pragmeme operates). To communicate, the interactants draw on such speech act types as indirect speech acts, conversational (‘dialogue’) acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts and physical acts. These are engaged in contexts, which include INF representing “inference”; REF, “reference”; REL, “relevance”; VCE, “voice”; SSK “shared situation knowledge”; MPH, “metaphor”; and M “metapragmatic joker”. The interaction between activity part and textual part results in a pract or an allopract.

Francis Hoyer and Ruth Kaiser’s Theory of Visual Acts

Hoyer and Kaiser’s theory of visual acts could be said to have been developed to complement Mey’s pragmatic act theory. In other words, Hoyer and Kaiser (2007) make a case for visual pragmatic acts to cover the shortcomings of Mey’s (2001) theory of pragmatic acts. To the duo, any analysis of pictures as symbols must take its point of departure in a communicative situation where an encoder is using one or more pictures to ‘say’ (in a general sense of ‘saying’) something to somebody. They argue that it is only by trying to understand the whole situation that one is able to tell whether the pictures ‘do’ something or not, and if they do, what do they do and how do they do it. The concept of visual pragmatic act enables us to understand that the visual and communicating visually are not matters of the static and the immutable. What the visual’ image means and does are determined by the specific users, in specific contexts, in historical or material world (Hoyer & Kaiser, 2007). The choice of theoretical framework is therefore schematised below.

Model for the analysis is schematised below:



Modified Mey’s (2001) Pragmatic Act scheme

Methodology

The study involves a qualitative critical content analysis of selected Photo news stories from two Nigerian national daily newspapers (*The Punch* and *Daily Trust*). The two newspapers were selected as representatives of national newspapers because their circulation cuts across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria and they are known for moulding enlightened public opinion, pungent editorialising on issues of national interest and informed feature articles and news on national issues (Ogungbe, 2014). The newspapers were also part of the most widely read newspapers in Nigeria and they share similar features in terms of circulation, coverage and fame. photo new stories selected cover the bandit attacks and Fulani herdsmen crisis were selected for the analysis using Mey (2001)'s pragmatic act complemented with Francis Hoye's (2007) visual act theory.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data comprise eight photo news relating to herdsmen and Farmers crises in Nigeria.

Text 1



The Punch, Wednesday, April 30, 2019

Explicit visual acts of reporting and informing

Implicit visual acts of protesting, demanding and condemning

i. Visual Act

The text 1 above is an instantiated pragmatic act with directive allopract of *demanding*, assertive allopract of *asserting* and expressive

allopract of *protesting*. One of the captions in the image reads: “END THE BLOODSHED” which is a directive pragmatic act demanding that the federal government put an end to the bloodshed in Benue state. The second pract: “BENUE LIVES MATTER”, is an assertive pragmatic act of asserting: the protester is stating it outright that the life of Benue people (one of the Middle Belt [North Central] states in Nigeria) is also important, and the incessant shedding of Benue blood should stop forthwith. An overarching instantiated visual pragmatic act is the expressive pract with the allopract of protesting. The overall goal of the image depicts the protest against the incessant killing of innocent people in Benue being carried out allegedly by Fulani herdsmen as this depicts the assumed role of the press as serving as watchdog of democracy in exposing the ills in the society.

ii. Portrayal

A young lady on sunglasses is being foregrounded in the image. The young lady is holding a placard which reads: “END THE BLOODSHED BENUE LIVES MATTER” which is targeted at protesting against incessant killings of Benue natives/residents by killer herdsmen in Benue state. The general impression is that the lady is from Benue state: this is accentuated by the Tiv coloured and patterned muffler wrapped around her neck. There are other protesters in the background too; a woman can be seen holding a placard.

iii. Saliency

The writing on the placard the woman is holding is foregrounded. The content foregrounds the theme of the protest and brings the attention of the world to the killings in Benue state. “SPEAK OUT4BENUE” is topicalised to draw the world’s attention that Benue natives and residents are victims of bloodshed. “BLOODSHED” is written in bold red font to foreground the wanton killings taking place in Benue state. The entire theme of the protest is written in cap locks to make it more prominent, visible and easy to read. Lexical words are

also used to create a vivid mental image in the mind of the reader which also aid brevity, conciseness and clarity.

iv. Visual Role

The visual role of the placard is that of emphasising and complementing. The placard is used to emphasise the theme of the protest, while also perfecting the presence of the protesting lady. Without the complementing role of the placard, the reader at a glance will not understand the role of the lady nor what she is protesting against. The placard brings to bare the necessary contextual variables of physical, sociocultural, linguistic and psychological contexts.

Text 2



Daily Trust, Monday, May 5, 2019

Explicit visual acts of informing and reporting

Implicit visual acts of ordering, demanding and ordering

i. Visual Act

The above text is an instantiated visual pragmatic act with explicit directive allopract of *demanding* and *ordering* and explicit expressive allopract of *protesting*. The first caption in the “DESIGNATE KILLER HERDSMEN AS TERRORISTS” is a directive allopract of demanding. The protesters want the federal government of Nigeria to

formally declare men who breed cattle but are involved in shedding innocent blood as entities who use violence means to intimidate others. In the second caption: “SAY NO TO KILLING OF INNOCENT NIGERIANS”, we have another directive allopract of ordering. The protesters want both the government and the people to condemn the killing of innocent Nigerians. This is because such nationwide condemnation will draw the needed attention to the wanton killings and discourage the perpetrators from committing such act. The overall visual pract inherent in this image is that of the expressive allopract of protesting. The people together with the placard they are holding are protesting against the incessant killings of innocent Nigerians allegedly by Fulani herdsmen. The acts of reporting and recommending are directed at playing the assumed role of the attention focus and formation of the press.

ii. Portrayal

A handful of protesters: ten men and a woman are visible in the image. They are holding a large placard, and on the placard is written: “DESIGNATE KILLER HERDSMEN AS TERRORIST” and they are also saying “NO TO KILLING OF INNOCENT NIGERIANS”. This is the reason they have taken to the street to protest. Third from the right is **Charly Boy**. Charly Boy, born **Charles Chukwuemeka Oputa**, 19th June 1950, is a Nigerian singer/songwriter, television presenter, publisher and producer. He is arguably Nigeria’s most controversial entertainers and his is best known for his alternative lifestyle, political views and media productions, most notably *The Charly Boy*. Charly Boy is also known as an advocate of the masses as he has fought for the rights of the average Nigerians. He has on several occasions been tortured by the Nigerian police and the military for standing up to his country’s government. He is an avid supporter of “Okada” riders in Nigeria—an organisation that has been frowned on by government as they have been regarded as a menace and unsafe transportation. He has fought for the rights of Okada users—most of whom are poor

individuals who earn their living by using the Okada for commercial purposes. His efforts earned him the name “Area Fada”.

iii. Salience

Two things catch the eyes: the protesters and their gigantic placard they are holding (as well as the message on the flex). The picture is drawing the reader’s attention to the message in the flex: “DESIGNATE KILLER HERDSMEN AS TERRORISTS SAY NO TO KILLING OF INNOCENT NIGERIANS”. “Herdsmen” sticks out: it is written in bigger font and in red, thereby drawing the reader’s attention seamlessly to it. Also, conspicuously on the placard are protesters are holding a herdsman with ammunition: AK-47. This is to draw attention to killer herdsmen whom the protesters want the federal government to designate as terrorists. The dozen or so people in the image are not smiling: their faces are stern; some are pointing fingers, while a couple has their fists closed. These show that they are serious with their protest and also they want the government to seriously and quickly accede to their demands.

iv. Visual Role

The visual role in this image is that of *Complementing* and *Emphasising*. The placard complements the theme of the protest: it brings to the fore the reason the protesters gathered together. It also emphasises the reason behind the protest.

Text 3



Daily Trust, Wednesday May 14, 2020

Explicit visual acts of reporting and informing
Implicit visual acts of demanding and protesting

i. Visual Act

The text 2 is an instantiated visual pragmatic act with directive allopract of demanding and expressive allopract of protesting. The protest was apparently embarked on to demand that “Bloodshed in Nigeria should Stop”. This pract of demanding is directed to the federal government of Nigeria, while the pract of protesting is aimed at bringing the attention of the world to the plight of these hapless victims of killer herdsmen and whose lives are no longer secured by the government. Such photo news is made to evoke surprisingly strong reactions and condemnation from the public on the high rate of killings in Nigeria.

ii. Portrayal

A huge placard is being held wide by two men. They’re right in front of some people who are also part of the protest. At the top of the banner is written “Central Baptist Church King’s Square, Benin City”. This explains the identity of those involved in the protest as members

of this church. On either side of this caption is the logos of the church which foregrounds the identity of the church. The two people holding the placard and those behind can be deduced to be moving.

iii. Salience

The name of the church is written in bolder font to draw the reader's attention to it. The words: ENOUGH OF" are also written in bigger font but in caps. While, those two words are written in blue colour, the word "BLOODSHED" is written in bigger font and capital letter. It is also written in red. These are targeted at creating a vivid mental picture of bloodshed in the mind of the reader. Meanwhile, "BLOODSHED" is the most foregrounded word on the banner and it is what catches the attention of the reader first. With the choice of colour and font and capital letter, it is the central theme of the placard. More so, the words "IN NIGERIA" are written in *green white green*. This is to foreground Nigeria as the physical setting where the bloodshed is taking place. This is because Nigeria's national flag is *green white green*.

iv. Visual Role

The visual role is that of complementation and emphasises. The placard is used to complement and emphasise the reason behind the protest and what the protesters are demanding from the government.

Text 4



The Punch, Wednesday, April 22, 2020

Explicit Visual acts of informing and reporting Implicit visual acts of alleging, demanding and protesting

i. Visual Act

The report in text 4 is an instantiated visual pragmatic act with assertive allopract of *alleging* and directive allopract of *demanding*, and expressive allopract of *protesting*. The first caption on the placard alleges that “FULANI HERDSMEN are Boko Haram members freed by the Nigerian Government”. Another caption demands that the federal government “Protect LIVES not COWS”. The overall instantiated visual pragmatic act inherent in the image above is expressive pract with allopract of *protesting*. The visual representation is intended to the government to address the security challenges in the country.

ii. Portrayal

A man and a woman are explicitly portrayed in the image. They are both holding a placard which they display ostentatiously for all to see the captions on the placard. There are other people at the background holding relatively smaller placard but are also part of the general protest. In the placard, there are different captions. The first one says: “FULANI HERDSMEN are Boko Haram members freed by Nigerian Government”. “FULANI HERDSMEN” are written in bigger font and in capital letter to draw attention to the culprits allegedly responsible for the incessant killings. The protesters are now alleging that these people are “Boko Haram members” that have been “freed by” the “Nigerian Government”. Boko Haram is a jihadist terrorist organisation based in North-eastern Nigeria, also active in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon. Boko Haram has killed tens of thousands and displaced 2.3 million from their homes and was at one time the world’s deadliest terror group according to the Global Terrorism Index. The second caption says “Protect LIVES not COWS”. This demand is made to the federal government who allegedly values cows over and above human lives. Herdsmen have allegedly embarked on reprisal attacks whenever their cows are rustled or killed; they kill people on this

revenge mission, thereby taking a life for a cow. These protesters are pleading and demanding that the federal government should not toe the parts of the herdsmen who supposedly value their cows over human lives. These two captions serve as the overall theme of the protest. Also noticeably in the image is that the woman on the right holding the placard is putting a headgear emblazoned with Tiv's colouring and pattern. This implies that she is a Tiv. Tiv or Tiv are a Tiviod ethnic group. They constitute approximately 3.5% of Nigeria's total population. Tiv are natives to Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau states. These states, particularly Benue state, have been under the incessant attacks of Fulani herdsmen.

iii. Saliency

"FULANI HERDSMEN" is written in bold and bigger font. It is also topicalised. This draws the reader's attention to the culprits. "LIVES" and "COWS" are written in bigger font and capital letters not only to draw emphasis on them but also juxtapose them: drawing sharp contrast between them. Also, catchy to the eyes are people supposedly killed in a gruesome manner by herdsmen. Some were chopped to death like animals, while another was burnt to death. Apart from the gruesome images of those killed, the placard was also designed in *Green White Green*, which foregrounds Nigeria's national flag, thereby laying emphasis on the physical context where the gruesome murders took place. Similarly, "NIGERIA" and "NOW" are also written in capital letters to emphasise the location and time the killings are taking place.

iv. Visual Role

Emphasis and complementation are the visual roles. The placard, while also complementing the theme of the protest, also emphasises at a glance the reason the protesters are gathered.

Text 5



Explicit visual acts of reporting and asserting

Implicit visual acts of condemning, protesting and ordering

i. Visual Act

In text 5, there are three instantiated pragmatic acts performed in the image above: first, there is an assertive visual pract with allopract of *condemning*; second, there is a directive visual pract with allopract of *ordering*; third, there is an expressive pract with allopract of *protesting*. One of the captions on the flex: “WE THE PEOPLE OF BENUE STATE CONDEMN HE BARBARIC KILLINGS OF OUR PEOPLE BY ARMED HERDSMEN” is an instantiated pragmatic with assertive allopract of *condemning*. This pract is targeted at condemning the alleged nefarious activities of herdsmen who have embarked on killing spree in Benue State. Another caption: “THE GENOCIDE SHOULD STOP FORTHWITH” is an instantiated pragmatic act with directive allopract of *ordering*. This order is directed at the federal government. The people want the systematic killing of Benue people to stop immediately. Meanwhile, the overall pract is expressive allopract of *protesting*. These six men that are visible in the image above have come together to protest against the killings in Benue State. These killings are allegedly being perpetrated by killer herdsmen. This photo news is in

line with the traditional role of the press in providing the public with necessary information.

ii. Portrayal

Six men are explicitly portrayed in the image above: five of these men are holding a big placard, while one is holding cardboard. From the caption on the placard they are holding, it can be deduced that these men are representative of Tiv, Idoma, and Igede ethnic groups—these are the major ethnic groups in Benue state. The second man on the right is on a Tiv regalia ad headgear; similar pattern and colour of attire is being tied on the waist by the less visible man on the far left. This foregrounds the fact that these people are from Benue state as explicitly stated on the caption in the placard.

iii. Saliency

The ethnic groups these protesters belong is what catches the eyes first. This is because they topicalised it on the top of the placard: “Mdzough U Tiv (MUT), Idoma National Forum and Omi Ny’ Igede”. In other words, they are representative of Tiv, Idoma and Igede ethnic groups: the major ethnic groups in Benue state. The core reason they are protesting: “...Benue state condemn the barbaric killings of our people by armed herdsmen” is written in capital letter and bold-bigger font. This is to draw the attention of the world to it in a very clear and vivid manner. The last caption: “This Genocide should stop Forthwith” is written in bigger fonts and capital letters. More so, it is written in red to foreground the bloodletting and incessant killings in Benue state. A big placard is used to caution the totality of intended message of the protest in a clear and concise manner. The placard is foregrounded, while the people holding it are somewhat back grounded.

iv. Visual Role

The visual role in this image is that of emphasis and complementation. The placard is used to strengthen the message of the protest: it actually says it all, and emphasises the reason why these six

persons troop out to protest. It therefore goes a long way to complement the protesters, that is, add more meaning and expand the intended message.

Text 6



Daily Trust, Wednesday, May 27, 2019

Explicit visual acts of informing and reporting
Implicit visual acts of demanding and ordering

i. Visual Act

The text is an example of an instantiated pragmatic act with directive allopracts of ordering and demanding; also, we have expressive allopract of *protesting*. The first caption on the flex: “#StopBenuekillingsNow” is an order from the protesters to the federal government of Nigeria. The protesters ostentatiously want the federal government to use the necessary security apparatus to put an end to the systematic killings of Benue people Benue by killer herdsmen. The second pract: “Stop Fulani Terrorists Killings’ is in corollary to and an extension of the first pract. The protesters went one further with another directive allopract of demanding: “BUHARI ACT NOW OR RESIGN”. They are demanding that the president should put an end to the killings or resign for a capable hand to do the job. The mainstream pract being performed in the image above is the expressive allopract of protesting. The pragmatic act of demanding here attempts

to play the assumed traditional role of the press towards the public. The role recognises the right of the public to access the news on matters that affect them.

ii. Portrayal

The people being portrayed in the image above are protesters who have come out en masse to protest against the killings of Benue natives and residents allegedly by Fulani herdsmen. The protesters can be seen clustered, and marching with the placard they are holding; majorities are lined up behind the placard. The exact location where the protest is taking place is not explicitly stated but the reader can infer that is most highly likely in Benue state as this is the place where incessant attacks and the killing of farmers by Fulani herdsmen have been taking place. More so, the fact that one of the captions in the image made reference to Benue state is another index that the protest is taking place in Benue state.

iii. Saliency

What catches the eyes first is that there are lots of people involved in this protest. This goes a long way to show the seriousness of the issue that needs to be address. The image is trying to get the reader not only to look at the numerous protesters but also it wants the reader to notice the captions on the placard: “#StopBenuekillingsNow” “Stop Fulani Terrorists Killings” “BUHARI ACT NOW OR RESIGN”. The protesters essentially want to draw the world’s attention to pogrom happening in Benue. Also noticeable is the black outfit that some of the protesters are wearing. This may yet be by accident but it contributes to the overall pensive mood that the theme of the protest is projecting. The expression on each of their faces is that of anger, despair and bitterness. The background of the flex is red. This is used to foreground the bloodshed in Benue by Fulani herdsmen. The first caption starts with a hash tag. This is used to make the caption: “#StopBenueKillingsNow” the focal point of the protest and make it trend seamlessly on social media like Twitter.

In the second caption, the value laden “TERRORISTS” is written in capital letters. This is not only to neither foreground the word nor draw the reader’s attention to it, but also to make the reader to believe that Fulani people use violence, especially killings, to intimidate the people of Benue with the aim of conquering and dominating them. While the first and second captions are written in yellow font colour, the last caption: “BUHARI ACT NOW OR RESIGN”, takes slightly different kind of font colour. “BUHARI” is written in black colour font. Black connotes evil, bad. This implies that Buhari is an evil and a bad leader who does not care about the killings of his subject. “ACT NOW OR RESIGN” is written in white which makes it prominent, drawing the reader’s attention to the fact that the protesters actually wanted to resign for his failure to secure their lives and properties. In addendum to the captions, the placard is also littered with the gruesome images of those who lost their lives to herdsmen attack. This helps to foreground the message being projected in the captions and also creates a vivid mental picture of the carnage allegedly being perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen.

iv. Visual Role

The visual role of the placard is that of emphasising and complementing. The placard gives more importance to the theme of the protest, while also complementing the protesters’ voice. The placard, indeed, brings to bear the essence of the protest as well as creating a strong mental image of those that have been killed by the Fulani herdsmen.

Text 7



Daily Trust, Friday, May 2, 2019

Explicit Visual acts of informing and reporting
 Implicit visual acts of demanding and protesting

i. Visual Act

Text 7 above is an instantiated pragmatic act with directive allopract of *demanding*, assertive allopract of *asserting* and expressive allopract of *protesting*. One of the captions in the image reads: “Give Our Youths Jobs not Guns” which is a directive pragmatic act demanding that the federal government put an end to the insecurity in the country. The second Pract: “Bring the Killer to Justice” is a directive allopract of demanding that police bring the killers of their people to justice. The text indirectly assumed the role of press to condemn the police for their inability to secure Nigerians from the insurgents and charge the government to do the needful.

ii. Portrayal

A police officer and a handful of protesters foreground this image. The police officer is seen standing and assumes to be pragmatically listening to the protesters on their grievances. Nigerians have decided to take their grievances to the police authority, so that it will see to the problems of the incessant killings in the country.

iii. Salience

What catches the eyes first is that there are lots of people involved in this protest. This goes a long way to show the seriousness of the issue that needs to be addressed. The image is trying to get the reader not only to look at the numerous protesters but also it wants the reader to notice the captions on the placard: “#Give Our Youths Jobs not Guns# The protesters essentially want to draw the audience to their demands as it can be seen that majority of the protesters constitute the youth who are jobless and yet the bandits are killing them. They therefore decided to take their demands to the police and to the world that they need jobs instead of guns.

iv. Visual Role

The visual role of the placard is that of emphasising and complementing. The placard gives more importance to the theme of the protest, while also complementing the protesters’ voice. The placard, indeed, bring to bear the essence of the protest as well as creating a strong mental image to the government to stop the killings and provide jobs for the youth in the country.

Text 8



The Punch, Tuesday, April 14, 2020

Explicit Visual acts of informing and reporting

Implicit Visual acts of demanding and protesting

i. Visual Act

Nigerian newspapers' visual representations are made polysemous so that readers can choose several meanings. Although captions try to control this potential proliferation by selecting single specific meaning for each image, the reader cannot but give cultural and social meanings to the pictures. These pictures themselves (with or without captions) embody a set of possible meanings or have meaning potential. For example, Text 8 presents the pictures of protesters with the pract: 'stop Fulani now". This is realised through pragmatic acts of demanding and protesting. Another pract in the image is: "Build our schools, our houses, our hospitals, and Give us JOB" is an example of directive pragmatic act of demanding that government should provide the citizens schools, houses and give out jobs. This text is similar to text 7 above where a number of youths demand the same from the government. It appears that youths are yearning and rightly condemning government for the suffering of the youth in the country. This can indirectly engage the youths in illicit acts if not provided with jobs that could enable them busy.

ii. Portrayal

A young lady and a group of able men are portrayed in the image. The young lady is seen holding a placard which displays "stop Fulani now" The protesters are indirectly condemning government for its inability to protect the lives of citizenry. Aside that, the young sitting on a blue chair is showing the wound he got from the suspected herdsmen' attack.

iii. Visual Role

The visual role in this text is that of emphasis and complementation. The placard is used to strengthen the message of the protest: it actually says it all, and emphasises the reason for the protest.

Findings and Conclusion

The paper has examined a visual- pragmatic study of selected photo news on herdsmen and farmers clashes in *The Nation* and *Daily*

Trust newspapers. The analysis shows that allopracts of reporting, and informing are foundational to the performance of various pragmatic acts of condemning, accusing, demanding, protesting, ordering, authenticating which are neither explicitly suggested in the pictures captions nor obviously projected in the cropping of the pictures but rather impinge on the photo news on the herdsmen crises. Some pragmatic acts are carefully performed through the picture and are meant to surreptitiously control government and events represented in the news.

The finding of the study indicated that photo news is a discourse unit that is analysable as independent text. They form a functional part of news discourse that is pragmatically encoded to underscore some special kinds of social meanings and implicitly perform some visual (pragmatic) acts. This tends to buttress the submission of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and Jewitt and Oyama (2001) that pictures are capable of performing many of the same complex pragmatic acts of urging, indicating, condemning, and accusing, protesting, challenging, warning, shaming which are often suggested in the picture captions. The study also revealed that visual representation in Nigerian newspaper is far from being straightforward. It goes beyond choosing and placing specific photographs forgetting readers' attention, or for authenticating verbal reports. That is, some pragmatic acts are craftily performed through the pictures and are meant to surreptitiously control readers' evaluation, opinion and action about the news reports on insecurity in the country.

The visual acts in the images show that the visual representations are essential parts of news discourse in the print media, because believing is seeing. Pre-existing ideology and journalists' personal biases affect the type of pictures or images placed in Nigerian newspapers and consequently, the pragmatic acts performed through them. This is especially so when reporters, editors, or page designers are placed in newspapers pictures that confirm or reinstate strongly held notions (such as showing the pictures of the protesters).

All the selected photo news items are aimed at arresting readers' attention and above all challenge, expose and urge the government to expedite their action on the to bring succour to the country. The numerous captions of pictures on the same dismal-pismal phenomenon, therefore, ridicule Nigerian government and pronounce them as 'slow actors' on the welfare of their subjects.

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