



A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Images of Banditry in Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Studies on security in Nigeria have focused on the prevalence, incidences and responses of the governments in Nigeria to the insecurity situations and very few on the paralinguistics. The images have attracted our attention and that is why this study seeks to examine the images of bandits on newspaper pages and other online platforms. The design of this study is both the qualitative and the quantitative research design method in collecting, describing and analyzing the data. The type of sampling technique adopted for this study is purposive sampling. Ten sampled images and comments on social media and newspapers were analysed using the framework of visual discourse resources. The elements in the framework include: ideational mode, interpersonal mode, textual mode, denotation mode, connotation, style, illustrations amongst others. We find that the images of the bandits are therefore viewed as those of criminality, facelessness, militancy, violence, killers, criminal gang, human right abusers, forest dwellers, teenage criminals and murderers and not as the actual Nigerian Fulani people. This is not to exempt the different nomenclatures which the media has given to the different terrorist groups in Nigeria. We conclude therefore that there appears to be a negative image of the Fulani race amongst Nigerians which informs the character and image of banditry with which these normads are being tagged.

KEYWORDS: *Multimodal Discourse, Bandits, Visual Resource, Terrorism, Militancy, Violence*

INTRODUCTION

Since the year 2015, to date 2022 and until Nigeria is able to conquer the menace of insecurity in the country, the ideological choices of words used by the various media outlets, scholars and politicians who have some sympathy for the criminal elements in the country will not cease to be documented. Numerous articles have been written about these criminals whose nomenclatures depend on who is writing or talking about them. From Boko Haram terrorists to Bandits and cattle rustlers these acclaimed migrants have been described as killers of innocent rural dwellers across Nigeria. Other accounts have reported that the terrorists groups across the world, popularly known as *Iswap*, *Boko Haram*, *ISIS*, *Taliban*, *Alqaeeda*, *Alshabab* amongst other networking Islamists, have in the recent years changed style of operation by indulging in Kidnappings for ransom in order to finance their operations. Abdulkadir (2017) dwells on the causes and incisive solutions to the widespread of kidnappings in Nigeria, while Abdullahi (2019) writes on rural banditry, regional security and integration in West Africa. On the cross-border criminal activities in West Africa,

Ado (2006) writes on the options for responses in West Africa.

In the national dailies across Nigeria, stories abound on the activities of the bandits. Instances include Adeoye's (2018) report on *Bandit's attacks on over 30 people buried in Zamfara* in the *Punch newspaper of March 31st 2018*, and Akowe's (2014) report on "Cattle Rustling" as a northern Nigerian nightmare in the *Nation newspaper of March 30th in 2014*. Similarly, Alabelewe (2020) reports in the *Nation newspaper of July, 26th and April 24th, 2020* on how Bandits Killed three (3) and seven (7), kidnapped many others in Kaduna. The list of killings, kidnapps and attacks on innocent communities and local government areas in Kaduna, Katsina, Niger, Zamfara as well as the full fledged terrorist programmes in the north-east of Yobe and Borno states is endless. It is important to note also that skirmishes of these attacks are felt in the south-east and some south-western communities in Ondo and Ekiti, Oyo state and recently in Kwara state amongst others. The word, "banditry" appears to have undoubtedly replaced the word, "terrorism" in Nigeria in the recent time because of the ideological stance of the various news media in Nigeria (see Ibileye, 2021).



There have been various reports on banditry by the available newspaper Houses in Nigeria. In the course of this research, we stumbled on various incidences of banditry in the north-west region of Nigeria. These reports were from *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Vanguard*, and *Daily Post*. For *thePunch* newspaper, Gbenro Adeoye reports on 31st March, 2018 that “Bandits attacked Bawan Daji village of Anka LGA of Zamfara State and killed over 30 people. For *the Nation* newspaper, a report on March 1, 2019 states that “21 killed in Kawaye village in Bagega community of Anka LGA of Zamfara State, 16 people were killed and 40 others got abducted. Similarly, for the *Nigerian Tribune*, on March 2nd, “Bandits kill 50 people in villages in Igabi and Giwa LGA of Kaduna State where 50 people were killed while several others injured. The *Vanguard* newspaper of September 13, 2020 has a report by Ibrahim Hassan Wa that “Bandits abduct 16 family members at Udawa farming community of Kaduna State where 16 people were abducted. Wole Mosadomi & Shehu Danjuma report on the 12th of October, 2020 that “Bandits kill 14 persons in Ruwan Godiya village of Faskari LGA of Katsina State and Kagara town of Rafi LGA of Niger State. Bandits kill Southern Kaduna District Head and son. 14 people were killed, 3 injured and 1 kidnapped. These and many other reports beautify the front pages of popular newspapers in Nigeria in the recent time. Over sixty two people were carted away from a Kaduna train attack which happened on the 28 day in the month of March, 2022 in Nigeria (see Premium Times, April 19).

THE PROBLEM AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Studies on security in Nigeria have focused on the prevalence, incidences and responses of the governments in Nigeria to the insecurity situations and very few on the paralinguistics. Thus, studies in Political Science (see Beland, 2005), History (see Olaniyan & Yahaya 2016), Sociology and Anthropology (see Yaro & Tobias, 2021), and other social science disciplines have examined the security situation in Nigeria focusing on the impacts of banditry on the society. Beyond the objectives of the attackers and the counter-attacks embarked upon by the Federal Government of Nigeria in suppressing and decimating the various groups, is the gory images and visuals usually published on pages of newspapers for the citizens to see. All these images leave empathy, sorrow and misgivings in the minds of Nigerians who do not understand the actual role being played by the present Federal Government of Nigeria whose duty it is to protect lives and property of her indigenes. The images have attracted our attention and that is why this study seeks to examine the images on newspaper pages and other online platforms for a multimodal discourse analysis.

The significance of this study borrows strength from the problem stated above. There are numerous studies on banditry attacks in the nation. The similarity between this study and the earlier ones is in their focus on banditry but the difference is in their separate focal interests. While in

the Social Sciences, the news is the data, in the Arts and Humanities, the utterances and the images form the data. A step forward in the Humanistic Arts is the study of images and utterances for scholarly descriptions and knowledge sharing. Thus, this study to the best of our knowledge as a study of images of bandits has not been over flogged. It hopes to contribute to knowledge in Humanities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Having established the overall purpose of this study, it is important to review articles written so far on herders and farmers crisis in Nigeria. Herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria are a series of disputes over land resources across Nigeria between mostly Muslim Fulani herders and mostly Christian non-Fulani farmers. They have been especially prominent in the Middle Belt (North Central) since the return of democracy in 1999. More recently, it has deteriorated into attacks on farmers by Fulani herdsmen and also vice versa (cf. Rosenje, & Adeniyi, (2021).

The International Crisis Group (2020) has reported that “attacks have taken place in the northwest Nigeria against farmers who are mainly Hausa. While the conflict has underlying economic and environmental reasons, it has also acquired religious and ethnic dimensions. Thousands of people have died since these attacks began. Sedentary farming in rural communities are often targets of attacks because of their vulnerability. There are fears that this conflict will spread to other West African countries but this has often been downplayed by governments in the region. Attacks on herders have also led them to retaliating by attacking other communities” (cf. Adamolekun, 2019; Reuters, 2020).

The most recent attack in Owo, Ondo state is yet to feature in any academic article but reports are available in newspapers and publications online (see BBC News online 2022). Some commentators have concluded that the conflict has been labeled a genocide of Christians by numerous news sources (Forbes report 2020). Few of these reports include “Is Genocide Happening In Nigeria As The World Turns A Blind Eye?” (Forbes, 2020); “Genocide Emergency: Nigeria” published on the 23rd September, 2020; “The Mass Murder of Nigerian Christians”, published in December 2020; “Why the West Ignores the Nigerian Genocide” (Newsweek. 21 June, 2021) and “Stop the Christian Genocide in Nigeria”. Contrary to these reports, some Nigerians especially the Muslim community have concluded that the goal of the Fulani sect is land grabbing and conquest but the suspected Islamization of the country (see Daily Trust, Thursday, 20 June, 2019). The image therefore of the Fulani Question in Nigeria is an old debate. The debate has been undergoing dialectical, dialogical and ideological metamorphosis. The image can be described in three turns: the first turn was about British colonial favouritism of the Fulani while the second turn was about the Fulani control of the commanding heights of the political leadership and political economy of post-colonial Nigeria. Chronologically, this stage lasted from the period

of independence up to Chief M.K.O Abiola's winning of the presidential elections. That is, from 1960 to 1992. The third turn is the Fulanisation and Islamization of Nigeria.

The contrary posture of the Daily Trust (2019) report is that the suspected image of the Fulanisation and Islamisation of Nigeria is purely a mythical construction. "Nothing of that sort exists anywhere except in the fertile imagination of its protagonists. How would the Fulanisation exercise work? How would that race succeed in its alleged effort to deconstruct the cultural world view of other ethnic groups and replace it with a Fulani world view? How would the race change the professional and occupational preferences of other ethnic groups and replace them with nomadic cattle herding? How would the Fulani race abolish all other languages in Nigeria and replace them with Fulfulde? What exactly does it mean to say Fulanisation of Nigeria?" In a nutshell, what the foregoing tells us is that if the Fulanisation strand of the debate is counterintuitive, its Islamisation cousin is completely unthinkable and incomprehensible (see Adamolekun 2019, Adeyiei 2022).

Blench, (2010) examines the "conflict between pastoralists and cultivators in Nigeria" in a review paper prepared for the Department for International Development (DFID), Nigeria. The conflicts involving the Fulani race and their hosts and neighbours has preoccupied his mind (see Blench 2010, Adeyiei 2022). Higazi (2016) focuses on "farmer-pastoralist conflicts on the Jos Plateau, Central Nigeria with a view to juxtaposing security responses of the local vigilantes and the Nigerian state in Plateau state. From a religious point of view, Last (2008a & b) has investigated Muslim-Christians in Nigeria and their interrelations with the Fulani across Nigeria. Ochonu (2014) also makes enquiries into Fulani expansion and sub-colonial rule in the early Adamawa province and by extension the entire Nigeria. These research efforts to mention a few have explored the relationship between Nigerians generally and the Fulani race. The image of the Fulani race in the continent of Africa and the historical antecedents have continued to haunt the group and no one would end the suspicion and hostility towards the Fulani people particularly because the identity of the criminal elements and the original herders remains a riddle to many Nigerians.

The Fulani race has been established in this study to be the cattle-rearing group who are nomadic herders seen in the forests across Nigeria. This study seeks to describe the actual image of the group described by *PremiumTimes* of April 4, 2022 as "a hundred groups of bandits with over thirty thousand (30,000) militants operating in the northwest and recently in the north-central, south-east and south west of Nigeria, killing, maiming and kidnapping innocent citizens and residents of the different regions. Adeyemi (2022) reports that "the rural banditry and terrorism ravaging Nigeria's northwestern states are products of a poor criminal justice system, ethnic profiling and criminality propelled

by poverty". There have also been heated debates over the motivations and agenda of the terrorists, locally referred to as bandits, by the Centre of Democracy and Development for West Africa (CDD). The CDD dispels reports that the violent entrepreneurs are sponsored by the northeast's Boko Haram insurgents, aggrieved politicians, the Fulani ultranationalist, or foreign powers.

By examining the intricacies and the hidden truth about the cause of banditry with a view to proffering solutions to this age-long lunacy, one is embarking on a study seeming like what obtains in sociology, history and political science amongst others if the linguistic angle to this matter is not added to the knowledge base. Critical Discourse studies such as this one will enable a justifiable spread of knowledge about the Fulani race, banditry and insurgency in Nigeria from a multimodal discourse point of view.

DISCOURSE

The word, "discourse" comes from the Latin word "discursus" which means 'running to and from'. The definition of discourse thus comes from this physical act of transferring information to and fro. Gee (1999) defines discourse as 'socially accepted associations among ways of using language of thinking, valuing, acting and interacting in the right place and at the right times with the right objects'. Halliday & Hasan (1976), assert that discourse is a semantic unit; a unit not of form but of meaning. In everyday usage of language, discourse usually means conversation or discussion. However, scholars see it in a way that it encompasses all forms of communication including images, news pictures and impressions (see Mengyuan, 2019). Mengyuan (2019) explains that discourse is the discipline devoted to the investigation of the relationship between form and function in verbal communication.

In Semantic and Discourse Analyses, it is a conceptual organization of conversations within each modality and context of communication. Crystal (1992) says that discourse is a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit such as sermon, argument, joke or narrative. Discourse is a social action and interaction in language studies studied under Discourse Analysis. Kress (1985, 2011) defines discourse as 'systematically organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. While Parker (1992) views discourse as 'interrelated set of texts, and the practice of their production, dissemination, and reception, that bring an option into being. Brown and Yule (1983) say that discourse is language in use, and refers it to be 'instrument of communication in context'.

From the various definitions given, the term discourse cuts across many disciplines, which means it has interdisciplinary quality. It is simply language-in-use. Therefore, we can say it is a language unit beyond sentence; more than words in clauses or a unit not of form but of meaning. Zellis Harris first used the term Discourse Analysis in 1952 in a paper he

published. The first major attempt to analyse discourse from the perspective of Linguistics was carried out by John Sinclair and Michael Coulthard of the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. They analysed the language used by teachers and pupils in the secondary school and proposed a five-point discourse rank scale for analysing discourse. Discourse Analysis evolved through the efforts of non-linguists, but in recent times has become a very popular approach in Linguistic Analysis.

There are many definitions of Discourse Analysis by various scholars. Stubbs (1983) says the term Discourse Analysis is very ambiguous. He uses it in his book to refer mainly to “the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring connected speech or written discourse. It attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. Discourse Analysis is also concerned with language-use in social contexts, and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers”. From his definition, it is noted that Discourse Analysis studies connected speech or written discourses that naturally occur. It studies language above the clause or sentence and it is concerned with language use in social contexts.

Brown & Yule (1983) observe that Discourse Analysis examines how addressers construct linguistic messages for addressees in order to interpret them. Frohmann (1994) defines Discourse Analysis as a way of approaching and thinking about a problem. It provides a tangible answer to problems based on scientific research, and enables us understand the conditions behind a specific problem and make us realize the essence of that problem, and its resolutions. Hamuddin (2012) posits that Discourse Analysis provides a basic methodology to describe and analyse how the structure and content of the text encodes ideas and the relation among the ideas that are present in the text systematically.

Discourse Analysis differs from grammar analysis. Grammatical Analysis focuses on the structure of sentences while Discourse Analysis focuses on the broad and general use of language (Ibiley 2021). Grammarians in terms of textual analysis may examine texts in isolation for elements. Discourse Analysis on the other hand takes into account social and cultural contexts of a given text. It also deals with real life usages of language (context) and not its forms or structures.

Elements of Discourse Analysis include coherence, cohesion, context, hedges etc. Coherence is the relationships which link the meanings of utterances in a discourse or of the sentences in a text. According to Bussmann (1998) coherence has to do with mental processes and cultural knowledge rather than any explicit discourse markers such as deictic words or linking words. Cohesion is the connection that results when the interpretation of a textual element is dependent on another element in the text. Renkema (2004) sees cohesion

as the connection that exists between elements in the text. “Cohesion is produced by (a) the repetition of elements of the text, e.g. recurrence, textphoric, paraphrase, parallelism (b) the compacting of text through the use of devices such as ellipsis (c) the use of morphological and syntactic devices to express different kinds of relationships such as connection, tense, aspect, deixis, or theme-rheme relationships” (Bussman, 1998:199).

MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Many scholars have given various definitions of Multimodal Discourse. Kress (2011) states that “Multimodality names the field in which semiotic works take place, a domain for enquiry, a description of the space and of the resources that enter into meaning in some way or another”. O’Halloran, Smith, Tan & Podlasov (2011) assert that “multimodal discourse involves the interaction of multiple semiotic resources such as language, gesture, dress, architecture, proximity lighting, gaze, camera angle, etc. Jewitt (2009) posits that “multimodality describes approaches that understand communication and representation to be more than about language and which attends to the full range of communicational forms which people use (gesture, image, posture, gaze) and relationships between them”. From the various definitions, it is evident that the term ‘image’ is not negligible.

Mengyuan (2019) in her paper takes the visual grammar of Kress and Leeuwen (2006) as the theoretical framework which gives a good explanation of the reproductive meaning, interactive meaning and composition meaning of image discourse, which is also suitable for the analysis of news picture discourse. Her paper expounds how symbolic resources interact with each other, so as to construct a complete text with linguistic symbols and then convey more social interactive meaning. The study reveals that visual grammar is feasible and operational in the analysis of multimodal news texts. The background and images of news discourse can be effectively supplemented and explained and it is of great significance to improve readers’ pictures’ reading ability.

According to Jewitt (2014) the approaches to Multimodal Discourse Analysis are: Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), underpinning a social semiotic approach and Mediated Discourse underpinning a mediated-action-based approach. It focuses primarily on interaction and understands images and artefacts through how social actors interact with them, rather than seeking to decode possible meanings from the perspective of the analyst. Lastly, Conversation Analysis (CA) underpinning a turn-taking approach focuses on interactions and only engage with images and artefacts as they appear in interactions.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is both the qualitative and the quantitative research design method in collecting, describing

and analyzing the data. The first stage of data gathering is the collection of images from newspapers in prints and online while the second stage is the organizing of the images for relevance and currency. The third stage is the analysis of the images using the triangulated theories of multimodal discourse. The type of sampling technique adopted for this study is purposive sampling. Ten sampled images and comments in videos and newspapers were analysed using the framework of visual discourse resources. The elements in the framework include: ideational mode, interpersonal mode, textual mode, denotation mode, connotation, style, illustration, colour, signs, among others. The sampled images were analysed and discussed accordingly.

Theoretical Framework

Motivated by Halliday’s (1978) ideas of Social Semiotics, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) proposed and developed a method of social semiotic analysis of visual communication and established a descriptive framework of multimodality. This, the scholars called Visual Grammar. In line with the three meta-functions of language (ideational, interpersonal and textual), they put up three meta-functions of images: representational, interactive and compositional meanings. This means that any semiotic system has to be able to represent objects and their relations in the world outside the representational system. It must have the capacity to form texts (compositional) and must be able to project the relations between the producer of a sign or image and the receiver (interactive meaning). A schema is drawn below to capture all the provisions in the Visual Grammar.

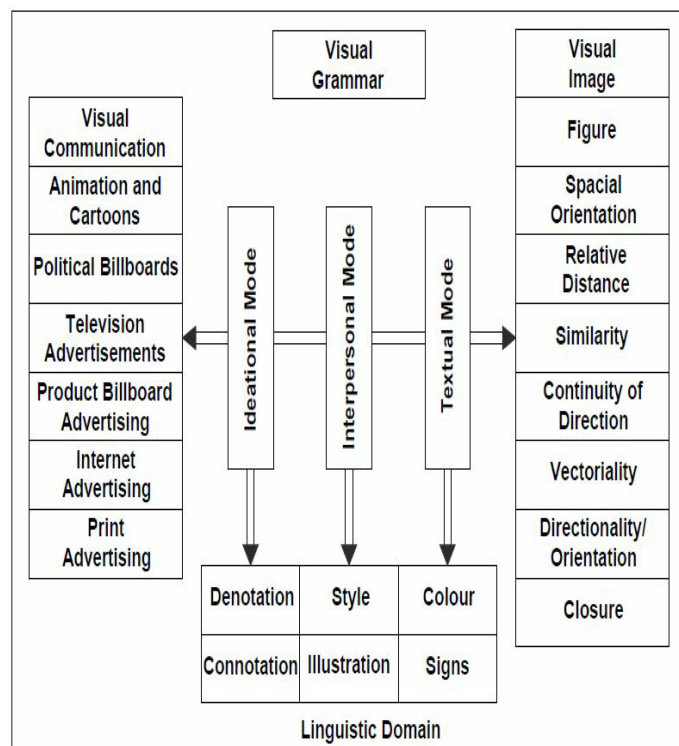


Figure 1. A synthesized Framework of the Semiotic Visual and Discourse Resources of Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), Machin (2007), Royce & Bowcher (2007), Canning-Wilson (2001) and Halliday, (1978).

The framework above is a multi-tasking combination of visual and discourse resources for multimodal purposes of analysing images and utterances. The schema purposes or proposes to foreground the fact that the import of visuals to contemporary information technology is not controversial as its utilization enhances arriving at a robust interpretation of the intended images of bandits sampled for this paper. In the framework above, to the left are visual resources which enhance the imaginative power of the audience to create their own mental picture of the visual image presented to them in their social context. The varieties of modalities in which visual images are employed for effective communication include: animation and cartoons, political billboards, television advertisement, product billboard advertisement, internet advertisement and print advertisement.

To the right, are varieties of modalities which enhance the ability of the audience to organically and harmoniously relate to each other as a whole, results in achieving structural coherence in visual images. These include: figure, spatial orientation, nearness or relative distance, similarity, continuity of direction, vectoriality (image carrying medium), directionality or orientation and closure. Occupying the visual grammar and linguistic domain are the communicative functions of colours: ideational, interpersonal and textual.

The ideational function of colours is expressed by its ability to denote specific people, places and things. The interpersonal function of colours is expressed in such a way that it has a strong and peculiar effect on people. Certain colours are used to draw the attention of others to what is presented, for example, red colour (not used for painting the interior of buildings). The textual function of colours is expressed in such a way that it creates coherence, i.e., colour combinations and matching in dress patterns and identity of a people. The Nigerian flag is painted: white and green. For coherent expression, the metafunctions help to connote and denote meanings using specific styles and colours for illustrations and signs. This framework has been adopted to discuss the sampled images of banditry in Nigeria as often painted by the social media.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The data selected for this study are images of bandits and those of the Internally Displaced Persons. These images are meant for discussions as discourse representations of the bandits from a multimodal point of view. The elements in the schema above guides the analysis of the data.

Visual Resources

Bandits are those heavily armed criminal gangs that have terrorized Nigeria’s rural northwest, killing, kidnapping, forcing people from their homes and taunting the authorities with their brazenness. For a detailed multimodal analysis, visual communication, visual grammar and visual image must be discretely addressed from the data available for this study. However, there is nothing grammatical to be

showcased other than the stationary and motion pictures of the bandits. Thus, the visual image is readily appropriate for discussions.

Visual Image

The image include persons and names which are faceless. For instance, Mallam Gumi, is a physical image serving as a middle man between bandits and the government. Dogo Gide is one of the suspected masterminds of the March 28, 2022 attack on a Kaduna-bound train, perhaps runs the biggest kidnap-for-ransom franchise in Nigeria. His operation, which is primarily based in the country's troubled northwest region, primarily targets government institutions, officials, schools and travelers. There is a monstrous image of a killer, a kidnapper and a human righter abuser. This image is painted mainly on the different electronic, social and new media. A very accessible media is through television advertisements.

Television Advertisement (media)

All the advertisements done on the television is meant to publicize the activities of the bandits in the northwestern states of Nigeria. These advertisements are viewed not only on the television but also on the internet. A click on the Google handle will pop up videos of bandits and their nefarious activities. Thus, Internet Advertisement is another quick means of viewing bandits in action. Very common and the cheapest means of access to the publicity usually given to attacks by bandits is through the print media. Therefore Print Advertisement on newspapers which are published online or which are printed as hard copies are available.

Figure

The media outlets publish the number of casualties as the attacks are carried out. These figures are necessary to give adequate update of the extent of the damage done the nation when facts and figures are given. A report such as this provides facts and figures. For example, "...the bandit conflict in northwest Nigeria is an ongoing conflict between the country's government and various gangs and ethnic militias. Starting in 2011, the insecurity remaining from the conflict between the Fulani and Hausa ethnic groups quickly allowed other criminal and jihadist elements to form in the region". Another example of figures is a headline such as, "Bandits killed 360, kidnapped 1389 persons in Kaduna in three years..." There could be cases where casualties are not numbered, for example: "Gunmen have killed an unknown number of church worshippers in Ondo state, south west Nigeria". The media also reported that "No figures for the numbers killed in the attack have been officially confirmed".

Spatial Orientation (Non-Verbal Cues)

Non-verbal cues are imperative if a thorough multimodal analysis is to be carried out. Such cues have to do with the nearness or relative distance between interlocutors in any speech event. Are there any similarities between reported news events? This similarity in reports and pictures or the

general image sustains the veracity of the discourse contexts. In that case, how congruous is the continuity of the videos and other images. Thus, a critical discourse analyst will be interested in the continuity of direction. The attacks are not carried out on the same days.

Vectoriality (image carrying medium)

There is usually an agent of destruction when the idea of terrorism is discussed. Terrorists are not ghosts, they are human beings who before now have been operating as if they were faceless. This is no longer the case as these unscrupulous elements now parade themselves in numbers in their motor cycles. These vectors make terrorism and banditry possible.

Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual

These three models of communication are relevant in a multimodal discourse. The ideational mode relates to the meaning of the utterances from the Fulani attackers. Utterances such as "we own Nigeria...all you infidels should relocate or be ready to die...our father gave us this land and we must occupy it" are all evidences of failed sense of interpersonal relationship between people who have lived together for ages. Without the writings on papers and electronically, the activities of the bandits would not have had the publicity which it has been given by the social media.

Discussion of Findings

The data sought for the description of bandits in this study comprises pictures of the bandits either in action or in mere postures meant to scare the nation. There are also pictures of the internally displaced persons who were victims of various attacks in the north east, north west, north central and recently in the southern parts of Nigeria. The triangulated framework also comprises aspects of different contributions of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics as well as Kress and van Leeuwen's visual discourse resources amongst others. The images of the bandits are therefore described as those of criminality, facelessness, militancy, violence, killers, criminal gang, human right abusers, forest dwellers, teenage criminals and murderers. This is not to exempt the different nomenclatures which the media has given to the different terrorist groups in Nigeria.

Bandits as Terrorists

One of the discourse representations of the bandits is that they were hitherto known to be terrorists. From the pictures harvested as data for this study, there is an image of terror ready to be unleashed by this group of people hired by some other faceless Nigerians to disrupt the peace of the nation and make the government of the day ungovernable. From a multimodal discourse point of view different modes and visual resources can explain the posture, the personalities and the colours of dresses and kinds of faces in the images. Men dressed in military camouflage and others dressed in rag-like attires with turbans and head ties are seen posing for a picture which they know is meant to go viral.



Figure 1. A notorious gang of bandits

The armed men are heavily armed with guns, ammunitions, explosives and grenades for massive destruction.

Bandits as Kidnappers

After a neglect of the Fulani fighters by their employers who now form a powerful cabal in the present government, these people felt abandoned and uncatered for by their kinsmen in power. The signs of danger are written all over the bandits. As vectors of evil, these ransom seekers for survival have kidnapped thousands of people across the country. Kaduna-train kidnappers are shreds of the terrorist groups on errands for faceless ring leaders who receive ransom from innocent victims. The interpersonal relationship between the sponsors and the foot soldiers has continued to be shrouded in some obscurity made incomprehensible to millions of Nigerians who confuse Fulanisation with Islamization.

Bandits as Criminals

From the image presented in appendix below, the criminal gang is said to be destabilizing the peace of the nation. This is ideational in thought. The image of the boys in the picture is that of a helpless sect of handpicked young men who see criminality as a source of livelihood in a failed nation. In television advertisements and textual representations of the bandits on newspaper pages, as criminals, arms and ammunitions with which these bandits operate are paraded with them. In fact, newspaper reports have revealed that terrorists are jailed in prisons across Nigeria. Kuje prison in Abuja (6th July, 2022), There have been at least thirteen (13) other jail breaks since the October 2020 incident with at least six of them successful. In the past year, 5, 238 inmates have escaped from various prisons across Nigeria, according to a *Premium Times* analysis (6th December, 2021).

Bandits as Faceless Gunmen

Across the country, there is a denotative representation of

the bandits who disguise as unknown gun men across the country. From the related images (picture b) in the appendix, "gun men flees scene of crime". The initial connotation of the bandits is that of a group of people whose origin is unknown but have been killing, kidnapping and raping of innocent villagers across Nigeria. Internet and Print advertisements have published that "Nigeria, over ten years and counting has witnessed bloody attacks virtually in every part of the nation but the recent tension recorded in the Southern region seems to be in contest with Northern Nigeria where farmers desert farming, farmlands, and farming tools for rampaging bandits, Boko Haram terrorists taking hostage of armed soldiers, crashing military plans, and kidnappers hitting world richest record through ransom from poor parents of school children. Naira land has reported with the caption "Unmasking the Faceless unknown Gunmen in Southern Nigeria (25th June, 2021).

Bandits as Murderers

From the visual image section of the theoretical framework of this discussion, one of the resources for discourse representations is the term *similarity*. There is a sense in which bandits could answer the name murderers because killing is their stock in trade. Bandits kill and take hostage of their other victims. Killing is conquest to bandits and they are not taking for granted whenever one is in their custody.

Bandits as Militants

Bandits are regarded as militants. From the directionality point of view in the theoretical framework, as well as spacial orientation it is obvious that bandits have proved to be militants. Reports from *The Cable News* and views unlimited as published in February 22, 2021 quotes Mallam Gumi, a spokesman of the bandits to have said, during a Channels TV programee on Monday that "bandits are not interested in killing people and that the "few" they have killed are "accidental" cases. Gumi, who is known to have access to the bandits also said they only kill people when they are avenging the death of one of them. A number of states across the north-west and north-central have been experiencing increasing attacks by suspected bandits. Gumi chose to "call them militants because they are fighting an ethnic war". From history, Fulani race are known to be fighters over occupation of land.

Bandits as Human right abusers

Another image of the bandits to many Nigerians is that of human right abusers. A look at pictures 5 and 6 in the appendix reveals that the women and children at the Internally Displaced Camps are undergoing serious human right abuses. As a matter of fact, bandits, criminals, terrorists are human right abusers. The ideational purpose of banditry is to displace original residents of a nation and occupy their lands by warefare and military conquest. In any war situation, human rights are abused.

Bandits as forest dwellers

The Visual image evidence of the bandits presents a group of people whose natural habitat is the forests where green pastures are available for cattle and other herbivorous animals reared by the Fulani race. The nation has large forests that have become safe haven for criminals. The armed men use the forests many states as cover up for criminal activities. According to the *Daily Trust* publication of Saturday 27th February, 2021 “nine forests linking almost the entire northern part of Nigeria and some neighbouring countries are being governed by bandits, thus worsening the insecurity challenges bedevilling the region. Bandits, terrorists and kidnappers have taken over many forest from where they are reportedly launching attacks and subsequently keep kidnapped victims hostage. While civilians see the forest as ‘dead zones’ such places have remained mysterious for security personnel”.

CONCLUSION

The interest behind the writing of this paper was to explore a novel ground in the trending attention of scholars across the disciplines in the social sciences. Articles in Sociology, History, Religions and Political Science have flogged the causes of terrorism, the occurrences and the likely solutions to the nagging causes of the invasion of the country by bandits and other foreigners. In English studies, discursive practices can only be taken as the approach with which matters of insecurity and terrorism can be addressed. From a multi modal perspective, we have attempted to explore the utterances and the images of banditry in Nigeria with the aim of identifying the discourse representations of the different images of bandits in Nigeria.

The triangulated framework adopted for the discussion of the data in the study has been applied in the first instance by reading the data with the theories and also employed for the discussion of the findings in the second. While care was taken in assuming that the framework forms a whole theory caution was taken in applying aspects of the different contributions of Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics as well as Kress and van Leeuwen’s visual discourse resources amongst others in the elucidation of the observations. We find that the images of the bandits are therefore viewed as those of criminality, facelessness, militancy, violence, killers, criminal gang, human right abusers, forest dwellers, teenage criminals and murderers. This is not to exempt the different nomenclatures which the media has given to the different terrorist groups in Nigeria.

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