

Grounding via Reception Strategies in Editorial Cartoons

Oluwatomi O. Adeoti

Kwara State University, Malete

oluwatomiadeoti@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the reception strategies employed by editorial cartoons in the interactions created in their cartoons using Vandergriff (2006) grounding techniques. The data for the study encompasses twenty-five cartoons from Nigeria's The Guardian newspaper published between January and March, 2012. The findings indicate grounding is used to seek clarification for precision in the understanding of intended meanings. Reception strategies are used as tools for eliciting information while measuring the level of understanding as discourses progress. This strategy creates an avenue for the cartoonists to tactically present their perspectives while endeavouring to convince the readers accordingly. The study concludes that reception strategies are important in establishing common ground between interactants as new or emerging information is accommodated through the process of reception.

Key words: Reception strategies, accommodation, common ground, grounding, conversational increments

Introduction

Successful communication requires some degree of familiarity with the subject of discussion, the context of the discussion and also the other discourse participants. Effective communication also requires collaboration between all participants (Bondarenko, 2019). However, speakers sometimes strike up conversations with strangers with whom they had no prior contact or shared familiar territory. In such instances, there is a need to establish certain information in the course of that conversation and the process of this information establishment has been termed 'grounding'.

Grounding relates to the collaborative efforts displayed by speakers and addressees during communicative processes which are based on the concept of common ground (Clark & Schaefer, 1987; Traum, 1994). Clark & Brennan (1991) posit that grounding is intrinsic to communication and to all joint actions because "in communication, common ground cannot be properly updated without grounding" (p. 128). There is thus an assumption of a vast amount of shared information or common ground - mutual knowledge, mutual beliefs and shared assumptions. Collective actions thus rely on common ground and its accumulation. Clark and Brennan (1991), therefore, explain grounding to be the process where participants in conversation try to establish that what has been said has been understood; they try to ground what has been said and then make it part of their common ground. It is thus the process of establishing mutual knowledge, beliefs, or assumptions during

conversation to effectively communicate, and it is essential for collaborative analysis (Homaeian *et al.*, 2017, p. 348)

Kruijff-Korbayova (2009) describes grounding as “the process of augmenting the common ground” (p. 1) because discourse participants try to ground joint action, i.e., “to establish things as common ground well enough for current purposes and in the process, monitor their common ground and how it changes as the conversation progresses (Clark & Brennan, 1991). This implies that regardless of the prior knowledge, either of the topic of discussion or of the other participants, the moment a conversation begins, participants begin the process of adding to (grounding) their common ground whatever needs to be grounded for a successful conversation.

Clark and Schaefer (1987) suggest that to arrive at this grounding condition, groups use three methods of reaching an understanding before they can proceed: New Contribution (where a partner moves forward with a new idea, and waits to see if their partner expresses confusion); Assertion of Acceptance (the partner receiving the information asserts that he understands by smiling, nodding, or verbally confirming the other partner. They may also assert their understanding by remaining silent); and Request for Clarification (the partner receiving the information asks for clarification).

Grounding is necessary to establish what is said, what is intended and what has been understood. It is arrived at through a continuous process of specification and subsequent acceptance of a coherent piece of information by a speaker. Clark & Schaefer (1987) describe this collaborative process in terms of the participants' contributions to the conversation. Interlocutors thus depend on evidence that they have been heard or understood. Such evidence is presented in the process of presentation and acceptance of ideas in creating common ground (Wilkes-Gibbs, 1997). Evidence can be negative or positive (Clark and Brennan, 1991).

Grounding strategies, a common ground feature, are of consequence in communication as participants interact in a process of mutual agreement of a reference for effective communication. Also, grounding or clarification processes rely on a notion of “locutionary proposition”, a linguistic sign, specified with an appropriate illocutionary force through the grammar. Such propositions become the elements manipulated during the grounding process, resulting in either acceptance in the common ground or the generation of clarification (Eshghi, 2015, p. 262). Although there have been several studies on different aspects of grounding and common ground over the years, little attention has been paid to the study of reception strategies as a grounding tool in editorial cartoons. This perhaps may have to do with the apparent focus of scholars on face to face communication (Clark and Schaefer, 1989; Clark & Brennan, 1991; Enfield, 2008). Some existing studies on grounding in communication are embedded within general studies on communicative strategies (Anderson, 1998), in relation to discourse acts (Kruijff-Korbayova, 2009; Cadilhac *et al.*, 2013) and as an aspect of conversational analysis,

i.e. engaging backchannel as a form of feedback (Eshghi, 2015). Other studies have considered the communicative angle of grounding by considering not just the communicative grounding but also how symbol grounding can be a side-effect of communicative grounding (Larsson, 2018) and how Shared Gaze in Situated Referential Grounding helps referential grounding to be more efficient (Liu, Fang & Chai, 2013). This is somewhat similar to Anderson's study which considered mimes as a feature of grounding in non-native speaker to non-native speaker interactions and native speaker to native speaker interactions.

Other fields where grounding has been explored is in the interface of humans and computers. These include studies such as Homaeian *et al.* (2017) and Vandergriff (2006). Others are on grounding privacy in mediated communication (Romero *et al.*, 2013), and effects of video and text support on grounding in multilingual multiparty audio-conferencing (Enchenique, A., *et al.*, 2014). The above studies have adopted various approaches to the study of grounding in conversation but none has considered how grounding is used in editorial cartoons. Liu *et al.* (2013) comes close to this present study as they consider modeling collaborative referring for situated referential grounding basing the study on collaborative referring. It, however, differs significantly as their method involved incorporating collaborative referring behaviors into the referential grounding algorithm. Adeoti (2015) also studied grounding strategies in editorial cartoons. However, her data consisted of editorial cartoons from three Nigerian newspapers and she accounted for features such as reference, accommodation and popularized expressions as examples of grounding strategies. This study differs considerable from that as it considers grounding strategies, with particular focus on one Nigerian newspaper.

This study, therefore, examines grounding, through reception strategies, in editorial cartoons in Nigeria's *The Guardian Newspaper* with a view to investigating its forms as well as its communicative functions (in the cartoons).

Theoretical considerations

This study is based on Vandergriff's (2006) classification of reception strategies which is a means of achieving or establishing common ground in conversation (Clark & Brennan, 1991). Vandergriff, referring to Clark's model of grounding, adds that the "model theorises how the communication medium and goals may affect grounding. While there is a need for grounding in all communicative contexts, different media and communicative purposes will change the grounding requirements" (2006, p.113). Grounding techniques will, therefore, be a function of the context and the communicative goal i.e. the grounding techniques used in face to face communication will be different from that which will be used in telephone conversations and also computer mediated conversations.

Having stated that the different media (and their attendant constraints) affect the use of grounding techniques, Vandergriff (2006, p.114) explains that Vandergriff

(1997), building on Ross and Rost's (1991) ideas identifies certain grounding techniques viz: global reprise, specific reprise, hypothesis testing and forward inferencing. Global reprise involves the listener or recipient asking for outright repetition, rephrasing or simplification of a preceding utterance. In specific reprise, the listener or recipient asks a question referring to a specific word, phrase or part that was not understood in the previous utterance. The reprises thus provide negative evidence of understanding as they are mainly concerned with the resolution of perceived miscommunication. Hypothesis testing and forward inferencing on the other hand, provide positive evidence of understanding as they try to establish the listener's or hearer's present understanding (Vandergriff, 2006).

Negative evidence, as mentioned above, is evidence that we have been misheard or misunderstood and when such evidence is noted, the problem is repaired. However, if there is no negative evidence, the assumption is that there has been understanding. So, when in the course of conversation, a final year student queries a doctoral student (whom he had been meeting on the corridors of the Department of History and had made a habit of saying 'hello' to): "Have you started exams?" and the doctoral student replies with a question "Started exams?", the doctoral student is giving the undergraduate negative evidence and a hint of what he (the doctoral student) has misunderstood.

Grounding in conversation can, however, change as a result of the present communicative purpose. The purpose of the communication determines the content while the content determines the strategy to be employed in the grounding process. Clark and Brennan illustrate this position with two types of content: references and verbatim content (1991, p.136). Grounding references involve establishing referential identity - the shared belief that the addressees have correctly identified a referent. This is established through strategies such as alternative descriptions, indicative gestures, referential instalments and trial markers.

Grounding verbatim content is applicable when getting information such as names, telephone numbers, addresses, book titles, bank account numbers, social security numbers and bank account details among others. Grounding techniques used here include: verbatim displays –such as an operator repeating a customer's number or street address, instalment – which involves the large information into small repeatable chunks or instalments and spellings – which involves the participants spelling out the essential words to ensure correctness in reception of the information and at other times for confirmation's sake. Clark and Brennan's contribution above shows that grounding changes with the current purpose and that the technique used is a function of the communicative intention.

Instances of grounding are of consequence for future interaction of the participants concerned. This, according to Enfield (2008, p. 223), is a function of two perpetually active imperatives for individuals in social interaction. The first is an informational

imperative which “compels individuals to cooperate with their interactional partners in maintaining a common referential understanding, mutually calibrated at every step of an interaction’s progression” (2008, p. 223). It is thus the cooperative endeavour to sustain common referential understanding among interactants as the interaction progresses. At the level of informational imperative, Common Ground enables parsimony because the fuller or larger the Common Ground, the less effort is expended in satisfying an informational imperative. The second is an affiliational imperative which requires the participants to maintain a degree of interpersonal affiliation, proper to the state of the relationship, which is also adjusted in the course of the interaction. The second aspect makes it possible for interactants to show, publicly, intimacy (or lack of same) which is an indicator of how much is personally shared by the interactants.

Vandergriff’s (2006) grounding techniques (reception strategies) are considered relevant to this present study as they foreground the intricacies of the communicative process and how they serve to accommodate emerging information in communication, thereby adding it to the existing repertoire of shared knowledge. They will, therefore, be adopted for the analysis of data in the study.

Editorial cartoons

Editorial cartoons have come to an integral part of newspapers today. Visual image in communication serves to convey messages lucidly and quickly, without risk to its property of being a tool for free expression. The implication of this is that while cartoons are economical, they are no less expressive, as a single cartoon stripe can convey a lot.

Considering the spatial and lexical ‘limitations’ in cartoons, editorial cartoons rely on a lot of extra-linguistic elements which are packed into each cartoon with as many paralinguistic elements as will make the decoding of the message possible (Medubi, 1987). A proper knowledge of the shared environment (between the cartoonists and the readers) is, therefore, deemed indispensable in realising the goal of the cartoonists. In view of this, Babatunde, (2007, p. 182) observes that “...the socio-cultural awareness, the degree to which he (a writer) is rooted in his environment is largely manifested in the way these relevant linguistic and contextual features flow wittingly or otherwise into his writing”. The writers’ awareness of the socio-cultural doxas is important in the encoding of the message and the ultimate interpretation by the reader, which is a function of the provisions of the common ground shared by the cartoonist and the readers.

Leaning on shared propositions and experiences, editorial cartoonists take certain things for granted in the creation of their cartoons. They make assumptions which mould their cartoons, and how they are perceived and interpreted by the readers. These assumptions are drawn from shared prior experiences – linguistic or otherwise, a common immediate context in which the speech event occurs and as

more recent arguments show, certain information provided in the course of the speech event. The gamut of shared features between the speaker and hearer has been dubbed 'Common Ground'. Editorial cartoons consequently provide an avenue for expression for the people and also a platform for governments to receive feedbacks on their policies and practices.

Editorial cartoons, also sometimes referred to as political cartoons (hti.osu.edu; Jimoh, 2010) because they often deal with political issues. They, however, also serve as visual commentary and observation on current events. They are usually satirical and humorous in nature as is the nature of cartoons in general. They may communicate the political viewpoint of the cartoonist or add depth to an editorial opinion in a newspaper. Editorial cartoons use caricatures and play significant roles in swaying public opinion. Editorial (Political) cartoons are a very important part of any newspaper. Supporting this stance, Meghana (2012) avers that "political cartoons are an indispensable part of any newspaper" because they are "the visual medium that engages the audience, helps them understand and interpret the political, social and economic scene in the country and in the world" (p. 10). They also provide a safe platform for social commentary and an avenue for voicing the opinions of the public (Ashfaq, 2008).

The above mentioned features of editorial cartoons bestow on them the capacity of subtlety and innuendo while resisting the government and other unpalatable state of affairs by using their cartoon plots and characters.

Methodology

The data comprises twenty-five editorial cartoons from *The Guardian Newspaper* published between January and March, 2012. The period covers a period when there were issues of concern for Nigerians. The cartoons represent issues of fuel subsidy, insecurity, corruption, state of the nation and other issues of governance. The quantitative analysis involved the use of simple percentages. The qualitative analysis was executed using Vandergriff's (2006) classification of reception strategies. For ease of analysis and space constraint, six cartoons are qualitatively analysed as samples while the nineteen others are presented in the quantitative analysis and are included in the appendix.

Analysis and discussion

Reception strategies in implicature construal

This is concerned with the interactive listening strategies adopted by the cartoonists in advancing the discourse among the characters in the cartoons. These strategies, however, do not serve this purpose alone, rather they are used as salient tactics by the cartoonists in probing for information among the cartoon characters and in the process, volunteer their own information to the reading public. Used otherwise as utterances produced by the listener to "signal either lack of comprehension or current state of understanding..." (Vandergriff, 2006, p. 114), this inherent function

is explored in this study of cartoons as an information incrementing device. This, perhaps, also explains why these strategies are used mainly in the samples that are conversational in structure (i.e. involving dialogue). Four forms of reception strategy (global reprise, specific reprise, hypothesis testing and forward inferencing) are identifiable from the data. The samples with reception strategies are presented in the table at the end of the sample analysis.

Global reprise as a grounding strategy

Global reprise involves the listener or recipient asking for outright repetition, rephrasing or simplification of a preceding utterance. Interlocutors engage it to calibrate referential understanding and to seek clarification in the course of a conversation.

Example 1

Cartoon description

Three men, dressed in suits are having a discussion about a recent report on the daily earnings of Nigerians.

Utterances

(i) *Speaker A: So it's true that 100 Million Nigerians now earn less than one Dollar a day.*

(ii) *Speaker B: Oh yes... Mr. President won't be happy about that.*

(iii) *Speaker A: Why?*

(iv) *Speaker B: That means we now have many children who go to school without shoes.*

(v) *Speaker C: It's worse than that.*

(vi) *Speaker A: How?*

(vii) *Speaker C: Many families now go to bed without food.*

Global reprise is employed as an information-eliciting strategy leading up to the final utterance in the exchange, which carries the main message of the cartoon. 'Why?' and 'How?' as used in the cartoon (utterances iii and vi) are considered as global reprise features as they involve the listener asking for a simplification of the information presented in the preceding utterance. The cartoonist is thus presented with an opportunity to present his point of view (that the situation of Nigerians is worse than that of the President when he "went to school without shoes" as many Nigerian families now "go to bed without food") as he attempts to inform and persuade the readers to believe in the same set of ideas. The conclusion (that the situation of Nigerians is worse than that of the President when he went to school without shoes is premised on the shared knowledge that Nigerians have of President Goodluck Jonathan's allusion to his early childhood days, when he was pre-election campaigns in 2011.

Example 2

Cartoon description

Two men are shown discussing. They express their views on an opinion and their facial expressions go from neutral in the first panel to disappointment in the final panel.

Utterances

(i.) *Speaker A: Last year, when he was campaigning for elections, he promised us "a breath of fresh air."*

(ii) *Speaker B: That's true.*

(iii) *Speaker A: Yesterday, during the protest march over the fuel price increase, we didn't breathe fresh air.*

(iv) *Speaker B: Really? How?*

(v) *Speaker A: We inhaled tear gas.*

On the surface, the expressions 'Really?' and 'How?' appear to be simple questions. They are, however, a form of generic or global reprise used in revealing the mind of the characters (and by implication, the cartoonists) on the issue being discussed. They also serve as a means of accommodating information that might not already be in the common ground of the interactants. For instance, even though Speaker B shares the background information that the referent (He) had promised them a breath of fresh air when he was *campaigning for elections, he did not share the new information that rather than inhale fresh air, it was tear gas that was inhaled during the protest march over the fuel subsidy removal*. Consequently, the speaker(s) solicit(s) more information, thereby creating an opportunity for the speaker to say more on the subject. This supposed uninformed position by one of the characters in the cartoon is, therefore, exploited maximally for the cartoonist's communicative goal. Other examples of global reprise found in the data include: 'What's that?', 'Like what?', 'How?', 'How can you say that?', 'What are you talking about?', 'I don't understand', 'What for?', and 'So what would happen now?' as used in datum 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 14, 16, 19, 21, and 24 respectively.

Specific reprise as a grounding strategy

In specific reprise, the listener or recipient asks a question referring to a specific word, phrase or part that was not understood in the previous utterance. It is thus a way of directly seeking clarification without making room for ambiguities. Consider the following example:

Example 3

Cartoon description

Two men are seen discussing about what the money recovered from fuel subsidy removal will be channelled to.

Utterances

Speaker A: We'll invest the money from oil subsidy removal on roads, schools, police, et cetera.

Speaker B: The Police?

Speaker A: Yes. We'll buy them more sophisticated weapons.

Speaker B: To fight crime?

Speaker A: No, to quell future protests and riots.

The exchange in example 3 instantiates the use of specific reprise in not only seeking clarification but in revealing the ‘hidden agenda’ of the government. Speaker B’s use of the questions ‘The police?’ and ‘To fight crime?’ are engaged on two levels. On the first level, the police seem to be a misfit in the list being reeled out. His asking ‘The police?’ was, therefore, to ascertain that the Speaker A was not mistaken. On the second level however, having established that the police was legitimately on that list, the question was why. What qualified the police to be on that list, hence the second specific reprise question “To fight crime?” This Interrogative introduces the invective focus, which is the focus of the cartoon – the intention of the government is to pitch the police against the people, rather than allow them serve the people as expected.

Example 4

Cartoon description

Two men are seen sitting in front of a TV. They hold a conversation about the intention of the government for the citizens in the New Year.

Utterances

Voice from the TV: This government wants peace to reign in this New Year. Let’s shun violence. Life is about give and take.

Speaker A: No wonder.

Speaker B: No wonder what?

Speaker A: No wonder they give us N18,000 minimum wage and they’ve now taken it back with this fuel price increase.

In example 4, the expression ‘No wonder what?’ serves as an introduction for the utterance in the second panel which is the highpoint of the cartoon. This closed ended interrogative style is specific and calls for a direct response, hence the response “No wonder they gave us...” The cartoonist engages the cartoon to interrogate the issues that affect the lives of Nigerians and in the process, confront the government on the perceived injustice being meted out to Nigerians. The specific reprise in this cartoon thus engenders the utterance in the subsequent and final panel which expresses the cartoonist’s orientation. Other examples of specific reprise in the data include ‘I see... ‘What do they want?’, ‘What state?’, ‘Why not?’, ‘What big fish?’, ‘What epidemic?’, ‘Then what are they interested in?’, ‘What Red card?’, and ‘But what if we have serious protests after the elections?’

Forward inferencing as a grounding strategy

Forward inferencing is a feature in grounding that seeks to establish the listener’s current understanding by providing positive evidence of such understanding. In the data set analysed, the instances of forward inference show the cartoonist, through the cartoon characters, responding in an almost affirmative tone, although still interrogative, to show that they are following the line of discussion of the co-interactant and that the topic being discussed is in their common ground. Let us consider the following example:

Example 5**Cartoon description**

A man and a woman (probably his wife) are riding on a motorcycle. The woman has a child strapped to her back while the man is at the wheels of the motorbike.

Utterances

Speaker A: (Woman): So, why did the government suddenly remove the so-called fuel subsidy dear?

Speaker B: (man): To quickly take care of some very important needs, of course.

Speaker A: (woman): Water, light, roads, housing, transport, food...

Speaker B: (man): Yes, food for the state house.

Speaker A's second utterance is a list of basic amenities such as water, light and roads among others, giving positive evidence that she understands what the man means by urgent needs. However, she seems to leave the list open-ended for him to complete as indicated by the ellipses. Speaker B takes that opportunity and delivers what seems to contain the source of the satire (food) in the cartoon. The cartoonist is thus able to address the issue of the controversies surrounding the amount allocated for food for the State House in the budget for that year vis-a-vis the other important issues affecting the lives of the citizens that should be considered as important. Another example of forward inferencing found in the data is in datum 9 where the speaker uses the expression "To force the government to revert to N65 per litre of petrol" as a positive evidence that his co-interactant's utterance is grounded.

Hypothesis testing as a grounding resource

Just like forward inferencing, hypothesis testing provides positive evidence of grounding in communication. However, it works like specific reference in that in the data considered, hypothesis questions are posed as interrogatives, though they provide positive rather than negative evidence of referential understanding. Let us consider the example below:

Example 6**Cartoon description**

Three men are seen having a conversation on the actions of the government.

Utterances

Speaker A: The government should listen to the cry of our governor and increase our state's allocation.

Speaker B: If they increase it, will that change anything?

Speaker A: Of course, yes...It will change the lives of some people for good.

Speaker B: You and I?

Speaker A: The governor and his family.

The conversation in example 6 typifies hypothesis testing. The utterance opens with an appeal to the government for the benefit of the people. The specific reprise in

Speaker B's first utterance (...will that change anything?) however sets the backdrop against which the main thrust of the cartoon is set which is elicited through the hypothesis testing "you and I" in Speaker B's second utterance and culminated with the focus of the cartoon in the final utterance (The governor and his family). Here, Speaker B tests the hypothesis by supplying answers to suggest that he is operating under certain shared knowledge with Speaker A. The cartoonist, however, uses this and accommodates Speaker B in the new information, i.e. the governor and his family, thereby accommodating it in the conversation and making it a part of the common ground. Other examples of hypothesis testing in the data include datum 6 and datum 7.

A summary of the analysed data (the six used for the sample analysis and the nineteen others presented in the appendix) is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Showing reception strategies and their functions

Sample	Reception Strategy	Example	Function
1	Specific reprise	I see... What do they want?	Interrogative whose answer introduces the crux of the cartoon.
2	Global reprise	What's that?	Interrogative that precedes the message at the heart of the cartoon.
3	Global reprise	Like what?	Initiates the concluding utterance which is the focus of the cartoon.
4	Global reprise	How?	Interrogative furthering the message of the cartoon.
5*	Forward inferencing	Water, light, roads, housing, transport, food...	Contains the item for the satire in the cartoon (food).
6*	*Specific reprise	*The police?	*Focuses attention on the expression 'the police'.

	Hypothesis testing	* To fight crime?	Interrogative introducing the invective focus.
7	Hypothesis testing Specific reprise	Why not? What state?	Forms the backdrop against which the main utterance is set. Interrogative that engenders the focal issue in the cartoon.
8	Specific reprise	Why not?	Precedes final utterance which contains the ultimate message of the cartoon.
9	Forward inferencing	To force the government to revert to ₦65 per litre of petrol?	Presents a reasonable answer to the question and also prompts the indictment of the government in the utterance finale.
10	Global reprise	How?	Validates the assertion in the preceding utterance and introduces the informative utterance in the following utterance.
11	Specific reprise	What big fish?	Accommodation strategy to introduce the information in the following utterance.
12	Specific reprise	What epidemic?	Prelude to the main message of the cartoon.

13	Specific reprise	Then what are they interested in?	Introduces the diatribe in the cartoon.
14	Global reprise	How can you say that?	Establishes the Governor as the subject of the cartoon.
15	Global reprise Specific reprise	How come we are not enjoying the benefits of democracy in this state? What headaches?	Serves as a link between the first panel and the last panel. Introduces the main message of the cartoon, which is an indictment on the manner of governance of Nigeria's leaders.
16	Global reprise	What are you talking about?	Expresses the shock of the speaker and serves as a build up to the message in the last panel.
17	Specific reprise	What red card?	Buttresses the preceding utterance and leads to the culmination of the core of the cartoon in the third panel.
18*	Global reprise	Why? and how?	Interrogatives used to draw out the message of the cartoon.
19	Global reprise	I don't understand.	Expression necessitates the response which contains the criticism.
20	Global reprise	What gives you that impression?	A sign of interest in the discussion and a strategy for

	Specific reprise	Who?	incrementing the information meant for the readers. It also questions the appropriateness of the composition of the group in terms of their commitment to the cause at hand.
21	Global reprise	How? What for?	One word utterances which prompt responses laced with the cartoon's focus.
22*	Global reprise	Really? How?	Serves as link between the expressed proposition and the last utterance, which supplies the fact of the situation.
23*	Specific reprise	No wonder what?	Serves as an introduction for the utterances in the second panel and the highpoint of the cartoon.
24	Specific reprise Global reprise	... But what if we have serious protests after the elections? So what would happen?'	Presents a plausible situation which propels other responses leading to the intended message of the cartoon.
25*	Specific reprise	If they increase it, will that change anything?	Utterances are interrogatives used in eliciting certain information which lead up to the very

	*Hypothesis testing	You and I?	essence of the cartoon. Expresses sarcasm at the hope of the speaker.
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A summary of the above analysis is given in the table 2:

Table 2: Frequency of reception strategies

Reception Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Specific Reprise	13	40.6%
Global Reprise	13	40.6%
Forward Inferencing	3	9.4%
Hypothesis Testing	3	9.4%
Total	32	100%

From Table 2, it is observed that global and specific reprises constitute a larger number of occurrences in the samples (40.6%) for both of them. This is because they are used by the cartoonists to create a situation of ‘ignorance’ or ‘lack of information’. These reprises thus serve as information eliciting strategies, which in turn, create opportunities for the cartoonists to present their points of view and subtly attempt to orient the readers towards the cartoonists’ lines of thought.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed the forms and functions of grounding via reception strategies in editorial cartoons. Global reprise, specific reprise, hypothesis testing and forward inferencing, which are the identified ground strategies, are used as tools for eliciting information while measuring the level of understanding as the discourse progresses. The analysis further indicates that the strategies also create avenues for the cartoonists to tactically present and impress their perspective while endeavouring to convince the readers accordingly. Reception strategies are also used to seek clarifications for precision in referential understanding in conversation. Also, grounding, through reception strategies, is considered to be of consequence as it relates to informational imperatives as the interactants are able to mutually calibrate referential understanding as a conversation progresses. Finally, the study shows that reception strategies are important in incrementing common ground interaction as new or emerging information is accommodated through the process

of reception. Future studies may consider grounding strategies in fiction work or computer mediated communication in Nigeria's cyberspace.

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Appendix

Datum 1

Caption: Balance of Fuel Subsidy

Speaker A: Is it true that the people want the fuel subsidy restored?

Speaker B: **No**, Your Excellency. They want something else.

Speaker A: I see... What do they want?

Speaker B: They want all **those** things you're enjoying, your Excellency.

Speaker B: **Food** subsidy, **Drink** subsidy, cloth subsidy, hat subsidy, shoe subsidy, electricity subsidy, medicine subsidy, toothpaste subsidy, et cetera, et cetera.

Datum 2

Caption: Driving the Point Home

Speaker A: What's in the **boot**?

Speaker B: Bad luck, officer.

Speaker A: What's that?

Speaker B: Empty petrol jerrycan, officer.

Datum 3

Caption: Tied Hands

Speaker A: By the way, why did the government send soldiers to our streets?

Speaker B: To show us that they are powerful, of course... More powerful than people power.

Speaker A: I'm not impressed. They should show us something else.

Speaker B: Like what?

Speaker A: That they are more powerful than the fuel subsidy cabal.

Datum 4

Caption: Double Trouble...

Speaker A: I learnt your government has declared a state of emergency in some states in your country.

Speaker B: Yes. And after that, they declared a state of confusion.

Speaker A: How?

Speaker B: They doubled the price of petrol.

* Datum 5

Caption: Food for Thought

Speaker A: Why did the government suddenly remove the so-called fuel subsidy, dear?

Speaker B: To quickly take care of some very important needs, of course.

Speaker A: Water, light, roads, housing, transport, food...

Speaker B: Yes, food for the state house.

* Datum 6

Caption: Hidden Agenda

Speaker A: We'll invest the money from oil subsidy removal on roads, schools, hospitals, police, et cetera.

Speaker B: The police?

Speaker A: Yes. We'll buy them more sophisticated weapons.

Speaker B: To fight crime?

Speaker A: No. To quell future protests and riots.

Datum 7

Caption: Chasing Shadows

Speaker A: Let's do everything possible to ensure that our request for a new state is granted.

Speaker B: I don't think that should be our major headache right now.

Speaker A: Why not?

Speaker B: We should focus our attention on one particular state in the country.

Speaker A: What state?

Speaker B: State of insecurity

Datum 8

Caption: Where Do We Go From Here (2)

Speaker A: Chairman, the pupils in that school have been studying under trees for a long time now

Speaker B: Well, the finances of this council has greatly improved. We can now afford to build a nice block of classrooms for them.

Speaker A: Great! So, when are you going to start building?

Speaker B: I'm afraid, not now.

Speaker A: Why not?!

Speaker B: After we finish building it, Boko Haram might bomb it the next day.

Datum 9

Caption: Enemies Within.

Speaker A: I think Nigerians should go on another nationwide strike.

Speaker B: To force the Government to revert to ₦65 per litre of petrol?

Speaker A: No, to force the government to purge itself of Boko Haram.

Datum 10

Caption: The Test...

(Voice from the Television): The government has vowed to unmask the Kano bombers.

Speaker A: Interesting. That means they have a very big task.

Speaker B: How?

Speaker A: It's going to be a do-or-die battle or "fight-to-finish" with the friends and supporters of the bombers in government.

Datum 11

Caption: Fishy Business

Speaker A: Congratulation, Your Excellency, over the Big Fish we caught recently.

Speaker B: What Big Fish?

Speaker A: The newly appointed Chairman of the Petroleum Task Force, Your Excellency.

Speaker B: Oh, we brought him on board intentionally.

Speaker A: To **Come-and Eat?**

Speaker B: To come and **FISH** in oil polluted waters.

Datum 12

Caption: The X-Ray

Speaker A: There has been an outbreak of cholera in that community.

Speaker B: Not again. The other time, we had a guinea-worm epidemic in this community.

Speaker A: That's true. We don't have clean drinking water and good hospitals in this state.

Speaker B: We have another epidemic, that's why.

Speaker A: What epidemic?

Speaker B: "Corruption Epidemic".

Datum 13

Caption: The Truth of the Matter

Speaker A: I really enjoyed my visit to your country. Everything there works.

Speaker B: Thanks. The leaders in my country are always working hard to take the country to greater heights.

Speaker A: Interesting. Many leaders in my country are not interested in **taking** the country to greater heights.

Speaker B: Incredible! Then what are they interested in?

Speaker A: **Taking Bribe.**

Datum 14

Caption: Open Secret

Speaker A: Very soon, our Governor will start paying tax – **like** us.

Speaker B: It's no big deal.

Speaker A: How can you say that?

Speaker B: Even if he pays fifty percent of his salary as tax, he won't feel the pinch at all.

Speaker A: What gave you that impression?

Speaker B: Oh well, everybody knows the man is another "Thief in the Government House."

Datum 15

Caption: Shareholders

Speaker A: Recently, the Federal and State governments shared some money from the Federation Account.

Speaker B: That's true.

Speaker A: So, how come we're not enjoying the Democracy Dividends in this state?

Speaker B: We have two major headaches, that's why.

Speaker A: What headaches?

Speaker B: Excess greed and **Excess** corruption.

Datum 16

Caption: Food for Thought

Speakers A, B, C and D: Sir, we want to go and **Eat**

Speaker E: Four of you at the same time?... Anyway, make sure you are back in the **Newsroom** in one hour.

Speakers A, B, C and D: I'm afraid we won't be back in a couple of years sir.

Speaker E: What are you talking about?

Speakers A, B, C and D: Some politicians have employed us as their **Mouthorgans** sir.

Datum 17

Caption: Home Truth...

Speaker A: I'm sorry we can't allow you into this country. Your Yellow Fever Inoculation card is fake... Tell your government to issue you a genuine **Yellow Card**.

Speaker B: This is unfair!

Speaker A: They should also issue a **Red Card**.

Speaker B: What Red Card?!

Speaker A: To the touts who sell fake Yellow Cards at your airports.

*** Datum 18**

Caption: Food for Thought

Speaker A: So it's true that 100 million Nigerians now earn less than one Dollar a day.

Speaker B: Oh yes... Mr. President won't be happy about that.

Speaker A: Why?

Speaker B: That means we now have many children who go to school **without shoes**.

Speaker C: It's worse than that.

Speaker A: How?

Speaker B: Many families now go to bed **without food**.

Datum 19

Caption: True Colour ...

Speaker A: I learnt the legislator representing your constituency is one of those who supported the Labour Bill.

Speaker B: Really? So he too wants workers to **VOTE** before embarking on industrial strike?

Speaker A: Exactly.

Speaker B: Wonders will never cease. In other words, the man now believes in voting.

Speaker A: I don't understand.

Speaker B: The same man who **RIGGED** to get into the National Assembly.

Datum 20

Caption: Power Failure

Speaker A: Very soon, we are going to enjoy **6,000** Megawatts of electricity **or** more.

Speaker B: What gives you that impression?

Speaker A: There's a new Presidential Taskforce on power made up of **13** powerful people **in** government and private organisations. Look at the list.

Speaker B: Somebody is missing.

Speaker A: Who?

Speaker B: The **EFCC Boss**

Datum 21

Caption: The Rehearsal

Speaker A: So, why are those soldiers deployed by the Government to crush the **FUEL SUBSIDY** protests still on Lagos streets?

Speaker B: Its politics.

Speaker A: How?

Speaker B: They are here to also crush the **OPPOSITION**

Speaker A: What for?

Speaker B: "Lagos must be **CAPTURED** in 2015.

*** Datum 22**

Caption: Seeing Red

Speaker A: Last year, when he was campaigning for election, he promised us "a breath of fresh air."

Speaker B: That's true.

Speaker A: Yesterday, during our protest march over the fuel price increase, we didn't breathe fresh air.

Speaker B: Really? How?

Speaker A: We inhaled tear gas.

*** Datum 23**

Caption: Taken for a Ride

Voice from the Television: This government wants peace to reign in this New Year. Let's shun violence. Life is about **Give** and **Take**.

Speaker A: No wonder.

Speaker B: No wonder what?

Speaker A: No wonder they gave us ₦ 18,000 Minimum Wage and they're now taking it back with the fuel price increase.

Datum 24

Caption: Tale of the Expected...

Speaker A: Our country's democracy has really stabilised. In fact, come 2015, I believe we can conduct police-free elections.

Speaker B: I see. But, what if we have serious protests after the elections?

Speaker A: No cause for alarm.... The Government won't invite the police.

Speaker B: So, what would happen?

Speaker A: They will invite soldiers.

*** Datum 25**

Caption: The Truth of the Matter

Speaker A: The Government should listen to the cry of our Governor and increase our state's revenue allocation.

Speaker B: If they increase it, will it change anything?

Speaker A: Of course, Yes.... It will change the lives of some people for good.

Speaker B: You and I?

Speaker A: No. The Governor and his family.