A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPER REPORTS ON INSURGENCIES

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Abstract

Several studies have explored the language of media discourse. However, little attention has been given to critical discourse analysis of media representation of insurgencies in Nigerian newspapers. Thus, this study critically explores lexico-syntactic choices and representations in Nigerian newspaper reports on insurgency. The study adopted Norman Fairclough and Van Dijk's models of critical discourse analysis as its theoretical framework. Three Nigerian dailies (Daily Trust, the Guardian and The Nation) were selected purposively because of their wide circulations across the six Nigerian geo-political zones and online availability. From the editions published between January 2015 and June 2017, a period covering the climax of insurgency in Nigeria, 18 reports were chosen for critical discourse analysis. The findings of the study showed that Nigerian newspaper reporters deploy ideologically biased lexico-syntactic patterns in representing the main types of insurgent activities carried out by Boko Haram, MASSOB and Niger Delta Militants in Nigeria. Also, they use lexical, syntactic, rhetorical and visual devices to do a lot of things including calling the attention of Nigerian security agents, the Nigerian government, and the international communities to the challenges posed to humanity as a result of insurgencies in Nigeria. Their lexical, rhetorical, and visual choices are also consciously used to encourage Nigerian security agencies to keep on fighting insurgencies and to urge the insurgents to surrender and embrace peace. The study also showed that some of the

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news reports occasionally bear the reporter's personal and institutional ideologies. The study concludes that unbiased reportage is cogent to winning the war against insurgency in Nigeria.

Key Words: Media Discourse, Insurgency, Ideologies, Critical Discourse Analysis, Media Representation

Introduction

Language is a social process that is conditioned by society. Linguistic phenomena are social because their use of language is determined by certain societal effects (Fairclough, 1989). Also, social phenomena are linguistic in the sense that language in action that goes on in social contexts is not merely seen as social processes and practices; it is part of those processes and practices. The significance of language in human life is incomparable. Language is not just a means of communication; it has grown to become a means of establishing relationships and enacting cultural ties as well as business associations. With the advent of the concept of globalization, people the world over communicate with one another and exchange ideas. Though technological advancements have served as a medium for communication, one of the copious avenues for communicating and documenting the experiences in society is via the media. Language is therefore used for achieving this task. In the media, language is used as a means of reporting, advertising, and commenting, and these are documented such that they can be retrieved and revisited. Thus, the role of language cannot be downplayed.

The mass media occupy a prominent vantage in the modern society. They bring about drastic changes and improve social situations as they influence our social, civil, cultural, political, economic and aesthetic outlook. The media have therefore become an indispensable part of human existence. However, varying factors such as; age, educational status, economic state, personal and insatiable human needs and availability of proper components decide the degree and frequency of media engagement. This is evident from the fact that most media centres are located in urban areas. Paul, Singh and John (2013)

aver that most media product consumers are domicile and are concentrated in and around cities and towns

Muhammed (2015, p. 89). Submits that "the primary functions of the media in any society are to inform, educate, and entertain. Beyond these, they serve as watchdogs of the society, agenda setters and force multipliers". Through these functions, the mass media sensitizes, enlightens and persuades members of the public to participate actively in developmental activities. To a large extent, the ability of the media to effectively carry out these functions depends on the appropriateness of language and discourse strategies deployed as well as the amount of freedom they enjoy in society. The media occupy a position that is similar to that of a middleman, providing necessary information about the affairs of a particular issue to the producers, which are the government and the general public as consumers. It is therefore susceptible to manipulation either positively or negatively (Ngige, Badekale and Hamman, 2016). In line with this thought, "the information disseminated by the news media could be either harmful or useful to the society" (Muhammed, 2015 p. 89). In other words, the choice of language and discourse strategies by the media could increase or decrease insurgency. Newspaper reports constitute important sources of information and attitude formation for the public. Newspapers in leading discourse initiation on key national issues pick statements and actions of prominent national figures, celebrities and happenings around the nation and expose them to their readership. The discourse employed by newspapers is not often devoid of some embellishments determined by the angle of the story. The press is very effective in telling the public what to think about and how to think about such things.

Fairclough (1999) opines that mass media are attracting critical scholarly attention because they carry a unique signifying power. The nature of their power relation is ideological and hidden. Although the participants in print media discourse (journalist and the reader) are separated in place and time, there are instances of power or control. The producers of media discourse exercise power over the consumers because they have the sole producing rights and therefore determine

what is excluded and included, what interpretation to suggest to readers, how people, institutions, policies and events are represented, and how to position the reader (Ogungbe, 2011). News reporting as a form of communication that is poly-thematic covers several areas including information on issues of interest to society such as the issue of insurgency.

Insurgency is a normative concept. The United States Department of Defence (2007), defines it as an "organized movement that has the aim of overthrowing a constituted government through subversive means and armed conflict" (cited in Hellensen, 2008. p. 14). Siegel, (2007, p. 328) states that "this definition suggests that insurgent groups employ unlawful means towards achieving an end, which could be political, religious, social or even ideological. The goal in insurgency is to confront and overthrow an existing government for the control of power, resources or power sharing". According to Anna (2013), terrorism can be said to be a media phenomenon; you can look at it as a species of psychological warfare waged through the media. Hence, terrorists influence the media, media coverage also affects terrorists. Terrorists, by definition, want attention. They commit violent acts to cause fear, and terror and disrupt normal life, all in the hope of gaining attention for a cause. Furthermore, Peresin (2007) asserts that terrorists, namely, seek first and foremost to manipulate and exploit the media for their purposes by sending messages of violence and thus gaining mass publicity. On the other hand, the counterterrorist approach adopted should be national and international. Democratic countries with free media use the media to react to a direct inquiry and request of the country by the expectations of the national safety apparatus. The news media can help terrorists just by reporting their frightful acts to a mass audience (Rather, 2012, cited in Ngige, Badekale and Hamman, 2016).
This study, therefore, critically examines the use of language and discourse strategies in reporting insurgencies in Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigates lexical and syntactic choices and the ideological import of such choices in Nigerian newspaper reports of insurgency.

Insurgencies in Nigeria

In the past few decades "the phenomena of ethnicity and religious intolerance have led to incessant recurrence of ethnoreligious conflicts, which have birthed copious ethnic militias like the Bakassi Boys, O'dua People Congress (OPC), the Egbesu Boys; the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC); the Arewa Peoples' Congress (APC), the Igbo People Congress (IPC) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), amongst others" (Salawu, 2010, pp. 345-353, cited in Folarin and Faith, 2012, p. 8). The onset of the agitation of these groups is birthed by different factors – religious intolerance, ethnic chauvinism and so on. One cannot specifically say the number of these insurgent groups due to inadequate data. However, Onuoha (2012, p. 134-151) has averred that "about 40% of ethno-religious crisis has occurred in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. There has particularly been an increase between 2012 and 2014 in the occurrences of terrorist attacks in the country with the government's insignificant success in curbing the menace. The most notorious insurgency-prone groups that have challenged Nigeria's national security, territoriality, sovereignty and unity have been the Niger Delta militant groups, Biafra agitators and Boko Haram" insurgents.

Media Discourse (MD)

Media discourse also called Journalese has a peculiar structure and covers a wide purview of different strata of society. Media language "refers to interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer" (O'Keeffe, 2006, p. 31). He further opines that "though the discourse is oriented towards these recipients, they very often cannot make instantaneous responses to the producer(s) of the discourse, though increasingly this is changing with the advent of new media technology". According to Macdonald (2003, p. 2 cited in Ayoola and Olaosun 2014, p. 49), the media often "perceived public desires and concerns "and sometimes set an agenda that interacts with those of the wider society. Bridges and Brunts (1981, p. 35) opine that, the media produces "precisely representations of the social world,

images, description, explanations and frames for understanding how the world is, why it works as it is said and shown to work". This is why Bell 1991, p. 2) says that "the study of media language has much to offer to the different disciplines on whose territory it touches: linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, semiotics, communication studies, sociology and psychology".

Macdonald (2003, p.14, cited in Ayoola and Olaosun 2014, p. 49) "observes that it is pointless to argue about the accuracy of any representation of the real world in the media. This is because it is not always possible to have access to the truth and even if one does, it is often evaded or distorted by participants whose human foibles often affect their positive or negative presentation of events and happenings. She concludes that an attempt to investigate the truthfulness of media representation can produce only a wild goose chase". According to Fairclough (2001, p. 50), media influences the readers in that "they have sole producing rights and, therefore, determine what is included or excluded" from their news reports.

White (1997, cited in O'Keeffe 2006, p. 441), states therefore that Linguistic analysis of the newspaper media is very often sceptical, and linguists sometimes see themselves as policing the subtle manipulation of language to distort reality. For example, claimed that, by 'severely' circumscribing subjective interpersonal features in hard news reports, journalists can, through 'objective' language, purport to be neutral, essentially where formal language provides the veneer of neutrality. White suggests that the use of such an impersonal register is but 'a rhetorical stratagem to aid the obfuscation of a reporter's subjectivity.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA is an approach to the study of language with a special focus on e-raying, social structure and power relations in texts. "The 1970s saw the emergence of a form of discourse and text analysis that recognized the role of language in structuring power relations in society. At that time, much linguistic research elsewhere was focused on formal aspects of language which constituted the linguistic competence of speakers and

which could theatrically be isolated from specific instances of language use" (Chomsky 1957 cited in Wodak 2002, p. 13). Furthermore Wodak (2002, p. 13) submits that "where the relation between language and context was considered, as in pragmatics (Levinson 1983), with a focus on speakers' pragmatic/sociolinguistic competence, sentences and components of sentences were still regarded as the basic unit. Much sociolinguistic research at the time was aimed at describing and explaining language variation, and communicative interaction with limited attention to issues of social literacy and power". In such a context, attention to texts, their production and interpretation and their relation to very different kinds of interest are the concern. The work of Kress, Hodge (1979), Fower, Kress, Hodge, Trew (1979), Van Dijk (1985), Fairclough (1989) and Wodak (Ed) (1989) serve to explain and illustrate the main assumptions, principles and procedures of what has become known as critical linguistics.

Kress (1990, pp. 84-97) opines that "theoretical foundations and sources of critical linguistics as quite self-consciously adapted". He further notes that "from its social-philosophical counterpart as a label by the group of scholars working at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s and by 1990s the label, CDA came to be used more consistently to describe this particular approach to linguistic analysis" (88). Kress (1990, p. 94) identifies CDA as "emerging as a distinct theory of linguistics". He elucidates certain qualities that distinguish critical discourse analysis from other linguistic analysis. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) succinctly outline these criteria, including the following.

1. Language is a social phenomenon.
2. Not only individuals but also institutions and social groupings have specific meanings and systematic arrangements.
3. Texts are the relevant units of language in communication.
4. Readers/hearers are not passive recipients in their relationship to texts.
5. There are similarities between the language of science and the language of institutions, and so on (Kress 1989 cited in Wodak 2002, p. 15).

Choice of Model

The framework used for this study involves a combination of the Fairclough (1992) CDA model, called textual-oriented discourse and Van Dijk's (1993) CDA model called the socio-cognitive model which has been widely referenced and applied in the analysis of media discourse. Fairclough views discourse as social practice and takes a social interest in the relationship between language and society (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, p. 258). The relationship between language and society can be described, interpreted and explained through studying and analysing written and spoken texts. Van Djik (1995) developed methods which are more focused on cultural and social contexts. The methods are based on four categories: action, context, power and ideology.

Discourse Analysis is, from Van Djik's (1995, p. 17) point of view "ideology analysis", because ideologies "are typically, though not exclusively, expressed and reproduced in discourse and communication including non-verbal semiotic messages, such as pictures, photographs and movies. He further claims that "ideologies indirectly influence the personal cognition of group members and they are manifested through discourse" (Van Djik 1995, p. 19). The manifestation is particularly presented by "Us" versus "Them" dimensions, in which people of one group are likely to use positive terms to describe themselves while they present others in negative ones. Besides ideology, the power issue is also one of the major goals which the CDA emphasizes. Through CDA, those people who are in power and have the means to deal with social problems are critically analyzed (Van Djik 1993). "In a society, the relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language can be described, interpreted, and explained" (Wodak 2001, p. 2). In other words, every discourse is produced and interpreted historically in a society where powerful groups dominate discourse structures. Thus, three major themes shared by all CDA models are the concepts of power, history and ideology (Wodak 2001, p. 3). Fairclough (1992) points out that discourse representation is associated with not only language texts but also social practices. It is important to analyse

intertextuality or discourse representation from both linguistic and social perspectives. Wang (2006) believes that the most widely cited view about CDA is Fairclough and Wodak (1997). According to them, there are eight principles of CDA. Some of these principles are as follows:

Methodology

This paper is a critical discourse analysis of selected Nigerian newspaper reports on insurgencies. It is a qualitative study based on content analysis of verbal and visual news in three Nigerian national dailies that are published in English (*Daily Trust, the Guardian and the Nation*). News stories selected for the analysis are limited to those on the three Nigerian insurgencies (the Boko Haram insurgency, the Niger Delta Militancy and the Biafra agitation). Thus, the study does not cover other aspects such as reports on politics, advertisement, and other activities in Nigeria. Aspects of news items covered are the headlines and storyline. The study is also limited to a period of two and a half years.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Lexico-Syntactic Representation of Insurgencies

Lexical Choices and their Ideological Import

Words/Nouns that Exclude or Suppress the "other"

Unlike what was obtainable before now, recently, people have become critical of words and expressions that exclude one party semantically while it is meant to represent all. Recently, scholars also have put up a strong resistance against the use of gender-biased expressions or words. They disagree that expressions such as ''man'' (which semantically refers to a male human being) should be used to refer to all human beings because it suppresses the female gender. Unfortunately, instances of such expressions are found in the news media which is supposedly used for objectivity.

Sample 1:

The Guardian, Monday, July 6, 2015. Vol. 31, No. 13,338

Gunmen kill 31 in Zamfara, six die in Yobe suicide attack

However, confirming the number of casualties to newsmen, chairman of Birnin Magaji Local Government Council, Muhammad Bala Gusami, said he could only confirm the bodies of 31 people…

The Guardian, Monday, July 6, 2015. Vol. 31, No. 13,338 Page 1& 2

Gunmen kill 31 in Zamfara, six die in Yobe suicide attack

This happened after the same group of gunmen killed six people from Kokiya and Cigama villages in Zamfara state at the weekend when the armed bandits attack after the Friday congregation prayer, in Kokiya Central Mosque.

Sample 3:

Daily Trust Wednesday, February 3, 2016 vol.39. No. 23

Biafra: Militants threatened to blow up hijacked ship

The ship was flying the Liberia national flag when it was hijacked by gunmen off the coast of Continuo, Benin Republic.

The choice of the word ''gunmen'' in the headline of Sample 1, headline and lead of Sample 2, and Sample 3 suggests that women do not commit crimes, or that those referred to (suspects)are all men. The old ideology that difficult or deadly endeavours are only embarked upon by men no longer holds. Several reports have indicated that women are now involved in armed robbery, militancy, and terrorism. The expression exonerates women from crimes and is biased against men by suggesting that only men carry guns. This is an overrepresentation of men. This portrays the reporter as biased as he would have used other words that are neutral and not gender-based like 'criminals', 'assassins', etc.

Sample 4:
Daily Trust, Thursday, October 27, 2016 vol. 41, No. 14

Army confirms return of missing soldiers in Borno

Maj. Gen Lucky Irabor, the Theatre Commander of Operation Lafia Dole, stated this while briefing newsmen in Maiduguri.

The use of 'newsmen' in the above sample excludes the female gender. The implication is that there are no women in journalism. Such words should be avoided when referring to an institution like journalism that has both men and women as personnel. There is a need for fairness and equity in the news media so that no group or gender is marginalized, misrepresented or underrepresented. Therefore, the reporter must exercise absolute carefulness in choosing his words to achieve this goal. Many centuries back, learners of English had been taught to use masculine pronouns in situations where the gender of the subject is unclear or variable, or when a group to which the subject refers contains members of both sexes. However, an important goal of Critical Discourse Analysis is the avoidance of words and expressions that are overtly or subtly biased against individuals or groups based on gender, ethnicity, social, political, or religious inclination, ability or disability. It is better to use "the Press" or "Journalists" instead of newsmen.

Sample 5:
Daily Trust, Monday, October 12, 2015.

Boko Haram fleeing N/East- Army Chief

He was addressing officers and men of the Nigerian Army at the Ikeja Cantonment at the weekend.

The choice of 'men' in the lead of the above Sample implies that there are no women in the Nigerian Army which is not true. This amounts to

underrepresentation of women in the Nigerian Army. The reporter's choice is unfair and biased against the female gender. A word/phrase like 'other ranks' or 'non-commissioned soldiers' is fair and more appropriate than 'men' for both sexes. Although in the military everyone is regarded as men, this also fails to recognize the place of combatant women in the military.

Blatantly Biased/Subjective Nouns

Reporters often use some nouns that are biased and not objective, even though they claim objectivity as they are meant to only report as it is. Some of these nouns are outlined below.

Sample 6:

Daily Trust Wednesday, February 3, 2016 vol.39. No. 23

Biafra: Militants threatened to blow up hijacked ship

The hijacking indicates the separatists could be working with some Niger Delta oil militants blamed for recent bombings of oil pipelines in the oil-rich south.

The use of the noun 'separatists' reveals the ideology of the reporter. This ideology is widely held by many Nigerians. In other words, resulting from the Nigerian civil war, any agitation from the Igbo has always been taken as a secession agenda. The information contained in the report is that a ship was hijacked by militants but the reporter chooses to use the word 'separatists' to name the group. This is capable of invoking the emotional feeling of hate towards the group or even influencing the passive and uncritical reader to take action against the referents. Reporters infuse their ideologies into the report as it has the power to influence the reader to think or act in a way towards the person or group so described or named. The reporter intends to inform readers especially the government to know the intention of the group as well as act to maintain the oneness of the country.

Sample 7:

The Guardian, Friday, September 2, 2016, vol. 33, No. 13,762 Pages 1 & 6

Fear of war grips N'Delta as military deploys weapons

The deployment of weapons by the military does not mean they are about to start a war. The activities of the military in the region are to curtail the activities of the militants and are not intended to turn into a war. The use of the noun 'war' by the reporter in the headline sensationally is subjective and intended to create a feeling of anxiety. The military and the government have always told the people of the region to be calm and go about their lawful activities and should not panic at the sight of the military or their equipment. For the reporter to immediately think of using the word 'war' with the myriads of nouns that would have been fair and objective enough to reflect the reporter's intention. The reporter intends to get the people and government on alert for any impending attack by the group.

Sample 8:

Daily Trust, Monday, October 12, 2015.

Boko Haram fleeing N/East- Army Chief

The Army said yesterday that the troops were pushing into Boko Haram dens and gradually clearing all known camps and enclaves of Boko Haram militants, especially in the North –east.

A 'den' is a home for wild animals, mostly used to refer to the home of lions. Human beings live in houses not 'dens'. The reporter's choice of the word 'dens' implies that Boko Haram members are animals; since a den is for animals, anybody who lives in it becomes an animal. This is indirectly referring to the group members as human beings who do things as animals. Here, the reporter likens the activities of the group to how animals act. This is a reflection of the reporter's ideology about the group members; he sees them as animals in human skins as a result of

their uncivilized ideologies as opposed to Western education and civilization. Choice of words like 'camps', 'enclaves', etc. is objective and fair to use for where human beings live or stay no matter how bad their activities are. The reporter's use of den, however, could be because he wants readers to desist from such vices.

Derogatory Naming and Labelling

Sometimes, reporters use names that are derogatory to refer to individuals or groups of people in their reportage. This is against the principle of objectivity and fair representation in journalism. People should be named and identified fairly. Interestingly, a critical examination of such names and labels can unravel the reporter's ideological stance and is intended to subtly influence the reader. Such derogatory naming or labelling can disrepute an individual or a group.

Sample 9:

Daily Trust, Wednesday, February 3, 2016. Vol.39. No. 23

Biafra: Militants threatened to blow up hijacked ship

The merchant ship, MT LEON DIAS and its crew hijacked by pro-Biafran militants' weekend has been released according to the latest report.

Sample 10:

Daily Trust, Monday, February 1, 2016, vol. 39, No. 21

85 killed in B/Haram attack near Maiduguri

…At least 85 people were killed Saturday night when Boko Haram militants attacked three villages on the outskirts of Maiduguri…

The reporter uses some derogatory labelling to refer to Boko Haram and pro-Biafra as 'militants' thereby, naming them by their activities as in Samples 9 and 10. This is a misrepresentation of the groups by the reporter and can influence the reader to think that the groups are all

about militancy. They could be identified first as a group before stating their activities and not to name them by their activities. The reporter adopted 'militants' to name them as a way of condemning the activities of the group. The reporter aims to dissuade readers from every act of militancy. In other words, as part of the media's social responsibility to vilify negative and anti-social behaviour, the reporter chooses to derogate the groups so that they are hated and fought by the people and government.

Syntactic Choices and their Ideological Import

Use of Attributive Adjectives

Syntactically, adjectives are broadly divided into attributive and predicative. The position of the adjective in describing or talking about people by the reporter gives a clue to the reporter's opinion and goes ahead to show bias. In other words, the decision to use either attributive or predicative adjectives by the reporter is ideological and rife with biases. The difference between attributive and predicative adjectives is not just a case of syntax but goes beyond that. According to Epstein (1978), modifiers (attributive adjectives) describe permanent qualities while qualifiers (predicative adjectives) give temporary traits. Reporters often use modifiers where they ought to use qualifiers as a way of assigning certain attributes or traits to people.

Sample 11:

The Nation, Sunday, October 2, 2016, vol. 11, No. 3722

Army releases 348 'cleared' Boko Haram suspects

Three hundred and forty eight suspect members of the terror sect, Boko Haram were let out of incarceration yesterday in Maiduguri by the Army…

Sample 12:
The Guardian, Thursday, September 22, 2016. Vol. 33, No. 13,782

> Niger Delta crisis to end soon, says president Buhari
>
> He thanked the United States for help rendered in the area of security through the provision of armaments, training for Nigerian troops, and sharing of intelligence, which have led to the degradation of the Boko Haram terror group in the North east.

Using the adjective 'terror' attributively in Samples 28 and 29 above to refer to Boko Haram and Niger Delta is jaundiced and conclusive. The reporter associates terrorism with the two groups. The idea is that the groups do not just carry out terrorist activities as a secondary objective, but have no goal than terrorism. The reporter's idea is that 'terrorism' is a permanent trait of the groups which may discourage the government from using the social and philosophical approach to de-radicalize the sect members. In other words, the report is capable of making the government wipe out all of them instead of capturing and rehabilitating them. The reporter has molded his opinion already about the groups and has communicated that covertly which will influence readers to form negative impressions against the groups. The aim is for readers to condemn the activities of the group and see them as a threat to the people.

Sample 13:
The Guardian, Thursday, September 22, 2016. Vol. 33, No. 13,782

> Niger Delta crisis to end soon, says president Buhari
>
> President Buhari said Nigeria was open to support in combating the humanitarian crisis ravaging the terror-torn region.

The use of the adjective ''terror-torn'' attributively conveys the biased opinion of the reporter about the head noun 'region' referring to the Niger Delta region. The meaning conveyed by the reporter is that the region is all about terrorism. The implication here is that terrorism has

greatly damaged the region, and there is nothing good in the region. This also labels the people of the region as terrorists whose activities have ravaged the region. While the aim of the reporter may be to make the people see the ugly effects of terrorism to desist from it for the growth and development of the region, the report may equally make uncritical readers believe that the region is in perpetual terrorism.

Sample 14:
The Guardian, Sunday, August 28, 2016. Vol. 33, No. 13,757 Page

Tension in Niger Delta as Military begins Special Drill There was palpable tension and apprehension among residents of some communities in the oil-rich, but troubled Niger Delta.

'…Niger Delta that is troubled by militants…' is an optional choice. Using 'troubled' attributively means that the crisis in the region is permanent; that the region has been experiencing trouble and is most likely to continue to experience it. The reporter establishes an inextricable link between the region (Niger Delta) and 'trouble'. What the region is facing is temporary and could be resolved anytime. It is, therefore, inappropriate to use 'trouble' attributively to the region. The reporter chooses this to show the enduring aftermath of terrorism on people who engage in it. This is to sensitize them to desist from terrorism.

Topicalization
Topicalization is a syntactic device which involves taking a structure (clause or phrase) in a sentence from its position to the sentence's initial position. In newspaper reports, whenever this is done, it is not just a matter of style but shows the reporter's ideological bias. Structurally, it is to make a part of the sentence come first while at the same time, the reporter uses it to make that part of the sentence more important and prominent by making it come first, to achieve the intended objective.

Sample 14:
The Guardian, Friday, August 26, 2016, vol. 33, No. 13,755 Page 1 & 6

Govt to raise a team for dialogue with militants

While he agreed that the demands by the traditional rulers are desirable, Kachikwu insisted that what is needed immediately is a developmental process that is agreed for the Niger Delta community which is long serving and in which money can be put.

'While he agreed that the demands by the traditional rulers are desirable,', it is topicalized by the reporter. Two positions are seen; the position of the traditional rulers who made demands, and the position of the minister, Kachikwu whose opinion is a developmental process is an urgent need. The basic state of the sentence is: "Kachikwu insisted that what is needed immediately is a developmental process that is agreed for the Niger Delta community which is long-serving and in which money can be put while he agreed that the demands by the traditional rulers are desirable.'' By topicalizing the demands of the traditional rulers, the reporter places more importance on the demands of the traditional rulers than the opinion of the minister. Though it is presented as an objective report, the reporter however infuses his opinion covertly by adopting this syntactic device.

Sample 15:
The Guardian, Monday, July 6, 2016,5vol. 31, No. 13,338 Page 1 & 2

Gunmen kill 31 in Zamfara, six die in Yobe suicide attack

And as the nation awaits the final verdict on the soldiers sentenced last year, the Chief of Army Staff has hinted that the Nigerian Army would set up another court-martial to try dissident soldiers soon…

awaits the final verdict on the soldiers sentenced last year" as a way of

saying that the verdict on the sentenced soldiers was more important and should come first before setting up court-martial to try other defaulters or offenders. For the reporter, the release of the verdict will determine the fate of subsequent court-martials that will be set up. The reporter aims to emphasize the importance of taking punitive measures against law-breakers rather than just judgment without action.

Sample 16:
The Guardian, Monday, July 6, 2015, vol. 31, No. 13,338 Page 1 & 2

Gunmen kill 31 in Zamfara, six die in Yobe suicide attack

However, confirming the number of casualties to newsmen, Chairman of Birnin Magaji Local Government Council, Muhammad Bala Gusami, said he could only confirm the bodies of 31 people as at the time he spoke with reporters on phone.

The structure ''Chairman of Birnin Magaji Local Government Council, Muhammad Bala Gusami, confirming the number of casualties to newsmen, said he could only confirm the bodies of 31 people as at the time he spoke with reporters on the phone.'' was re-structured and part of it topicalized by the reporter as seen in the above sample. The reporter shifts attention from who confirmed the number of casualties (Muhammad Bala Gusami, Chairman of Birnin Magaji Local Government Council) to newsmen who received the confirmation. This is the same as saying that newsmen receiving the confirmation are more important than the person who made the confirmation. The source is suppressed and the newsmen who received the information from the source are made prominent and more important than the source of the information. The reporter's choice echoes the professionalism and objectivity of the newsmen as they do not just fabricate stories but get them directly from the sources and eyewitnesses. This is to give credibility to news reports.

Sample 17:
Daily Trust, Saturday, January 2, 2016, vol. 18, No. 80 Page 4 & 5

How Boko Haram killed 19 family members in attack

Perhaps, the most heartbreaking case of Boko Haram's violence in recent times in Borno state was last Sunday's attack on the home of the Bulama (Ward Head) of Baderi village in the outskirts of Maiduguri, Borno state capital.

''Perhaps, the most heartbreaking case of Boko Haram's violence in recent times in Borno state was…'' was topicalized by the reporter as a way of saying that it is common knowledge that Boko Haram kills people in Maiduguri Borno state capital but that this attack demands attention because of the great damage caused. The reporter, by using this syntactic device is unconcerned about where and how it happened by directing readers' focus to the huge damage caused by the attack. Newspaper reports according to professional ethos are to be objective and devoid of the reporter's opinion to allow readers to make independent judgments. Unfortunately, this is not so, as a critical study like this reveals otherwise. The reporter in the above sample focuses the attention of the readers on the weight of the damage caused to influence the readers. The intention is to emphasize the disheartening, dehumanizing and agonizing activities of terrorists.

Sample 18:
The Nation, Friday, May 6, 2016, vol. 11, No. 35 Page 1,6& 10

Militants bomb oil facility

Fears that power supply may get worse were rife yesterday after Wednesday's bombing of a Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) major valve platform around Escravos in Warri, Southwest Local Government Area of Delta State.

'Fears that power supply may get worse were rife yesterday…' is topicalized by the reporter with the covert intention to direct readers' attention to the effects of militant activities in the Niger Delta rather than the bombings themselves contained in the report. Here, the reporter directs the attention of readers to power being affected by the bombings thereby affecting its supply. By this, the reporter tries to influence readers that the effect of the activities of the group is not far-fetched as power, a common utility drastically drops in supply. The reporter intends to inform readers, especially the government to brace up for the looming scarcity of oil. This is to enable them to prepare to curtail its effects on the economy.

Findings and Conclusion

This study concludes that news reports on insurgencies in Nigeria not only inform the audience about the latest activities relating to insurgencies and the government's steps towards stemming the menace but they also help to celebrate and praise security agencies in their fight against insurgencies. Through the news reports, Nigerian journalists also denounce the insurgents and challenge them to embrace peace. Nevertheless, some of the reports are imbued with reporters' ideologies and those reporter's ideologies are reflected in their reports when looked at with a critical eye as revealed through the data analyzed in this research.

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