

**ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER REPORTS OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF BIAFRA
(IPOB)**

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Abstract

The study aimed to critically analyse the media's reports about IPOB using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA sees language as a social practice and hence, the use of specific lexeme or vocabulary indicates certain ideological standpoint. CDA believes no use of words is neutral, that there are certain ideologies or principles that guide discussants in discourse. It is therefore necessary to analyse the media and try to uncover the ideological standpoints in their reports about the secessionist group - IPOB. The analysis indeed showed that the media is not a neutral channel as they claim to be. They are sites of ideological struggles and these ideologies influenced their reports about IPOB.

Key words: CDA, IPOB, Media Discourse, Ideology, Discursive Strategies, Newspaper reports

Introduction

Besides the basic function of language as the medium for communication and exchange of ideas and information, it is also the medium for the construction of individual and collective worldviews. Gee (1), supporting this notion, opines that "language is not just about giving and receiving information but to scaffold the performance of social activities and to scaffold human affiliation within cultural and social groups and institutions." These functions are related because social groups and institutions can shape social activities and beliefs.

One of the social institutions that can shape social activities and beliefs is the media. The media are the custodian for gathering and disseminating information. Most of our view points on certain issues and ideas are influenced and formed by the media. The media is not just a medium for disseminating information on the happenings of the world, it is also a site laden with ideologies, which are carefully embedded in their discourse. These ideologies play a big role in news report and are meant to create certain feelings and view points in the minds of the audience. This study hopes to explore the linguistic features and discursive strategies used by selected newspapers to report the activities of the group - Indigenous People of Biafra - IPOB.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

IPOB can be said to be a social 'left behind' group. Social 'left behind' groups, in the words of Goodwin and Heath (1), can be defined as:

Social groups that are united by a general sense of insecurity, pessimism and marginalisation who do not feel as though elites... share their values, represent their interests or genuinely empathise with their intense angst about rapid social, economic and cultural change.

The definition captured the essence of the group - IPOB. They are known as a separatist group made up of south eastern Nigerians who want to secede from the country and become an independent state. The group was initially formed after decades the Nigerian-Biafran war ended (July 7, 1967 - January 15, 1970). According to Ugorji (4), IPOB is a new faction formed from the former group -Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra- MASSOB. In 2014, Nnamdi Kanu formed another group named "Indigenous People of Biafra" - IPOB. He did this using the social media and an online radio he named after the defunct Biafran radio station "Radio Biafra." The launching and revitalisation of the Radio Biafra and his use of the social media was seen as a smart move, (Ugorji,

5). He garnered support and sympathy from a lot of people, both locally and internationally. He also used provocative languages in advancing the Biafran cause. He often referred to Nigeria as "zoo" and Nigerians as "animals." Most of his speeches were termed "hate speech" because they seem to incite his listeners into violence. He kept calling for a referendum by the Nigerian government.

The IPOB is a group reckoned with their forceful use of words. They tend to threaten and insult anybody or any group against them. They were also said to have threatened the Nigerian government when it declared "no referendum, no election" in Anambra state. They were known to use such derogatory words as "animals", "zoo", "efulefu", and so on, on people who disagree with their point of view, which makes them unpopular with a lot of people and the powers to be. The activities and speeches of IPOB garnered extensive media coverage in 2017 and featured a heated media and social media debates between people and groups who support the Biafran course and those who do not. This created an avenue for the media to use certain language to influence the audience to accept certain points of view concerning IPOB and it is therefore necessary to critically analyse the media's report.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis, often shortened to CDA, to Van Dijk (135), is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power, abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. To Fairclough,

Critical Discourse Analysis is analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes, to investigating how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggle over power, and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor security power and hegemony (132).

In sum, critical discourse analysis aims at making transparent the connections, among discourse practices, social practices and social structures, connections that might be opaque to a lay person. Van Dijk is of the view that critical discourse analysis focuses on social problems and the role of discourse in production and reproduction of power abuse, Ideology and dominance (135). It looks at why speakers or writers make use of certain words among other words available to them.

Ideological Square Theory

The theory of Ideological Square according to Van Dijk (17), can be used to analyze ideologies in every level of discourse. He is of the opinion that, "Discourse is so complex and therefore ideological structures can be expressed in so many different ways, it therefore becomes useful to have a more practical heuristic method to find ideology in text and talk." He propounded the theory of Ideological Square with the notion to help expose the inequality and racism, the media helps to reproduce and entrench in the society. He believes that a number of ideologies are relevant in situations of competition, conflict, domination and resistance between groups. This tells why ideological practices are polarized on the basis of "Us" and "Them"

The theory of Ideological Square concentrates on positive "in-group" and negative "out-group" description (18). He opines that ideological square acts as a kind of justification for the presence of inequality in the society by placing in-groups and out-groups in opposite sides through the process of emphasizing "our" good quality and actions and "their" bad qualities and actions.

To Makamani (20), the Ideological Square is simply a framework that studies how different groups are represented or talked about in the society. He asserts that a group is more likely to talk about the good things about themselves and the bad things of others which is in line with Van Dijk's submission of, "Say positive things about Us and negative things about Them. Also, do not say negative things about Us and do not say positive things about Them."(17). To Van Dijk, ideology is a form of identity of a person or a group, it is what separates one group from another and it is also accountable for the organization of people and society in polarized terms. He further states that group membership has to do with who belongs and does not belong to "Us" and how we distinguish ourselves from others by

our actions, aims and norms. He later modified the four principles of the ideological square to: emphasize positive things about Us and emphasize negative things about Them. De-emphasize Negative things about Us and de-emphasize positive things about Them

Newspaper Headlines

Newspaper headlines are a very integral part and element of a newspaper. They are usually the first element of the newspaper a potential reader gets to see and to an extent everyone that buys a newspaper usually glances at the headlines before deciding to buy or not. Isani (81) considers headlines as one of the most creative areas of journalistic writing and in some aspects, comparable to poetry in that it burrows extensively from linguistic features generally associated with versification as they are normally written in a way to arouse reader's interest and curiosity..

Headlines impact is usually stronger on the onlookers and readers because they tend to be memorable and concise. Discourse analysis has been drawn to the language of newspaper headlines as editors and journalists tend to persuade and swerve the readers and onlookers to their side on issues contained in the report.

Media Discursive Strategies

Discursive strategies can be defined as linguistic devices that writers and speakers employ in communication in order to achieve a particular desired effect or goal. They are actually called discursive practices but Wodak and Busch (794), chose to call them "discursive strategies" According to them, "actors utilise these strategies to announce and persuade audience through different semiotic practices", (794). Discursive strategies can be seen as specific, not always intentional or conscious, ways of employing different discourses or discursive resources to establish certain interests. Van Dijk whose major work was on racist discourse propounded about 25 discursive and ideological strategies the media used to influence audience. Some of the strategies include:

Simplification: a complex and serious event is reported in a simpler, less serious and off handedness manner

Polarization: attention is called to opposites.

Intensification: attention is called to conflicts rather than consensus.

Concealment: withdrawing relevant information i.e. not telling the whole truth.

Distortion of various degrees: manipulation of facts by exaggeration, minimization or equivocation.

Falsification: presenting an untrue fact, that is lying, (67).

Methodology

The data for the study are national newspapers. The headlines of the newspapers, both online and printed form will be used. Also, the discursive strategies employed in the headlines of the newspapers will be revealed and discussed using Van Dijk's Ideological Square theory of Critical Discourse Analysis. Data analysis will be carried out in a three stage analysis which are:

(1). Layout and Structural Organisation : This stage looks at the surface elements of the text like the title of the newspaper, date of publication, the news writer and so on. These surface indicators according to Bardici (12), says something by themselves about the news report.

(2)Discursive and Ideological Strategies: This refers to how language is used to depict the social actors and object. It also refers to use of language persuasively and effectively. According to Bardici (12), quoting Van Dijk, Rhetoric is concerned with persuasive moves through such devices as metaphors, hyperbolic enhancement, quoting credible sources and other rhetorical figures employed in the text.

(3). Ideological Standpoints: Ideology is a very important part of texts. It influences the way in which a text is formulated and its meaning constructed. It is therefore, pertinent to study the ideological standpoints of the media to help uncover their hidden messages.

Data Analysis

The newspapers whose headlines are selected for this study are *Vanguard* and *The Guardian* newspaper. The two newspapers are selected for their wide readership which in turn gives them certain amounts of power to wield over their readers. However, the newspaper headlines will focus on two issues: The IPOB/Military clash and IPOB's sit-at-home order.

Vanguard Newspaper

Biafra: South East group blames Kanu over IPOB's face off with military

IPOB, is mostly made up of people from the South East. The journalist craftily mentions that a group from South east blamed Nnamdi Kanu over the clash IPOB had with the military, but deftly didn't mention the name of the group, may be because they are not popular and not worth mentioning or just to subtly hint that not everybody or every group in South East supports Nnamdi Kanu and IPOB.

Discursive Strategies

There are two discursive strategies employed in the above headline:

Concealment: in the headline, the name of the group is concealed. It could be that the group is not popular or deemed irrelevant by the journalist. Or the journalist could be subtly drawing attention to the fact that not everybody or every group in South East supports Nnamdi Kanu.

Victimisation: Nnamdi Kanu was victimised in the headline. He was held responsible for the clash between IPOB and the military while IPOB and the military who were involved in the clash were exonerated.

Ideological Standpoint

Nnamdi Kanu is responsible for IPOB's face off with the military. If not for him, the military wouldn't have attacked his hometown, IPOB wouldn't have clashed with them and many wouldn't have been injured or dead from the clash.

Anxiety over IPOB sit-at-home order

The headline hints that there were fear and nervousness over the order to sit at home on May, 30th by IPOB. Military men were deployed in major cities in the South east to quell whatever the IPOB planned, and people were beginning to panic over a possible chaos and crisis.

Discursive Strategies

The discursive strategy inherent in the headline is the Intensification Strategy. It intensified the feelings of people over the sit-at-home order. It also, paints the picture that people were in fear and panic over the order.

Ideological Standpoint

The ideology inherent from the headline is that IPOB's order was met with fear and nervousness. This will play a role in carrying out the order.

Total shut down in South East

The headline shuts down every anxiety as there was a total adherence to the order. No economic activity or movement was recorded. The complete adherence could be because of love or fear for IPOB. Hence, there was no need for the military intervention.

Discursive Strategies

Consensus and Exaggeration: the headline, "Total shut down in S/east" suggests that there was no single movement recorded in the whole of south east. This is exaggeration because there is no way in the whole of south east for people not to move about, even in smaller villages. Also, there is the consensual strategy implied in the headline. It suggests that there was a general consensus among the south easterners to obey the sit-at-home order, hence no movement was recorded

Ideological Standpoint

The sit-at-home order given by IPOB which was reported to being received with anxiety was later carried out to the latter. The total obedience to the order could be out fear for IPOB since the order was initially met with anxiety or could be out of support for the Biafran dream.

The Guardian Newspaper Analysis

Many feared Dead as Military Lay siege to Nnamdi Kanu's home

Just as *Vanguard* Newspaper reported, the military that were sent to bring 'peace' in Umuahia went to attack Nnamdi Kanu's home. *The Guardian* reported that the military 'lay siege' i.e. they surrounded the home of Nnamdi Kanu and were ready to attack. This was the opposite of what they were supposedly sent to do and it resulted in a clash with IPOB.

The headline reported that many people were 'feared', not certain that they were dead. The journalist however, deftly did not mention if it was IPOB members or the military or both parties were feared dead. This could be a deliberate ploy.

Discursive Strategies

The journalist used Euphemism strategy. This strategy is used to report events that may trigger panic and fear in the minds of people in a mild manner. The report could have read, "Many dead..."but it added the adjective "feared" to make the report mild or not provocative.

Ideological Standpoint

Many people maybe dead in the military attack in Umuahia. This may incite people into war and more hate speech, hence, the adjective "feared."

Northern groups Support Military Operation in S'East

This headline came a day after the report of military / IPOB clash which many were feared to be dead. It was earlier reported that Military laid siege in Kanu's home. Therefore, the unnamed groups in the North supporting military attack in the South East are simply urging more deaths and injured people.

Also, the journalist may deliberately leave out the names of these groups in order not to provoke more hate between the North and the East or he/she thinks the groups are not popular or relevant enough to be mentioned. This however, leaves a lot to be imagined.

Discursive Strategies

Two discursive strategies are prominent in the above headline: Euphemism and Concealment

Euphemism: the headline reports that some northern groups were in support of military operation in south east where it was reported that the troops laid siege in Kanu's home. Therefore, the groups supporting the military operation are in actual sense supporting the attack, killing and injuring of people going on in the East. The phrase, "military operation" is used in order not to make it blatant what the northern groups are actually supporting.

Concealment: the journalist also deftly concealed the names of these northern groups. Maybe, so as not to intensify the tension between the Northerners and Easterners or maybe the groups are not influential enough to be mentioned. Whichever the case, it leaves a lot to be imagined why the names of the groups were concealed.

Ideological Standpoint

Some unnamed groups in the north support the killing and injuring of people going on in the East. Obviously, they do not care about the lives of Easterners being wasted neither the chaos being unleashed in the South East.

Sit-at-home order grounds South East

The above headline denotes IPOB as a social actor whose order was observed by the whole of South East admonishes. The IPOB always remember her fallen heroes every 30th May by engaging in no economic activity and no-movement. On this particular year, they - IPOB – gave an order for every Igbo to remain at home and no movement should be carried out. The journalist captured the total adherence to this order by using the verb 'grounds' which denotes a prohibition to a usual activity.

Discursive Strategies

The strategy employed in the headline is Sharpening strategy. The use of the word, "grounds" brings a certain edge to the report. It sharpens the report and brings into focus that normal activities were stopped in south east.

Ideological Standpoint

The sit-at-home order brought every activity and movement in South East to a halt. Everybody and every movement in south east stood at a standstill in honour of the order by IPOB.

Conclusion

In summary, the media is not a neutral site. It is a site laden with ideologies; these ideologies influence the way they represent an individual or group in their reports. They often use negative words for groups they do not support and positive words for groups they support. They would often report more negative and inaccurate events about an individual or group they do not support and put out more positive and exaggerated reports about individuals and groups they support their ideals.

The media, from the analysis carried out often use different discursive strategies to influence their readers. Such discursive strategies include authorization, victimization, moral evaluation, use of metaphors, euphemism, ideological square, concealment, distortion of facts, falsification and so on. From the analysis, it can be deduced that Vanguard newspaper are anti-IPOB while the Guardian newspaper are pro-IPOB and this influenced the way they use words in reporting IPOB.

The research set out to show that the media, assumed to be neutral on news report, are indeed not neutral. It revealed that for every issue, the media has an ideology concerning the issue and this ideology influences their report on the issue. With the help of CDA, the analysis was carried out to reveal a plethora of linguistic and discursive strategies the media used in reporting IPOB. These strategies were employed to drive the reader to a preferred reading. The preferred reading being what the media wants the reader to believe and think. Hence, the two newspapers studied have each, different ideology about IPOB which was revealed in the analysis.

Readers and audience are advised to read and think critically about issues before drawing conclusions. This will help to broaden their opinions and views about such issues, as opposed to depending on the media to give accurate and detached reports about issues

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