

MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF EDITORIAL CARTOONS ON INSECURITY IN NIGERIA'S 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Ifeyinwa Chukwuokoro
Department of English and Literary Studies,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Chuka Ononye (PhD)
Department of English and Literary Studies,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka
&
Ekwe Ngene
Department of English and Literary Studies,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Abstract

Study analyses editorial cartoons on insecurity in Nigeria's 2023 general elections. Applying qualitative data analysis, the study examines the semiotic elements that serve as represented participants (RPs) in the cartoons, how such discourse participants are represented in their relations and the multimodal discourse elements utilized to construct meaning in the cartoons. Using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design model, the study discovered bandits, assassins, terrorists, 1999 Constitution, President Buhari, Independent Oil Marketers, Mr Godwin Emefiele, Lady Justice, and party presidential candidates as the Represented Participants. Some RPs in their relations were represented as initiators of activities that aggravated insecurity while some semiotic elements were discovered to have caused tension which is an index of insecurity. Finally, colour, positioning, font size (for salience), information value, and image size were discovered as multimodal elements whose communicative affordances enhanced meaning construction in insecurity contexts of 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

Key words: Semiotics, multimodality, political cartoons, election, discourse analysis.

Introduction

Insecurity takes a central stage among all that borders Nigeria as a nation. It is an overarching problem marked by fear, injustice, unemployment, deprivations, social unrest, and many more. In an unsecured environment, the citizenry lacks protection from harmful situations but are threatened by all that is devoid of human comfort. Insecurity reflects in the forms of banditry, abductions, insurgency, terrorism, and the like. It is obvious in the field of politics where politicians struggle for one position or the other with desperation. Their quest for power makes them susceptible to monstrous activities such as killings, kidnapping, assassination, thuggery, suppression of human rights, disenfranchisement of electorates, and many others. Media houses cover all these complex realities and incorporate them in their reportage through cartoon discourse in an entertaining but serious way. Political cartoons capture and project topical issues that affect the general public. They communicate sensitive issues in a mild and humorous manner. Semiotic elements that enhance meaning construction and communication in such cartoons help to reduce the seriousness of the issues being communicated but pass the real message to the masses. In political cartoon, construction and communication of meaning are usually done through a complex means called multimodality. Multimodality is a display of dynamism in modes of communication and meaning making in discourses. It incorporates linguistic forms, visuals – objects, symbols, colors, charts, cartoons, performing arts; aural-sound, music mantra; gestures- silence, movement, body language; spatial-proximity, position, physical arrangement, dressing, and others which all work together to convey meanings, ideas and concepts. For Machin and Mayr (2012), multimodal resources critically relate to one another in communicative discourse situations for construction of meaning. This means that multimodality makes use of the complementary affordances of multiple modes of communication in meaning-making discourses. Therefore, political cartoons reflect the complex society.

The 2023 general election seems to have recorded the highest on-line political activities in Nigeria. Sensitization of the electorates, political manifestos, campaigns, political supporters and oppositions reflected on-line. Cartoon discourse captured most of these activities and utilized divergent semiotic elements in the representation of their meanings. Apart from pre and post-election activities captured by political cartoons, the happenings on the Election Day were equally recorded, among which were insecurity issues. Their interpretations portray various levels of insecurity, dehumanization, harassment and maltreatments suffered by the electorates. More so, several issues contributed in heightening the insecurity discourse within the period. These were fuel scarcity, naira redesign, cash withdrawal, naira scarcity, and others. In portraying this, the blend of semiotic and linguistic resources in the selected cartoons created a wonderful multimodal effect in communicating meanings enacted in the discourse on insecurity in 2023 general elections Nigeria. This work, therefore, aims to present a multimodal analysis of 2023 general election political cartoons on insecurity using Kress and van Leeuwen's (Henceforth, K & vL) (2006) grammar of visual design. A multimodal analysis will be done on some selected political cartoons on insecurity to explore the visual grammar of the election activities and unveil their implicit meanings. This shall be carried out in two segments where the first shall cover the description of the K & vL's model of multimodality while the other aspect shall present the analysis of the selected political cartoons from the standpoints which are:

- (a) Who are the represented participants (henceforth, RPs) in the cartoons on security in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria?
- (b) How are the discourse participants in the cartoons represented in their relations?
- (c) What are the multimodal discourse elements utilized to construct meaning in the cartoons? .

A multimodal analysis was considered most appropriate for the enquiry because of the complex nature of the data involved. Linguistic mode alone could not service the enquiry since people have learnt to explore complex approaches in the form of semiotic resources in diverse communication encounters. As noted above, some of these meaning resources include the use of symbols, sounds, colors, space and many others which pass information and enact meanings in social interactions. A good number of scholarly enquiries have been recorded in cartoon genre as could be seen in the subsequent session.

Literature Review

In this 21st Century, communication has transcended linguistic mode to incorporate several other effective means of constructing meaning. One of this is cartoon. A wide array of scholarly researches has proved that cartoon genre is invaluable in communication. For instance, Oluremi, 2019, Gamage (2019), Pedro and Lekan, (2016) are among these works to be reviewed. Oluremi (2019) is a study on political cartoons. He sees political cartoon as humour and further calls humor "elitists' weapons" used to frame political discourse (p.67). Using Flamson and Barret's Encryption Theory, he examines "Pragmeme of Political Humor in Selected Nigerian Political Cartoons. In his deployment of Encryption theoretical model, he explicates that encryption theory revolves around the notion that a purposefully produced humor shows that both the speaker and the audience share certain information in common and as a result, this theory holds that there are inferences and implied meanings within the framework of structured humor. In other words, humors are conduits of meaning, communication mechanisms which are decked with meaning potentials. They are store houses of meanings whose contents could only be assessed maximally by the audience if they are in possession of the key to it. Oluremi refers to this key as "common knowledge, attitudes and preferences required to derive the implied messages contained in the piece" (p.68). The author further explains that encryption and decryption dynamics are the workings of cognition which must be relevant to the context and audience as well. This is why he, Oluremi, connects the model with the theory of pragmeme since both the encryption and decryption are context bound and also have social relevance in the political domain. He reasons that politicians employ humor in their language use and that is why the media deploy political humor to satirize their words and actions. In other words, the media presents socio-political realities in a new and more captivating mechanism where the elites, through the instrumentality of cartoons, subtly attack and ridicule political excesses of the ruling class. Yet the subtlety and triviality in presentation do not undermine the severity of the message. Oluremi concludes that audience who is conversant with the political terrain of the cartoons of analysis always

decrypts them easily and they induce actual laughter in such audience. However, with the theory of pragmeme, the author is able to uncover the pragmatic import of the contents of the cartoons thereby submitting that the President Buhari's administration is bedeviled by egocentric leadership, "selective justice and law makers who are law-breakers" (p.79). He finally avows that the analysis so far of the selected cartoons is evidence of the empty campaign promises of political leaders and a show of the helpless realities of Nigerian nation at 56. His work differs from present study which focuses on cartoons that relate to insecurity while his placed emphasis on humor in political cartoons.

Furthermore, Abdullah, Sarudin, Usman, Mohamed, Mohammad and Idris (2020) survey elements of multi-modality in cartoon through linguistic and visual modes. They aim at demonstrating that cartoon can be deployed for meaning and information dissemination but decoding and comprehension of the message therein may not necessarily be simple since the message may be implied using linguistic mode or implicitly presented through visual modes. For this interrogation, the authors adopt Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistic model together with Kress and Van Leeuwen's multimodal theory. In this study the authors claim that images evoke more durable feelings in readers or readers than words do when read or heard. They view multimodal analysis as that which combines visual and linguistic modes of analysis in media communication. According to them, multimodality is a branch of SFL propounded by Halliday and expanded by Kress and van Leeuwen in an approach called "The Grammar of Visual Design" (P. 256). They further explicate that SFL theory which operates within multimodal frame that places emphasis on metafunctions that includes ideational interpersonal and textual metafunction whereas in social semiotics, multimodality works on three levels of meaning covering representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning. Abdullah and his colleagues believe that approaches and theories of multimodality abound in their reference to Jewith (2014), three main approaches exist within multimodality namely, a. social semiotic approach to multimodal analysis relating to Kress and Van Leeuwen, b. systemic functional grammar (SFL) of discourse analysis associated with O'Toole and others and c. interactional multimodal analysis relating to Scollon and Scollon. However, Abdullah et al submit that only the social semiotic approach out of the three approaches that is receiving a fast tracking expansion especially on multimodal studies on cartoon genre. However, through the analysis of linguistic and visual modes in their data, the researchers conclude that cartoon can be analyzed to explicate meaning and disseminate information contained in cartoon images even in class settings.

Pedro and Lekan, (2016) is a study on political cartoon discourse. It concentrates on a multimodal analysis of some cartoons relating to Nigerian 2015 General Election with the aim of exploring the verbal and non-verbal elements deployed in constructing meaning. Using Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) social semiotic theory within the scope of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics, the authors expose certain ideological dispositions that prompted the use of certain verbal and non-verbal resources prevalent in the selected cartons. According to them, political cartoons expose social realities of events in society within particular periods. Adetola and Adeoye, (2020) explore editorial cartoons as medium of communication using by two Nigeria national newspapers in order to determine the efficiency of illustrations through the use of newspaper editorial cartoon as a medium of message dissemination, examine the agenda setting function of newspapers through the use of editorial cartoons, and to ascertain the media role as watchdog of the society through the use of editorial. . The two newspapers were The Punch and The Guardian. According to them, cartoon illustrators provide supplementary viewpoints on current news events; their visuals becoming frames for organizing social knowledge in addition to capturing the essence of issues or events.

Cartoon and Multimodality

Cartoon existed as artistic drawings on ancient Greek monument long before now. It was said to have been discovered in very long scroll manuscripts as frescoes and tapestries with depictions of great military and political heroism. These ancient pictures depicted Norman Conquest of England as well as the demonstration of a conquest by 8-Deer Tiger claw capturing a 9-year old Prince, 4-wind serpent of fire, the prince's brother and other loots in 1049. These mural arts equally tell epic stories about heroic deeds, the ordeals of farmers, and the suffering of menial workers during the great Egyptian Pyramid Era (MacCloud,1994; Pryor,2004). The interpretation of these monumental sculptures shows

dehumanisation and maltreatments suffered by the farmers in the hands of Menna, the Egyptian officials. This, nevertheless, demonstrates that cartoons from the onset have always been used to expose the suffering humanity in general. Political cartoon is generally regarded as metaphorical, humorous, satirical, yet educative, informative and entertaining. It achieves these in multi-dimensional ways. This is why they are said to be multimodal in nature because they have rich contents filled with semiotic elements and information value covering their background and socio-cultural relevance.

Multimodality Theory is conceptualized from four core components which are modes, semiotic resources, modal affordances and inter-semiotic relations. A mode is the form of communication that is used to convey information. It can as well be viewed as “any organized sets of semiotic resources for making meaning” (Bazemer & Jewitt, 2010, p. 5). It is heavily influenced by cultural shaping and personal meaning. This means that modes exhibit socio-cultural relevance. Therefore, Multimodality revolves around how various realizations of meaning are achieved in discursive modes. A medium, on the other hand, is the finished product that encompasses all of the chosen modes. Semiotic Media Resources are social semiotic principles that pertain to the meanings we assign to certain media or modes. Our cultural backgrounds, the society in which we live, and personal beliefs all have effects on how we perceive and utilize semiotic resources. What people (social actors/interactants) do with certain modes determine the social resources of such modes which invariably become the social semiotic importance of such resources. Hence, semiotic resources that are grouped together form a mode. However, there must be a shared cultural significance associated with such media resources. The choice of cartoon mode as our investigative tool is quite appropriate considering its meaning construction mechanisms which are constantly linked with socially, culturally and politically situated constructions.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) is a theoretical model that presents the possibility of visual structures to represent actions and their actors. Within the ambient of the model, certain experiences, social interactions/interactors, their relations, the possible interpretations of such experiences and socio-cultural contextual interpretations could as well be linguistically represented. This is because they believe that the perception of visual images suggests meaning potentials that artists and designers of graphics incorporate in communicating to their audience. In general, semiotics is all about sign-making (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006), both linguistic and non-linguistic signs, for communication purposes and meaning-making. In other words, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) multimodality model called Visual Grammar is all about language, visual, and general multimodal communication affordances, and their complementary role in meaning-making. From this perspective, they postulate that in multimodality, every meaning potential emanates from a certain background which could be social, cultural, political, and even psychological. This is what they refer to as a specific context that propels the sign designer to create the sign. Their model presents three vantage points through which visual grammar can be analyzed and they include: Representational, Interactive and Compositional meta-functions. Representational meta-function: By this approach, K & vL mean that image can be used to represent persons, places and things. In other words, images that represent people are called Participants/Represented Participants (RP). Participants could be represented as Actors (initiators of actions) or as Goals (receivers of actions). On the other hand, actions that are represented are referred to as processes which could be transactional (equivalent to transitive verbs) or non-transactional (intransitive) processes. However, the situations of the participants and the processes are called Circumstances.

K & vL explain that Interactive meta-function covers the ability of the image to represent certain social relations between the producer, viewer, and the object they represent in sub-categories of contact, social distance and subjectivity. On the other hand, Compositional meta-function covers information value, salience, and the framing pattern of semiotic elements. This incorporates the overall layout of pictures where representational and interactive elements are structured to relate to each other in an integrated manner that culminates into a whole in meaning construction. In other word, the way an image is placed has a contributory role to play in the entire process of meaning making in visual grammar.

In summary, K & vL uphold that visual meanings are realizable through a proper synergy of pictorial affordances. Therefore, in Visual Grammar, people, places, and things depicted in images are called the represented participants; the producers and the viewers of the images are the interactive participants while the carefully articulated semiotic elements collectively utilized for meaning construction constitute what they call Compositional features of the image representation. However, there must be a systematic pattern of interpreting what is presented so that semiotic elements are not placed indiscriminately.

Methodology

Data for this work consists of three purposively selected on-line cartoons on insecurity in 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Through purposive sampling technique, attention was given to political cartoons published between February and May, 2023 and any other that is relevant to the discourse in Nigeria. As qualitative research, the study took a purposive sampling method in order to present an in-depth description of insecurity discourse and the social Actors involved in 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Therefore, study is qualitative as well as descriptive in nature in analyzing literature and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) grammar of visual design anchored its analytical structure in order to reveal the represented participants in the cartoons on security in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, patterns of representations of the discourse participants' relations in the cartoons, and determine the semiotic elements utilized to construct meaning in the data.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of two national newspapers in Nigeria: The Punch and Business Day. Since it is impossible to study all the national dailies in Nigeria, the two above were selected as designed within the electioneering period in Nigeria: February – may, 2023. This formed the population of the study. The selected newspapers published more cartoons on political insecurity than the rest within the period under study and this was done in more frequent manner. For these criteria, they were selected for the study. Seventeen political cartoons were selected but three were sampled and analyzed since they were basically on political insecurity within the period under study.

Data Analysis

In K and vL (2006) visual grammar model, semiotic elements in communication and meaning construction are called Participants. The participants are usually designed in two categories: Represented Participants (RPs) (people, things, or places represented in images or texts) and Interactive Participants (image/text producers and viewers/readers). For K and vL, meanings are embedded in these participant images.



Identification and Description of the Represented Participants

Cartoon (1) contains five Represented Participants (RPs). Out of the four men placed together, three are wielding a club while the fourth bares a gun. They are laying an ambush for another man in the image of the INEC Chairman who appears to be delivering the 2023 elections. This illustrates clearly the issues surrounding the 2023 elections. Giving the state of insecurity in the country prior to the elections, there was no hope of abating these indices during the elections. Although there was a reduction in banditry in the months preceding the election, yet its trappings were still felt in certain ways. The little that existed in the moment was significant as it pointed to the first possibility of holding the elections and also purported retributions if the certain candidates did not win or if certain conditions were not met. There was tension in the country. The existence of these tensions was

confirmed by the Inspector General of Police, Usman Baba, as reported by Channels television on February 24, 2023 that 425,106 security operatives had been deployed across the nation as “Activities of bandits, terrorists and secessionists and self-actualization elements popularly known as IPOB or ESN still remain a challenge”. The assertion of the IGP was reechoed by the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Mahmood Yakubu. Mr Yakubu while addressing the press at Chatham house, London explained that despite INEC’s overwhelming effort, violence and threat of violence are major challenges to organizing credible elections. These postulations came to limelight when the Labour Party candidate for Enugu East, Mr Oyibo Chukwu was assassinated alongside five others in his vehicle three days to the senatorial elections which was to be held on 25th February. Of course, cartoons are designed according to socio-political happenings. Reading these images, one finds the meaning affordance that buttresses why one of the RPs in this cartoon is represented as “Assassin”. Assassination was one the trappings of insecurity during Nigerian 2023 general elections. Notably, in the aftermath of the election, the Independent newspaper in what it described as “a harvest of death” reported that over 130 lives were lost while the Vanguard Newspaper pegs the number at 137. This means that the cartoon is designed according to socio-political realities of the period. Furthermore, the third club in the cartoon bears the inscription: “1999 CONSTITUTION”. This is because the 2023 election was heralded by vagaries of constitutional interpretations ranging from the eligibility of candidates, party membership, voter accreditation, mutilation of result sheets to required nation-wide percentage of voters that a winner must accrue. The image presents the Nigerian 1999 Constitutions as an index of insecurity because its meaning affordance portrays a serious threat to the conduct and success of the election just like the rest of the RPs: bandit, assassin and terrorist.

Pattern of representation: In this first cartoons the pattern of representation is such that the Represented Participants were presented as initiators of insecurity processes (actions). These RPs were the bandits, assassins, terrorists and surprising, the Nigerian 1999 constitution. They strategically positioned themselves to launch a surprise attack on the election activities, electorates and the entire electoral system.

Compositional meta-function: The overall layout of the semiotic elements are apt in constructing meanings. These include the position of the RPs (the togetherness of insecurity semiotic elements), their postures, their dressing codes that portray their threatening identity, and their weapons that relate to their identity. Their arrangement portrays a strong backing by the Nigerian constitution. Its position depicts that if all the other participants fail to heat the election, it will stand as the last resort to knock it down unflinchingly. That is why it bends low not be well noticed but stays in an action position at the back. Nevertheless, the information value placed on their clothes helps to expose their identity, and the color (green-white-green) equally depicts the Nigerian position in the discourse of 2023 election. The solitude of Mahmood Yakubu on the lonely road depicts that he has the sole responsibility to deliver a credible election if he finds the affordance and really wants to do so. These create a wonderful multimodal visual appeal in the context.



Representational meta-function: Cartoon (2) has three Represented Participants: the former President Muhammadu Buhari, former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Mr Godwin Emefiele, and an independent fuel marketer. The marketer laughs on as Buhari blows the fire while Emefiele stocks more wood under the pot which is shaped like a ballot box and painted in the colours of the Nigerian flag with an inscription 2023 ELECTIONS. The inscription on each firewood displays the trending problem ahead of the 2023 elections. They are CASH WITHDRAWAL LIMIT, NAIRA SCARCITY, NAIRA REDESIGN, FUEL SCARCITY. Buhari in this cartoon seem to be fanning the flames that will ensure a credible election first by instructing the Governor of the Central bank to redesign the naira and also lower the withdrawal limit of citizens in order to checkmate the trend of vote buying and bribery during the election season. This acts which were considered as not properly thought led to a drastic shortage of money in circulation and thus the scarcity of the naira. The central bank had on 26 October announced the redesign of the 200, 500 and 1000 bank notes which will begin circulation from 15th December 2022 while the old banknotes will cease to be legal tender on 31st January 2023. Reasons given for the redesign by the Central bank was that it would help to control the naira in circulation, manage inflation, combat counterfeiting and ransom payment. By January 21st 2023, there was severe public outcry about the non-availability of new bank notes and also the lack of grassroot awareness on the new monetary policy. Several calls were made for the extension of the usage of the old notes, a 10-day extension was given by the Central Bank but even that was not enough to alleviate the shortage of naira notes. It took a court injunction which was lackadaisically obey by the central bank to reverse the usage of the old note and restore parity after months of long bank ques, sleeping at ATM points and buying naira notes for exorbitant prices. Although the lack of naira notes slightly influenced the issue of vote buying during the 2023 elections, it did not eliminate cases of thuggery, violence ballot box snatching and manipulation of election result. These incidences of abnormality further threw more light on how ill thought the naira redesign policy was and how it did not help in anyway to ensure a credible election as thought by the former president.

The pattern of representation : In this second cartoon, the actions of the Represented Participants rather fueled the insecurity of the 2023 general election; therefore, they are represented as Actors (initiators) in the discourse of insecurity in Nigerian 2023 general elections.

Compositional metafunction: The overall layout of the semiotic elements herein is quite appropriate in their meaning construction. At the discourse of insecurity, what heated up the election activities were cash withdrawal, naira redesign, naira scarcity, fuel scarcity, the negative influence of independent fuel marketers and the unproductive attitude of President Buhari. One sees the positions of the semiotic elements in the form of firewood, the postures of the Represented Participants, the color of the object representing ballot box of 2023 elections, the indifferent but confident posture of the image representing the independent fuel marketer, the futile efforts of the image of Mr Godwin Emefiele and the information value that provided some background information about the RPs. Therefore the

integration of the entire semiotic elements creates the meaning affordances in the discourse of insecurity in the 2023 general elections.



Cartoon (3) contains five Represented Participants. The first is the image of the Lady Justice covered in black cloth. She is sandwiched on the left by the second Represented Participant, APC Presidential candidate, Bola Tinubu; the second RP: INEC Chairman, Mahmud Yakubu; the fourth RP is the Presidential candidate of the PDP, Atiku Abubakar; while the fifth is the Labour Party Presidential candidate, Peter Obi. The lady justice is standing on a block bearing an inscription: PEPT which means Presidential Election Petition Tribunal. The petitioner on the right asserts: “WE SHOULD EXPOSE IT TO LIGHT! This means that the Lady Justice should be exposed to light but the Represented Participants (petitioners) on the left kicks against it: “NOOO! WE PREFER DARKNESS!” This is a declarative statement portraying the Represented Participants as Actors that prefer darkness to light. Invariably, judicial probity in Nigeria seems to be a mirage since justice could be based on preference. However, denial of justice strengthens insecurity in a socio-political system. This is a clear elaboration of the issues trailing the outcome of the 2023 presidential election where Bola Tinubu was believed to have been erroneously declared winner. An outstanding facet of the petition presented to the tribunal by the candidates of the Labour party and the PDP is that of identity, given that almost everything about the winner of the election is shrouded in secrecy. Another issue presented to the tribunal by the Labour party was INEC’s refusal to obey the order of the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal which mandated INEC to provide the party with materials used for the elections for forensic audit. The refusal of INEC to obey the court order has left the party with only but one question which is “What is INEC hiding?” some unconfirmed rumours also say that INEC has wiped some or all the result in the Biometric machine used for the election. While the events of the tribunal are still ongoing, the cartoon clearly shows the manipulation of the judiciary by the government, thus making it difficult for the common man to secure justice. This is so because proper semiotic or pictorial analysis incorporates both what is seen together with what is known. Thus the common knowledge existing between cartoon producers and viewers shapes the affordances of meaning explication (Jewitt, 2010). In other words, analysis of cartoon genre is usually based on socio-political realities in conjunction with the affordances of the semiotic elements.

The pattern of representation: In the third cartoon, the Represented Participant, Lady Justice, is the Actor who possesses the power to initiate both justice and injustice. By the semiotic positioning of the images at the right hand side of Lady Justice, the RPs there advocate justice thus: “WE SHOULD EXPOSE IT TO LIGHT! That is why they prefer exposition of issues to light. In this context, there is the relatedness of the linguistic item “justice” to light, right{fair/equity, righteousness} and uprightness. Semantically, justice can be associated with such linguistic items as light, justice and the like. On the other hand, the RPs at the left hand side of the Lady Justice advocate darkness thus: “NOOO! WE PREFER DARKNESS!” the semiotic implication of the representational position (the left hand side of Lady Justice) portrays them as supporters of injustice, questionable activities in the

dark, clumsy activities usually committed in secret. Therefore, they are represented as Actors/initiators of injustice which breeds insecurity in Nigerian 2023 general.

Compositional meta-function: The overall layout of the semiotic elements herein enhances the meaning construction in this context. In the first instance, the size of the Lady Justice is far bigger than the rest of the RPs. This has a visual grammatical interpretation that she is vested with the final authority to dispense justice. Apart from her size, she is positioned on top of the rest of the Represented Participants to demonstrate her superiority over all the RPs. However, there are three strategic places with linguistic modes. The first and the second ones are respectively found at the right and left hand sides of Lady Justice, while the third one is located at the base on which she stands. The first one reads: WE SHOULD EXPOSE IT TO LIGHT! Although this is written in bolded upper case which equally has a pragmatic interpretation, the size is smaller than the second one which reads: NOOO! WE PREFER DARKNESS! The size possesses a meaning affordance as a pointer that the speakers may not succeed in getting the justice they are advocating while the speakers of the second one which is also in bolded upper case but bigger in size are likely to receive what they are demanding, that is, for the Lady Justice to act in darkness and dispense a dark judgment. The third linguistic mode reads: “PEPT” which means Presidential Election Petition Tribunal. Its position portrays a visual grammatical interpretation that Lady Justice can trample upon it and suppress anything that comes out of it since it is already under her feet. However, injustice supports insecurity.

Conclusion

This work so far has presented a multimodal analysis of Nigeria’s 2023 general election political cartoons on insecurity using Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) grammar of visual design. The study explored the visual grammar of the election activities and unveiled their implicit meanings. Analysis has shown the Represented Participants (RPs) as bandits, assassins, terrorists, 1999 Constitution, President Buhari, Independent Oil Marketers, Mr Godwin Emefiele, Lady Justice, and party presidential candidates. From the analysis, it was discovered that some RPs (like President Buhari, Independent Oil Marketers, and Mr Godwin Emefiele) were involved in some activities that caused much heat and insecurity during the election. Other semiotic elements like naira redesign, fuel scarcity, naira scarcity, and 1999 Constitution were discovered to have been represented as indices of insecurity in the country prior to the elections and such aggravated the state of insecurity during the elections. It was equally discovered that compositional meta-function of some semiotic elements enhanced meaning construction in the data. Such elements of multimodality include colour, positioning, font size (for salience), information value, and image size.

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