

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Newspaper Editorials on Insecurities in Nigeria

Obiageli C. Okpala

Department of English Language
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam
obypascal2@gmail.com

&

Prof. Ephraim A. Chukwu

Department of English Language & Literature
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
chukwuephraim@yahoo.com

Abstract

The insecurity challenges in Nigeria seem to intensify by the day, probably due to the political situation in the country or the economic hardship that engulfs the country. The media, being the watchdog of society, scrutinizes and determines what and when to report the incident. The media can manipulate people's perceptions, escalate a crisis, or bring the crisis under control. The linguist and discourse analyst interpret the language of the media based on the situation. This study, however, critically investigates the editorial discussions on the issues of insecurity in Nigeria. The newspapers under study include *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *Punch* Nigerian newspapers, from April 2021 to December 2022. The study adopted Halliday's systemic functional linguistic and Tuen van Dijk's Media Critical discourse for the theoretical framework. Qualitative and descriptive methods were adopted for the data analysis. The study finds the use of different linguistic devices in the form of evaluative adjectives and adverbs, generic phrases, rhetorics, and idioms for the expressions of different opinions and attitudes towards the state of insecurity in the country. The study recommends more studies on media discourses on insecurity, studies on editorials and other social media platforms to see how to solve the problems of insecurity with the use of language.

Keywords: Critical discourse, newspaper, media, insecurity, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria has been experiencing different forms of terrorist attacks, ethnic and religious crises, militia attacks, kidnapping, farmer-herder crises, political crises, and insecurity at various levels and forms. Some scholars traced the insecurity crises in Nigeria to the amalgamation of the country by the British colonial masters in 1914 (Onifade, 2015 and Eruvbetine 2001). The insecurity problem is also a global problem that occupies media spaces all over the globe. The insecurity situation in Nigeria has claimed a lot of lives and properties. It has retarded the country's development for a long time now. Many Nigerians had had and still have a share of the quakes in national insecurity. This long threat to national security in Nigeria has lasted so long that researchers have attributed these factors to it: seemingly incurable mutual suspicions across ethnic, religious and linguistic borders as its primary cause, the acts of terrorism by the Boko Haram Islamic sect, incidents of kidnapping in the South East and South-South parts of the country, agitations by militants in the Niger Delta. All of these acts that involve threats to life have contributed to creating an alarming state of insecurity in almost all parts of the country.

The print media, being a linguistic medium and one of the most important vehicles for the exchange of ideas is the mirror through which society sees the activities and events that happen in the world. The media, however, plays significant roles in the circulation of and bringing international attention to the situations and sufferings of Nigerians. The media defines the dimensions of the challenge, identifies the key actors and shares people's perceptions in their ways. The editorial uses language to convey thoughts to human minds. It regulates the thought direction of the readers by helping them formulate ideologies on national issues through language. Language is used in many different ways to reinforce and manipulate a message. It conditions our thinking about social problems and their processes. It enhances communication among humans and influences people's behaviour to an extent. Through such acts, language strengthens the bonds of cohesion between members of society.

As Owolabi puts it, "Language does not exist ...because man is a rational being; it exists because man is a social creature (2016: 242)". It is a special tool that expresses the editorial's decisions and stances

on issues. The editorial patterns of words, phrases, clauses, sentences and discourses communicate with the human mind and influence human thought. The newspaper editorials try to convince readers that their point of view about a topic or particular issue is the correct one to accept. In doing this, editorials act as advocates for newspapers. Because their purpose is to recommend a particular decision either for or against a defined course of action. Editorials build on an argument and try to persuade readers to think the same way as the paper does. It influences public opinion and promotes critical thinking. It causes people to take specific action on issues such as economics, politics, international relations and social issues.

The most concerning social problems in countries that are as numerous as Nigeria are religious crises, ethnic crises, violence, human trafficking, insecurity, and others. Hence, insecurity issues are problems discussed through different opinions in the media, especially news editorials that contain the authors' attitudes. However, the interest of the present study is to look into the editorials of selected Nigerian newspapers. The study will look out for the linguistic devices critically used by the editorials to evaluate the security situation in Nigeria.

Through our observation, most studies on language and media reports have not engaged prominently in editorial discourse from a linguistic viewpoint. Some others on newspaper language did not focus on insecurity. Some that talked about insecurity focused their attention on news reports about a particular terrorist group like Boko Haram, a militant group or farmer-herder crises. Few studies on security only focused on political, ethnic or religious crises. Some other studies on media discourse focused only on stylistic studies that target aspects of newspaper language as advertisement or aspects of media such as television or radio.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to investigate and critically analyses the linguistic devices used to address the insecurity problems in Nigeria as reflected in the editorials of the selected Nigerian newspapers.

The objectives are to:

- i) find out how the press that stands as the bridge between the government and the people through their language use in the editorials and critically evaluate, appraise and assess' these security challenges in Nigeria,
- ii) to look out for the newspapers' linguistic choices that highlight the editorial opinions on the menace of insecurity in the country.

Conceptual Framework

The Media

The media is the bridge between the people and its societal activities. The media reports and informs the public of the activities around the globe and within their societies. While addressing the affairs of the country including the national security challenges in Nigeria, Section 22 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended entrusted the media with the power to monitor governance and uphold the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy as enshrined in chapter 2 of the constitution. Jegede (2018:21) also says, "Media are not just passive agents; they also have an active role and shape perspectives, making them independent sources of opinion". Joseph Pulitzer, cited in Nwabueze and Ebeze (2013:862), while highlighting the importance of the media in any society, urged the press as follows; "there is not a crime, there is not a swindle, and there is not a vice which does not live by secrecy. Get all these things out in the open, describe them, attack them, ridicule them in the press, and sooner or later, public opinion will sweep them away". The media in this study can be the mouthpiece of the people entrusted with the weapon of language skills.

Language Use in Media

Language is the tool used by the media, especially the press media, to expose, attack and ridicule all these anomalies in the societies. Firth (1935), cited in Okpala (2017: 2), posits that "language is fundamentally a way of behaving and of making others behave". Language is "a key to man's life and general existence", it fashions out and polishes our attitudes and general behaviour. Language is an essential tool for the regulation of every community, for the instruction of its young ones, the creation

of laws and development of its members (Bakuunu and Diedong 2021: 45)". Language may be constructive and positive it may be destructive and negative, one thing that is assured is that effective communication and proper use of language can go a long way in solving most, if not all, of society's social problems. The press media, therefore, uses language particularly in their editorial section, to express ideas and beliefs which can change, implicate, convince and redirect the thinking of people. The language that is used in the media equally expresses concepts and ideologies or at least, mirrors human attitudes (Malcolm 1997). Alder and Rodman (2007:79) also opined that "there is an intrinsic power in language to shape opinions and attitudes". Language is portrayed as the weapon of the media in resolving insecurity challenges in Nigeria, as used in the editorials of selected Nigerian newspapers.

Insecurity Situation in Nigeria

Nigeria has lasted for one hundred years since her creation by the British colonial administration in 1914. However, there has been deep-seated suspicion among the many ethnic and religious groups brought together to form the political entity (Onifade, 2015:1)." This suspicion as Onifade continues," has led to multiple divisions among the constituent groups. While there is mutual distrust and obvious contention between the "North" and the "South" on one hand, there are divisions and suspicions among the various groups that make up the "North" and "South (Onifade, 2015:1)". Eruvbetine (2001:1) in his view, accuses the colonial masters, whom according to him, "were aware of the plural nature of Nigeria, but amalgamated the states for their selfish interest. He states as follows:

“Nigeria is a plural state with diverse and complex ethnic, economic, cultural, linguistic, religious and social realities with high conflict potential that the colonial masters who created the Nigerian state were quite aware of and utilized as the basis for enunciating its administrative policy of divide and rule” (2001:2).

In fairness, insecurity is not a problem that is unique to Nigeria. It has geographically spread across the globe. The United States, the United Kingdom and many countries face the challenges of insecurity within their borders daily (Adejumo, 2011). The difference between these nations and Nigeria is how they manage the threats. Nigeria as Africa's most populous country is socially and culturally diverse with over 250 ethnic groups and a nearly even share of adherents to the Muslim and Christian faiths (Gideon, 2021: 1-2). However, one can say that the insecurity situation in Nigeria defies all corrective measures and spreads like disease to every nook and cranny of the nation. The insecurity situation in Nigeria has deteriorated in the past eight years of President Muhammad Buhari's government and the national press could devote much time to their editorial platforms to express their opinions on the issue. Apart from Boko haram, farmer-herder crises, and militant groups already terrorizing the country, a new group has resonated from the Eastern part of the country identified as unknown gunmen. This new breed specializes in destroying both government and private properties, kidnapping, terrorizing, and killing innocent citizens. Hence, the need for this present study is to look into the selected editorials and critically analyze their language devices in the discussion of insecurity.

Theoretical Framework

Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a theory propounded by M.A.K. Halliday. This theory views language as not just a formal activity, but a means through which its users perform actions and fulfill their social functions and obligations. Language is seen through the lens of the 'functions' it performs in social institutions. In other words, systemic functional linguistics focuses on what people do with language. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) opine that the choice of certain lexical choices and syntactic patterns have functional roles in relating the writer's or speaker's intentions to an audience.

Critical Discourse Studies

Discourse analysis is the analysis of language used in both spoken interaction and written text. It includes studying both language forms and language functions in the context of a situation. Norquist (2013:1) also describes discourse analysis as 'the study of how language is used in texts and contexts.' Brown and Yule (1983:1) note that the analysis of discourse is necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs. Bakuuro and Diedong (2021)

say that it is 'a way of looking at the nature of language and how it is linked to the integral issues of society.' Discourse analysis, for Abrams and Harpham (2005) involves the use of language in a running discourse which involves the interaction of a writer and a reader in a specific situational context and within a framework of social and cultural conventions.

Critical discourse analysis, on the other hand, is one of the approaches to analyzing written, spoken or sign language in discourse. Critical discourse analysis according to Rashid and Souzandehfar (2010) cited in Ajayi & Bamgbose (2019) 'is the right place to perform an autopsy on discourse, either written or spoken, to uncover the ideologies underlying it.' What is crucial in CDA is explicit awareness of its role in the society. Bakuuro and Diedong (2021) note that newspaper editorials express ideologies and comment vividly on contemporary social, political, and economic issues. A discourse analysis that is based on social, political or economic ideology is a critical study. Hence, the issue of insecurity in Nigeria is a social issue that affects all other aspects; economics, politics etc. Therefore, this study is a critical discourse analysis of newspaper editorials on insecurities in Nigeria. Critical discourse analysis can provide effective insight into the relationship within language because it offers the Hallyidayan view of language in which language is itself inseparable from its socio-linguistic contexts, its mediation of ideology and the relation to power structure within society. (Orphin, 2005:37).

Van Dijk's Theory of Media Discourse

This theory sees discourse analysis as an ideological analysis that derives its meaning through language. In the words of Van Dijk (1998), "ideologies are typically expressed and reproduced in discourse and communication". This theory is therefore, relevant to this study since according to Bakuuro and Diedong (2021) "the analysis of the newspaper editorials helps to bring out the underlying meaning of the linguistic devices used in the discourse." Thus, the analysis of insecurity discourse in the Nigerian newspaper editorial is a veritable resource for studying the editorials skill in language production for their readers' consumption. As stated by Boyd-Barret (1994) the Media Discourse theory calls for a thorough analysis not only of the textual and structural level of media discourse but also of the analysis at the production or comprehension level.

Empirical Review

Research on insecurity has focused on a specific group like; Boko Haram (Osisanwo, 2016b, Odebunmi and Oloyede, 2016), Insurgency (Ononye, 2014 and Ebim, 2017), IPOB (Chiluwa, Taiwo and Ajiboye, Umetiti). None of these studies focused as this present work on the discussion of insecurity situation generally in Nigeria.

Chiluwa's (2012) "Labelling and Ideology in the Press: A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Study of the Niger Delta Crisis" examined the discursive construction of Nigeria's Niger Delta ethnic militias in the Nigerian press. Chiluwa opined that certain lexical items have been occurring frequently in the Nation's press in representing the militia groups and their activities. He argued that any form of linguistic labelling in the media could be seen as judgmental and can heighten the already tense situation in the land. The studies focused only on the Niger Delta crisis and not on the general insecurity situation in Nigeria as discussed in the editorial sections of some Nigeria newspapers that are the interest of the present study.

Osisanwo (2016b) explored the discursive representation of Boko Haram terrorism in selected Nigerian newspapers. Similarly, Odebunmi and Oloyede (2016) examined frames and pragmatic strategies deployed by Nigerian newspaper reporters on the Boko Haram insurgency. Saheed (2019) examined and interpreted discursive and lexical strategies employed by Nigerian newspapers in reporting Fulani herdsmen crises in Nigeria. He employed Van Leeuwen's social actor approach to CDA and M.A.K Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, the Transitivity Theory. The study established that most of the Nigerian newspapers' reportages were purposively framed to incite violence, fear, or rancour in the minds of their readers and built a wall of differences among people of the same country. The studies, though, worked on Nigerian newspapers none of them was in the editorial section of the newspapers. Secondly, they focused only on the Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen's crisis and not on the discussion of the insecurity situation in the editorials on which this present study hinges.

Data Analysis

Question 1: How did the editorial writers of the Nigerian newspapers selected for the study evaluate the insecurity situation in Nigeria?

Evaluative Adjectives and Adverbs

As part of their linguistic strategies in expressing the insecurity situation in Nigeria, the editorial writers judiciously use evaluative adverbs and adjectives that also serve as the expression of their attitude towards the security challenges in the country. Some of such examples are seen in the following excerpts:

- 1) **Instructively**, Umar Labdo Mohammed, a lecturer in the Northwest University, Kano, in January 2018, **outrageously** claimed that Benue State belonged to the Fulani herdsmen “by right of conquest”. (*Vanguard* April 2, 2021).
- 2) Ortom’s rice farm has been **repeatedly** destroyed. (*Vanguard* April 2, 2021).
- 3) Former Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Idris, **infamously** disobeyed Buhari’s order to relocate to Benue State after the New Year Day massacres, and **gracefully** retired thereafter. (*Vanguard* April 2, 2021).
- 4) It is **suicidal** to pretend about it; Nigeria is on fire over insecurity. (*Vanguard* April 1, 2021).
- 5) There are protests in the South, mostly by women and young men who work in the farms. They can no longer go to their farms because of the possibility of being raped, killed or kidnapped by criminals who have **consistently** been identified as herdsmen. (*Vanguard* April 1, 2021).
- 6) **Weak, incompetent, sectional and monumentally corrupt** governments and terrorists. (*Punch* July 29, 2022)
- 7) Some state governments and politicians may, for political calculation and the votes they expect to win elections, have decided to keep mute over the **alarming** development. (*Vanguard* April 1, 2021).
- 8) With the **ferocity** of the herdsmen attacks spreading all over the country, even the blind can see that time is fast running out for Nigerians to come to grips with evil and danger that insecurity has become. (*Vanguard* April 1, 2021).
- 9) The **brutal** military response to the peaceful protest by IPOB, its **hasty** designation as a terrorist group and the unchecked activities of armed herdsmen led to the emergence of the **murderous** gangs of terror, the so-called “unknown gunmen”. (*Vanguard* May 29, 2022).
- 10) These **senseless** killings must be halted. (*Vanguard* May 29, 2022).
- 11) Yet, most unforgivable has been Mr. President’s **dismissive** reaction to the **glaring breach of** national security. (*The Guardian* July 25, 2022).
- 12) The handwriting is on the wall, and the **dastardly** results are playing out. **Surely**, the state of the Nigerian nation calls for a change of direction to avert a looming doom. (*The Guardian* June 7, 2022).
- 13) No part of the country is safe **anymore** (*Punch* 11 April 2021).
- 14) ...Nigerians have never had it **so bad**. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).
- 15) **Frightfully**, as Nigeria is coming apart, the Buhari regime looks **forlornly** lost. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).
- 16) **Unquestionably**; and the evidence is written in blood **daily**. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).
- 17) **Increasingly**, they are spreading westwards and southwards, forging alliances with herdsmen and bandits. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).
- 18) It is **admittedly**, not for want of funding. The regime allocates **humongous** billions to security, but typically, there is no accountability, **little** oversight or **tangible** result. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).
- 19) Failure to act **decisively** could accelerate the pace towards complete disintegration. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).
- 20) The country was ranked the 12th **most fragile** state out of 179 countries in the **Fragile States Index** 2021. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

The editorial writers did not stop giving factual information on the insecurity in Nigeria; they also evaluated the situation through adjectives and adverbs marked bold in each excerpt above. These serve as a way of expressing the editorial's attitude towards the insecurity situation in Nigeria. Already, adjectives and adverbs are descriptive word classes that describe their objects; they are of this context used by the editorial writers to evaluate the seemingly obvious worrisome situation in Nigeria that

needed the immediate attention of the governments and stakeholders. Some other evaluative terms in the editorials not included in the excerpts data are **outrageously, adamant, recklessly, disastrous, abysmally, massive, apparently, brutally, consequently, porous, steadily, briskly, helplessly**, and others. These evaluative adjectives and adverbs show different attitudes and judgments of the editorial writers. The writers' judgments and attitudes towards the insecurity situation in Nigeria are aimed at influencing readers' opinions about the insensitivity of the country's leadership to the people's plight and the incapability of the armed forces in combating the daredevil terrorists. The judgments though they remain the writer's opinions, will promote critical thinking on the part of the readers.

Question 2: How did these editorials present their opinions on the insecurity challenges ravaging the Nigerian states?

The use of Reporting Verbs

The data analyzed for this study show that the editorial writers used reporting verbs such as claim, appear, admit, argue, warn, express, confirm, say, alert, lament, and others. Their use of these reporting verbs also reflected the editorial writer's opinion and attitudes towards the true value of the information they gave on the insecurity situation in Nigeria. It also shows the extent to which they considered a proposition true or false. Some of the examples include;

21) Niger Governor, Sani Bello, **admitted** that terrorists currently occupy Swathes of the state, with Shiroro LGA the worst hit. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

22) In Sokoto, the Commissioner of Police, Kamaludeen Okunola **confirmed** that about 23 persons, all travellers were attacked and killed in their vehicle. (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).

23) CFR's Nigerian Security Tracker **said** violence **claimed** 87,903 lives in the 10 years to March 2022. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

24) Defending itself, the Buhari regime **argues** that it inherited insecurity, **insisting** that it is trying its best. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

25) To the duo and many others within and outside the country, the government **appears** to have lost control. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

26) Shortly after Enoch Adeboye, a leading cleric, **expressed** serious concern about the rampaging of criminals nationwide, Olusegun Obasanjo, a former President (1999-2007), **raised** similar fears. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

27) As Adeboye **lamented**, "You cannot go to Kaduna by road, you cannot go to Kaduna by air and you cannot go to Kaduna by rail. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

28) The constant loss of human lives as a result of these attacks is heart-rending, particularly as they come against **claims** by government security agencies that the war against insurgency is being won. (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).

29) Some locals and security experts **said** the only way to tackle the menace of bandits on the Abuja-Kaduna highway is to have permanent surveillance along the road. (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).

30) The despair of Nigerians can only be imagined as they watch helplessly while criminals exterminate them, and law enforcement agencies **appear** powerless. (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).

These reporting verbs also show the editorial writers' accountability for the knowledge of the insecurity situation they write about. Their choices also show the writer's aim of drumming the message of insecurity home to the people and those in authority who have such powers to ratify the situation.

The use of Generic Phrases

The editorial writers also employed generic phrases to express modality in their bids to reveal their stance or opinion towards the propositions on the issue of insecurity in Nigeria. Some of the examples employed include the following excerpts:

31) It is surprising that the Northern state governments have not made any move towards having such security outfits despite the magnitude of insecurity in the region. (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).

32) It is again worth asking: where is President Muhammadu Buhari? (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).

33) It is a potent query. (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).

34) It is admittedly, not for want of funding. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

35) It bears repeating that national security architecture has failed totally. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

36) It is not wisdom but folly that will destroy all. (*The Guardian* July 25, 2022).

- 37) It can no longer be denied that what is happening in Imo State is terrorism. (*Vanguard* May 29, 2022).
- 38) It is suicidal to pretend about it: Nigeria is on fire over insecurity. (*Vanguard* April 1, 2021).
- 39) It is a hollow defence. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

The editorial writers employed these linguistic devices: modal auxiliaries, evaluative adverbs and adjectives, certain reporting verbs and generic phrases to express their attitudes and opinions towards the truth of the propositions expressed in the sentences and to evaluate opinions about the described insecurity situation in Nigeria. Their deliberate choice of generic modalities helps to realize the meanings that can be derived from the statements.

The use of Rhetorics

Another linguistic device used by these writers to evaluate the insecurity situation in Nigeria is through the use of rhetorical questions. Rhetorics promoted critical thinking and produced a sharp effect on readers (Bakuuro and Diedong, 2021: 54). The editorial writers used rhetoric as a linguistic device to evaluate the insecurity situation in Nigeria and also to influence both the people and the government by drawing their attentions to some critical questions such as the following excerpts:

- 40) That may be so, but can the country afford to station Policemen and Soldiers on every road and at every hour? (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).
- 41) Isn't it time for government to begin to explore an effective way to carry out its constitutional and sacred duty of protecting lives and property of Nigeria? (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).
- 42) If a regular security presence on the highway will put a stop to the menace of bandits and kidnappers, why then is both the Federal and Kaduna State governments not taking full control of the highway? (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).
- 43) Why should the terrorists be allowed to have the upper hand while the security forces stand on the fence? (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).
- 44) What would the people do? How would they move about for daily living? (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).
- 45) What legacy is this administration leaving for posterity? (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).
- 46) Is there really hope for an end to insecurity considering that terrorism and insurgency have lingered for over 10 years, putting Nigerians on the receiving end? (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).
- 47) What is the motivation behind the deliberate depletion of security agencies in a country outran by insurgents? (*The Guardian* July 25, 2022).
- 48) Are the lawmakers and state governors also guilty especially in the plot to run over the country by destabilising regions for political and sectarian interests? (*The Guardian* July 25, 2022).
- 49) Are they all so blinded by political affiliations and ambitions that they have lost their soul, sense of propriety and duty to their own people? (*The Guardian* July 25, 2022).
- 50) Who are those sabotaging the collective interest of one Nigeria for selfish interest? (*The Guardian* July 25, 2022).

The editorial writers used this device to evoke emotional effects on the readers, promote critical thinking and drum home the negligence of the governments and those in authority on the readers through this linguistic device. They also expressed their attitudes towards the situation of discussion.

Use of Idiom

Another linguistic device used by the editorial writers to express their attitude towards the insecurity situation in Nigeria is the use of idiom. Writers use idioms as part of their linguistic strategy to draw the reader's attention to critical issues. Palmer (2002:2) says that 'idioms are a colourful and fascinating aspect of English'. Bakuuro and Diedong (2021:55) believe writers use idioms to tickle the minds of their readers to think critically about the issues they put on the table. In essence, the editorial writers use the idiom to validate the information on insecurity in Nigeria and to make their readers see the situation from their perspectives. Some of the examples seen in the excerpts below:

- 51) It is suicidal to pretend about it: Nigeria is **on fire** over insecurity (*Vanguard* 1 April 2021).
- 52) Fulani herdsmen are spilling **rivers of blood** in the North-central states. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

53) The Abuja-Kaduna highway, a critical route, for that matter, linking Abuja, the federal capital city with Kaduna, the political headquarters of Northern Nigeria, has become a **nightmare** for travelers plying the road. (*The Guardian* December 10, 2021).

54) On many fronts- security, economy, and social life – **Nigeria is crumbling**. (*Punch* April 11, 2022).

55) ...Lai Mohammed, lambasted the Senate “**for playing to the gallery** like their counterparts in the United States,” declaring that the government is on top of the game. (*Punch* 29 July 2022).

56) Imo and Anambra states are the core **theatres of violence** in the South- East. (*Vanguard* May29, 2022)

57) The “**Stick and Carrot**” approach rarely fails to douse internal discontent as the Niger Delta militancy experience has shown. (*Vanguard* May29, 2022)

58) At perilous times like this, **a word should be enough for the wise** that has understanding and selfless enough in the real business of statesmanship. (*The Guardian* July 25, 2022).

59) The federal government has been seen as engaging in “**motion without movement**” on this issue. (*Vanguard* April 11, 2021).

60) ... a failed state is not only **economically prostrate**; it is also devoid of the rule of law. (*The Guardian* June 7, 2022).

The editorial writers use these idioms to depict the realities of the security situation in Nigeria and the attitudes of the governments and stakeholders to the situation. Idoms used by the editorial writers also express their attitudes towards the issue on the table. The idioms have sharp, strong meanings to Bakuuro and Diedong (2021:55-56) "that sustains reader's attention, thereby increasing their chances of being influenced by the attitudes and beliefs of the writers."

Discussion

The analysis of the selected editorials indicated that editorial writers not only aim at reporting and giving information on news events but also try to provide the readers with their judgments and comments through different linguistic devices in the form of evaluative adjectives and adverbs, generic phrases, rhetorics and idioms. The editorials used idioms to make their readers see the insecurity situation in Nigeria from their perspectives.

Conclusion

The study has succeeded in depicting the realities of the insecurity situation in Nigeria through its findings on the editorial writers' choice of linguistic devices in the form of evaluative adjectives and adverbs, generic phrases, rhetorics and idioms in expressing their different views and attitudes in informing their readers of the security situation in the country. The study, therefore, recommends more studies on media discourses on insecurity, studies on editorials and other social media platforms to know if there would be an end to some of these problems in Nigeria with the use of language.

References

- Abrams, M. H. and Herphan, G. G. (2005). *A glossary of literary terms*. Cornell; Holt Reinhart and Winston.
- Ajayi, T. M. and Bamgbose, G. A.(2019).” Ideologies and impoliteness strategies in online ethnic-religious conflict among Nigerians”. *Journal of Linguistics*. 3(1).
- Alder, R. B. and Rodman, G. (2016). *Understanding human communication*. USA: Harcourt College publishers.
- Bakuuro, J. and Diedong, A. L.(2021). “A critical discourse analysis of language in Ghanaian newspaper editorials”. *Athens Journal of Mass media and communications*. 7(1) . 45-60.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. J. (1994). ”Language and media: a question of convergence” in. *Media texts: authors and readers*, D. Graddol and Boyd-Barret. Eds. Clevedon Multilingual Matters Ltd. 22-39.
- Brown, G. and Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chiluwa, I. (2012). A nation divided against itself: Biafra and conflicting online-protest discourses. *Discourse and Communication Journal*,1-21.

- Ebim, M. A. (2017). A Critical Discourse Analysis of Print Media Depictions of insurgent activities in Nigeria. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of English, University of Ibadan.
- Eruvbetine, A. (2001) "A humanistic synchronizing of Nigeria's pluralistic imperatives into a living culture of development" in Eruvbetine, A (ed) *The humanistic management of pluralism: A formula for development in Nigeria*. Lagos: Murtab press.
- Halliday, M. and Mathiessen, C. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Hodder education.
- Jegade, O.O. (2018). "Circumstances and their roles in the development of editorials". *World journal of English language*. 3(2).
- Malcolm, X. (1997). "Discovering language" in Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa and Virginia Clark (eds) *Language Awareness*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 11-15.
- Notquist, R. (2013). Discourse Analysis. Retrieved from grammar.about.com/ord/d/g/disanalysis/term.htm.
- Nwabueze, C. and Ebeze, E. (2013). "Mass media relevance in combating insecurity in Nigeria" in *International Journal of Development and Sustainability* Vol 2, No 2.
- Okpala, O. C. (2020). "Discourse analysis of students and non-teaching staff Conversations" In *PREORC Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 5 (1).
- Onifade, O. S. (2015). "Media Narratives on Power Relations in Nigeria: A Critical Discourse analysis of three national newspaper columnists. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Communication and Media Studies, Eastern Mediterranean University.
- Ononye, C.F. (2014) *Style, Lexical Choices and Media Ideology in Selected English-Medium Newspaper Report on Niger Delta Conflicts, 1997 – 2009*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of English, University of Ibadan.
- Osisanwo, A. (2016). "Discursive representation of Boko Haram terrorism in selected Nigerian newspapers". *Discourse and Communication*, 1-22.
- Owolabi, D. (2016). "Perception of English usage in expressing validity on products and services" in *Papers in English and Linguistics* (PEL), 17, 241-254.
- Saheed, O. K. (2019). *A critical discourse analysis of media representation of Fulani herdsmen's crises in selected Nigerian newspapers: Implications for Nigerian education*. Unpublished Masters Thesis. Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1998) *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. London: Sage Publications.

Nigerian Newspaper Editorial Sources

Punch, July 29, 2022

Punch, April 11, 2022

The Guardian newspaper, December 10, 2021

The Guardian newspaper, June 7, 2022

The Guardian newspaper, July 25, 2022

Vanguard newspaper, April 1, 2021

Vanguard newspaper, April 2, 2021