

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA REPORTAGE OF BOKO HARAM ACTIVITIES IN THE NATION NEWSPAPER

Bunmwakat Kate Sambo

Abstract

The Boko Haram insurgency has dominated national discourse and has been a major source of headlines for national newspapers over the years. This study was undertaken to make a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the news reportage of the Boko Haram insurgency in The Nation newspaper. The problem identified in the study is the language used by the media on the activities of Boko Haram and the implications for society. Norman Fairclough's theory was adopted as the framework for the study. The research design for the study was the Critical Discourse Analysis design. The Nation newspaper was selected for the analysis. Five news reports were extracted for analysis. The three tools of analysis were lexicalization and predication, presupposition and intertextuality. The analysis of the newspaper's report showed that Boko Haram is being treated as callous, evil and dreaded while the Federal Government and its troops as accommodating and being a more peace-loving and responsible side. In conclusion, the use of language by the media has created immense awareness about the activities of Boko Haram.

Key words: Boko Haram, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Media report, Newspapers, Language.

Introduction

The name Boko Haram is translated from the Hausa equivalent of 'Western education is forbidden'. The name was given to the group by the people of Borno State because the group's teachings and preaching were observed to be opposed to Western education and Westernization in general. The group originally named itself Jama'at Ali

As-Sunnah Lid-Da'wahWa'l-Jihad, which in Arabic means a group of the people of Sunnah (truth) committed to the teachings of Allah and Jihad. The word Jihad has been interpreted differently by different Islamic sects.

In the early years of Boko Haram, when the group began to go violent and attacked police and military personnel, the group's leader Mohammed Yusuf was captured alongside some of his followers, and executed. At the time of his execution the press, both in Nigeria and abroad frowned at the manner and circumstances in which he was killed by the riot police without any trial. The press viewed the act as a violation of his human rights and so the press and the human rights groups condemned his execution.

The most memorable atrocity of the Boko Haram insurgency is the 14th April 2014 kidnap of 276 school girls from Government Secondary School Chibok. Most citizens of Borno had sympathy for Boko Haram at the time, and it was not until the group began to be more daring and more nefarious, that they lost the sympathy.

Beyond the issue of the formation and spread of Boko Haram and its militant activities, another issue that forms a background to this study is the issue of news media reportage of the terrorist group, especially the print media, and how language is deployed in the media to convey information about the group.

The emphasis of this study is not based on unravelling Boko Haram incidences of attacks, but on the exploration of linguistic properties vis-à-vis language, cognition and society. Just to mention here the Boko Haram insurgency, as well as the nature of language use of its reportage, forms the background on which this study is undertaken.

While it is important to report all the violent Boko Haram attacks by way of persuading the government to do something about the problem, it is equally important not to exaggerate the conquests and audacity of the violent sect so as not to boost the morale of the insurgents. The news reportage of the insurgency should therefore be handled with utmost care. This has not always been the case, because

news reporters have often been found to be subjective instead of being objective, responsible, mature and balanced in their reportage, as the ethics of their profession dictate.

The Concept of Discourse

Discourse could be referred to as language in active communicative use. In discourse, normally there is the communicator on one hand, who encodes and channels the message to the target audience, and the receiver on the other hand who receives and decodes the message. Looking at discourse in the light of the foregoing, it can safely be said that discourse is a socio-linguistic activity which serves as a unifying and meaning-getting platform in a given society. Discourse can further be classified into different specialized types such as media discourse, and legal discourse; classroom discourse serves a social function. About this study, however, the following definition of discourse by Nicky Cole (2018) is more apt.

Discourse refers to how we think and communicate about people, things, the social organization of society, and the relationship among and between all three. Discourse typically emerges out of social institutions such as media and politics (among others), and by giving structure and order to language and thought, it structures and orders our lives, relationships with others, and society. It thus shapes what we can think and know at any point in time.

Discourse Analysis (DA)

Discourse Analysis (DA) is an approach to the analysis of written, spoken or sign language, including any significant semiotic event. Karmadu and Osisammo submit that DA is a broad field of study that draws some of its theories and methods of analysis from disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, philosophy and psychology. DA therefore has many theories, which include Discourse Analysis theory itself, Conversational Analysis Theory, Narrative Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis, which will be discussed later.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (which henceforth will be referred to as CDA in this work) is a very important field of study in language as well as in social sciences such as sociology, psychology, political science and conflict studies. It makes CDA a multi-disciplinary subject. For this study, however, CDA is created mainly from the socio-linguistic point of view, which seeks to analyse language use in communication and its impact on society in general.

One of the pioneers of CDA, Teun Van Dijk (2018), defines CDA as a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, are resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. This shows that CDA is not an analytical study of the language text alone but also the socio-political implications of the discourse.

It is the goal of CDA to unravel all matters arising from public discourse as they affect the wider society, and also challenge societal inequality as depicted in power relations in the society. It is for this reason that Van Dijk (2018) submits that “critical discourse analysts take an explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality”. Corroborating this point, Fjortoft (2013) observes that CDA started as a reaction to the descriptive nature of scientific observation in language research, and the approach challenged the need for language analysis in isolation from its social context. This submission confirms that CDA goes beyond a mere analysis of language and its surface features, but involves other extra-linguistic factors.

CDA and the Media

The role of the media is central in CDA. No medium carries the intrigues of power, politics and societal relations within the society like the news media, and these are things that CDA seeks to analyse and bring to the fore.

Media discourse, according to Macdonald as cited by Ayoola and Olaosun (2014), frequently reacts to perceived public desires and concerns, and sometimes sets the agenda that interacts with those of the wider society. One of the main characteristics, or the ideal characteristics, of news reportage is balanced reportage. That is to say that the reporter does not resort to things like sentimentalism, bias or sensationalism in his or her reportage of an event. In other words, the news reporter is (or ought to be) objective and not subjective.

The mass media, according to Akpan, Ering and Olufu-Adeoye (2013), is a powerful tool of communication in peace and conflict situations. It can be used positively to promote peace and resolve conflicts at appropriate times. Conversely, it can also be used negatively to initiate, escalate and sustain conflict covertly or overtly. This shows that the media have enormous powers to control conflicts in any given situation.

The Boko Haram insurgency has been a dominant source of cover stories and headlines for Nigerian newspapers. The story of Boko Haram has boosted the sales of newspapers over the years as Nigerians eagerly buy and read the newspapers in the hope of finding out that the insurgents have been defeated.

Empirical Studies

This study, *Print Media Framing of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: A Content Analytical Study of the Guardian, Daily Sun, Vanguard and This Day Newspaper* by Okoro Nnayeolugo, PhD (2013) set out to identify the pattern of frames adopted by Nigerian newspapers in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. Four newspapers (The Guardian, The Vanguard, Daily Sun and This Day) were. The research method was content analysis. The findings of the study indicate that Nigerian newspapers reported the Boko Haram insurgency in a predominantly policy response frame. From the findings, it is clear that Nigerian newspapers reported government interventions in positive terms. Such positive framings are germane to minimizing insurgencies

like that of Boko Haram, while on the other hand coverage which emphasizes the ethnic and religious frames are negative and detrimental to peace initiatives in a secular and multi-cultural state like Nigeria.

The research *Media Representation of Boko Haram in some Nigerian Newspapers* by Kehinde Ayoola and Ibrahim Olaosun (2014) examined the media representation of the socio-political discourse that centres the activities of Boko Haram, on Nigerian-based militant Islamic group that has been responsible for violent attacks on individuals and institutions in the country. The data for the study were derived from newspaper reports published in July and August 2011 in the wake of the bombing of the nation's police headquarters and the United Nations headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. The theoretical framework employed for the analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis. This inter-disciplinary interdisciplinary and discursive approach made the application of history and ideological analysis possible. The paper concludes that contrary to scepticism about daily newspapers as purveyors of misery and libel, Nigerian national newspapers serve as a source of accurate information and perceptive analysis on Boko Haram and that the bombing of the Nigeria Police headquarters and the United Nations house in Abuja by the group exposed the ill-preparedness of Nigerian security agencies to meet the security challenges of the 21st century.

Doubtless, similar studies have been done on Boko Haram in the forms of sociological or conflict resolution studies. Stylistic discourse analyses have also been done on the phenomenon, but this Critical Discourse Analysis will give a new revelation on the phenomenon as it concerns the media's language use.

Theoretical Framework

As earlier stated about Discourse Analysis (DA) theories, three theories are discussed here briefly to show the appropriate theory adopted for this study and why that is so.

Conversational Analysis Theory

Conversation Analysis (CA) is an approach to the study of social interaction that emerged in the 1960s in the writings of Harvey Sacks, a sociologist. It was consolidated in his collaborations with Emmanuel A. Schegloff and Gail Jefferson in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

CA examines the structure and organization of spoken and written communication. It is an interdisciplinary study which includes Psychology, Linguistics and Sociology. CA helps to understand how language works in life real-life situations by examining the structure and organization of talk during social interactions. CA is an important field of study.

Wilkinson (2019) submits that CA has been used not only as a research method for analysing communication disorders in the field of acquired disorders; in particular aphasiology; it has also been central to the development of novel forms of planning, implementing and evaluating intervention which aims to improve conversations involving a person with communication disorder (PWCD). CA being a research approach that analyses social interaction, bears some resemblance to CDA. However, this theory is not quite befitting as a framework for CDA of media reportage on Boko Haram activities in the Nation newspaper.

Narrative Analysis

The theoretical lineage of narrative theory is traceable to Aristotle. However modern narratology is said to have begun with the Russian formalists, particularly Vladamir Propp (morphology of the folktale, 1928) and Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia and polyphony and carnival (1965).

Narrative analysis refers to the method of analysis used for interpreting texts or visual data that have the form of a story. Narrative analysis, simply put, is a qualitative analysis method focused on interpreting human experience and motivations by looking closely at the stories (the narratives) people tell in a particular context. In other

words, a narrative analysis interprets long-form participants' responses or written stories as data, to uncover themes and meanings. The data could be taken from interviews, monologues, written stories, or even recordings. In other words, narrative analysis can be used on both primary and secondary data to provide evidence from the experiences described. (Al-Saraf 2023).

Narrative analysis being the analysis of written or orally narrated stories no doubt is similar to this study, nevertheless, the narrative theory is not extensive enough to accommodate the present study.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

As already foregrounded, CDA posit Wodak and Meyer (2009) was formerly identified as Critical Linguistics (CL). Nowadays some scholars prefer the term Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) was developed by the Lancaster school of linguists of which Norman Fairclough and Michel Foucault, Van Dijk, Ruth Wodak etc. were the most prominent figures. It is a cross-discipline outlined in the early 1990s. In general, CDA as a school or paradigm is characterized by the common interests in de-mystifying ideologies and power through the systematic and reproducible investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken or visual).

This theory better suits the present study as it looks beyond the linguistic choices. This work is not just a superficial analysis of media reportage as in Discourse Analysis (DA) or the politicizing of discourse but it takes a critical look at how language as employed in press scripting influences the reading public.

The CDA theory adopted for this study is that of Norman Fairclough. Fairclough is one of the trio who pioneered Critical Discourse Analysis. His framework was developed based on the work of systemic functional linguists, such as that of Halliday (1985) which attempts to analyse language based on the social functions that language serves. To Fairclough, language use is a social practice since discourse is involved in all various day-to-day activities in human social practices

whether they are political, economic or ideological, without any of them being reducible to discourse.

Methodology

This research is a Critical Discourse Analysis, and as such the design is the critical discourse research design. Critical discourse research design is done in such a way that language is not analysed in isolation from society, but is one in which the analysis of linguistic choices is done about societal appreciation and consumption of the encoded information and the discourse. Data gathered for this study are taken from the print genre of the mass media. The researcher decided to opt for newspapers, which have daily and up-to-date reportage of national issues. Data on the activities of Boko Haram abound in Nigerian newspapers; therefore, the researcher has picked The Nation newspaper. A brief background of The Nation is given below.

The Nation Newspaper

The Nation Newspaper is a Daily Newspaper published in Lagos, Nigeria. According to a 2009 survey, it was rated as the second most-read newspaper in the country, and the same result was repeated in a 2011 report by the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVANS). The paper says it stands for freedom, justice and the market economy. Its target audience is the political elite, the affluent, the educated and the upwardly mobile was founded by the current Nigerian President, Bola Ahmed Tinubu in July 2006.

The procedure for the selection of the newspaper was based on the popularity factor. It is based on the assumption that the more widely circulated and widely read a newspaper is across the country, the more representative it will be of the wider view of Nigerian society. Five news reports on Boko Haram were collected for analysis. The period of the news covers the month of May 2012, after Boko Haram became violent,

with the bombing of the nation's Police Headquarters in Abuja and the United Nations building in the same city in 2011.

The method of analysis will make use of Fairclough's three tools (lexicalization and predication, presupposition and intertextuality) from his five tools of discursive practice (lexicalization and predication, presupposition, intertextuality, verbal process and topics).

Lexicalization and Predication

This is concerned with the analysis of the denotation and connotation of lexical items. The choice of certain words in defining certain people or actions is significant for analysis because according to Richardson (2007), "words convey the imprint of society and of value judgments in particular".

S/N	THE NATION
1.	<u>Islamist Sect, Boko Haram</u> , last night released a video showing a smiling <u>suicide bomber</u> drive into the offices of This Day and <u>blow himself up</u> , an attack that <u>killed at least three people</u> and made journalists a new target of the <u>extremist group</u> . (The Nation, Wed. 2 nd May, 2012).
2.	The <u>Federal Government</u> was yesterday holding out an olive branch to the <u>Boko Haram insurgents</u> saying it is ready for talks. (The Nation, Friday, 11 th May, 2012).

There are observable distinctions in the naming of Boko Haram fighters and the Federal Government and their troops in each of the analyses as presented above on lexicalization and predication, item 1 is devoted to the press denotation of Boko Haram and description of their activities while item 2 is devoted by the denotation and description of the Nigerian government. Concerning Boko Haram, The Nation views the group based on its (Boko Haram) Islamic ideology in which the group claims to be fighting a just Islamic war for Allah; thus, the Newspaper calls them names like 'Islamist Sect', 'Boko Haram', 'suicide bombers' the 'extremist group', and 'insurgents'. While describing the activities

of the group, the newspaper points to the suicide bomber as ‘blowing himself up’ and ‘killing at least three people’.

On the naming of the government side of the Boko Haram conflict, however, the side is spoken of as a more legitimate authority than the Boko Haram side; thus, the paper writes, ‘The Federal Government was yesterday holding out an olive branch’ to the Boko Haram insurgents. This presents the Federal Government as being a more peace-loving and responsible side, kind enough to woo the more bloodthirsty Boko Haram to embrace peace even when it can easily use its national military might to crush the insurgent group.

Presuppositions

Presuppositions are those things that are treated as common knowledge by the communicator, e.g. happenings or basic facts that are assumed to be societal knowledge. While making a presupposition, the writer or speaker considers his remarks to be taken for granted and so should go unchallenged.

S/N	THE NATION
1.	The sultan <u>dispelled</u> rumours that there are <u>plans to Islamize Nigeria</u> (using Boko Haram) saying ‘if there is such a plan I should know because I was in the military (The Nation, 11th May, 2012).
2.	The sect claimed responsibility for the January 20 th attacks. <u>The most deadly ever carried out by the Boko Haram</u> (The Nation, May 2, 2012).

In item listed as number 1 above, the reporter used presupposition in reporting on rumours to Islamize Nigeria. For the sultan to ‘dispel’ the planned Islamisation of Nigeria means there were indeed rumours that the Boko Haram sect was formed to Islamize the country. But beyond that fact, we see The Nation Newspaper again defending the image of Islam, dissociating it from any alleged attempt to Islamize Nigeria. Statement number 2, where the sect ‘claimed’

responsibility for the January 20 attack, shows that an attack took place on the said date, which the reporter takes for granted that the reader is aware of. Also, for the reporter to describe the attack as the most deadly attack ever carried out by Boko Haram’ presupposes that there have been previous deadly attacks, though not as deadly as this one. This portrays Boko Haram as a deadly group.

Intertextuality

We constantly cite and recite expressions, and we recycle meanings that are already available. Intertextuality comes from 3 types of sources, i.e. direct quotation, indirect quotation (or space quotes i.e. highlighting only important words and not the whole quotation) and scares quotes i.e. statements like ‘the so-called’, the so described (or self-confessed confessed), what they call, and words like ‘according to him/whom etc. the use of such devices helps the reporter to avoid responsibility or being held accountable for such statements.

THE NATION	
1.	“Government is ready to discuss. History has proven that even wars that are fought for decades, in the end, are only concluded by dialogue”, Vice President Namadi Sambo said. (The Nation, May 11, 2012).
2.	General Danjuma said, “ <u>The somalialisation of Nigeria is taking place right before our eyes.</u> We need to sit down and get to the root of the problem. <u>Where are our northern governors?</u> ” (The Nation, May 2, 2012)

In item 1, for instance, the larger part of the statement is credited to former Vice President Namadi Sambo. Thus, the reporter puts the statement in quotation marks. The only part that is originally that of the reporter is the part after the closing quotation marker, which says, “Vice President Namadi Sambo said”. The second statement also includes texts or words used by General Theophilus Danjuma, who is quoted as saying ‘the somalialization of Nigeria is taking place right

before our eyes'. The coinage 'somalialization itself is derived from the Somalia civil war, which the general is using metaphorically to warn about what may happen in Nigeria if care is not taken to nip the insurgency in the bud. Also, the question, "Where are our northern governors?" was asked by the general is a reference to the existing northern governors' forum.

Conclusion

The study has been able to unravel the factors that give rise to news reporters choosing to use language in a particular way, the crucial role they play in ideology, power and hegemony and the consequences of certain media language on reporters and consumers alike. The language used in reportage of the Boko Haram insurgency shows how much the Boko Haram insurgency has dominated the press in all its ramifications, being a burning topical issue. For the analysis, however, the research made use of news reports only. The choice of news reports is based on their factual and first-hand experience nature. For instance, the reporter is a living witness of what he is reporting about; the news is received as authentic, although, as has been observed in the use of intertextuality as analysed above, some news reports are based on other sources of information which the reporter reproduces in his news reportage, and not things physically witnessed; hence the use of intertextuality to acknowledge sources of the information. However, news reports are viewed generally as being more objective and credible.

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